

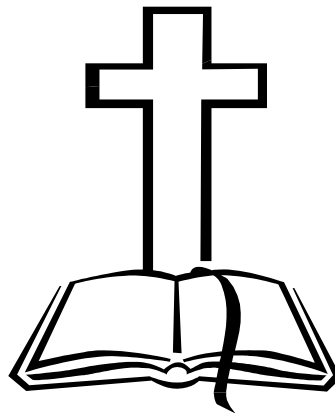
USE THE MEANS OF GRACE AND THEY WILL STAY!

A popular movie once circulated the notion: "If you build it they will come". In the context of this movie, if you build a baseball diamond in the middle of a cornfield people will come to watch their old time major league heroes. While such a slogan has worked with some communities building new arenas, stadiums and ballparks, it has not proven to be any kind of end or purpose for Christ's Church.

Jesus' Church is not about bricks and mortar. It is about souls, souls bought with the holy precious blood of Christ. Therefore, as our congregation realizes the blessing of pursuing a future building expansion of both the church and school, we will have a higher goal than just bringing people to see and visit a building. Our aspiration remains the work of leading people to stay close and connected to Jesus in every aspect of their lives.

We have already been taught that Jesus does not want us to cheapen his importance to that of some quick fix or a place to only turn to when we hit the pits and heartaches of life. As the winter cold persists, we put a high value on having nice sweatshirts, sweaters, a warm jacket among other winter wear. But that need will likely dissipate and become nonexistent in July and August. Those garments of warmth may even get packed away to make room for the t-shirts and shorts. Never pack away the need for Jesus and his life-giving grace!

Jesus' message of the Law exposes our daily, urgent and desperate need for forgiveness and grace. Our sins of self-service and selfish gain are many. "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). That free and boundless grace is the Gospel. And Jesus is the embodiment of that Gospel truth. This message is the core and root of the Means of Grace. We have learned that God's Means of Grace for us is the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This alone will provide staying power to keep our loved ones, along with each one of us, connected to Christ in faith. Yes, evidence has shown that in some cases "If you build it they will come". But more importantly, "If you use the Means of Grace they will stay!" "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).



The Season of Lent: This 40 day long season of the church year begins on Ash Wednesday, February 9th. Of all the seasons of the church year, Lent is surely the most solemn and somber. During this season, the paraments in church are violet, the color traditionally associated with sorrow over sin. The hymns used at this time of year generally have melodies which sound somewhat sad. All of this is appropriate for this time of year because especially during Lent we focus our attention on the details of our Lord's suffering and bitter death on the cross. We take time to realize that, as the Bible teaches, it was our own sin which made Jesus' suffering and death necessary—our sin which He paid for on the cross. No wonder this season has such a serious and solemn mood.

And yet Lent is not an exclusively, sad season. The message of Lent includes the wonderful and joyful news that Jesus' suffering and death accomplished nothing less than the forgiveness of the sins of the world. Nothing less than the death of God's holy and innocent Son could pay for sin. But because of that payment, our sins truly have been forgiven. We have peace with God and the promise of eternal life with Jesus in heaven. And that news is the most joyful news we will ever hear!

- **The above reminder is reprinted from a recent newsletter of the Czech Lutheran Church**

MORE NEWS RELATED TO THE UPCOMING LENTEN SEASON:

ST. MARK'S SPECIAL LENTEN MID-WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE at 7:00 p.m.

The overall theme: "We See Jesus"

- + Feb. 9, "We See Jesus Making Us Clean" (Numbers 19)
- + Feb. 16, "We See Jesus Bringing Us into God's Presence" (Exodus 40)
- + Feb. 23, "We See Jesus Paying for Our Sins" (Leviticus 4)
- + Mar. 2, "We See Jesus Giving Us Fellowship with God" (Leviticus 1)
- + Mar. 9, "We See Jesus Giving Us Eternal Life" (Leviticus 23)
- + Mar. 16, "We See Jesus Acting As Our Go-Between" (Exodus 28)

* Special worship services are also held during Holy Week: Thursday, March 24 at 7:00 p.m., Maundy Thursday, and Friday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m., Good Friday.

ST. MARK'S LENTEN MEALS (prior to three of the Wednesday worship services)

- Feb. 9, at 5:45 p.m., Ladies Guild will host a potluck meal. Each Family should bring a main dish to pass along with a salad or dessert.
- Feb. 23, at 5:45 p.m., The Church Choir will host a soup and sandwich meal.
- Mar. 9, at 5:45 p.m., The Saint Mark's School will host a meal, serving sloppy-joe sandwiches and chips.

EASTER IS MARCH 27 (Worship services will be held at 7:00 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.)

- Our Youth Group will again host a full breakfast from 8:15 to 9:30 on that Easter morning.

