



Lent, Easter & Pentecost 2025 Lion's Roar E-Newsletter

Please note: if you cannot see all of this newsletter (to the end, where Amanda's contact information is) find a link at the bottom of your e-mail that will allow you to "view the entire message".

Pastor's Corner - *Pastor Joel Neubauer*

Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it.

—*Proverbs 3:27 (Good News Translation)*



Fasting is a time-honored Christian tradition. While it's become almost culturally cliché to “give up chocolate for Lent” or to use these weeks of late winter as a springboard for beach-body dieting — or like a second shot at a new year's resolution for personal wellbeing (less caffeine, less stress, more water, more rest) — a Christocentric spirituality of fasting is not the same as simply doing more or less of what we think we oughta be doing all the time. Spiritual fasting is intended to refocus our life toward a *new way of being*. Habits I need to break in order to be a healthier person do not require fasting (*as if it*

would be ok to jump back into those same unhealthy behaviors in the future): that kind of work requires repentance and conversion. Fasting is spiritually different.

Spiritual fasting opts to lay down *good* things in order to focus on *other* — possibly even *better* — things, not judging against our past experiences, but judging life to be spiritually worthwhile for exploring what could be *beyond* good. Earthly life is good—even *very* good, according to God's own estimation (Genesis 1). When God takes a share in the human life of Jesus Christ, it is a very good life and well worth living. The cross that comes before Easter is not Jesus “giving up chocolate for Lent” in order to lose a few pounds, but is rather Jesus fasting from the very goodness of life because Christ has judged God's promise of resurrection worth exploring as something bigger, something more. And Jesus does not give up his life for Lent by hiding it in the closet to re-consume when the calendar says the season of fasting is over: Jesus gives up his very good life by giving it away to those who need it — to people like me (and you) whenever we find that that our goodness in life is being lost to the

brokenness of how we hurt (or withhold love from) one another. What Jesus finds in the resurrection has to be a new life, because the good ol' life he enjoyed up to Good Friday has been given to us—and we need it too much to give it back.

Doing good to those who need it is what it means to be fasting. We fast from a self-accumulation of goods and a self-retention of human goodness, following rather a spirituality that thinks with the mind of Jesus — a mind which always considers others as more needful of the good life we now possess than we ourselves (Philippians 2). And this fast, which, joined to Christ, gives our human goodness — *our most poetic and literal humankindness* — away to those who need it, is a fast that never ends. We don't take back the good we give away; we trust God to raise up a new life, our life renewed, that is even better than whatever we may have had before.

Our traditional Lenten disciplines add prayer and charitable giving — of money, time and service — to the discipline of fasting. But if fasting is simply giving up our goods to those who need them, then all our disciplines collapse into one. We give up our good prayers to build a relationship with God. We give up our good ol' money, time and service to build lives and relationships with neighbors. We give our former understanding of goodness for the new revelation of something that could be better than good: something we might advance from “good and better and best” all the way to being something *lovely*, even perhaps to something we could call *loving* or call *Love* itself. Following Christ into and out of Lent (*and the grave that ends it*), we breathe the Spirit of fasting, of prayer, of generosity. Joined to Christ, we live the sacred spirituality that does good to those who need it wherever, whenever, as ever we can: in so doing, we live by resurrection's love each day.

Through Lenten faith, for Easter joy, in Jesus' peace: *Pastor Joel*

News and Announcements

Ash Wednesday Worship

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday Worship Opportunities
Wednesday, March 5th
12:30pm & 7:00pm

Holy Week and Easter Worship Schedule

Palm Sunday

April 13



9:00 & 11:00am
Divine Service of
Holy Communion
with Palms & Passion Narrative

Maundy Thursday



April 17

7:00pm
Holy Communion Service
with washing of feet.

Good Friday



April 18

12-3:00pm
Reading of the Gospel
with Organ Meditations

7:00pm
Good Friday Worship

Easter Sunday



April 20

6:24am
Easter Sunrise Service
in our Chapel of All Saints

9:00am & 11:00am
Festive Eucharist Worship Service



Dorcas Circle

Dorcas Circle ** (Also, see an article below with more information about Dorcas Circle!)**

Dorcas Circle will meet:

- Thursday, March 18th
- Thursday, April 15th
- Thursday, May 20th

at **10:00am** in the Library at St Mark.

