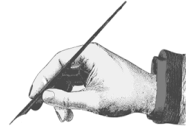


December 2023 / January 2024

President's Notes

By Joni Wasmund



Thank you for the privilege of serving as the President of St Mark Lutheran Church for the past 3 years. God uses each of us for His chosen purposes in His chosen time and I am truly thankful to have had the opportunity to be surrounded by the called men and women who served on Council these past years. Each Council was exceptionally gifted with wisdom, grace and commitment to Kingdom work and it's been wonderful to work with them. Our ministry teams (formerly known as committees) are wonderfully gifted as well and continue to bless us all by their ongoing dedication to their plans, projects and events. What an amazing group of people. Our staff is the best ever and truly remarkable in their abilities to produce outstanding results.

We welcomed Andy McBeath to our staff last month as our Worship Director and were struck in awe upon his offertory anthem his first Sunday with us, November 12th. Outstanding, incredible and tremendous are only a few adjectives that try but fail to fully describe the power of Andy's organ mastery. God has truly blessed us again.

Huge thank yous to Deb Zuchowski, Rhonda Doran, Brock Zwicke and Debbie Plishka for their faithful and joyful service as they step away from their staff roles as Church Administrator, Office Assistant, Contemporary Worship & Media Coordinator and Financial Secretary, on December 31st. Congratulations to Deb as she retires after many years of employment, the most recent 8 being our Church Admin. We wish all of you the very best in life as you follow God's lead wherever He takes you.

Continued on page 3

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Christmas Services



Please join us to celebrate
Christ's Birth on December
24th at 4:00 & 8:00PM
Christmas Day at 10:30 AM



CHURCH EVENTS

www.smlc.info/events

Complete Details Inside or

Find Us Online@

www.smlc.info

ARTICLE DEADLINE

The deadline for the February edition of *The Voice* is **January 15th**. Please Email articles to:

stmarkcommunications@gmail.com.

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024



ST. MARK COUNCIL

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Joni Wasmund (Dec)/Cliff Ewert (Jan)
ioni1812@sbcglobal.net | cewert41@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Laurie Kerns (Dec)

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Charlie Burke
 Wendy Weidner
 Brock Zwicke

INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR

Pastor Steve Abend | pastor@smlc.info

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Deb Zuchowski | Deb@smlc.info (Dec)

OFFICE ASSISTANT

Rhonda Doran | Rhonda@smlc.info (Dec)

MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

Rick Wilhelm | hockeyfamily3035@gmail.com

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Debbie Plishka | dplishka@gmail.com (Dec)

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC & MEDIA COORDINATOR

smlc@smlc.info (Dec)

BOOKKEEPER

Barb Griffith | Barb@smlc.info

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Andy McBeath | andy@smlc.info

NURSERY COORDINATOR

Deb Heide | heidedeborah@gmail.com

Next Council Meetings: Tuesday, December 12th @ 7:00PM and Tuesday, January 9th
Next Committee Meetings: Tuesday, December 26th @ 7:00PM and January 23rd

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As president-elect of St. Mark for the coming year, I would like to share some of my thoughts and goals with you.

I sincerely thank Joni for her dedication to St. Mark for the past three years. All of us appreciate her time and effort to help move our church forward through a difficult time. It is my prayer that Joni continues to help in the growth of our church.

My goals are simple, yet complex as I will work to move Christ's Kingdom forward, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, at St. Mark and our community.

- 1) To fully support the work of the Transition and Call teams in their work to secure a Christ centered pastor who will bring renewal to St. Mark.
- 2) To invite more people to accept Christ and prayerfully attend St. Mark, especially young families with children. We should explore better use of the Ed Center to make it a hub for youth activities: a day care center, a facility for home schooling, a place for after school care, nights for youth tutoring, scouting activities, etc. By using our resources to reach out to the community, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love."
- 3) To simplify our church operations. Our ministry teams should serve as the primary facilitators in moving St. Mark forward with the support of the Council. Each ministry team will have an annual budget to be controlled at their discretion. When ministry teams are empowered to perform at the highest level, they will be more successful and the members will be happier and the results more satisfying.
- 4) To enhance communications between the leadership and the congregation. In addition, provide open communication to the community through direct mailings for events, press releases to the local media, and increased use of social media.

In today's world Christianity is under attack from many sides with agendas to marginalize the Christian influence. I pray that by all of us working together we take the Lord's Great Commission to "...make disciples of all nations..." and apply it to our own community.

Finally, I thank Deb Zuchowski and Rhonda Doran, who are leaving at the end of the year, for their dedication and work that greatly supported St. Mark through their years of service. Work is being done to replace both positions, but with the Holiday Season, these jobs may go unfulfilled so we ask for your patience. We also ask that if you have some free time in January, 2024 to help by volunteering to answer phones, assist in the office, and keep a daily routine going, your time will be greatly appreciated. You can volunteer by calling Pastor Steve at 847-356-8140 or by email: pastor@smlc.info.

God is great all the time and may He grant you and your family a blessed Christmas season.

