

WINTER  
2015

# Saints & Sinners

A newsletter for the family and friends of St. Mark's Lutheran Church

## Pastor Steve's Devotional

Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:10-11



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I used this same verse in my newsletter article last year at this time. Not only is it my favorite bible verse but it is a message we continuously need to hear.

“Do not be afraid . . . I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people . . .”

Do we hear those words? Do we believe those words? You sure wouldn't know it if you follow the ridiculousness that gets spread around social media. The great hubbub about decorating before Remembrance Day, and the thing I am deeming “The Great Holiday Scandal of 2015” in Starbucks using plain red cups for the holidays.

“Do not fear” the angels said, and yet . . .

God has donned skin and a pair of sandals to come among us so that we might be free. I sincerely doubt God cares about what colour cup we are drinking our overly indulgent gingerbread half-caf, non-fat lattes from, or that an advent wreath might appear alongside a

Remembrance Day wreath.

I do suspect, however, that God might be concerned with how many of those red cups end up as post-Christmas landfill, or when one of our veterans ends up homeless. As we wait in Advent for the coming of Christ and the Kin-dom of God, let's try to stop being afraid and instead focus on standing up for things that bring good news of great joy for all the people.

It is not always easy to discern what those things are. A good example is the shoeboxes we have been preparing for children in third world countries. You will find one of a number of articles I've come across later in this newsletter that questions just how much joy they really bring. We need to decide if this is a practice we should continue in the years to come or if our efforts might better serve elsewhere.

Peace be with you in your discerning!

**Pastor Steve**

## **The Long and Winding Road Or How I ended up at St. Mark's as Vicar**

This is my call story. I first felt a draw to Ministry as a young child. My family attended a small, rural United Church. We got a new Minister – a woman – and I thought – I would like to do that! But it did not initially work out that way. As a teenager my family moved to the property my father grew up on. We attended the Free Methodist Church – the Church of my father and his family. It was not a completely happy time for me in Churchland. The message I heard more often than not was – negative – teenagers are bad – there are many temptations out there and you are a sinner. I was missing God's love and grace. So I let Church go and moved on to University. In my first year I did some career counseling and the overwhelming choice for me was a Minister or Rabbi! But I was having none of that. I had plans – and they were my plans! I did not want them messed with. I could not and would not say "Thy Will be Done".

I pursued my academic career with an Hons BA from the University of Waterloo in history and drama. I moved to Sudbury to do an MA in history. While studying at Laurentian I met Ross and began to attend the Anglican Church with him – Ross was a "cradle Anglican". We were married in the Anglican Church. I was baptized as part of our marriage preparation and we continued to attend Anglican Churches as we moved around for school, London, St. John's and Toronto. I was also confirmed in the Anglican Church. Ross knew that I had felt a strong call to Ministry - but he also knew that I was very busy ignoring it and pursuing my own plans.

I identify much more closely with Samuel than Moses. Moses was able to say "here I am".....but Samuel – said I think you must mean someone else! That was my response. I did a very good job avoiding for a very long time. Finally as I was ½ way through my PhD I could not hide any longer – I could no longer stand to say no not me! So I began the process of discernment and divinity school. I went to Trinity College at U of T. I thought the choice of Trinity would be good for me, as it was more conservative and "high" Anglican than I was! I did not really fit in. As part of my studies I did placements in congregations and a 4 month internship at U of T as a campus chaplain. My supervisors were the Lutheran and United Church chaplains. My Lutheran supervisor told me that I did not belong at Trinity College and that I really belonged with the Lutheran Church. And it turns out he was right! I did not know how Lutheran I was!

I took a year off from my MDiv and worked as chaplain at Albert College in Belleville. I returned to finish my studies with a new baby. I did not end up pursuing ordination at the conclusion of my studies. I stayed home with my daughters. I kept attending the Anglican Church. But there came a time when my family no longer felt that we belonged in the Anglican Church. One of Ross' colleagues knew that we had left the Church and encouraged us to give Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belleville a try. I did not tell anyone there my background at first. I thought the time for all of that was past. Eventually Pastor Rob and I talked and over time he convinced me to give this another try. So I entered the process with the ELCIC. Pastor Steve did my initial formal interview. I met with committees and the Synod and Seminary tried to figure out what to do with me! I have been called neither fish nor fowl – I did not fit a profile. So I ended up doing an intensive course on Luther Confessions and a Clinical Pastoral Education course. This was followed by more interviews and then the opportunity for an internship. And here I am! I can now say – not my will be done – but thy will be done. Not an easy change for me!