If you are interested in joining Dorcas Circle, or would like more information you may contact Stephenie Gregg. (sfmgregg@outlook.com)



Community's Warmth Reaches Those in Need: A Thank You and Update



St Mark Rallies to Support PORT and Those Experiencing Homelessness

Volunteers came together in February to support PORT (People Offering Resources Together), a program providing vital services to those experiencing homelessness in our community. St Mark family and friends, Scout Troop 306, Cub Scout Pack 595, employees from Langley Federal Credit Union, and Harper's Station Yorktown Community joined forces to assist 128 guests during the February 14th PORT event.

Volunteers helped with in processing duties, served a hot meal and prepared breakfast bags, and distributed special Valentine's bags filled with hygiene essentials, sweets, and heartfelt notes from St Mark. The Valentine's bags were a particularly big hit, with many guests expressing their gratitude for the thoughtful gesture.

This year we saw an increase in the number of guests served by PORT reflecting the ongoing need in our community. According to Interim Executive Director for LINK, Will Jones, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Hampton Roads has increased from 6.8 to 7.8 per 10,000 people [according to](#)

We are overflowing with gratitude for the incredible generosity shown by the St Mark's family and friends, St Mark Preschool, Family Focus, Scout Troop 306, and Cub Scout Pack 595 during our recent winter clothing drive. Your donations have made a significant impact on our community!

Your outpouring of support resulted in a collection of winter wear, including over 30 coats and jackets, 20 sweaters and shirts, vests, hats, gloves, scarves, and earmuffs. These items have been instrumental in providing warmth and comfort to those facing hardship this winter.

We are thrilled to share that the first round of donations was delivered to PORT in early January, just before the bitter cold temperatures set in. This timely delivery ensured that those in need received vital warmth during the harshest part of the season.

And the giving didn't stop there! Thanks to the continued generosity, a second donation was delivered to PORT in February, further bolstering efforts to support those experiencing homelessness and hardship.

We are deeply touched by the commitment of our community partners and the dedication of each and every donor. Your contributions have made a tangible difference in the lives of our neighbors, providing essential warmth and comfort during a challenging time.

Thank you for your unwavering support and for embodying the true spirit of giving. We are proud to be part of such a compassionate and caring community.

[13NewsNow](#). The support of community partners like St Mark is crucial in addressing this ongoing need.

St Mark has been a key supporter of local Newport News hosting churches through PORT, twice a year in November and February. However, the ongoing challenges related to homelessness in the region mean the cost of supporting this event is also increasing.

"We are incredibly thankful for the ongoing generosity towards supporting our community," said Carlton Hardy, St Mark PORT volunteer. "St Mark's contributions allow us to continue providing essential services to those who need them most"

To learn more about PORT and how you can contribute, please visit: <https://smlconline.org/port>



... "whatever you did for one of the least of these, my brother, you did it for me." Matthew 25:40

Mark your calendars: On Sunday, April 27 and Sunday, May 4, St Mark Lutheran church members and friends will again have the opportunity to sponsor a child at the Refugio de Los Sueños in Quito, Ecuador.

The Refugio de Los Sueños is a safe haven for children who suffer from hunger and many times abuse. At the Refugio, they receive food, medical and dental attention as well as therapy.

They have access to an Education and learn Vocational Skills. They also learn



St Mark Notching Up Our Digital Presence

Get Ready to Share the Love Online!

Exciting News from your St Mark Tech Team!

Hey St Mark family! Get ready to spread the love, joy, and good news beyond our walls because we're about to unleash a social media explosion!

The St Mark Tech Team, inspired by the vibrant spirit of our community, has been working hard to create an online experience that truly reflects who we are: a welcoming, inclusive, and service-oriented family of faith.

What's the Buzz?

We're talking a social media transformation that's going to make it easier than ever to connect with each other, share inspiring stories, and celebrate all the amazing things happening at St Mark. Imagine Facebook and Instagram working together like a dynamic duo, spreading the love of Christ and showcasing the heart of our community.

Why the Digital Leap?

Just like we open our doors to all who seek a place of belonging, we're opening our digital doors wide! We want to connect with those who may not be able to join us in person, share the warmth of St Mark with the world, and make it easier for everyone to stay connected, informed, and inspired.

Here's the Game Plan:

essential Life Skills such as hygiene, use of eating utensils, how to sleep in a bed, etc.