Cliff Ewert



President's Message *Continued from page 1*



The two Church Administration job descriptions were slightly edited and prepared for internal and external posting at the end of October and are currently in the hands of a small group led by Trustee Laurie Kerns, as this group identifies all the responsibilities performed by the office staff and aligns them to ensure the staffing model structure is in the best order for St Mark. Watch for the job postings and advise Laurie if you are interested in either position.

Our Transition Team continues to lead us under the guidance of Pastor Steve as we enter into the "Present" and celebrate who we are today as a congregation. Our history has shaped us and God has been faithful in that. We continue to look to Him for His grace and mercy as we celebrate all the good things like our many, many volunteers and all they tirelessly do and how we learn how we can better love as Jesus loved and be the disciples Jesus calls us to be.

Thank you all for the support, love and kind words you shared with me these past weeks and years. It has truly been a privilege to serve the Lord in this capacity.

A little child, a shining star, a stable rude, the door ajar. Yet in that place, so crude, forlorn, the Hope of all the world was born.

I wish you all a blessed Advent and Christmas season.

Joni Wasmund
Congregational President

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart
December 2023 / January 2024

From the Desk of Intentional Interim Pastor Steve

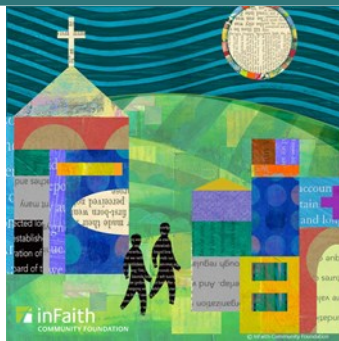
Greeting brothers and sisters in Christ

I wanted to thank you all for the love and support you have shown Penny and me. This is an extremely difficult time and your care, calls and cards have been so instrumental in helping us see that God loves us and is carrying us currently. When we read the cards, they remind us what we can't see in this time of grief, so thank you. One specific card touched me the other day, it said grief is not a lack of faith, grief is not a lack of trust, grief is the price for love. Our son David was loved by so many. If you were to ask people who their best friend was, a dozen people would say David Abend. He was just the kind of person that once you were friends, you were friends for life! People traveled from all over the country to be with us at his service. It reminded us of the impact his life had on so many people. He was a person of great faith in God and would share it regularly with anyone who would listen. His favorite Bible passage was, "Christ is in me." He picked it out when he was 10 and lived his life full of love, compassion, and care for others because Christ lived in him!!!

David was deeply loved by his mom and me, so it does stand that our grief runs so deep! Thank you all for the love and support you have shown us. It has made a difference!

Your brother in Christ,

Intentional Interim Pastor Steve



ENDOWMENT FUND CONTINUES TO GROW

We are excited to share with St Mark how well our Endowment Fund has grown over the last couple of years. Your continued contributions and the Thrivent investment skills has allowed our fund to increase to a market value over \$75,000. **Thank You** St Mark for those donations.

Earlier, we indicated that only a little of the Endowment Fund would be used to support St. Mark's mission; the remainder would be left to grow. Over time, as gifts are made to it and the principal grows, the Endowment Fund becomes a substantial way for the church to expand its mission in our community.

There is still time for you to contribute to the Endowment Fund and include your donation as an income tax deduction for 2023. The easiest way to contribute is to open the Giving page on our website and ask that your donation be directed to the Endowment Fund. www.smlc.info/giving/

The IRS Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is in full swing. Did you know that the IRS allows you to contribute directly from your IRA to St Mark to meet your RMD without paying income taxes on the contribution? When you donate to St. Mark via the Giving page of our website, all those contributions are considered tax deductible donations. If you ask the company managing your IRA to send money directly to St. Mark, marked for the Endowment Fund, that contribution counts toward your required minimum distribution and it does not count as taxable income. Confusing, maybe, but your income tax preparer knows all about this. If you have any questions about our Endowment Fund, please call Mel Ellingsen (847) 274-8144, or email him at mel-ellingsen@comcast.net.

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024



MISSOURI MUSINGS

BY BOB YARBROUGH

A National Epidemic

Are you traveling for the holidays? Many are. They will visit family or friends. Sometimes conflict arises because we need to visit more than one place. If your own family lives in the same area as your in-laws, it can be hard to balance your time. You can't be two places at once.

But isn't it nice to be wanted? Not everyone has that "problem." In fact, according to the surgeon general of the US, Dr. Vivek Murthy, there is a national epidemic . . . of loneliness. Almost 1/3 of people in the US among 19–29 year-olds say they feel lonely. That number goes up to almost 40% among college students.

One report states: "The student loneliness epidemic is often associated with the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, which prevented young people from making connections in their usual classroom and extracurricular settings, but the issue dates to well before 2020."

Isn't it ironic? There has never been more "connectivity" in the form of cell phones, messaging, texting, and the like. "Influencers" have millions of "followers." But the more digital connection we have, the more isolated many feel.

