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# FISHHOOK

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February 2024

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Family of St. Andrews,

The first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Mark are this: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel" (1:15). Something interesting to think about is that fact that many scholars believe St. Mark's Gospel was the first Gospel written. Matthew and Luke came afterward, with the Gospel of John being a distant fourth in the chronology. If that is true, then this means these words—although not the first words heard from our Lord—are the first words of Jesus written in the New Testament.

During the season of Epiphany we celebrate the mission of Christ to all people, and the marvelous works He did and continues to do in the midst of them. These past few weeks we have heard messages focusing on Jesus calling certain groups of people to Himself. And no

matter which group Jesus calls, it is astonishing to find out that Jesus ultimately always calls *us* to Him. Jesus calls us to hear His words and to worship Him as Lord.

And here, in the first words of Jesus ever written, we see that Jesus is calling us, once again, to celebrate His Lordship over our lives, and to rejoice in His works. Jesus begins His ministry announcing that the Kingdom is at hand. That word "is" emphasizes that everything *is* accomplished: the Kingdom is coming and is ready to be established. **(continued on next page)**

*Christ is the one doing it all. He repents us.*

*(continued from first page)* But 2000 years later, does it really look like Jesus' Kingdom has been established at all? Does it look like God's will is thriving in our world today? Certainly there are glimpses of God's good and gracious care in the news: a child is saved from a burning car; a community is raising funds to help the homeless; those who have committed serious crimes are brought to justice. Still, it seems that the bad outweighs the good in terms of the news cycle. (But a long list of the horrors of life doesn't need to be stated right now. We don't need to dwell on the effects of the sins of others and of our sinful, fallen world.)

So, with this being said, is Jesus' Kingdom really here? Where is the Lord, and what is He calling us to do? As we approach the season of Lent, we enter into a time of prayer and fasting, a time when we prepare to hear the cries of Jesus on Good Friday, and the shouts of joy "He is risen!" come Easter. But is it also a time when we listen to the words of our Lord and focus on repentance—for it is even our sins that crucified Christ. And lo and behold, today we hear Jesus speak that same word, "Repent and believe the gospel." Many rightfully point out that repentance isn't just feeling bad for what we have done, but it is turning away from our sins, believing in Christ and the forgiveness He grants us, and fleeing from ungodly things. But if we take a look at Luke 13:6-9, the parable of the fig tree, we get a clearer look at what repentance looks like. Here, Jesus speaks on what repentance is:

*"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"*

The fig tree, here an unrepentant person, is about to be uprooted and thrown away; done-in if you will, by the Man, who is God. In other words, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Time is short! And what does the Vinedresser, Jesus, do? He does the work. With dirt-covered hands, He spreads the manure, He speaks His Word, to soften our hardened hearts.

This Lent, God continues to call us to repentance. And like a lot of things in God's Word, this may seem uncomfortable. God calls us to action, to work, to repent! But also, Christ is the one doing it all. *He repents us.* So today, tomorrow, and in the days ahead, when thinking on repentance continue to ask God for mercy, for the time is growing short. Ask Him to alleviate that one specific sin that is burdening you. But also ask Him to repent your own heart. Ask Him to turn you away from all evil. Plead with Him for help. For the Good News of Jesus is that He is near His people, calling us to repentance, and forgiving us in the Gospel.

In Christ,

*Pastor Brian*



# Worship

## Lent Sermon Series

On Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings during Lent, we will be exploring the "I Am" claims of Jesus in the New Testament, along with the seven last statements He spoke on the cross. If you would like to be emailed a daily devotion, subscribe with the QR code in the graphic below. Or you can download the full devotional for free at <https://shorturl.at/izHTU>. We will also have limited printed copies available.



