



Saint Mark's
Evangelical Lutheran Church

Weekly Update

April 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday, the day that begins Holy Week, when we remember Jesus' last week on earth. I have always appreciated the observance of Holy Week and the sense that we are walking with Jesus through that last week in real time. I have some great church memories of children's pageants and palm branch processions. I have known congregations that actually brought in a real donkey for the day, though I think s/he was left at the front door. I have always looked forward to reliving the events of the week: sharing the bread and wine with Jesus and his other disciples in the upper room on Thursday, fighting sleep as he prays; hiding in the background and trying not to be noticed as he is brought before Pilate; taking my place at the foot of the cross with the others who watch in sorrow and disbelief as he takes his last agonized breath.

And then waiting. Waiting through the long weekend for the surprise we are always ready for, when we will go with the women, early in the morning, on the first day of the week, while it is still dark, to the open and empty tomb. This year it will be different. This year Holy Week will be lived out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will observe the events of Jesus' last week in relative isolation. All the things we have come to expect and enjoy, will not be available to us. The week will be quieter. The week will hold sadness, uncertainty, confusion, and fear.

I wonder if the emotions we are experiencing this year, though, aren't a little closer to the emotions that Jesus and the disciples experienced that first Holy Week. While the week started for them with the excitement and joy of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, things deteriorated fast. Before the week was up, cries of "Hosanna!" had turned to cries of "Crucify him!" Before the week was up, the one who had been hailed as Messiah and King, was arrested and executed. Imagine the confusion. What's going on? Imagine the grief. How could Jesus be dead? Imagine the fear. Am I next? Imagine the despair. Now what?

As we live through this pandemic together, we ask the same questions. What's going on? How could so many be dying? Am I next? Now what? I don't have the answers to those questions. The answers will come as we live into them. I imagine, though, that the answers will be similar to the answers the disciples received after that first Holy Week. The disciples learned that there were certain events and experiences in life that changed everything. The disciples learned that even when things did not go the way they wanted them to go, alternative outcomes could be even better than they had expected. The disciples learned that even in the midst of suffering, death and grief, God was at work to bring forth new life.

It's Almost Holy Week. Right now we have a road of isolation, struggle, fear, uncertainty to walk. Unfortunately we don't get to just jump ahead to Easter and have this all behind us. It won't be that quick or easy. But we do get to walk this journey holding on to the promise of the empty tomb, and that colors and informs how we journey. At the end of this, we will realize that this is one of those events and experiences that changes everything. At the end of this we will discover positive outcomes we couldn't have anticipated. At the end of this, we will experience the new life that God is always breathing into the world.

God's peace and comfort, my friends.
Pastor Mary

For Pastoral Support, please contact:

Pastor Mary
Cell: 608-295-5401
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Pastor Ivy
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On-line Worship

We are so grateful for those who have contributed so much of their time and energy to making our on-line worship services happen. Thanks to Paige Ericson and Cyndi Johnson for sharing their stories with us during our Wednesday worship. Many, many thanks to Gary Martin, whose knowledge, expertise, and attention to detail, have made it possible for this to happen. We are blessed!

Schedule for upcoming services

Palm Sunday	Sunday morning, April 5
Maundy Thursday	Thursday afternoon, April 9
Good Friday	Friday afternoon, April 10
Easter	Sunday morning, April 12

Chapel Roof

Thanks to all who have contributed so generously toward the Chapel Roof Fund. All of the money needed has been given or pledged! Work is scheduled to begin the week after Easter, but like everything else these days, that is subject to change. Special thanks to Gary Hook who is managing this project.

Blood Donors Needed – April 22

St. Mark's will be hosting a blood drive on Wednesday, April 22 from 11:30 am to 5:00 pm in Rees Hall. The Red Cross had planned for this blood drive to be held at North High, but the since the High School is not open right now, they asked if they could move it to St. Mark's. As of this writing, the regular blood drive that the North St. Paul churches hold, is still scheduled for Christ Lutheran Church on Monday, April 6. There is a desperate need for blood donations right now. Please take advantage of one of these opportunities.

Live Musical Prelude

The live prelude will return this Sunday, April 5 at 9:30 am on Facebook as we celebrate Palm Sunday. Music for the day will include *All Glory, Laud, and Honor, Beneath the Cross of Jesus, Sonatina in A Minor* by Georg Anton Brenda, and *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*. Looking ahead to next week, live preludes will be played on Maundy Thursday at 7:00 pm and Good Friday at Noon. Just visit St. Mark's Facebook page and click Play to watch and listen. If you're not able to watch live, the video will also be available to watch on Facebook afterwards.

www.facebook.com/stmarksnsp/

Need to talk?

If you have concerns, needs, or just want to chat, please feel free to contact Pastor Mary or Pastor Ivy. Their contact information is located on the front page.

Youth Update

During this time of sheltering in place, we're reaching out individually to the youth and college-aged adults. We're meeting as a group on Zoom (video chat) on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm. These meetings are accessible via phone, computer, or tablet at <https://tinyurl.com/u6euwpl>. We're offering time to check in, play games, and a bible study. We're currently participating in a Lenten Photo Journey, where people are encouraged to share a photo each day based on a prompt. These photos are being posted to our Facebook page.

We are looking into alternative ways to celebrate our graduating seniors. Personalized scrapbooks remain available through Karyn Mikel. We are taking a "wait and see" approach before making any decisions about our summer mission trip. We will update you as things become clearer. In the meantime, be well and let us know if there's anything we can do to support you! – Susie

Church directory postponed

We have cancelled the scheduled photo sessions for the church directory. **Our new dates are Aug. 17-19 and Sept. 15-17.** We'll send out the link for online sign ups as soon as it is available.

Thank you from Mike Nelson

*St. Mark's Family,
Thank you for your prayers, thoughts, and support during my enlistment in the US Navy. Knowing I had family, friends, and a congregation back home praying for me every week, sending care packages, and greetings helped me push through the tough days.*

In my six years in the Navy I was a Nuclear Machinist Mate serving on the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz. My responsibilities included maintaining the nuclear reactors and training and supervising department personnel.

I am currently relocating with my wife Taylor. We are actively job searching and setting up our apartment in Knoxville, TN and enrolling in college courses. Your continued prayers are appreciated as I transition from military to civilian life.

Thank you and God's Blessings and good health to you during this time of uncertainty.

~Mike Nelson

Have you signed up for electronic giving?

If you have not already set up electronic giving, now would be a great time to do so! Follow the link on stmarks-nsp.org to get started. You can find the link at the bottom of the home page, or under the "About" tab. It's easy, secure, and provides for the support of St. Mark's ministries even when we can't be together. Once at the VANCO site, select "set up profile."