Most who are caught up in *connectivity* have never discovered *Christianity*. By "Christianity" I mean not so much the institutional religion as personal faith in Christ and the bond we have with others as a result.

More than any media influencer, Christ connects us. He connects us with God: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Christ also connects us with other people. Through faith in him we have God as our heavenly Father. We have fellow believers as sisters and brothers.

To know Christ is to know you belong. Even after this life, we have a future home, for Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2 KJV). But already, here and now, God is with us. We are not alone, ever. Consider such Scripture promises as:

"Fear not, for I am with you" (Gen. 26:24).

"The LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 20:1).

"The LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies" (Deut. 20:4).

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God" (Isa. 41:10).

"The God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

One of Jesus' most famous promises is found in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (28:20).

Not only do we belong to God the Father in Christ: we belong to each other. It's one of the best things about church: we care about others, and others care about us.

Twenty years ago we were living in Venetian Village. I was driving my son Micah to a baseball tournament out in Rockford. These words of a Toby Keith country music song came on the radio: "I love this bar/It's my kind of place/Just walkin' through the front door/Puts a big smile on my face."

Not everybody smiles when they walk into St. Mark on Sunday. But many do. They love "the church," and they don't mean the building: they mean the people. They shake hands or hug in the narthex. They hang out between services in the fellowship hall. They may meet separately during the week.

I wonder if "St. Mark East" still meets in the McDonalds on Grand in Lindenhurst?

As the holidays are nearly upon us, remember that for many it's a lonely time. Take Romans 5:8 to heart: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Then show to others the love God has shown to you. By ourselves we can't cure the national epidemic of loneliness. But we can receive and share with others the potent cure of belonging, to Christ and to each other.

¹ https://www.insidehighered.com/news/students/physical-mental-health/2023/11/08/new-epidemic-gripping-college-campuses-loneliness?mc_cid=74a3bfc4f3



St. Mark Council News

To keep you better informed about Church Council decisions we briefly present the major items from our meetings. Should you desire in-depth information, please go to <https://smlc.info/minutes/> for additional Council and Committee minutes.

Council Highlights November 2023

Accepted resignations of Rhonda Doran, Office Assistant and Debbie Plishka, Financial Secretary, effective December 31, 2023.

Approved in-house DivorceCare program for members and the public to be coordinated by Sue Rudny.

Approved filing with DCFS for childcare licensing exemption for Parents Morning/Night Out events.

Approved revisions made to the Employee Handbook to include IL SecureChoice (State mandated employee retirement program) and updated PTO (Paid Time Off) parameters.

Approved Property & Management expenditure for new windows and roofing over the original fellowship hall (old Sunday School room).

Approved Bookkeeping system conversion to Advanced Online Non-profit QuickBooks.

?? Tech Enthusiasts Wanted: Join the St Mark Lutheran Church Tech Team! ?? *Step Up and Be a Tech Hero!*

Have you ever wanted to be behind the scenes, making a significant impact on our worship experience? St Mark Lutheran Church invites YOU to join our dynamic Tech Team! No experience necessary—just a willingness to learn, have fun, and contribute to this vital ministry.

Why Join St Mark Lutheran Church Tech Team?

- ? Learn a New Skill: Interested in gaining valuable skills? Operating sound and video equipment is a fantastic way to develop technical know-how. Our experienced team, led by Director of Music Andy McBeath, will guide you every step of the way.
- ? No Experience Required: You read that right—no prior experience needed! Our Tech Team is all about learning together. Whether you're a tech guru or a complete novice, we welcome individuals of all skill levels.
- ? Support a Vital Ministry: As we navigate a shortage of volunteers, we need dedicated parishioners like you to step up and support this vital ministry. Your contribution to the Tech Team ensures our worship services run smoothly, enhancing the experience for every one.

How to Join:

Contact our Director of Music, Andy McBeath, at andy@smlc.info, to express your interest.



Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

Greetings From The Congregational Life Committee

Advent Soup Suppers

Mark your calendars to join us for great fellowship and delicious food. There will be a soup supper starting at 5:30 p.m. followed by an Advent service on December 6th, 13th and 20th. We always have at least five different kinds of hot, delicious soup along with a large variety of sandwich fixings, salads, and yummy desserts. It's a great way to get to know other church members and to really get into the holiday spirit. *Please join us!*



Trunk or Treat / Operation Christmas Child / Holiday Meal in a Bag

Thank you to everyone that participated in any of these annual events. We had a nice turnout for Trunk or Treat and look forward to making it an even bigger event next year. It's not too soon to start thinking of family friendly ways to decorate your vehicle!

We were able to pack 300 boxes for Operation Christmas Child thanks to all of the donations that we received. Our committee thanks everyone that purchased items off our Amazon wish list, dropped items in our collection bins, and shopped with their Thrivent cards.



Thanksgiving is approaching quickly and we are working on the final details for our Holiday Meal in a Bag program. By the time you're reading this, we will have packed and delivered 26 boxes filled with food for a complete Thanksgiving meal. Thank you to everyone that donated items, helped to pack up the boxes and/or delivered to families in our community.