**DAILY DEVOTIONS**  
BY EMAIL THIS LENT

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD  
READ A DEVOTION  
PONDER A QUESTION

starts on  
Ash Wednesday  
Feb 14, 2024

[www.SparkHelpsChurches.com](https://www.SparkHelpsChurches.com)

**I AM**  
SEVEN LAST(ING) WORDS  
MATT BEHRENS

## Family Wednesday Lent Services

*Your whole family is welcome to experience the truth and joy of forgiveness this Lent. Each Wednesday service includes a special activity to help all ages connect with our Savior's love.*

**Ash Wednesday, February 14, noon & 7pm:** Begin the season of Lent by taking an hour to reflect on God's great forgiveness of our sins. The service includes time of confession and forgiveness, Holy Communion, and marking our foreheads with ashes to remind us that without life from the Lord, we are but dust.

**Lent Midweek, Wednesdays 2/21-3/20, 7pm:** Interact with the truth of who Jesus said He is. Crafts, singing, Scripture, and a message will give a special time of reflection during this season of repentance.



# Serving Stockton and Beyond

## Rahab Comfort Dog



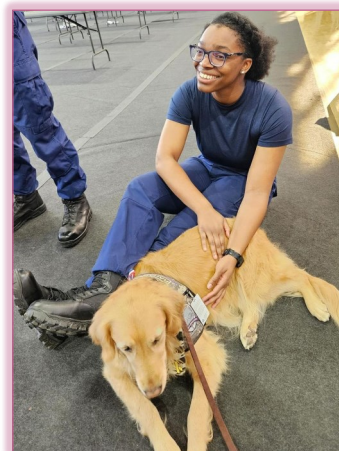
Rahab Comfort Dog team is looking forward to the new year and new opportunities to share the mercy, compassion, presence, and proclamation of Jesus to those suffering and in need. *Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 136:1*

Rahab enjoyed meeting all the people at church during Advent and Christmas. Rahab is a blessing to the congregation and the community. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

Rahab Comfort Dog Military Handlers Mike Rehbein and Cathy Pauley spent a "paw-some" day visiting the Coast Guard trainees, instructors, and some family members from U. S. Coast Guard Training Center Petaluma. A lot of these service men and women were away from their families (and pets) over Christmas, so it was great to be able to spend time with them. Micah and Aaron Comfort Dogs were there also. *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. Psalm 139: 9-10*

Rahab Comfort Dog Handler Amy Lapointe and Ministry Partners Sue Gruber and Brooke Kelly visited Port City Academy Charter School in Stockton to bring love and comfort to staff and students. Sadly, one of their students passed away in December and her mom was a staff member. *For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort, too. 2 Corinthians 1:5*

Rahab and Handlers Bobby and Laura Moore visited the Stockton Police Department in December to pass out Christmas goodies the team put together for the officers, dispatchers, admin, and support staff! They stopped by to share Christmas hellos to the dispatchers and then went over and visited with officers who were on duty. They were escorted by Chaplain Renee of the Stockton Police Chaplaincy program. We are truly blessed here in Stockton to have such wonderful first responders and chaplains serving our community. *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7*



Handlers/Caregivers Mike and Ann Marie Rehbein attended a Lutheran Educator Conference in San Diego with Rahab. Five of the Northern California comfort dog teams attended, offering comfort and cuddle time during the conference. *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:20*

Rahab Comfort Dog Handlers Bobby and Laura Moore and Ministry Partner Barbara Britton attended Comfort Dog Aaron's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in Napa. CalFire even attended, along with other comfort dogs in Northern California. *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy. Philippians 1:3-4*

Rahab attended the Good Shepherd Family Ministry annual Christmas play. She enjoyed watching all the "animals" go up to the manger and took a picture with the entire cast. Rahab is Good Shepherd's official Christmas dog for the next play. *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. Luke 2:16*

Rahab Comfort Dog Handlers/Caregivers Mike and Ann Marie Rehbein went with Rahab to Monterey Park in mid-January for three days to bring love and comfort to the victims and families of last year's January shooting. **(continued next page)**



