

Dear Members and Friends of St. Mark's,

May God lavish his blessings upon you during this New Year, and may each of us be willing to share our blessings with others. As Abraham was "blessed to be a blessing" so are we, blessed by God, to bless others, in the name of Jesus.

Your Refocus Team has been working hard over the past many months, scrutinizing our Mission Statement (a statement which tells us and others, in a nutshell, what we're all about). We've been discerning our Core Values (the priorities or driving principles our congregation will live by as we go about mission and ministry). And we're well into praying about and seeking God's Vision (what God has in store for the future) for St. Mark's.

In seeking God's vision for our future here, it is helpful to take a good look at the past, where we've been, and discover how that informs, drives and helps dictate our future. Many of us desire a return to the past, the glory days, the days when things were going quite well. I want to suggest, that our memories of the "glory days" are usually clouded, and our memories tend to cling to the good, warm and fuzzy things which brought us hope and a sense of peace. That can be a good thing; recalling what brings peace and hope. But, if we stop there, we'll likely miss what we need to do, to go boldly and strongly into the future God has laid out for us.

All churches have ups and downs; in ministries, membership, volunteerism, excitement and involvement. But, as Christians, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, we are called to share his name and do ministry on a regular basis, in order to bring God's love and forgiveness to others, through our serving others (sound familiar??). We have been **called** by God to live lives of Freedom and Forgiveness. We **gather** to praise and thank God, to be fed and nourished and prepared to do ministry. And finally, we are **sent** out, into the community and the world, to bring that forgiveness and freedom to others.

Lutherans tend to do the **called** and **gathered** parts quite well. We need to work on the **sent** aspect of our Christian lives. We aren't called and gathered for our own edification. We are called and gathered in order to be sent out to do ministry.

That said, I was going through church records, I was stuck by a trend. I believe most of us knew this trend to be occurring, but most of us didn't realize how serious a trend it has been/become.

In the 1980 census, the population of Chula Vista was listed as 83,927. In 1990 it was 135,163 (an increase of 61%). Recent records show a growth to over 212,000 people as of 2008 (an increase of approximately 20%).

And the membership at St. Mark's? In the midst of this phenomenal growth around us, membership here has in a serious decline almost every year; from 948 members in 2000 down to 621 in 2005 to 483 in 2007. The great news is, we are once again seeing a rise in membership. Energy and excitement are rampant. And there is much hope and future-looking occurring. As you share your excitement and blessings with your friends, families and neighbors, they will be encouraged to come to St. Mark's to experience the joy and peace you have. Continue to do that. But, remember, that is merely a beginning; a starting point.

From my point of view, we need to be much more about increasing **ministries**, and members **personally involved in** those ministries, than we should be about growing our membership. When I recall the ministry of Jesus I note he was concerned about meeting folks **in the midst of their need** and in filling those needs; not growing a congregation. When Jesus **met the needs**, his following grew, as a natural result of doing ministry. But, his goal was not congregational growth, but a **growth in ministry** and **involvement of his followers in that need**. In the life of the church, ministry comes first. And we hope that our ministry will meet the needs of others, inside and outside the church, and that those ministries will show what we are doing in Jesus' name, and encourage others to join our fellowship. Ministry usually results in the growth of a church... but we should be willing to do ministry for ministry's sake.

My prayer for 2009 is a growth in your involvement in all aspects of ministry here at St. Mark's and a deepening of your sense of belonging and welcome.

Again, may God bless you this New Year, and may each of us seek ways to bless others.

As always, to God be all the glory!

Pastor Ron Hovick
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Okay, so we survived the zaniness of the holidays. It was touch and go in a few spots but we made it happen. Now it's time to think about spring (leaving the Christmas tree up through February does not excuse you from this).

Thanks to the talent of Danya Zimbauer and a group of hard working parents, spring for the St. Mark's children has come to mean musical theater and 2009 will be no exception. The title and theme of the musical is still top secret (meaning Danya won't tell me) but the date range is coming into focus.

This year's edition will begin in earnest the first week of March and the final extravaganza will take place in May.

In the meantime, our wild and crazy Wednesday nights will continue in their current format with food, classes and confirmation leading up to a worship service, the one difference being that the children will be working on chimes instead of choir during the first two months of the year.

So why am I bringing this up?

Because I love seeing so many kids involved. Springtime last year was a beautiful burst of energy thanks to the excitement and high standards of "Fish Tales".

There were kids coming out of the woodwork—some regulars and some new. It was both a tribute to our music leaders, who worked diligently to make the musical special,

and to the parents who not only made sure their kids were involved but made sure all of the many details were covered.

I'm really looking forward to this year's musical and can hardly wait to start planning. Now, if I could just get Danya to divulge her top secret plans. Anybody know if she likes chocolate?

Family Ministries Director
Brett Perkins
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619-479-9669



The Refocus Group has been meeting for some months now working on a list of core values with supporting Biblical texts. You can look forward to hearing much more specificity about these values in the up-coming Sundays.