Merry Christmas to all!

C/3 HIGH SCHOOLERS

Things we hope to do this month:

- 1) Go Christmas Caroling at Victory Lakes and Cedar Village – at least***
- 2) Have a Progressive Dinner that ends with ...
- 3) ... a White Elephant Gift Exchange
- 4) Go to a movie, do an Escape Room, or go bowling?????
- 5) What would you like to do?????

*** If you have any other ideas and/or places to go caroling, please let me know.

As always, if you have any questions, pray requests, concerns about what we are doing and/or why we are doing it, please reach out to Mike Mol at 847-276-8739 or at MEMOL2Elks@gmail.com. **Please continue to pray for the youth of St. Mark!!**

thrivent
Connecting faith and finances for good.

THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS®
Thrivent Financial members that have Choice Dollars® have until Wednesday, March 31 to direct them

THRIVENT MEMBERS!

Don't forget to use your Action Teams before year end.

Holidays are coming and Thrivent members have the unique opportunity to get funds to help support upcoming projects in the church and community.

DIVORCECare

#1 DIVORCE RECOVERY PROGRAM IN THE WORLD!

Group begins Monday, January 8th 6:30-8:30pm St. Mark Library
Register by sending email to stmarkdivorcecare@gmail.com



Are you or someone you know currently going through a marriage separation or divorce? St. Mark is here to help! We are proud to be offering DivorceCare!

DivorceCare is a Christ centered biblically based program that helps those who have been devastated by divorce or separation. It is a 3-step program consisting of a video seminar, group discussion and a personal workbook. We will meet one evening a week for 13 weeks. Come bond with others going through similar situations. Together we will listen, share and pray while developing our personal relationship with Christ. You'll hear concepts and practical advice that can help you heal and begin to put your life back together again! Stay tuned for start-up dates! Contact Susan Rudny (Group leader) at stmarkdivorcecare@gmail.com for any questions..

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

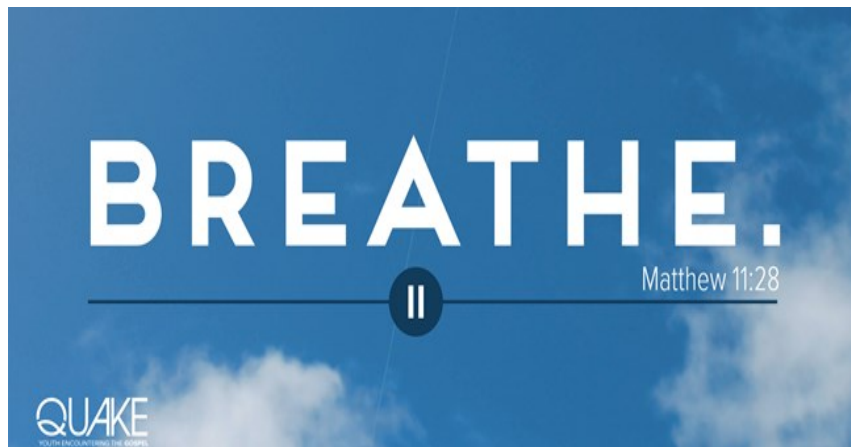
ATTENTION ALL 6TH THROUGH 12TH GRADERS

QUAKE 2024 is coming up in January of 2024!

What is QUAKE you might ask? Well, according to their website:

Quake events are weekend retreats created specifically for youth in grades 6-12. Since 1966, we have hosted Quake events at hotels and water parks across the country. Quake partners with youth leaders to encourage teens to become established in their faith, empowered for Christian living, and enabled to live a life of ministry and leadership.

This year's theme is:



And it will be held at the Hyatt Regency Schaumburg on January 26th – 28th, 2024. Here is their website: [QUAKE Info](#). The cost will probably be \$100 or less for each participant.

^^^ ^^

What am I really interested in knowing right now though – is there anyone who is interested in going? If so (or even if you have questions), please contact me, Mike Mol, at church, at 847-276-8739, or at MEMOL2Elks@gmail.com.

St. Mark's Three Days of Prayer

January 9-11, 2024



What profit is there in prayer?

“Much in every way. Whatever God can do faith can do, and whatever faith can do prayer can do when offered in faith. Faith is only genuine as it eventuates into prayer. An invitation to prayer is, therefore, an invitation to omnipotence, for prayer engages the omnipotent God and brings Him into our human affairs. Nothing is impossible to the man who prays in faith, just as nothing is impossible with God. ... According to the Bible, we have because we ask, or we have not because we ask not.” Is wisdom not to pray, but pray again and again till the answer comes? The world situation is such that only God can straighten it out. Let us not fail the world and disappoint God by failing to pray.” Tozer, A.W. *Prayer* Moody Press, 2016. P.88.

St. Mark Church will be participating in our ninth LCMC *Three Days of Prayer* from Tuesday, January 9 through Thursday, January 11, 2024 as well as the rest of 2024. Look for updates in the weekly announcements and the *2024 Prayer Brochure* and *Prayer Guides* on the Prayer Table in the Narthex the last week of December.