**("Rahab" continued)** Top Dog Bobby Moore and Rahab also went to Monterey Park on the actual anniversary to attend the vigil. Rueben Comfort Dog was also in attendance for the entire week. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* Matthew 5:4

Comfort Dog Rahab with Handler Cathy Pauley and Ministry Partner Boni Hamilton visited Marshall Elementary School in January. This was Rahab's first visit to the school, and the team hung out in the Calming Center, bringing peace, calm, and love to the many students and staff who came in for stress relief and to see Rahab. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6*



**If you would like to purchase a Rahab Stuffedie** (stuffed animal with Rahab bandana) to add to a Valentine or Easter gift, please email Top Dog Bobby Moore (not church staff) at [comfortcarek9@stalc.org](mailto:comfortcarek9@stalc.org). Cost is \$20 each, and *every purchase donates a second stuffedie* that the team is able to give out to hurting people at ministry events.

**Want to join the team?** Contact Bobby Moore to learn if this might be a ministry for you! (209) 679-9442; [bobbymoore209@gmail.com](mailto:bobbymoore209@gmail.com)



## Hosting the Homeless

### Family Promise Hosting March 3-10



It's that time again to be a blessing to the families supported by Family Promise. If you are able to help with any of these needs please call the office. We would love to see new volunteers!

- Van Driver
- Provide Dinner
- Dinner Assistant
- Evening Activities
- Homework Tutor
- Overnight Support

[office@stalc.org](mailto:office@stalc.org)

## Feeding the Hungry

### FEBRUARY FOOD DRIVE

This month we are focusing on ready-to-eat canned meals with POP-TOP LIDS (for people without kitchens).



Box located in the church entry.

# Women in Mission

## Lutheran Women's Missionary League



Our February LWML meeting is on Tuesday **February 13 at 1:00pm.**

In keeping with our theme of Renewal and Restoration, our guest speaker is Jessica Velez, founder of Red Rabbit Advocacy. She will be sharing about her outreach to the homeless in San Joaquin county.

Please bring four photos of people you love to share with others at the meeting!

## Walking and Crafting

Our walking, beading, and card-making groups are having a ball! Contact these ladies to learn more.

**Card Making** — **February 7 and 21 at 1:30pm** in the fellowship hall. Karen Kleinert: (209) 406-9708; [hkleinert05@comcast.net](mailto:hkleinert05@comcast.net)

**Beading** — **February 20 at 2pm** in the library. Debbie Wilson: (209) 298-8451; [skydebbill@yahoo.com](mailto:skydebbill@yahoo.com)

**Walking** — St. Andrews Strollers walk every Saturday morning at a different location each week. Where would you like to explore? We have wonderful walks in towns close by that you may enjoy. The distance is up to you! Save the date for our March 23 walk in Knights Ferry. For more info, contact Joan Sykes: (412) 337-2538; [jumblefromjoan@inreach.com](mailto:jumblefromjoan@inreach.com)

# Kids of St. Andrews

## Newday Preschool

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Even though February is the shortest month of the year, it's a great month to share the Gospel with Newday children. We will learn that God can forgive our sins and give us a new heart, because someone with a perfect heart, Jesus, died in our place.

Beyond Valentine's Day, it is International Month of Friendship! We will continue to celebrate the idea of friendship and choosing kindness. We will talk a lot about whether a choice we made or something we said made our friend's heart feel big or small. *If you see a parent dropping their child off at school, or see a staff member in the halls, please let them feel the love of St. Andrews and Newday!*

If you are looking for a school that helps children grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, academically, and physically, call our preschool director Marla Rivas at (209) 957-4089 or email [newday@stalc.org](mailto:newday@stalc.org).



## Kids' Church



**February Kids' Church Schedule**

♥ Music, Crafts, Bible Stories

♥ Classes 3-yrs thru 5th Grade

♥ February 4, 11, 18

Sign-in @ 10:35am. Kids join families in church for prayer & communion after class.



