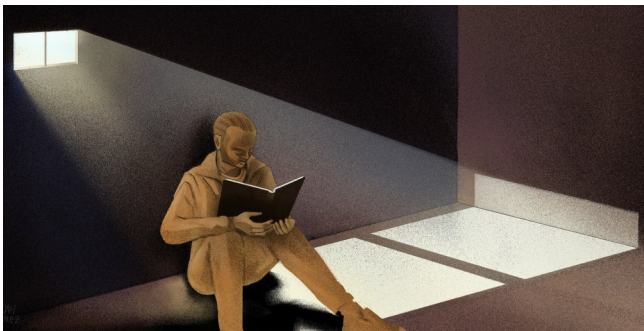




FISHHOOK

March 2023

The Bible was written approximately between the years 2000 BC and 100 AD. Its 66 books were written by about 35 named authors and two or three dozen unnamed authors. (Who wrote Hebrews, Chronicles, and all those psalms?) It contains 1,189 chapters and—depending on the translation—31,103 verses and 807,361 words. In the King James Version, the middle verses are Psalm 103:1-2, and the middle chapter is Psalm 117. The most popular verse is John 3:16.



I once read a story about a prisoner locked in his cell for a lifetime with nothing to read but the Bible. After his death, people read notes he'd scratched on the walls and saw nothing but trivial information such as I listed in the previous paragraph. The prisoner had counted how many times certain words appeared in books, how many total verses there were, how many times specific names were mentioned, etc. He had recorded a lot of information on the walls of his cell, but not one word about any transformation he experienced through the Word of God.

What happens when you read the Bible? Do you like knowing about people, places, and things? Do you like learning context and connections? Do you geek out over the use of specific word choices in the original Hebrew and Greek? I love all of the above, but I've learned that simply learning more and more information is not the end purpose of an encounter with God's Word, but rather being transformed in heart, mind, and soul. **(continued next page)**

It is clear God's Word is meant to do something in us.

(continued from first page) Much of Scripture speaks to the need of our hearts to be changed by God:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? — Jeremiah 17:9

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. — Romans 12:2

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. — 2 Timothy 3:16-17

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. — Hebrews 4:12

It is clear God's Word is meant to do something in us. Transform us. Change us. Get us off one path and lead us on to another. As we go "Thru the Bible" in this season of Lent we are not just learning more information about eight cool chapters of the Bible. We are learning how to be transformed by God's Word and how to replicate that with others.

We encourage you to go through each week's chapter in the study guide and ask its simple questions with your family, small group, or others you've invited to read with you. If you want to experience transformation, you'll pay close attention to the questions that prod you to consider what you will do or how you want to change because of your encounter in God's Word. Then be brave enough to talk the next week about how that effort went. Pray for, challenge, and encourage each other. Ask the Holy Spirit to work with and around you. You'll be surprised what God will do with this approach to Scripture. I know I have been.

Isaiah recorded it best:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

— Isaiah 55:8-11

God's Word is working and will work in us and through us.

Pastor Dan

Thru the Bible: February 26-April 23



Pick up your free study guide at church

Kids of St. Andrews

Introducing Jamie Eisenbeisz



We are officially welcoming Jamie to our staff team this month as Children's Ministry Coordinator. As many of you know, Jamie has a strong background in outreach, short-term missions, and cross-cultural ministry. She also has a background in Lutheran education and biblical studies.

Jamie has been overseeing our Kids' Church (Sunday school) program this year and also planning outreach events for our congregation, such as October's Trunk or Treat. She will assist in planning VBS and continuing to connect our congregation intergenerationally. We are thrilled to have her as part of our mission and ministry to Stockton and St. Andrews!

If you'd like to introduce yourself, volunteer to help with kids, or share ideas, please email Jamie at jamie@stalc.org.

Vacation Bible School: June 12-16

VBS is on its way! We look forward to offering our community a week of free fun and learning about Jesus, the Light of the World. Check out these ways you can help!

Collect glass baby food jars or other small jars. (Must be able to hold a votive candle.) Please wash the jars and remove any labels before bringing them to Karen Kelly or the office.

Pitch in on craft work day. Stay for lunch after church on **April 23** and lend a hand to get crafts ready for all the creative kiddos.

Invite friends, neighbors, grandkids! We'll have online and printed registration ready in the next few weeks. Meanwhile save the dates!

Plan on volunteering during VBS. We'll need all hands on deck, from serving dinner to leading discussions to handing out T-shirts. Kids will be present each night from 5:30-8:15pm, but we'll need help before and afterward, as well.

Please talk with Karen (Neraknsteve618@gmail.com) or Jamie (jamie@stalc.org) to learn more about how you can be involved!



Easter Egg Hunt

Candy & Plastic Egg Donations

Newday families are joining us for an Easter egg hunt on Sunday, March 26! We need:

- ♥ unfilled, standard-size plastic eggs
- ♥ individually-wrapped small candies



A donation box is in the Narthex.



St. Andrews Easter Egg Hunt

Sunday, March 26, noon

Bring your own baskets and meet Newday families!