We are asking for your earnest prayers that Our Lord guide each of our hearts and minds to prepare and participate in these challenging times for St. Mark Lutheran Church. So we pray to set aside time to:

- glorify and honor Our Lord;
- confess our sins and seek his forgiveness;
- petition our Lord for a spiritual revival of our church body and cover our leadership with prayers;
- continue to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in giving wisdom and courage for our church leaders as they seek our new shepherd;
- trust and obey the Holy Spirit's direction;
- help us refocus on our mission in carrying out the Great Commission to seekers, making disciples of new believers and continuing spiritual formation of existing believers.



Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

On Going Opportunities for Prayer



- *First Friday Sing and Pray.* See you Friday, December 1st at 7:00 pm. and January 5, 2024 from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm in the Sanctuary. See *First Friday, Sing and Pray, page 13.*
- *St. Mark Prayer Chain*, a wonderful group of fellow Christians, praying for all prayer requests and praising God for His listening to our petitions, thanksgivings and praises for His responses. Email requests and praises to smlcprayers@gmail.com. Please share with the Prayer Chain; how God has responded to your prayer request.
- *ZOOM Weekly Prayer Meeting* - Come, pray and be blessed. Beginning Tuesdays, November 28 until further notice from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. We will be meeting on Zoom praying over the previous week of Prayer Chain requests, St. Mark Church and each other. Contact Pam Burke 244-430-6226 and Barb Ewert for Zoom link. 847-514-5487.
- The Worship and Music Committee will be posting the 2024 *Three Days of Prayer Brochure* on the St. Mark website under Prayer. We prayerfully request you include these various petitions as part of your devotions for our church families, Intention Interim Pastor Steve, staff, church council and committees during this coming church year.



**Every Month - 2nd Saturday /
7:00am Breakfast /
8:00am Training / 9:30am Adjourn**

Join in person or via zoom on the 2nd Saturday of the month (Men age 15+). Become part of something good and GET PLUGGED IN. We always have room for one more man. Send your contact information to Ministry2EveryMan@gmail.com or text 847-271-8632.

St. Mark's Joyful Hearts - Singles Group

Joyful Hearts is a group for St Mark single people who get together for friendship and fellowship. The commonality and shared experience of being single is what brings us together. We believe that Christian friendships make our lives more fulfilling. Joyful Hearts is not a group that actively seeks dating relationships. We have been getting together once a month at one of our local restaurants for food, conversation and fellowship. Additionally, throughout the month we have gone to the movies, farmers markets, local concerts, etc. If you are interested in joining this group please let us know (you can pick and choose what you want to participate in). This is a great way to get to know other members of the church!



Contact Patty or Nancy [Lindholm Patricia@yahoo.com](mailto:Lindholm_Patricia@yahoo.com) or NEOConnor@comcast.net

A HUGE THANK YOU and an update about FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

If you have been to FMSC in Libertyville lately, you may have noticed something new!! In the lobby is now a shelf with Bibles on it and a sign that says: "If you would like or need a Bible, take one. They are free!" Those Bibles are from St. Mark!! In August, after getting approval from Council and Worship and Music, I collected St. Mark's old unused Bibles and started putting them on the shelf to be taken by our volunteers. Looking at the number of boxes of Bibles we had, I figured it would take a *long* time to go through them all, but God had other ideas. In just over two months, 155 Bibles have been taken off the shelves and we are out of the used Bibles.

Now for the HUGE THANK YOU!! Seeing that there is definitely a need for Bibles in the area, I again approached Council and this time, Evangelism, seeking funds to purchase more Bibles. H.I.S. Ministry heard of this request and stepped up and donated just over \$1000 to buy more Bibles!! GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME & ALL THE TIME GOD IS GOOD!!

As you may know, St. Mark (and you) donate generously to FMSC through our Benevolence. In case you didn't know, each meal you pack costs **only 29 cents!!** So thank you for blessing kids around the world with your giving. As always, we would love to have you come and pack too. St. Mark is signed up to pack either the first Thursday night or Saturday morning of the month. (If it makes sense -- the first Thursdays are odd numbered months, and the first Saturdays are even numbered months.). Our next packing event is right after this newsletter is "published" but if you would like to sign up for 2024, our upcoming dates are listed below. As a reminder, there are "sit down and label the bags" jobs, "standing in one spot and packing the bags" jobs, and "working for the warehouse crew" job.

Saturday mornings

[Dec 2nd at 8:45 am](#)

[Feb 3rd at 8:45 am](#)

[April 6th at 8:45 am](#)

Thursday nights

[Jan 4th at 6:45 pm](#)

[March 7th at 7 pm](#)

[May 2nd at 7 pm](#)

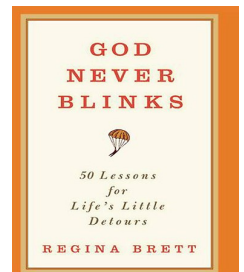
If you ever have a question about FMSC – what, why, and/or how we do things – please ask Mike Mol at church, at 847-276-8739, or at MEMOL2Elks@gmail.com.



