



Holy Cross—St. Mark

Newsletter

February 2026



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Upcoming Events

Feb. 7: Puzzle Exchange @HC - 9am
Feb. 9: Little Lambs @HC - 6pm
Feb. 9: SM Council Meeting - 6pm
Feb. 15: 20's & 30's Group @Gladstone
Ski Hill - 3-6pm (ET)
Feb 18: Lenten Supper & Worship @SM -
5:30/6:30pm
Feb 25: Lenten Supper & Worship @SM -
5:30/6:30pm
Feb. 19: HC Voters' Meeting - 6:30pm

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Devotional Thoughts

By Pastor Crass

In Ephesians 4, Paul speaks about Christian maturity. As we grow in Christ, we grow more united with each other and more firm in the truth of God. But what does it mean to be spiritually mature?

Listen to what Paul says in verse 16: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.” Truth and love. These are the two things God calls us to as we become more mature. But how does a person balance truth and love when the truth is hard to speak or when love is hard to muster?

I think back to my afternoon job at Seminary. I worked as an after-school teacher at a ritzy private school in Milwaukee, the kind that charged upwards of \$20,000 tuition for 1st grade. Most of the kids we took care of came from the families of the teachers that taught there and were very middle class. But some of the kids also came from families of wealth and fame. I remember one day walking to my classroom to read my kids a book and take them outside for two hours of playtime, when I overheard a conversation between two moms. I didn't recognize either of them, as neither had kids that stayed for aftercare. But I quickly found out who one was.

“I'm sorry to hear about Jason,” the one mom said. “I've always been a bigger Jason Kidd fan than a fan of the Bucks.” The woman she was talking to, apparently, was the wife of the Hall of Fame point guard that earlier that day had been relieved of his coaching duties by the Milwaukee Bucks. Certainly, these were words of compassion, and understandably. No matter how much money a job pays, the stress of relocating a family and moving the kids to a new school midway through the year cannot be discounted. The mom said kind words. But I couldn't help but doubt that they were true. I certainly could have been wrong, but my gut told me she was saying what she thought the other mom wanted to hear. *(continued on page 3)*

WELS News

How do we encourage and train as many men and women for ministry as possible? This is one of the most pressing questions facing WELS at this time. With the current shortage of pastors and teachers, expanding mission opportunities, and a lower birth rate, we have challenging times ahead.

But every challenge that confronts us presents an opportunity. These challenges give us a great opportunity as a church body to talk about the high calling of serving as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. We have a natural opportunity to encourage more people to consider serving full time in the public gospel ministry. As I start in my new position as administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education, this is the highest priority before me.

A key element to promoting ministry among our members is our new ministry recruitment counselors. These counselors are working to increase the discussion of the public ministry in our midst. Their job description explains their work: The ministry recruitment counselor provides gospel-centered encouragement and guidance to called workers, parents, students, and lay influencers, helping them identify and nurture individuals who may be suited for public ministry. Their tagline is “Encourage the Encouragers, Influence the Influencers, and Recruit the Recruiters.” They will be working with pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and lay members to influence ministry encouragement in churches and schools.

We currently have three ministry recruitment counselors. Mary Heckendorf is working in the Arizona-California and Pacific Northwest Districts, Pastor Mark Schroeder is working in the Western Wisconsin and Northern Wisconsin Districts, and Sam McKenna is working in the Southeastern Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Atlantic Districts. We have plans to call two more counselors in 2026. All these counselors are privately funded through generous donors for the first four years. We are thankful for these gifts and excited to see the blessings that God will bring to our church body through their work.

Another of my priorities is to work with our WELS ministerial education schools. WELS Ministerial Education is at a critical time as WELS faces the challenge of needing more called workers when there are fewer young people to step forward for that work. Our church body has been blessed by a three-tiered, four-school system. We have two preparatory high schools: Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Our WELS college of ministry is Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Our pastors then continue their training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Each of these schools plays an important role in our collective work. WELS Ministerial Education is committed to maintaining this system. We will be looking at creative and strategic ways to maintain and increase enrollment at our schools to ensure that they are positioned to meet the called worker needs of our church body.

While some significant challenges are ahead for WELS Ministerial Education, these are exciting times to see how Christ can work through us to proclaim his Word to the world. I encourage every member to look for men and women who have the gifts to serve as pastors, teachers, or staff ministers. Take the time to encourage them to pursue this vocation for their lives. God can and will do amazing things when his people are faithfully proclaiming his Word and about his mission. I am excited to be part of this integral work.

Rev. Charles Vannieuwenhoven
New Administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education

Dual Parish Update

- Compline services have been discontinued due to low attendance. We will go back to normal Tuesday Bible classes.

St. Mark Council Update

- Joey Starzynski has been elected the new treasurer.
- A discussion was had about the Christian Dayschool/Highschool fund of upcoming needs from within the congregation.

Holy Cross Council Update

- (The Holy Cross voters have a meeting scheduled after the publication of this month's newsletter.)

Who Can I Pray For?

Below are some of our shut-ins that you can pray for, call, and even visit (please call ahead before any visits).