First Communion Classes

St. Andrews has traditionally prepared young ones for and celebrated their first communion on Maundy Thursday each year. This year Maundy Thursday will be on April 6. In order to prepare our children for this event we teach them the background of Holy Communion and the beauty of what occurs when we gather to receive the body and blood of our Savior Jesus.

This training occurs on the three Wednesdays before Holy Week, **March 15, 22, and 29, from 5:30-6:45pm**. Any child 5th grade and older is welcome to attend, and we expect a parent or guardian to also be present during these classes. You're invited to stay for our Family Midweek Lent Services right afterward!

Please let Pastor Dan (pastordan@stalc.org) or Pam in the office know if you plan to attend.



Confirmation Classes

While H2H will be on hiatus during Lent, those students being confirmed will participate in a class for confirmands and their parents to help prepare the students for writing their faith essays. These classes will be held at **5:30-6:45pm on March 1, 8, and 15**. You're welcome to participate in our Family Midweek Lent Services at 7pm!

Please save the date for the confirmation retreat being held at Lake Tahoe on April 28-30, and plan for the faith essays to be shared in front of the whole church (at both services) on Sunday, May 21. Talk to Pastor Brian (pastorbrian@stalc.org) or call the office with any questions. *H2H will resume Wednesday, April 12.*

Youth Group



Eighth through 12th graders! Come for an awesome all-nighter at church starting **Friday, March 10 at 6pm** and ending Saturday morning at 8:00. We dare you to stay awake later than Pastor Brian!

High school students, we encourage you to attend our Family Midweek Lent Services, as we'll be taking a break from regular meetings until April 12.

Newday Preschool

Are you involved in our community? Are you brave enough to talk in front of preschoolers? March is Community Helper Month and we're looking for people to present to our students. Please call or email Marla if you're interested (or if you'd like to volunteer someone else).

Several of our classes are learning music with Ms. Rachel this month, so our families will be coming to St. Andrews to hear our songs during Sunday worship on March 26. We're excited about the Easter egg hunt afterward!

We're now accepting enrollment for summer 2023 and fall 2023 programs. Space is limited, so contact us soon! (209) 957-4089; newday@stalc.org



Women in Mission

Get the Inside Scoop!



Thanks for coming to our Women's Ministry launch event in January. More than 100 women ages 9-92 attended! Half signed up to be on our "Women in the Know" contact roster or to become involved in new and existing small groups at St. Andrews.

If you missed the event or didn't fill out a card, it's not too late to be included! Check the *I want to be a Woman in-the-Know* box on the Sunday bulletin connection card or call Deb Johnson (209-481-1570) to get connected.

Bible Study

Ladies, join us on Mondays at 9am for a fascinating walk through the book of Genesis. Bring your Bible (or borrow one from us) and discover God's incredible plan for our world!

Lutheran Women's Missionary League

March is a busy month for us!

We'll be collecting a *noisy offering* on Sunday, **March 5**. Remind your friends to bring spare change!

Our *LWML meeting* will be on Tuesday, **March 14 at 1:00pm** to plan the final details for the CNH Women in Mission Spring Rally. We'll need everyone's help as we host women from all over our district on March 18. Bring your mite boxes and your journals to Tuesday's meeting.

Finally, make sure to sign up for our *spring rally*, being held **March 18!** Bring a friend and enjoy a wonderful day of fellowship and learning with sister LWML groups. Email the office (office@stalc.org) or call Debra Johnson to register: (209) 481-1570



Women in Mission Spring Rally

Saturday, March 18, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



Emerging Faith

Guest speaker: Jamie Eisenbeisz

Guest musicians: Good Shepherd Singers

\$13 in advance/\$15 at door

Register by **March 10** thru church office



Serving Stockton and Beyond

Rahab Comfort Dog

Rahab's Bible verse is Joshua 2:11: "When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

It has happened once again: Another mass shooting, more lives lost, more loved ones in mourning...and darkness settles in. However, light always invades darkness, and God's love shines brilliantly through with the promise of hope, love, and the beginning of healing.

Within three hours of the breaking news of the Monterey Park shooting, Lutheran Church Charities started calling Top Dogs with orders to prepare to deploy. Shortly after I received the call, I notified Team Rahab and within hours, our team said, "Here I am Lord, send me." Michael and Ann Marie Rehbein arrived with Rahab Monday afternoon. In total, five dogs from NorCal and Las Vegas deployed for five days. Pastor Dan and Bobby Moore relieved the Rehbeins on Wednesday.

The Comfort Dog teams spent time at the memorial site, City Hall, Fire, Police, County Coroner, schools and countless other areas. The Comfort Dogs were in the news all week and as people learned the dogs were there, more and more requests were made for visits, and more and more messages came in via the dogs' social media pages. One comment on a dog's Facebook page stated, "Thank you so much for going there. I know it will help all of them as they grieve. But it helps all of us. The violence in our world breaks my heart. But knowing there are people (and dogs) who care, really does help."

A week after we returned home, a school principal wrote us, "I have to tell you, I hear about the Comfort Dogs from our students almost daily. Yesterday, one of the first graders asked me when Rahab was going to come back. They definitely had an impact on us!"