Most importantly, **they experience God's love.**

With the support of St Mark, in the past 22 years the Refugio has helped over **5,000** children towards a brighter future. While their physical needs are great, their most important need is **your prayers.**

Please join us on Sunday, April 27, and Sunday, May 4 to learn more about St Mark's Sponsorship Program and take part in this life-changing mission.

We look forward to seeing you.



St Mark Announces Sponsorship of Challenger Little League District 7 for 2025 Season

As the familiar sounds of spring training fill the air, signaling the return of baseball, St Mark is thrilled to announce its continued sponsorship of Challenger Little League District 7 for the 2025 season. This partnership underscores the church's commitment to inclusivity and community support, bringing the joy of baseball to children with physical and intellectual challenges.

Challenger Little League, a division of Little League International, provides a unique and valuable experience for young athletes who may not be able to participate in traditional baseball programs.

Social Media Superstars:

Our Facebook and Instagram accounts will be joining forces! Get ready for a seamless experience where you can find all the latest news, inspiring stories, and captivating content.

Content that Sparkles:

We'll be sharing a vibrant mix of photos, videos, and stories that capture the essence of St Mark – our joyful worship, our dedicated ministries, and our commitment to serving others.

Website Connection:

Our website and social media will be best friends forever, making it super easy to find information, register for events, and stay connected with everything happening at St Mark.

Tech Team Triumph:

Our amazing IT volunteers are working their magic to ensure a smooth, secure, and user-friendly online experience.

Calling All St. Mark Superstars!

This is where YOU shine! We need your help to make this social media adventure a success. Here's how you can get involved:

Share Your Sparkle:

Have a heartwarming story, a beautiful photo, or an inspiring video? Send it our way at social@smlconline.org!

Spread the Love:

Like, comment, and share our posts to help spread the good news and connect with others.

Tech-Savvy Talents:

If you're a social media guru, a photography enthusiast, or a content creating extraordinaire, we need your skills!

District 7, serving the Virginia Peninsula, is dedicated to creating a supportive and encouraging environment where every child can enjoy the game.

“We are incredibly excited to partner with Challenger Little League once again,” Gary Brocksmith shared. “The spirit of these athletes is truly inspiring, and we are honored to play a role in providing them with the opportunity to experience the fun and camaraderie of baseball.”

The 2025 season promises to be filled with exciting moments and heartwarming displays of teamwork and determination.

St Mark Church encourages the community to come out and support the Challenger athletes.

"We invite everyone to join us in cheering on these incredible young players," added Gary. "The energy and enthusiasm at these games are contagious, and it's a wonderful way to celebrate the power of sports to bring people together."

The 2025 Challenger Little League game schedule will be posted on the church kiosk as soon as it is made available. St Mark Church will also share updates through its regular communication channels.

For more information about Challenger Little League District 7, please visit <https://smlconline.org/challenger>.

Stay Tuned for More!

Get ready for an online experience that's as welcoming and vibrant as St Mark itself. We can't wait to embark on this digital journey with you!

With love and digital hugs, St Mark Tech Team!



St Mark Music Director Search: A Competitive Landscape and a Vision for the Future

St Mark Lutheran Church is actively engaged in the search for a new Music Director, a process that highlights both the challenges and opportunities facing congregations in the Hampton Roads region.

The search committee is building upon a rich legacy of musical leadership. Before Greta Melson's ministry of music with us, our congregation was blessed with others' skills, including Dan Landis' long-term commitment as Music Director. These individuals have left a lasting impact on St Mark's

musical heritage.

"Dan and Greta's dedication were truly remarkable," says a member of the search committee. "They poured their hearts into our music ministry, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions."

To broaden the search, the committee has updated the job announcement on the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) job board, the American Guild of Organists (AGO) Hampton Roads chapter, and the church's website. The announcement now accurately reflects the position description based on available compensation, with an "Open Until Filled" application deadline.

Professional consultations within the music director community confirm that advertising through the ALCM job board, widely used by Lutheran college graduates, is the most effective way to reach candidates nationwide.

However, our search has revealed a highly competitive landscape. "We've discovered a significant shortage of Music Director candidates in the Hampton Roads area," our search committee explains. "At least eight congregations in the region are currently searching, and we've already experienced a candidate withdrawing after accepting another offer."