## 2016 Book Club Books



January	<b>All the Light We Cannot See</b>	Anothony Doerr
February	<b>Day After Night</b>	Anita Diamant
March	<b>All My Puny Sorrows</b>	Miriam Toews
April	<b>Accidental Saints</b>	Nadia Bolz Weber
May	<b>Sweetland</b>	Michael Crummy
June	<b>Through the Glass</b>	Shannon Moroney
July	<b>Summer Break</b>	
August	<b>Summer Break</b>	
September	<b>Boys in the Boat</b>	Daniel James Brown
October	<b>Nature of the Beast</b>	Louise Penny
November	<b>Purity</b>	Jonathan Franzen
December	<b>Christmas Break</b>	

### Worship Services during the season of Advent and Christmas

The season of Advent, a time to prepare for celebrating the birth of Jesus, the longing of the Jews for a Messiah. In Advent, we're reminded of how much we need a Saviour, and we look forward to our Saviour's coming.

Advent 1 - Sunday Nov 29 at 10:00 AM in English and German,  
Reception with the German Community to follow

Advent 2 - Sunday Dec 6 at 10:00 AM, 2016 Budget Meeting  
and Annual Turkey Dinner to Follow.

Advent 3 - Sunday Dec 13

Advent 4 - Sunday Dec 20 - Choir Cantata



Christmas Eve - Thursday Dec 24 - 7:00 PM

Christmas 1 - Dec 27, 10:00 AM

Christmas 2 - Jan 3, 10:00 AM

### Annual Carol Sing

Sat Dec 5, 7:00 PM,  
at the home of Ken and Susan Gies,  
785 Haverhill Drive



# Praying with faith

What does it mean to pray with faith? Does it mean that when we pray, we must believe very hard that God will do what we ask? I think not.

Hopefully our wills are so aligned with God's will that we have prayed for the right thing at the right time. But often we have prayed for things whose time has not yet come, things that may not be the best for us, things that might not be best for others.

I believe that, when we pray, our faith must be in God's Providence. Providence is God's mighty, loving care. We must have faith that God is able to accomplish all things, often in unexpected ways. And that God is already lovingly concerned with our problems.

When we realize that God cares more about our problems than we ourselves do, our attitude in prayer becomes different. No longer are we listing things for God to do; instead, we are sharing our feelings with our Father in Heaven and asking what we should do. This makes us more open to new ways of dealing with our difficulties.

Once we have prayed, we should set aside our anxieties and fall asleep, or go through our day confident that our Heavenly Father is watching over us in love and is able to provide what is needed at the right time. This is so pleasing to God. Our faith in God's care is something only we humans can give. Angels don't need faith - they are in the presence of God and know what God is like. But we humans have to trust. Our faith is extremely precious to God, as Peter wrote in his first letter, "more precious than gold".

Remember the song:       In your time  
                                  In your time  
      You make all things beautiful in your time  
          Lord please show me every day  
          As you're teaching me your way  
          That you do just what you say  
                                  In your time



Submitted by Anya Hageman

# Inter-Church Refugee Partnership Update



Dear Congregation,

**Will our first family arrive before the end of the year?** It's unusual that our family hasn't been interviewed yet, even though their paperwork was completed months ago. Marguerite has called the Visa Office in Beirut, and we are waiting to hear back.

Our first family is stable, though separated. They seem to have enough finances though as you know, "Abu" is in danger for not taking sides in the conflict. Our second family is together in Jordan and they are experiencing hunger. Syrian refugees are not permitted to work in Jordan, and Mohamad has been arrested twice for working.

The partnership's fundraising has been going very well. We have also received many offers of help. Thank you for your moral support, financial donations, and for signing our wish-list sheet. Good Shepherd Brockville is leaving our partnership, but only because they want to join local Brockville groups who are sponsoring refugees.