God Never Blinks

This month's book, *God Never Blinks*, is a collection of 50 essays by columnist Regina Brett. When Brett turned 50, she wrote a column on the 50 lessons life had taught her. She reflected on all she had learned through becoming a single parent, looking for love in all the wrong places, working on her relationship with God, battling cancer and making peace with a difficult childhood. It became one of the most popular columns ever published in the newspaper, and since then the 50 lessons have been emailed to hundreds of thousands of people.

Brett now takes the 50 lessons and expounds on them in essays that are deeply personal. From "Don't take yourself too seriously-Nobody else does" to "Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift," these lessons will strike a chord with anyone who has ever gone through tough times--and haven't we all? You can find this book under call number 646.7 BRE.



Noah's Nursery News:

I hope you enjoyed reading all about our nursery volunteers over the past several months!

A big shout out of thanks to those who didn't want to be recognized in this way and to everyone involved for their continued support with our nursery endeavor which allows parents to tend to their spiritual needs while we tend to their children!

Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Deb Zuchowski for her leadership, support and guidance throughout the years! Thank you, Deb. You'll be missed!

Stay tuned as some fun things are coming up regarding additional "Parents Night Out" events! More information to follow as dates are established and then it'll be publicized.

In the mean time, God Bless - Deb Heide



Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

LIVE READERS NEEDED

(No experience needed.
Just willingness.)

Can you read out loud? In front of people?
We are looking for members who can read Scripture out loud in front of the congregation during services.

This is a great chance to get involved in your church. You don't have to be a fabulous public speaker. Training will be provided. If you can read and talk out loud at the same time, then we want you!

Contact II Pastor Steve (pastor@smlc.info) or any member of the Worship & Music Committee for more information.



Christmas Program and Celebration....

On December 10th at 4:00 our Sunday School will be bringing the true meaning of Christmas to our church with a nativity program. Immediately following there will be fun family events and pizza for everyone. Please invite your families and friends to join us as we celebrate the joyous occasion of our Savior's birth.

Parents of play participants, please remember practice dates of Sundays, December 3 and 10 at 9:00 before Sunday School.

There is still time to volunteer to help to make everything run smoothly for the Christmas celebration. More helping hands lightens the load. Please sign up to help on the volunteer board located in the Narthex today or contact Cindy Zwicke or members of Parish Education Ministry team.



Christmas Decorating

A huge THANK YOU to all who helped decorate the sanctuary and adjoining areas for the holiday. It took a greatly enthusiastic group of confirmands, their parents and congregational members to get it done in a manner of hours. It will take half the time to take it down on January 8th, 2024 at 6:00PM. Many hands make light work!

A reminder to add your ornament to the fellowship hall tree! Add your heart to all those who already have a little part of themselves displayed.

My Christmas wish for all is that we regain the Christian fire of our parents!

Gae Michal gmichal48@gmail.com

In late November some of the Sunday School teachers were having students draw pictures and write Christian sayings on shoeboxes. I along with several Sunday School teachers and students were packing 300 shoebox gifts for Operation Christmas Child. I loved to see Sunday School teachers and students packing shoeboxes. I hope next year I will see more! This was a great cause and I enjoyed lunch and fellowship with many at St. Mark. In conclusion, I want to thank all members of St. Mark for their kindness and fellowship as I approach my first year of becoming a member! As I write and think about December it has gotten colder and that means that our Sunday School students are already rehearsing for St. Mark's Christmas Program on Sunday, December 10th at 4:00PM. I hope to see many of you at this very special program. Next, I hope to see many visitors in December as I write this to you! I have a lot of ideas about a new prize bin for Sunday School students who have 10 punches. As a friendly reminder, any members are welcome to attend Feed My Starving Children events in December and the New Year!



Submitted by: Melissa Grandt
St. Mark Sunday School Coordinator
smarksunschool@gmail.com

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

Do you Know???... Andy McBeath – Director of Worship and Music

I think a great place to begin is how to pronounce my last name, it is the same pronunciation as Shakespeare's Scottish play.

A little history about me, I grew up in the Chicagoland area in Batavia, Illinois. My first exposure to music was through my Lutheran Church's music program where I joined the children's choir and took lessons from the piano accompanist. In high school I became interested in the organ and took a few years of lessons from the church organist Karl Bruhn. I then went on to study music performance at the University of Illinois for my bachelor's degree and to New York University for my master's.

My first job after college I was hired to work at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, Illinois. There, I began as an Assistant Organist and Bell Choir director and was fortunate to be mentored by the head organist, Don Horisberger. After around five years of weekly lessons and playing for services and singing in the choir, I was promoted to Associate Organist/Choirmaster. After eight years I was looking for something new and moved on to the Presbyterian Church of Barrington. For the past two years I was the organist working with the choir director Dr. Kirsten Hedegaard, head of the choral program at Loyola University.

