



**A one-year
commitment
of all members of
Shepherd of the Valley
Lutheran Church
to read
the Word of God
together**

OVERVIEW

The Word of God as recorded in the Bible is the source and authority for our faith. It remains at the heart of our devotion, our worship, and our growth in grace. Scripture is what gathers us as a community of believers in Jesus, called by God through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we renew our efforts to be faithful in Bible reading, reflection, and study, we'll grow closer to God and to each other. That's the promise of Scripture itself. Our 2009 theme, *Wake Up to the Word! Closer to God. Closer to Each Other*, is a profound expression of our plan for activities that will encourage all of us to pursue regular encounters with the written Word of God.

You may be asking yourself, "But how do I get involved? What is next for me?" Throughout the year we'll be reading the Word of God together. This will require participation and commitment from everyone, (yes, that does mean you). While new parts of *Wake Up to the Word!* will be rolled out as the year goes on, the core begins right now! Here are the upcoming dates and activities for you to commit to and get involved in.

ACTIVITIES

NOVEMBER 30, 2008

INTRODUCTION TO WAKE UP TO THE WORD!

On Sunday, November 30, we'll have an introduction to our *Wake Up to the Word!* On this Sunday, we'll encourage everyone to begin their Daily Devotions, and get a sneak preview of the readings for the year of Mark.

Daily Devotions

We ask you to commit (with the rest of the congregation) to a daily devotional life. That means carving some time out of your busy schedule each day for the reading of the word, reflection, and prayer. This sounds far more daunting than it is. We're here to help you with resources to make this a meaningful and accomplishable commitment for all.

There are a variety of good devotional books available. On November 30, we'll have a display to assist you in finding a devotional that fits your personality, theology, and time restrictions. Three that we recommend are:

Christ in Our Home

This devotional includes short readings and reflections to help bring worship into your daily life. Though we won't be following the Revised Common Lectionary in worship this year, this devotional will help you celebrate all the festivals of the church, major and minor, and celebrate people of great faith. *Christ in Our Home* is offered free of charge and is available in small and large print.

Davey & Goliath: Devotions for Families on the Go

These devotions are designed to be done by the whole family. They include age-appropriate readings for elementary age kids, as well as activities and crafts. These are offered for free and can be picked up in the narthex.

Daily Texts

Two short scripture readings and a prayer for each day of the year. These can be read a few times through and then add your own prayers at the end. This is a brief, convenient way to make sure you're reading the word everyday. The book includes some devotional tips and Luther's Small Catechism. They will be available for purchase starting November 30 for \$10 each. If you'd like to have the daily texts emailed to you everyday for free, just go to www.moravian.org/daily_texts to sign up!

Introduction to the Year of Mark

The story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is the main story of the Christian faith. Each of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the first four books of the New Testament portion of the Bible—tell the story of Jesus. Some stories are common to all, some unique to each, but all four tell the story from the point of view and with the purpose of an individual author.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of these gospels, and believed to be the first written.

Historically Mark was often neglected by the church because the fuller accounts in the other three Gospels attracted more attention. But, Mark is written with a sense of urgency and in a staccato literary style that has intrigued readers and raised interest in Mark's version of the story of Jesus. Scholarship into Mark's gospel has exploded over the past sixty years. With the creation of the new three-year lectionary in 1978, Mark is now heard as the primary gospel reading on Sunday mornings every third year. (John's gospel does not get its own year, but is read on selected Sundays during the other years.)

For 2009, we again enter the year of Mark, but instead of following the appointed lectionary, we'll read together the entire Gospel of Mark over the course of the upcoming church year. Here is the schedule for Advent.

Weekly Word- Sunday Reading Schedule for Advent 2008

November 30 <i>Advent 1</i>	Luke 1: 67-84	Zechariah's Prophecy
December 7 <i>Advent 2</i>	Mark 1: 1-8	The Proclamation of John the Baptist
December 14 <i>Advent 3</i>	Mark 1: 9-12	The Baptism of Jesus The Temptation of Jesus
December 21 <i>Advent 4</i>	Mark 1: 14-15	The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

**DECEMBER 7, 2008
WAKE UP TO THE WORD!
KICK-OFF CELEBRATION**

Note that the reading of Mark's gospel begins on December 7, our *Wake Up to the Word! Kick-Off Celebration Sunday*. This will be the exciting start for our year-long journey. While no groups will meet prior to this Sunday, the *Weekly Word* will be distributed beforehand.