Rumour has it that CFB Kingston is getting set up with cots and washing machines to temporarily house refugees. This might be a great time to volunteer with the Red Cross. I imagine the Red Cross and other groups will minister to that temporary community.

Please pray that the world will respond in love rather than in fear to the refugees. That agencies will be able to separate true refugees from trouble makers. That countries and individuals will donate more money to the World Food Program, which has had to reduce rations to refugees.

And that the refugees scattered in so many countries will be able to withstand the winter. May God give them joy and strength.

May God bless our work.

Anya

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## Children's Activity

### DESIGNER OLD FASHIONED PAPER CHAINS

1. Cuts long strips of coloured paper about 8 ½ x 1 inch.
2. Write your prayer of peace or love on each strip.
3. Apply glue to one end of strip, bring the glue end around and under the other end. Press and hold.
4. Thread next strip through the loop and glue ends together to complete the next loop.
5. Continue until all the strips are glued and linked together.
6. The chain is usually used as a garland on a Christmas tree or hanging over a window or on a wall.



Pauline is shutting down her computer as our newsletter editor. Please when you see her, thank her for the excellent job she did for us.

We are looking for someone with tech savvy skills to replace her. Ideally the newsletter comes out 4x per year and the Editor's Job is to take the information and turn it into an attractive newsletter.

Please see Pastor Steve for more information.

**ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**2016 Proposed Budget**

	2015 Budget	2016 Budget	Budget Inc 15 vs 16
<b><u>Revenue</u></b>			
Envelope and PAR Offerings			
- Current	109064	97036	-12028
- Benevolence	17033	16764	-269
Loose	1200	1200	0
Other	5500	13000	7500
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL REVENUE	132797	128000	-4797
<b><u>Expenditures</u></b>			
1. Ministry of the Pastor			
Base Salary	39847	42198	2351
Pension - ELCIC	6400	6600	200
Pension - CPP	2100	2200	100
EI	1300	1350	50
Health & Dental	5600	5640	40
Continuing Education Allowance	600	600	0
Car Allowance - Pastor	4000	4000	0
Equity Allowance	1720	1720	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	61567	64308	2741
2. Ministry of Worship			
Organist	11247	11466	219
EI, CPP for organist	700	700	0
Pastoral & Organist Supply	1200	1200	0
Music Supplies	500	150	-350
Worship & Altar Supplies	1200	1200	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	14847	14716	-131
3. Education & Outreach			
Sunday School	200	160	-40
Adult Education	250	250	0
Communications - Publ, Adv, etc	350	250	-100
Book Allowance - Pastor	500	500	0
Conference - Synod & National	2000	1000	-1000
Baptismal Materials	0	50	50
Confirmation Materials	0	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3300	2210	-1090

<b>4. Parish Administration</b>			
Secretarial Services	2500	2000	-500
Office Supp, Post, Comp Repairs	500	500	0
Internet Access	600	600	0
Photocopier Costs	1500	1400	-100
Telephone	950	830	-120
Bank Charges, PAR & Cheques	100	75	-25
	<u>6150</u>	<u>5405</u>	<u>-745</u>
<b>5. Maintenance</b>			
Taxes	3350	3350	0
Fuel & Utilities	12000	12000	0
Repairs & Supplies	2000	1500	-500
Insurance	5000	5100	100
Custodial Services	1850	1850	0
Snow Removal	1500	1300	-200
Paper & Parlour Supplies	200	200	0
Capital Expenditures	2000	1500	-500
	<u>27900</u>	<u>26800</u>	<u>-1100</u>
<b>6. Miscellaneous Expenses</b>			
	1000	75	-925
	<u>1000</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>-925</u>
<b>7. Benevolence</b>			
Benevolence - Synod	17033	16764	-269
Social Ministry	1000	1000	0
	<u>18033</u>	<u>17764</u>	<u>-269</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>132797</b>	<b>131278</b>	<b>-1519</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-3278</b>	
Weekly Requirement to meet Budget	2553.79	2524.58	change -1.1%

Solar Project: Revenue and donations to the solar project will be used to repay the loan

May the Peace of Christmas fill your hearts!  
**Why parents shouldn't support 'Operation Christmas Child'**  
October 14, 2015 by Emma C Williams

What could be the harm in sending a Christmas gift to a child in need? At this time of year, schools all across the country are taking part in the Christmas Box appeal, and the task is superficially noble: ask your child to fill a decorated box with toys and essential items and the charity will deliver them to a child who is living in poverty. It's a tangible, personal way of giving, and it's immensely popular.