NEWS FROM THE NEWLY FORMED BUILDING FINANCING COMMITTEE

Where Do We Go From Here?

I am not much of a swimmer and I am even less of a diver. But I do know that the two activities are very much related to one another. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is further clear that our congregation is seriously pursuing a future building project. In other words, we hope to “dive” into an expansion of our current facilities, the good Lord willing. Just as a springboard precedes and propels the actual dive, such is our committee’s understanding. It was well agreed upon at our first meeting, that our church has already put in place such a springboard for future expansion. It is called the **Saint Mark’s Mission Statement**. We may not read through it every Sunday that we are in church, but nonetheless it is there as a constant reminder, in nearly every worship bulletin. It places before our eyes

- * Why Christ’s Church exists
- * Why St. Mark’s Lutheran Church exists
- * And why each Christian and member of his Church still does exist.

BECAUSE JESUS DIRECTS US, “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS . . .” (MATTHEW 28:19), OUR MISSION AT ST. MARK’S IS TO NURTURE BELIEVERS WITH THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS, PREPARING THEM FOR A LIFE OF SERVICE TO THE TRIUNE GOD; AND TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS AND HIS FORGIVENESS TO OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.

Every aspect of our future growth (spiritually, numerically, and physically as a congregation) must be done and will be done to further Christ’s Kingdom. His cause is our cause. His will is our will. “God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:5). Consider how the future expansion will reflect this mission and purpose.

- We can do a better job with youth discipleship, **by having a permanent classroom exclusively utilized by our Lutheran Elementary School.**
- We can foster better interaction and Christian fellowship **with a more open fellowship hall while having a spacious and furnished kitchen attached to it.**
- We can better accommodate visitors and foster a warm welcome at the time of their visit **with a larger and more open narthex or lobby.**
- The elderly and handicapped will truly benefit **with a drive-up (and sheltered) entrance to the church**, thus making their worship more possible year-round.
- And ultimately, we can enhance our worshipful atmosphere **with an enlarged sanctuary** that will become exclusively a place to pray, praise and give thanks to God.

SO THIS IS WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE PLAN TO DO FOR YOU:

The Voters, in October, adopted preliminary plans for future construction. We have been given the projected cost of \$400,000 to pay for such expansion. The voters then stated that \$80,000 in cash and pledges was the minimum threshold, before future construction can be taken seriously. The voters further authorized the establishment of this current committee, entitled: The Building Financing Committee.

Now, by God’s goodness and grace, he has led members already to donate in excess of \$22,000 to our established building fund. == OVER ==>

Our committee has duly decided that it is paramount and of utmost importance that we meet with our entire membership. This church is **your** shared ministry. Take a hold of the opportunity to have all your questions answered and to be informed before you consider any pledge or donation to this project.

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS HAVE NOW BEEN SCHEDULED!

Please, choose a meeting that best fits your schedule. Sign-up for a planned meeting by using the sign-up sheets on the table in the entry of our church! Each meeting will gather in the church fellowship hall. Consider one of these possibilities:

- Thursday, February 17 at 7:00 PM
- Friday, February 18 at 7:00 PM
- Sunday, February 27 after morning worship, with pot luck dinner
- Monday, February 28 at 6:30 PM.

Call any of the committee members listed below, if you have any questions or if you prefer to have a committee member meet with you privately. Together, let us keep these matters in our prayers, praying that God's will be done.

In view of God's rich mercies,

Pastor Lon Kuether

The Building Financing Committee

John Quint, Committee Chairman

Ken Grob, Committee Secretary

Gerald Goldschmidt

Doug Kranich

Jean Mathweg

SCHOOL AND SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

PIZZA / GAME / MOVIE NIGHT

- On Friday, February 11, the Kids' Group organization will be hosting this activity for the young families of our congregation. Pizza will be served along with soda (pop). There will be a mere cost of \$3.00 per person. A sign-up sheet is located in the church entryway. Please sign-up so that a sufficient number of pizzas will be ordered. For more information or details call Lou Tasa, 444-2340.

SUNDAY SCHOOL'S SPECIAL LENTEN OFFERING (for Tsunami Relief)

- The children attending Sunday School will be given special cloth bags for collecting coins. The children will then bring these offerings forth in our morning Palm Sunday worship service. The special designation for these gifts will be our WELS Committee on Relief, specifically earmarked for assisting those effected by the Tsunami. We do have world mission fields that are in these areas. These monetary gifts will enhance their outreach efforts to those who are suffering. Adults within the congregation are also welcome to hand any such gifts, for this cause, to our Sunday School Superintendent, Paul Pfeiffer.