Weekly Word

There is great power in experiencing the Word of God in community. In addition to your

individual Daily Devotion, we're asking each person to commit to reading the Word of God (through the book of Mark) each week.

This reading can be done with friends, couples, or families. But, we're really encouraging everyone to attend a *Weekly Word* Group. Studies have shown that you are far more likely to follow through on commitments if you have a weekly meeting to hold you accountable and to encourage you.

Shepherd is offering a variety of *Weekly Word* Groups where you can Encounter, Reflect, and Act on the Word of God within your SOV community. Please plan on making attending a *Weekly Word* Group part of your spiritual life in Advent (and the whole year!)

Each week we'll have a *Weekly Word* handout to guide us in preparation for the upcoming Sunday. This guide will have three parts. In *Encounter*, we'll read the story and have an opportunity to ask some basic questions about what we have read. In *Reflect*, we'll consider more deeply about how God speaks to us as individuals, and as a community of believers, through this Scripture. In *Act*, we commit to following through in some way on our insights.

Open House

December 7 is also an Open House and great time to invite your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others to visit us. In addition to the celebration that accompanies the beginning of the Year of Mark, there will be refreshments served in Founders Hall. Invite someone along that morning! (Note also, the Preschool and School are having an Open House the same day, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.)

Facilitators for Weekly Word Groups

For each of these *Weekly Word* Groups, we'll need facilitators willing to lead discussion and facilitate the hearing of the word. The first groups will begin in Advent, but groups will continue all year. If you hear God calling you to

be a facilitator, but cannot commit right now, you may start a group in mid-January, Lent, Spring, or Summer.

Weekly Word facilitators will commit to:

1. Lead a *Weekly Word* session—the day of the week and location can be tailored to your schedule. Each session should last only one hour.
2. Meet with Pastor Stacy at 11:45 a.m. each Sunday (for about 75 minutes) to read the word together to prepare for your *Weekly Word* session. Everything that you need in order to lead your sessions will be provided and covered as a group prior to your session. This time together will be all the preparation you'll need to lead your session.
3. Six *Weekly Word* sessions—Advent sessions start the week of December 7 and end the week of January 11. Provisions will be made if you must be out of town for one of your sessions. So, don't let one Christmas commitment stop you from answering the call.

If you feel called to this ministry, please don't hesitate to contact Pastor Stacy at pastorstacypayne@mac.com.

Wristbands

Small things often make the difference in following through on the commitments we've made that are important to us. Beginning December 7, we're asking all *Wake Up to the Word!* participants to wear a *Wake Up to the Word!* wristband. These wristbands have two purposes. The first is purely practical, wearing your wristband is a daily visual reminder to your commitment to Daily Devotions and *Weekly Word*. The second purpose is to invite conversation from others about what *Wake Up to the Word!* is all about. We're all timid about talking to others about our faith in God, but it's amazingly easier when they ask the questions. So, wear your wristband and invite others to *Wake Up to the Word!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wake Up to the Word! is a 12-month commitment of all members of SOV to reading the word of God together. In this time, we'll read the book of Mark together, reflect on where God is calling us, and grow closer to God and closer to each other. This is an exciting opportunity for growth as individuals and as a congregation. Keep your eyes out in the coming months for more ways to *Wake Up to the Word!*

The Gospel of Mark In Performance

A prominent event in our congregation's observance of the Year of Mark's Gospel will be the world premiere performance of *Kata Markon: The Passion According to St. Mark* on Palm Sunday, April 5, 2009, at 5:30 p.m. Composed by Mark Weiser, this Passion follows the precedent of J.S. Bach and others in presenting the passion story with sung narration of the Gospel text. Additionally, there are occasional vocal solos and choral interludes that reflect on the Passion narrative. The performance features choir, soloists, organ, and a chamber ensemble. Original texts and translations are by Todd Payne.

The title *Kata Markon* comes from a transliteration of the original Greek heading, ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ. This heading appears at the beginning of Mark's gospel in two of the oldest and most reliable copies of the New Testament. The Evangelist's urgent telling of the suffering and death of Jesus is a powerful witness to the gospel and especially well-suited to the observance of Holy Week.

CONCLUSION

As the year unfolds, there will be other events related to our theme and more opportunities to *Wake Up to the Word!* The blessings of regular encounters with Scripture will continue to encourage and deepen the ways we grow closer to God and closer to each other. May the Word of God dwell richly among us!