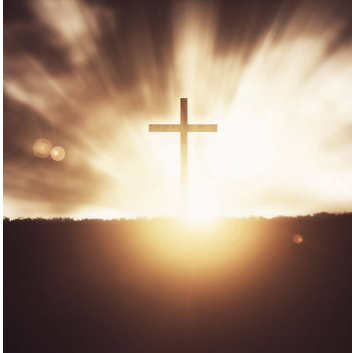
Geographic considerations are a factor. Our committee believes the potential candidate pool is likely concentrated on the Peninsula, due to the perceived travel barrier of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT).

In light of these challenges and the exceptional dedication of past Music Directors, our committee — in conversation with our elected congregational council — is exploring the possibility of transitioning the position to a compensation level reflective of a full-

time role. "It may surprise many to learn the position has been compensated at a part-time level, especially given the years of dedicated service we've received," our search committee has pondered. "Over the next few months, we plan to discuss ways to make the position more competitive."

This potential transition would require a robust approach to stewardship and a focus on growing our congregation's financial resources to continue our excellent and robust music ministry.

St Mark Lutheran Church remains committed to finding a Music Director who will continue to nurture and enhance our musical heritage. The search committee appreciates the congregation's patience and understanding during this process and will continue to provide updates as the search progresses.



What is Dorcas Circle?

Dorcas (Tabitha) Acts 9: 36 - 43

Beloved for her concern for the poor, Dorcas was brought back to life by Peter. Dorcas was dearly loved in her church. She wasn't a prophetess, neither was she a preacher. Instead she was a woman full of good works and charitable deeds. The people loved Dorcas because she cared for others and demonstrated her caring in

practical ways.

When she became sick, her fellow believers were deeply concerned and sent for Peter. When he arrived he found that Dorcas had died. Even in their grief, her friends wanted Peter to know what a wonderful woman Dorcas had been. Acts says "all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them" (9:39).

Peter was moved enough to pray for her restoration. When he rose from prayer, he called to her; she opened her eyes, and sat up.

It's clear that Dorcas was deeply involved in the lives of the members of her congregation. Although a widow herself, she had made "tunics and garments" for the other widows in the church and undoubtedly for other needy folk as well.

Dorcas is the only named woman in Scripture who is specifically called a 'disciple' (9:36). Some have taken this to suggest that Dorcas held the office of deaconess. Certainly her focus on providing practical help to other believers fits the kind of ministry first-century deacons performed (see Acts 6:1 - 8).

But ministry involves more than distributing clothing. Dorcas had the gift of giving herself even as she gave the clothing she made for others.

From the brief comments in Acts about Dorcas, she seems to have been a truly nice person. Perhaps the word "neighbor" or "neighborly" is appropriate. Like a good neighbor, Dorcas was always there for others. And people loved her for herself, not just for what she did for them.

An example for today. Her simple concern for others rather than powerful speech or a great singing voice won Dorcas the love of her friends and neighbors. Sometimes in our desire for a more public ministry we forget that the greatest in God's kingdom are

called to be servants, and servants are called to care for those they serve.

from "Women of the Bible" by Sue and Lawrence Richards

What Is Dorcas Circle? It is the outgrowth of a core group of women at St. Mark who have been meeting monthly since the beginning of St. Mark. The group has been quite unorganized from the beginning. Dorcas Circle does not have officers. Originally meeting for Bible study and to serve the needs of members or the church property, we now meet monthly for Bible study as a social ministry group has taken over the other duties. We have at times been more active than at other times, serving as volunteers at the Bargain Box, Food Closet, and in St. Mark. Dorcas Circle is a member of the Virginia Women of the ELCA.

Currently the magazine "Gather" is the source of our study. Gather is a magazine for women, written by women and published by the WELCA. We provide two paid subscriptions to Gather which are available in the church office. This resource is available online at www.gather.com.

January began a four part series on Faithfulness, with the study of Ruth. February we studied Psalms 22. March is the third session, Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10 - 11) This is available online at [gathermagazine.com/Bible study](http://gathermagazine.com/Bible%20study). See the kiosk for more information.

Dorcas circle meets monthly on the third Tuesday at 10 a.m. We each contribute to the lesson and discussion. We do have an offering and the group collectively decides where the money is to be used.

Excerpts from 2019 Dorcas Circle Bible Study by Peggy Anderson and Judy Theodosakis.