Currently, I live on the north side of Chicago in the Ravenswood neighborhood, about a mile north of Wrigley Field. My wife Katie and I just celebrated our first wedding anniversary this past September. Katie is a Product marketing Manager at Spekit, a just-in-time learning platform. We love to travel and just returned from an amazing trip to Portugal. We added to our family by getting our dog Piper who is a seven-month-old Golden Cava doodle (mom is a Golden doodle, dad is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel). We have lots of pictures (see one below). My parents are Marcia and Larry who still live in the same house I grew up in Batavia, Illinois. My mom is a retired fourth grade teacher and my dad is a CPA who is still working on retiring but can't get enough of the fast-paced world of accounting. I have one brother, Robbie McBeath, who works for the University of Illinois advocating for broadband access across Illinois. He lives in Logan Square with his girlfriend Kyra and their dog Penny.

I look forward to serving at Saint Mark Lutheran Church and creating a music program that glorifies God in all we do. Be on the lookout to join the bell choir and/or senior choir! If you are interested, please reach out to me at andy@smlc.info.



Join the St Mark Lutheran Church Choir!



“As long as we live there is never enough singing.” - Martin Luther

Do you have a passion for singing? St Mark Lutheran Church invites you to join our vibrant and welcoming choir, where the power of music brings hearts together. To join please contact Director of Music Andy McBeath at andy@smlc.info.

Why Join St Mark Lutheran Church Choir?

- ☑ **Spiritual Fulfillment:** Joining the St Mark Lutheran Church Choir is not just about singing—it's about adding your voice to a powerful tradition of worship to glorify God. Experience the spiritual upliftment that comes from being part of a choir that enriches our worship services with timeless and inspirational music.
- ☑ **Friendship and Fellowship:** Choir rehearsals and performances are not just about singing; they're about building lasting connections with fellow choir members. Come as you are and share laughter, camaraderie, and a shared passion for music as we grow together in both faith and friendship.
- ☑ **Musical Growth:** Whether you're a seasoned vocalist or a beginner, our choir welcomes all skill levels. Under the guidance of Director of Music, Andy McBeath, you will have the opportunity to learn new techniques and experience the joy of musical expression. Contact Andy at andy@smlc.info.

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

*First Friday
Sing & Pray
Dec 1st &
Jan 5th*

God is still in the business of answering prayer!

Come join us Friday, December 1st to sing a few of our favorite Christmas carols and celebrate a time of reflection this advent season. Also on Friday, January 5th we will be bringing in the 2024 New Year praying God’s will for guidance and direction in our lives, church and country. This all begins at 7:00pm for one hour in the sanctuary. Pray silently, in agreement or out loud. It is an informal gathering to come and go as your schedule accommodates, no pressure, no expectations.

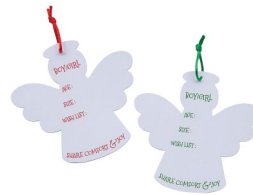
*The effective prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
Colossians 4:2*



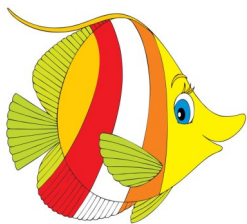
**Angel Tree
Is Back!**



Angel Tree Tags are now available. The gifts need to be returned to church by Tuesday, December 12th. The gifts will be delivered the week of December 18th. Each child will receive a gift of clothing or toys not more than \$25-\$30 in value. Return the gifts wrapped with the Angel Tree Tag attached to the Christmas tree in the Narthex. Please contact Jill Decker if you have questions.



Thank you to everyone that helps with this ministry. The families greatly appreciate the gifts.



Fin Facts

Financial Position & Year End Giving

As of October 31st St. Mark had \$325,775 (increase of \$11,000 since August) in checking and savings accounts as well as \$60,000 in a contingency account and \$363,262 in Restricted Funds. Due primarily to staff vacancies, and in spite of contributions being \$83,842 below budget, the church is running a net income (gain) through October in the amount of \$91,824.

Now that we will soon be at full staff, we expect a net **loss** in 2024 of approximately \$41,000. Losses of this magnitude cannot be absorbed indefinitely. Please carefully consider St. Mark in any year end giving you may be planning. Beyond tithing, year end offerings can help sustain a church through the lean years. General offerings or donations to one of St. Mark’s Endowment Funds (see page 4) will be put to good use. Also, do not forget to designate those Thrivent Choice[®] dollars before the end of the year!

	<u>Budgeted</u> <u>Unrestricted Offerings</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>Unrestricted Offerings</u>	<u>Over/Under</u>
Month of September 2023	\$ 55,125	\$ 40,641	(\$ 14,484)
Month of October	\$ 64,125	\$ 48,362	(\$ 15,763)
2023 Fiscal Year (Jan.– October)	\$ 567,250	\$ 483,408	(\$ 83,842)

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

Support St. Mark & Local Businesses



Second Tuesday Each Month

CARRY OUT, PICK UP or DELIVERY!
Be sure to bring your coupon and mention it at time of payment!