Celebrating God's love and forgiveness, we serve others.

Core Values

Prayer: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Isaiah 56:7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Accessibility: Matthew 9: 10-13 And he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Ephesians 2:14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Service: Hebrew 13:16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Matthew 25: 35-45 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me. ...

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Communication: James 1:19 You must understand this, my beloved; let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger;

Proverbs 18:13 If anyone gives answer before hearing, it is folly and shame.

Education: Psalms 78:1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I arrive, give attention to public reading of the scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

Worship: Psalms 100:2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come into

John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Youth: Luke 18:16 But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

1 Timothy 4:11-12 These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Healthy Relationships:

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Matthew 18:15-20 "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two along with you, ...

The 2008 Council goals were 1. to create better communications, and 2. to establish some needed policies and procedures.

1. To work toward better communication the Council minutes are now posted for members to read, the "Marksman" has been expanded, and more information is available on the Church Web site.

2. Facilities Use policies were developed; Wedding policies, fees, & information were developed & established; a Memorandum of Understanding for on-going facilities use was created; and Council began to develop a sexual abuse prevention program.

*Two Council members organized and hosted the March Installation Dinner for Pastor Ron.

*Council supported the Pacifica Synod with a donation of \$1,000 for the "Blessed to Build two Buildings" -

project, which funded the new Synod offices and a church building for the Ethiopian Lutheran Church.

The Personnel Committee of the Council worked to establish job descriptions and update & revise the Employees' Handbook.

*Another project has been bringing our Constitution into alignment with the ELCA Model Constitution, have it approved by the Synod Constitution Review Committee and ready for our members to approve at our annual meeting on Sunday, January 25, 2009.

*Some Council committees have been more active than others and we hope to strengthen & improve more of them as time goes along. The Church Council too is a work in progress.

A special thank-you to Council members:

Karin Quick, Steve Sprenkle, & Brad Voigt, who are ending their terms and will not be on Council next year.

Blessings & thanks to those Council members who will be continuing to serve:

Chuck Cole, Diane Flint-Wages, Karl Larsen, & Diane Nissen.

Also, thanks to all members of St. Mark's for your support!

God bless you in the coming year.

Nancy Dreesen,
Council President

Prayer Quilt Ministry

"Blessed to be a blessing" - we are so blessed that we are able to use our hearts and hands to bring the gift of prayer to those who are so in need of it!

We are all members of this ministry, and you are blessed, as well as the person prayed for, when you tie knots and prayers into quilts.

There are so many people in need of our prayers especially at this time.

If a friend, relative, or acquaintance is in need of prayer, please take the next step and ask if we could wrap them in our prayers, and call to request a quilt.

We were able to wrap over 365 recipients in our prayers in 2008. That's an average of one a day! Please join us on Saturday, January 17th for our first Prayer Quilt Saturday of 2009.

No experience is necessary, and there are many tasks available.

Come for part or all of our work and fellowship time - 10:00 to 2:00 in Jacobson Hall. Lunch will be provided

I have been asked many times about how the Prayer Quilt Ministry is funded. We are an all donation ministry that relies on donations from church members, those who have received quilts, etc., who wish to donate so others may have quilts to wrap them in our prayers.

We accept cotton fabrics, thread, gift cards to JoAnn, and of course, cash or checks. Checks should be made out to St. Marks's, and be sure to write PRAYER Quilt Ministry in the memo line as we have two quilt ministries.

To request a quilt, call Roz Nelson at 619 422-5463, the church office, or you may e-mail roz at roznelson@att.net.

PLEASE CONTACT

Pastor Ron directly if you anticipate an upcoming hospital stay. His phone number is **(619) 632-7709**, his email address is **rhovick@cox.net**.

Prayer Request: rhultenius@cox.net
joanharsh@cox.net

Church Attendance

	11/08	11/07
Week 1	271	246
Week 2	245	229
Week 3	262	246
Week 4	245	183
Week 5	250	n/a

Family of the month

Each month we will select five families from the directory to pray for in turn, as well as those families who have a special need at this time.

Please pray for these families:

Mark, Stephanie, Joshua & Jonathan Bennett
Wayne, Judy, Christine & Bradley Benton
Aimee Bentz
Bob & Margaret Bergan
Sunni Bergener

Things do not change; we change.

Henry David Thoreau, Walden

HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Pastor Sieber is our Visitation Pastor, currently calling on the following homebound members.

If you or someone you know has a need and would like a visit from Pastor John, please call the church office at **(619) 427-5515**.

Please keep these people in your prayers and remember that most of them would appreciate visits from you as well.

Betty Burgess	Kaho Chester
Reuben Haas	Peter Honrud
Florence Harris	Esther Kort
Gene & Olive Kramp	Joe Wingo
Verna Werstlein	Nora West
Helen Dearmin	Ken Hultenius
Bob Whittier	Elinor Scavo
Jack Walquist	