But Operation Christmas Child is run by Samaritan's Purse, a huge and zealous organization led by Franklin Graham, son of the famous evangelist Billy Graham. Not only is the organization openly homophobic, it seeks to proselytize in a manner that most people, including liberal Christians, find unacceptable. As a humanist, I am naturally disquieted by the idea of people performing evangelical work with the intended purpose of conversion; but I am positively offended when this work is performed at the expense of vulnerable children in desperate situations across the globe.

Several other charitable organizations and reputable businesses, including the Cooperative, have withdrawn their support for Operation Christmas Child. The charity Save The Children has questioned its effectiveness and expressed concerns about the use of evangelism in the context of people in need. Some leading teachers' Unions, including the NASUWT, have pointed out the difficult position that schools are placing themselves in when they support such charities without giving careful thought to their stated mission. But despite all of this, hundreds of schools will still take part in Operation Christmas Child this year, unwittingly supporting the work of a right-wing evangelical organization, with little or no idea of what it stands for.

Some of the evangelical literature sent with shoeboxes to impoverished children 'Through The Greatest Journey discipleship program, boys and girls can become faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Samaritan's Purse developed The Greatest Journey as a dynamic, interactive Bible study for use in countries around the world where Operation Christmas Child distributes gift-filled shoeboxes. Wherever possible, children receiving shoeboxes are invited to enroll on The Greatest Journey; 2.8 million children have enrolled on this program since the curriculum was first developed in 2008.' Many schools either downplay or indeed appear completely ignorant of this aspect of the charity's work, and UK representatives of Operation Christmas Child will claim that the spreading of the word extends no further than a small booklet of bible stories that may be handed out with the boxes. This is simply not true, or at least it is not true in all cases. Much of the literature used by Samaritan's Purse demonstrates a clear and direct attempt to convert the young, and the charity aims to enroll children in their brainwashing program wherever possible.

One of the reasons why so many people in the UK are completely oblivious to the extreme agenda of Samaritan's Purse is that it is deliberately not promoted here, to the extent that many earnest and well-meaning volunteers remain blissfully unaware of its sinister nature. This is an excerpt from one of the organization's own statements about their UK-based operation, and it implies that there may well be practices that even those who work for the charity in the UK are completely unaware of:

'Please be assured that the commitment of Samaritan's Purse to evangelism is as strong as ever. ... However, there is a difference in the way the boxes are processed in the UK for overseas shipment. The UK program removes all religious items ... and forwards any Christian literature to our National Leadership Teams working in countries where shoebox gifts are distributed, so the Christian literature

can be used with children. ... The Gospel is also presented locally as part of the distribution of the gifts, and wherever possible, children are offered a Gospel storybook written in their own language called The Greatest Gift of All. Many children are also invited to enroll in a 10-lesson follow-up Bible study program, and upon completion receive a New Testament as a graduation gift.'

In the USA, where evangelism is broadly accepted and commonplace in many parts of the country, the evangelical message is better understood both by donors and by volunteers. In this country, most volunteers and participants in the scheme cling to the notion that if they haven't seen it then it doesn't go on. Do not be fooled – it does.

#### Suggested alternatives

If your local school is irretrievably wedded to the idea of a Christian shoebox scheme, the BHA advise that Link to Hope don't distribute any literature with their boxes. The Rotary Club also runs a similar scheme and they at least have a proven track record when it comes to providing worthwhile aid within the developing world. But most charities with a genuine desire to bring change to the developing world and to lift children out of poverty now reject the Christmas box model; donors may well have the best of intentions, but sending a shoe box full of gifts is ultimately a grossly inefficient and environmentally questionable way to give. **If your school would like to back a more effective scheme with tangible outcomes you could suggest that they look at those run by Plan UK, Oxfam, Save the Children, Aquabox or Good Gifts.**

From here:

<http://humanistlife.org.uk/2015/10/14/why-parents-shouldnt-support-operation-christmas-child/>

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*And the angel said to her,*

*“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”*

*Luke 1:30-31*

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