CHURCH FAMILY PHOTOS FOR THE BACK WALL DISPLAY

- Please speak with Carol Kranich if you wish to update your family picture posted on the back wall of the church. These pictures, with names, are a great help to our new members as well as our old-time members in knowing who's who.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LADIES' GUILD

- Any ladies interested in being a willing worker for the Ladies' Guild are asked to please contact Kiki Schnackenberg (755-1244). A willing worker is someone that would be willing to help for church functions when someone from a Hospitality Unit is unable to make a function. ALL LADIES, PLEASE LOOK OVER AND KEEP YOUR LADIES' GUILD BOOKLETS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE (The blue covered booklets)! THE ORGANIZED GROUPINGS OF LADIES THAT WILL SERVE AT FUNERALS/WEDDINGS/SHOWERS IS VERY IMPORTANT and NECESSARY.
- A LADIES' GUILD BREAKFAST & FELLOWSHIP is planned for Saturday, February 26th at 8:30 a.m. All ladies interested in attending should meet at Pete's Place South restaurant.
- ALTAR GUILD VOLUNTEERS ARE STILL NEEDED! The 2005 signup schedule is on the back bulletin board in the church entryway. Please note that volunteers are still needed for certain months (namely July & September). If you have any questions about what it all involves, please call Laurie Quint (444-7863).

YOUTH GROUP NEWS!

- There will again be a Lock-in/Retreat at the Fosston Community Center on Presidents' Day weekend. We will go to Fosston on February 20th and come back to St. Mark's on February 21st, in the early afternoon. There will be swimming, open gym, together with the use of a game room. The Bible Studies will focus upon God's Gift of ANGELS.
- Saint Luke's in Grand Rapids is also inviting our youth (or any interested members for that matter) to a two-day skiing event at GIANTS' RIDGE in Biwabic. Registration forms can be picked from Pastor Kuether. Special two-day rates for skiing and overnight stay are listed. The dates for this event are also February 20th – 21st.

PANTRY FOOD - BEING COLLECTED!

- These Pantry goods are being collected to benefit the married students attending MLC, in New Ulm. This table is in the church fellowship hall. The food will be delivered on February 19th when school families go down there for the small school basketball tournament.

A SPECIAL UPDATE FROM YOUR STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

As a result of our monthly meetings, our areas of focused improvement have been in the areas of outreach, assimilation of new members, and congregational fellowship.

- Names of prospects are being gathered and contacted.
- Several committee members attended an assimilation seminar in the fall of 2004. And many suggestions are now being implemented.
- Congregational fellowship activities have been looked at and evaluated. At times, there is the need for organization and leadership.

The Stewardship Committee is now seeking to improve upon our procedures. Every planned fellowship event will have a coordinator. This person is not expected to do all the work of planning, publicizing and set up. But he/she/they must line up the people to do the work. So to keep such activities organized, the Stewardship Committee has produced a checklist and form for structure.

The stewardship/evangelism committee has developed a sign-up sheet to solicit coordinators and helpers for fellowship events, potlucks, game nights, movie night, etc. Our hope is that through the use of a sign-up sheet our annually scheduled events will be more organized and planned and that more fellowship events will be generated.

The pastor will notify the congregation when an annual event has typically been scheduled and ask that members volunteer to coordinate and help with the event. The coordinator is responsible to oversee helpers, suggest the type of meal or event, seek food donations (when necessary) and promote the event in writing via the bulletin. The helpers' responsibilities are to assist the coordinator by setting-up, serving, cleanup, etc. **In the event that no one volunteers to coordinate the event the event will be dropped.**

Additional blank sheets will be available on the table at the back of the church for anyone interested in coordinating a special fellowship event. Simply sign-up, notify the pastor (in writing) and wait and see if there is support.

We pray that this effort will further strengthen our relationships with those, whom we share a oneness in faith.

A final note: As from time to time you may view our church website at www.stmarksbemidji.org, we want you to feel free to make helpful suggestions and comments. Your thoughts and help may be brought to the attention of this committee.

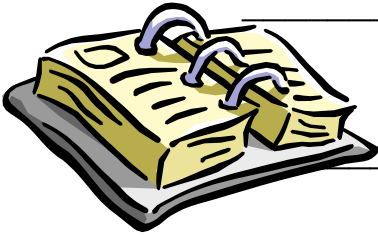
Paul Bellig, Committee Chairman
Wade Greenwaldt, Council Representative
Ken Grob
Lucille Granger
Carol Kranich

Fellowship Event Sign-up Form

Event Title:

Coordinator(s)*:

Helper(s):**





*Coordinator oversees helpers, suggests type of meal or event, seeks food donations (when necessary) and promotes the event (in writing) via the bulletins, etc.

**Helpers assist the Coordinator by setting-up, serving, clean up, etc.