Present this certificate at the time of payment and **15%** of your order, excluding tax and tip, will be donated to **St. Mark Lutheran Church**.
Certificate must be presented at time of payment.
Not to be used with any other coupons or discounts.

Share with your friends and family.

LINDENHURST LOCATION ONLY

12:00 - 9:00 PM

Visit www.antiochpizzashop.com for full menu.

Valid the **Second Tuesday** of each Month

Antioch Pizza ■ 224-444-8657
1856 E. Grand Ave., Lindenhurst

DATES: Second Tuesdays
12/12/2023, 1/9/2024, 2/13/2024



Wendy's

THIRD THURSDAY EACH MONTH!

Now Serving Breakfast!

DRIVE THRU Anytime that day! Be sure to bring your coupon! (paper or electronic)

Show your support for St. Mark Lutheran Church

Stop into **Wendy's® Lindenhurst** anytime on the **Third Thursday** of each month and **30%** of qualifying sales will be donated to **St. Mark Lutheran Church**.

DATE: Every Third Thursday
12/21/23, 1/18/2024, 2/22/2024

TIME: All Day (Breakfast until Close)

LOCATION: 370 S US Highway 45, Lindenhurst

Present this flyer when ordering!

Paper flyer or electronic image of flyer (on a phone/tablet) is required when order is placed. Only valid on date at location specified above. Wendy's gift cards and other retail purchases are excluded from the event. Drive-thru, carry-out (place inside the dining room at the counter) and dine-in orders when and where available qualify. Owned and operated by **HAMRA** Enterprises, a Wendy's franchisee www.hamrafundraising.com.

Divine Signs is Lake County's premier yard message creation company, dedicated to spreading joy and love in an extraordinary way!

We are excited to announce that we will **contribute 10% of our proceeds to St. Mark Lutheran Church** in Lindenhurst, IL. Simply mention St. Mark Lutheran Church, it is that easy! Tell your family and friends and let's get your next congratulatory event in the schedule!

This promotion is offered for everyone. Contact us directly or visit our sites to learn more about us...



Kevin and Tracy Graul

Phone or text: (224) 223-2786
Facebook.com/DivineSigns3.16
[Instagram@Divinesigns3.16](https://www.instagram.com/Divinesigns3.16)
DivineSigns.godaddysites.com

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024



Order Your Poinsettia Plant Today

I/We would like to order

_____ (quantity)

RED POINSETTIA plant(s)
at \$12.00 each for the

2023 Christmas Eve Worship Services

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION!

Name:

(Please Print Clearly)

Phone:

(Please Print Clearly)

Plant(s) are given:

___ **To the Glory of God**

___ **In Honor of** _____
(Please Print)

___ **In Memory of** _____
(Please Print)

___ **In Celebration of** _____
(Please Print)

___ **I will pick up the plant(s) after the 8 pm Christmas Eve Service.**
(Plants must be picked up by Wednesday, 12/27/22)

___ **I would like the plant(s) taken to someone who is ill or shut-in.**

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

I have enclosed my payment of \$_____.

(Please make checks payable to St Mark Lutheran Church.)

(Deadline for ordering plants is Sunday, **December 10th**)

**Open Arms
Food Pantry**
Neighbors Helping
Neighbors



OAM continues to support more than 200 families every week ! During the Thanksgiving distribution over 400 Holiday meals were handed out in our community!

Thank you for all your continued support filling the "yellow barrels"!! It is truly heartwarming to see our St. Mark family continue to support our neighbors in these unique times.

The items requested for December are Cereal / Baby food - - - January needs are Baby food, Soup & Coffee - - Any nonperishable food is always appreciated.

If you have any questions about OAM please contact Ron Placko at rdplacko@comcast.net or 847-404-3304.

**Announcing
a new
Program at
St. Mark!**



In January 2024, St. Mark will be starting a program entitled Parent Morning Out. The Evangelism Ministry Team is starting this community outreach program as a means to reach and minister to young families in the greater Lake Villa / Lindenhurst area. Children can be dropped off for 3 hours, one Friday morning a month, free of charge. The first date will be announced in December.

To run this program, we need people to help care for the children. If you are interested in spending 3 hours a month playing with little ones, please contact Deb Heide at heidedeborah@gmail.com.

Background checks will be required.

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart

December 2023 / January 2024

ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH
1822 EAST GRAND AVENUE
LINDENHURST IL 60046

*Address Service Requested
Return Postage Guaranteed*



The **VOICE**
OF ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH



Stephen Ministry

THE VOICE

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH

☎ (847) 356-8140
🖱 www.smlc.info
✉ smlc@smlc.info

Service Times
Saturday | 5:30PM
Traditional
Sunday | 8:00AM
Traditional
10:30AM
Contemporary

TO RECEIVE
★ THE VOICE ONLINE,
EMAIL DEB@SMLC.INFO

**FEBRUARY
VOICE DEADLINE:
January 15, 2024**

Serve The Lord With All Your Heart
December 2023 / January 2024