



Lent, Easter & Pentecost 2026 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*

**Suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said,
"This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"**

—*Matthew 17:5*



From the bright cloud of the Holy Spirit, the sacred creative Voice — the Voice who is “Our Father in heaven” — proclaims a simple prescription for Christian spirituality: Listen to Jesus!

To listen to Jesus — *not just to hear words repeated out of the Bible, but to listen deeply as the gospel of Jesus continues to be inspired among us for the sake of grace, mercy, peace, justice, hope, etc* — is an aspirational discipline. I’m sure I hear the buzz of good news more often than I stop, intentionally and mindfully, to listen to it. I fear I hear Jesus — *speaking to me through his body, the church; communing with me through his body and blood and the Word he makes flesh in the promise of his sacraments* — more often than I stop, faithfully and trustingly, to listen to him. I know I listen to me — *to my self’s best intuition and understanding* — more often than I listen to anything or anyone else.

Intuition is not bad. Self-understanding is helpful. We need to understand ourselves (and it is good to be able to trust our made-in-the-image-of-God-given intuition) in order to understand and to trust what God is saying to us in Jesus. It is this person, this soul that I am, whom God directs to listen to Jesus: we’re in this together.

Something I know about myself: it’s easier for me to list what I consider faults than to brag about my skills. I struggle with anger over injustices I see in and around me (and sadly, my short fuse for righteous indignation seems to trick my temper also to be short in less righteous moments). I am impatient for life the

way I want it to be (often focused on controlling my level of comfort). I juggle worries and anxieties for much that is beyond my control. I am quick to recall my hurts and slow to offer my thanks. I wrestle with a nagging sense of inadequacy and a paranoia that the world is aware that it could find someone better than me for whatever role I think I play here.

I hear this internal monologue: it knocks me down, slays my spirit, pushes me to fear the worst. I hope I'm alone in this because I don't wish to share my most painful personality traits with you—yet human experience informs me that I'm not so unique. We tend to hear such deathly messaging, and it seems to deeply affect how we understand our position as people of God, children of God, saints of God. So it is in these moments, for these moments, that our merciful Maker reforms us to hear something else, to listen to someone else: Jesus.

Called to listen to Jesus, Jesus begins to speak like this: firstly, Jesus tells us to rise. Secondly, Jesus tells us to be unafraid. Thirdly, Jesus tells us to frame everything only in the resurrection we meet in the Son of Man, the Child of Human Hope, the Heir of all Humanity. God (who is, per the New Testament, fundamentally the fullness of Love) says "Listen to Jesus!" And so for our human spirituality, as we listen to Jesus, suddenly our rising and our (en)courage(ment) — in the context of Easter Morning — gains holy power to drown out any damning or damaging message that threatens to undermine or to undervalue who we are by God's grace, mercy and peace.

Whatever hell we hear around or within us, may we "give it up for Lent" as we listen to Jesus for an enduring life that values, not only ours, but all our neighboring lives in (and all the fullness of) creation.

God calls us to the resurrection dawn where Christ will speak our names with love: in peace, let us listen to him! —*Pastor Joel*

News and Announcements

Ash Wednesday Worship

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday Worship Opportunities
Wednesday, February 18th
12:00noon & 7:00pm

Holy Week and Easter Worship Schedule

Palm Sunday

March 29



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

Maundy Thursday



April 2

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

Good Friday



April 3

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

7:00pm
Good Friday Worship

Easter Sunday



April 5

6:45am
Easter Sunrise Service
in our Chapel of All Saints

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



Table Talk group two recently met at Park Lane for great food and camaraderie.

Left to right: Carlton Hardy, Josh Turner, Sandy Hopkins, Phil Hopkins, Stephenie Gregg



Celebrating 50 Christmases in a Free Papua New Guinea

Communities across our synod have entered a new year in which our commonwealth will celebrate its contributions to two-hundred fifty years of an independent United States of America. A quarter of a millennium may seem impressive, but we know our history is even richer: deep roots in indigenous and colonial cultures, lasting legacies of free and forced migrations, our long arc of history still bending towards justice.

Communities of our global companions in the Islands District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea are also marking a milestone in their



Welcoming a New Neighbor to St Mark

Our neighbors' success is our success! After many recent years living beside a construction zone, it is pleasant for our congregation to welcome a new neighbor to St Mark along Old York-Hampton Highway.

Last month the Virginia Beer Company opened The Kitchen just across from the western edge of our congregational campus. Their patrons receive a well-framed view of St Mark through the windows that look down Route 17—and this is an opportunity for us to be present and to introduce our ministry to folks who may venture into our neighborhood for the first time. We hope and intend to be an anchor for the spiritual lives of all who share our community. If our neighbors are able to introduce new eyes to a glimpse of the hope we have to share, we are excited to meet them!

We are grateful as The Kitchen joins local businesses adjacent to our campus where we can find overflow parking as needed; our parking lot may also serve as overflow for The Kitchen at times when our calendar allows it. We of course remain in control of our parking lot use: if you are planning activities at St Mark, please make sure our office is aware so that we can protect and prioritize your safety and needs.

history of independence this past Christmas: fifty Christmases in the modern Independent State of Papua New Guinea. At one fifth the age of our USA, we might be tempted to think of PNG as a “new kid on the block”—but companionship teaches us the longer, richer history of our neighbors than a geopolitical golden anniversary might indicate.