St Mark Adventures: Two (Local!) Spring Field Trips Exploring Art and Faith

Last spring it was a joy to visit the National Galleries of Art in Washington, DC! This spring, we have two new opportunities to visit art in connection with our faith, our heritage, and our local community:

First will be a exhibit of Michelangelo's sketches for the Sistine Chapel, for the first time in the United States—and Michelangelo, whose life fully overlapped with Martin Luther's and the beginning of the Reformation, danced in his art between fidelity to the Roman tradition of the church and the growing faithful renewal ideals of the Reformation. The cost is \$15 to St Mark, and our office will purchase tickets to assure our shared late-morning entrance time. March 25 is also a feast day in the life of the church, remembering God's annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary: following our time at the museum, we will gather in a beautiful sanctuary for a brief time of prayer before heading to a restaurant for lunch (or home, as our schedules require).

Second will be a late morning viewing of two beautiful portions—the prophets and the gospels—of the Saint John's Bible as it is hosted by Christ & St Luke's Episcopal Church in Norfolk. "In 1998, Saint John's Abbey and University commissioned renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson to produce a hand-written, hand-illuminated

Bible. We invite you to explore this work of art that unites an ancient Benedictine tradition with the technology and vision of today, illuminating the Word of God for a new millennium." The cost is free; lunch at a local restaurant is again possible for us to share after seeing the Saint John's Bible.

Please feel welcome to sign up for one or both field trips, either via a reply to this email or on the kiosk in our St Mark narthex. More detailed information on times and possible carpooling will be shared asap.

Tuesday, March 25 — [Michelangelo and the Genesis of the Sistine](#) — Muscarelle Art Museum, W&M, Williamsburg — \$15/person (free for members)

Thursday, April 3 — [The Saint John's Bible](#) — Christ & St Luke's Episcopal Church, Norfolk — Free

Flyers

Simple Soup and Bread



&



Lenten Holden Evening Prayer

Wednesday's in Lent

March 12, 19 & 26, April 2 & 9

Beginning at **6:00pm**

PJ's Faith Fable

[Click here](#) or on the article itself to view in another window or tab.

PJ's Faith Fable: The Wounded Wolf and the Wounded Rabbit

In the crosshatch shade of sagebrush,
by the streams of western rivers,
where the soil is loosely settled,
free from stones that block their burrows
dig the earth-hewn homes of rabbits—
pygmy rabbits—small as breadloaves—
digging, running, hiding, living—
breathing life as pygmy rabbits.

Also in those western grasslands,
bigger far than pygmy rabbits,
packs of wolves—o wild coyotes,
breathing life as wolves—go hunting,
eating what their work provides them,
**what they catch when long legs, running
after prey have caught their victims:
strong coyotes—wolves are howling.**

But within the wolfpack, see it:
here's a wolf who isn't running—
one who's old, whose legs are wounded,
having grown both slow and fragile;
yet within its social network
still this wolf is called beloved
and its packmates, who are hunting,
share their catch to show compassion.

Pygmy rabbits, too, are social;
see within the sagebrush, hiding,
here's a small and broken body,
legs that cannot run or burrow,
eyes that cannot spy for danger—
yet the fellow pygmy rabbits
do their best to share their sagebrush.
Lives are kind that show compassion.

Soon the old wolf's wounds have festered
more than packmates' help can handle
and the wounded pygmy rabbit,
also mortal, further weakens.

Though the pack can help no longer,
off it runs to hunt fast rabbits.
Left alone, the wounded duo
find each other, hiding, hungry.

“Don't be frightened by my presence,”
soft, the wounded wolf then whispered,
“I'm too weak to run and chase you.
Little rabbit, I depend on
others' mercy for my welfare—
if I eat, it's what I'm given.
I can't work to set my table;
Soon they'll say my feast has finished.”

**“I am not afraid to face you,”
answered back the wounded rabbit,
“As in days when I was stronger,
I took care of wounded others,
so my own have shown compassion,
as they could, for life's wellbeing—
but my needs they cannot offer.
What you need, I yet can give you.”**

Crawling slowly—*such compassion!*—
inched the wounded rabbit onward
in the way to where the wolf lay
wounded, waiting, fading, hungry—
as the wounded wolf had mentioned,
who could neither work nor chase it,
pure reliance on the mercy
of another was required.

“You need neither run nor chase me,
Wounded Wolf,” sighed wounded rabbit,
“I have burrowed in the mantle
of the earth where life was easy—
now where life for us is fleeting,
I will burrow in the mantle
of your body, by your heartbeat—
none will say your feast is finished.”

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself. —Romans 15:1-3a

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