**Candy Donations**

For our children's Easter egg hunt we need individually-wrapped small candies by **March 3**.

Donation box in the church entry.

## First Communion

First Communion class (for 5<sup>th</sup> graders and older) will be held in the fellowship hall at **5:30pm on Wednesdays, March 13, March 20, and March 27**. These classes will prepare our first communicants to receive Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins on Maundy Thursday (March 28 at 7pm). It is a joy to see those who are young rejoice in the Lord!

## Confirmation (H2H) & High School

Our Wednesday night gatherings will pause during Lent, starting with our all-church **Ash Wednesday worship service on February 14 at 7pm**. Also, you're invited to come with your families to our Wednesday night family Lent services from 7-8pm, February 21-March 20, where we'll have activities to experience more of God's love. Read about it on page 3 of this newsletter!

## 2024 Confirmands

Students who are being confirmed this year have classes on **Wednesdays, February 14, 28, and March 6 at 5:30** in the fellowship hall to begin preparing their faith statements for presentation during worship.

## Package Packing

High school and H2H groups will be putting together care packages for St. Andrews folks who are off at college or in the armed forces. We'll meet on **Sunday, February 4 at 9:45am** to pack these, sending them off the following week.

## Middle School Fun



**FRIDAY FUN**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

6TH-8TH GRADES  
FEBRUARY 16, 5:30-7PM

Free dinner will be served! Parents must drop off and pick up kids in the fellowship hall.

ST. ANDREWS LUTHERAN CHURCH - 4910 CLAREMONT AVE. - STOCKTON

# Senior Pastor Call Process

## Introducing Interim Admin. Pastor Ron Youngdale



"Children should be seen and not heard!" That phrase is from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, which applied not to children, but to young women! Yikes! Later it was applied to children. I remember hearing that phrase many times as a child. (Does that make you wonder about my childhood? LOL.) Allow me to rephrase for 2024 at St. Andrews: *"An interim might not be seen, but he is heard."* I can guess the question you are thinking: "What is this guy talking about?"

Before I go further, let me introduce myself. I am a retired pastor. I served 37 years at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Turlock. I have been married to Pam for 39 years. We have two daughters (Abby and Kirsten) and four grandchildren. We are both handlers for Genesis, the Comfort Dog at Good Shepherd. (Pam is the Top Dog!) I have been serving the California-Nevada-Hawaii (CNH) District

congregations through the Conflict Transformation Team. Recently, I began providing consultations for churches, which is why I was asked to serve you. Such consultations are to help congregations assess what they are doing in ministry in order to become better at what they do, sharing the love and grace of Jesus.

I started my position as your interim administrative pastor in January. You will probably "hear" me more than you will "see" me. I have been asked by the CNH District to serve you as you prepare to find a new senior pastor, helping your congregation assess congregational and community ministry needs. Most of my work will be behind the scenes, working with your Mission and Ministry Council and staff. I will use several resources to discover your perception of the kind of pastor you want. I am preparing to share the first resource ("Know Your Community") with you on February 11 and 25. [See graphic below.] The second main resource ("Know Your Church") will be developed by taking a survey that we hope *each one of you* will fill out in March. I will share that report in April. Other items I am working on are administrative and organizational. If you have any questions about what I am doing or would like to offer any input, please contact me at [pastorron@stalc.org](mailto:pastorron@stalc.org) or (209) 404-4817.

Please pray for this process of finding and calling a pastor as your senior pastor. To God be the glory!

*Pastor Ron Youngdale*

## Who Is Stockton?



ST. ANDREWS

# KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Who are our neighbors? What are the needs and motivations?

**PART 1:** FEB. 11, 9:45AM & NOON  
**PART 2:** FEB. 25, 9:45AM & NOON

Held at St. Andrews Lutheran Church



SENIOR PASTOR  
CALL PROCESS