Christ’s church in our shared Lutheran tradition predates modern independence in Papua New Guinea by almost a century—a church with faith in Jesus naturalized in PNG from missionaries during its colonial era (various European colonizers were present on the lands of PNG from about the time of our Lutheran Reformation). Yet the longest era of PNG’s history tells stories of indigenous and independent cultures reaching before colonization to ancient times. Perhaps we might celebrate with PNG more than a mere half century of independence, but a regaining of autonomy, a reinstatement of independence, or even a resurrection of freedom for God’s people.

From our histories, we bend towards justice together through Christ and as companions in Christ. From Jesus’ birth as the new kid on Bethlehem’s ancient block—but whose divine history extends deeper and ever more richly as the Word with God, *the Word who was God*, before time itself began—Christ gives us hope and joy to gather our fullest stories and to cradle them faithfully for God’s good news to celebrate our on-going stories of freedom as one in Christ Jesus, loving neighbors side-by-side.

For more information, please visit <https://vasynod.org/ministries/global-mission/>

Shared by Pastor Joel Neubauer, Team Member, Global Companion Partnership

Please be aware of new traffic patterns as our corner of York County continues to develop.





PORT: February 13th Recap

This past weekend, we had the privilege of serving 131 guests at PORT's overnight shelter in Newport News. During some of the coldest nights of the season, your compassion made a real difference. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, donated, and prayed for our neighbors in need. We are so grateful for our incredible community!



What a gift of God to be able to reconnect with Cristian Romero!

In 2006 I visited the Refugio in Quito Ecuador with Susette Goff. Ninos, ninas everywhere! And towering above them all was a young boy named Cristian who I wanted to sponsor. Even before we had the Adopt a Kid program, Cristian became "my kid." I was blessed to be able to see him again last month when he came to share with St. Mark how much the Refugio meant to him as a child growing up in poverty and abandonment. He shared his thanks for everyone who has helped the children there as he was helped. The Refugio provides a safe place where children can feel God's love and care through people at St. Mark. Won't you please consider sharing the many blessings that God has given you with a child who needs love, school books, school uniforms, and other blessings that the Refugio can offer?

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Matthew 25:40

Anne Baumgartner

Young Friends of St Mark enjoying Shrove Tuesday Pancakes!



Flyers

See the kiosk for a sign up sheet for soups and bread!

Simple Soup and Bread



&



Lenten Holden Evening Prayer

Wednesday's in Lent

February 25 & March 4, 11, 18 & 25

Beginning at 6:00pm

PJ's Faith Fable: The Two Red Foxes, Tod and Vixen

The two red foxes were survivors on the edge of two worlds, two lives carved in the liminal space between two realities: wild versus tame; chaotic versus controlled; free versus framed; dysregulated versus developed; their natural home versus humanity's engineered houses.

The two red foxes found each other in this juxtaposed situation in the snow of an early winter. One fox was big and broad and barking — Tod. One fox was sleek and smaller and sounded out her siren in the night — Vixen. These two foxes shared a hope for the future, a hope for a world where foxes would continue to deftly navigate the nuances of life between odd situations. To live, to run, to breathe, to survive, to thrive, to be foxes in the midst of different realities was to bear a witness for all creation that life in our cosmos need not be either here or there, but a life that can endure across all aisles, a life everywhere.

It was Vixen's voice that found Tod in the beautiful black of that winter night. It was Vixen who invited Tod to come and follow the path she cut through the snow. Together Vixen helped Tod learn to find everything they needed, whether alone on hilltops or walking across the frozen water of a lake or dipping in and out of human neighborhoods where some were attracted to appreciate the grace and dignity they saw in Vixen: many of those people even came to value grace and dignity within humanity all the more, learning that the sacred creator of such a life as in this vixen must also be a divine maker who sees beauty and worth in human beings!

The partnership between Tod and Vixen was quick to become complete. The two red foxes became inseparable, became united, became faithful to one another. What Tod and Vixen shared in the unspoken experience of two red foxes seemed to match what the human side of their world called "*Love*." And as love does,

their love had no option but to multiply. The hoped-for future of the two red foxes would be the unfolding reality of a new family, a new tribe, a new community of survivors.

The two red foxes were survivors, but mortal. As easily as Vixen could teach Tod how to glean life from trash cast out by humanity, she could also point easily to how many people would rather see her hunted and trapped than free and thriving. For people who did not see divine grace and dignity in foxes, our foxes would be targeted as nuisances to slay.

Tod raised his hackles to defend Vixen at the thought of a threat her danger, but Vixen responded by stepping out in front of him. Looking ahead, Vixen saw clearly how the path of her life—as long as it would bridge all places freely—would necessarily introduce her to conflict from people who despise foxes. She knew the traps would be set. She knew the danger would come. She knew that her mortal days would be a finite, counted set. "It is also true," Vixen promised Tod, "that I have life in me that will continue beyond the reach of hunters who chase or catch me."

Tod had learned from Vixen how to live her wildly wondrous way; though he would could not imagine being separated from her, Tod trusted the life he learned with Vixen and he trusted that, following her model, he would be able to live and care for any kits of their growing family far into the future. "But," Tod seemed to ask with his eyes, "just because I *can* survive your way, wouldn't you rather stay with me so we can thrive together?" "If anything parts us," Vixen responded, "I will do everything I can to come back and find you again. I trust we will share new seasons."

We wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

—Titus 2:13

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