- Carol Heydn - (906)788-4445 - W5744 14 Lane, Wallace, MI 49893
- Kristin Bates - (906)280-8276 - W6450 Cty. Rd. 358, Daggett, MI 49821
- Harold Schlenvogt - (906)753-4326 - W5209 Cty Rd 348, Stephenson, MI 49887
- Evelyn Smith - (920)370-2361 - 1191 Pawn Dr, Green Bay WI 54313 (Menominee Health Services)
- Elizabeth Grille - (906)792-6060 - W4728 County Rd. 338, Wallace, MI 49893 (Menominee Health Services)
- Cheryl Bussler - (906)290-0881 - N222 Willow St, Stephenson, MI 49887
- Jim and Carlyn Lynch - (906)241-1488 - N10438 M-35, Cedar River, MI 49887
- Judy Hamblen - (715)923-5661 - 2006 Lake Park Dr, Room 203, Marinette, WI 54143 (The Cottages)

Would you like to be included on this list? Please reach out to Pastor Crass.

(continued from page 1)

Later that evening I was scrolling social media, reading about the firing. And nearly every comment was filled with hate. Jason Kidd was being called all kinds of names. People were thrilled that he had lost his job, with some going so far as to say he wasn't welcome in Milwaukee anymore. And certainly, while some were trolls hiding behind a keyboard who would have interreacted differently with Kidd if they were in a room with him, you know the passion of sports fans can lead to terrible things being said in public.

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head." I will admit to you that I have not always been focused on speaking the truth in love. At times I want to blurt out the truth. I want to say things how they are, unconcerned about how the "truth bombs" will land. My sinful nature tells me it's good, that truth (or rather, my opinion) is the only thing that matters and should, therefore, be unstifled. But then there are other times when I keep my mouth shut, refusing to tell people what they need to hear because telling people what they want to hear is so much easier. God, forgive me for those times that I speak without truth or without love!

Be honest with yourselves, friends. Are you truth-tellers, speaking your unfiltered mind because someone else "needs to hear it"? Have you built up a reputation where people don't care what you have to say because you are so bombastic and over-the-top that your words carry little weight? Or maybe, you go with the flow. And you're very kind to people but never speak out. You wrap your arm around a friend, not to tell them you love them but are concerned about their behavior, but to say, "whatever makes you happy." Your words also have no weight because you don't use them to say anything important. You just sit and nod, as if you have nothing to offer to others.

If you are one or the other, repent. If you are a pendulum that swings back and forth between the two, repent. And don't tell yourself, "I will try better." Be filled with the word of God, that word that helps us see God's truth as the most important medicine and our loved ones as the desperate sick who need that medicine. Then, like the Great Physician, approach people with good bedside manner and effective treatment. Do not be afraid to speak, but speak the truth in love. Amen.

Member Announcements

If you have an announcement you would like shared with everyone at church, please let Pastor Crass know.

February 2026

Unless otherwise noted, the Lord's Supper will be celebrated on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8am Bible Class at St. Mark 8:45am Worship at St. Mark 9:30am Sunday School at Holy Cross 10:30am Worship at Holy Cross 11:45am Bible Class at Holy Cross	2 1pm Holy Cross Ladies' Aid	3 1pm Midweek Bible Class at St. Mark 6:30pm Midweek Bible Class at Holy Cross	4 3:30pm Catechism Class	5	6	7 9am Puzzle Exchange at Holy Cross
8 8am Bible Class at St. Mark 8:45am Worship at St. Mark 9:30am Sunday School at Holy Cross 10:30am Worship at Holy Cross 11:45am Bible Class at Holy Cross	9 6pm Little Lambs 6pm St. Mark Council Meeting	10 1pm Midweek Bible Class at St. Mark 6:30pm Midweek Bible Class at Holy Cross	11 3:30pm Catechism Class	12	13	14
15 8am Bible Class at St. Mark 8:45am Worship at St. Mark 10:30am Worship at Holy Cross 11:45am Bible Class at Holy Cross 3:00pm (ET) 20's & 30's Tubing Event at Gladstone Ski Hill	16	17 1pm Midweek Bible Class at St. Mark 6:30pm Midweek Bible Class at Holy Cross	18 5:30pm Lenten Supper at St. Mark 6:30pm Lenten Worship at St. Mark	19 3:30pm Catechism Class 6:30pm Holy Cross Council Meeting	20	21
22 8am Bible Class at St. Mark 8:45am Worship at St. Mark 9:30am Sunday School at Holy Cross 9:45am Fellowship at St. Mark 10:30am Worship at Holy Cross 11:45am Bible Class at Holy Cross	23	24 1pm Midweek Bible Class at St. Mark 6:30pm Midweek Bible Class at Holy Cross	25 5:30pm Lenten Supper at St. Mark 6:30pm Lenten Worship at St. Mark	26 3:30pm Catechism Class	27	28

St. Mark
Altar: Sandy Toupalik & Amy Peterson
Hostess: Kay Keefer & Christa Crass

Holy Cross			
Ushers		Counters	
Date			
2/1	Team 3: Kedsch	Team 4: Marie Anderson & Mary Sivula	
2/8	Team 4: Sivula/Tauscher	Team 1: Jerry Karry & Kristin Sivula	
2/15	Team 5: Anderson, Walcher, Lynch	Team 2: Ken Hacker & Terri Sivula	
2/22	Team 1: Trout/Karry	Team 3: Sean Trout & Jeff Hacker	