As written in USA Today: "Mourners navigating the darkness shrouding California's close-knit Monterey Park have discovered a source of comfort in the form of cuddly, four-legged friends. After Saturday's mass shooting at Star Ballroom Dance Studio that claimed 11 lives, Lutheran Church Charities sent five trained golden retrievers from its K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry—Lois, Rahab, Micah, Reuben and Salome—to offer compassion for a community torn apart. The dogs traveled from Lutheran churches in Las Vegas as well as Elk Grove, Yuba City and Stockton, California. The LCC's comfort dogs' response to these tragedies and others since 2008 have helped ease the burden of grief by simply being present."

It is hard to express what our human team experiences when called into action, so I asked they provide me with a few of their thoughts, which you can read on these pages. As I wrap up this article, I will end with how I started: Light always invades darkness, and God's love shines brilliantly!

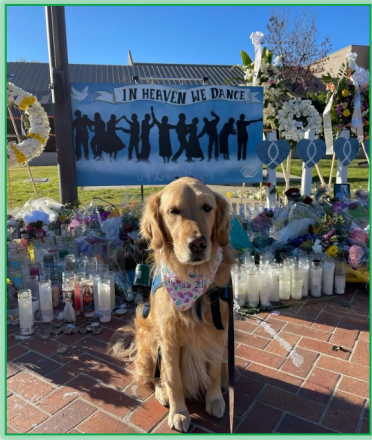
In Christ's brilliant light,

Deb Rider



Ann Marie... It was amazing to watch how God used Rahab to draw people to us in each new situation over the three days we were there. God's love and peace flowed through us allowing us to just be present with them, giving them a chance to relax and express whatever they were feeling at that time. I can't explain except to say that it is a sacred call to be allowed into someone's pain, entrusted to listen with loving care in a crisis such as this. It is a holy privilege to be used in this way.





Pastor Dan... I am always amazed how Rahab is such a bridge builder and door opener. Our ministry team is able to help and support so many people we wouldn't normally be able to reach because Rahab and other LCC Comfort Dogs are able to open the door to reach first responders, community leaders, mourners, children, and more. Rahab connected with the Police Chief of Monterey Park, the shifts of the fire and police that responded to the tragedy, the coroners who worked the scene, and many other grieving community members along the way. I love being able to connect with people in these times alongside Rahab, knowing Jesus wants to be with these people and give them hope, peace, and encouragement. Strife and cynicism may be growing in our culture, but people still respond to love and hope.



Michael... When we received the news of the shooting in Monterey Park and that Rahab was going to be needed there, I was not surprised. Our team has been working together for these past two years and more to be ready to serve whenever and wherever there is a need. Ann Marie and I were able to drive down to Monterey Park on Monday morning. We did not even know where we were going to be staying or what other teams were going to be with us. As we were in the car driving to Southern California, we received text messages about which hotel we would be staying in and which other LCC teams were coming. By late afternoon, five comfort dog teams were heading to Monterey Park to work together to bring the presence, care, and compassion of Christ to the community.

While many people took comfort in petting the dogs and talking about their feelings, the experience of one woman was very meaningful. She was a librarian who worked with the senior citizens of Monterey Park. As Rahab lay across her feet, the librarian talked. She said that she did not know any of the victims personally and so she thought she was OK emotionally. But then as she talked about her friends who had lost loved ones to the shooting, she began to cry. She had not realized that she, too, was hurting deeply. She sat with Rahab for at least 20 minutes. She apologized for her tears, which she had not expected to shed. We let her know that it was OK. This is why we were there.

Good Shepherd Talent Show



Mark your calendars for the not-to-be-missed Good Shepherd Talent Show, being held at St. Andrews on **March 25, 12:30pm**. We promise an afternoon that will bring you smiles and fun!



Worship

Evening Lent Services

family midweek lent services

*interaction with the true story
of forgiveness for all ages*

Wednesdays, 7-8pm, Mar. 1-29



Plant a seed, carry a rock, and create art to help learn more about our relationship with God. Each service also includes Scripture, singing, and a message from our pastors as we continue our "Thru the Bible" journey. *Kids, it's okay to come in your pajamas!*

Guests on March 26



Help us welcome families of our Newday students during our 10:45 worship service on March 26! The preschoolers will be singing sweet songs of God's love and joining us for the Easter egg hunt afterward. Plan on staying after church to meet some of these wonderful people.

Notable Notes



MILITARY & COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES

Share names/addresses with Pastor Brian by **March 12!** If you'd like to donate items, we need:

- pens/pencils
- granola bars
- microwaveable popcorn
- candy bars
- hot chocolate packets
- small bags of chips/cookies

Get it before it's gone! Newday has Popcornopolist kettle corn available for just \$5 a bag. Stop by the church office during regular hours (M-Th, 8:30-4) or call Marla (209-957-4089) if you'd like to purchase the whole lot. Can't go wrong with kettle corn!



St. Andrews is *how* old? We are seeking a few members that can help plan an 80th (!) anniversary celebration for St. Andrews this fall. Please let Pam in the office know if you are interested in being a part of this team: (209) 957-8750; office@stalc.org

