

ST MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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Family of St. Mark's,

This December, I was asked to write a devotional for a United Methodist church in the village of Gouverneur, in upper New York, the birthplace of the Lifesaver candy. Before joining St. Mark's, my dear friend, who pastors in that village, invited me to spend a few days with him and to participate in Holy Communion together, something we had not done in many years. A few

weeks ago, I got an email saying that they needed spots filled for their parishioner-run devotional for Advent, and I could not help but answer the call to help a fellow church. What started as one devotional for Christmas Eve became two, and I have shared them below:

December 5th, 2025: Matthew 1: 18-24: Despite its significance, the story of Joseph gets lost in the majesty of the divine conception of Mary. If we're being honest, who can blame us? We choose the Son of God and angels versus a silent, sleeping character. However, as we look at the text, Joseph is called righteous and is willing to endure social criticism to preserve Mary's reputation (Matt. 1: 19-20).

In this moment, this is where the story becomes interesting: Joseph has decided to do more than what the social order would have required him, but he receives a vision of a different, more beautiful path to remain beside Mary and see Jesus for himself. Is it the easier path? Not at all. Will it be a journey of ridicule, confusion, and probably telling the same story to dozens of people that aren't really listening anyway? More than likely. But Joseph is not concerned with the status quo; he is invested in showing the world who Jesus is.

Take this week to listen to what God may be telling you to do in your own life. In reflection, prayer, and conversation, the ideas that the Holy Spirit places into your heart may not be as strange as they seem at first, and may lead you directly to seeing Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

December 24th, 2025: James 5: 7-10: This is it, friends. The day before the arrival of the Christ Child, when everything will be made right in the world, right? Unfortunately for us, our world has a way of not being so clean and pristine during the holidays. Being a minister for almost a decade, I have experienced both births and deaths on Christmas Eve, plans that had been shattered, and others that had been seen through. The truth of the matter is that we do not know what tomorrow looks like, but we do have the promise of God's faithfulness that we will endure.

In James' letter, he writes to a persecuted group of Christians under internal and external pressure. In

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the climactic ending, James cites the Prophets of the Old Testament as examples of steadfastness in difficult times (Jas. 5:10b). Almost 750 years earlier, God's truth and examples continued to be shown through societal uncertainty. The importance of the Prophets in this example is that God had used a wide range of people to speak His word, and He continues to use many that the world rejects, ignores, or attempts to silence.

This is the good news from James: we have gifts to offer everyone we meet this holiday season, including ourselves! Whether we are feeling overwhelmed, overworked, or underappreciated, God's gift to the world reminds us that we do not know every aspect of someone's life, but we can choose to be kind, caring, and patient to one another. Sometimes, simply our presence is the greatest present we can offer someone.

As the last newsletter of the year, I pray that your hearts are full of joy, peace, love, and wonder as we enter 2026. St. Mark's is here because of you and your love of God and His people!

Merry Adventide,
Rev. Samuel R. Plymale

LAITY

CORNER Spiritual practices! What is that you may ask? Specifically, Christian spiritual practices are regular practices in which we can cultivate and grow our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If I had to guess the most common practice that many are familiar with is prayer. But there are SO many others: studying scripture, meditating with God, practicing silence, fasting, worshipping, and the list goes on. I would love to see more conversation about how we are personally connecting with our faith outside of Sunday service. I want to know what Spiritual Practices you are doing and / or what are you interested in learning more about? Please reach out to me, I would love to hear from each of you and share practices and ideas among the congregation.

Brian and I continue to pray for you all.
Peace be with each of you,
Ashley Battaile

CHRISTMAS OFFICE HOURS

The church office will be open Monday and Tuesday, December 22 and 23 from 9-12. The office will open again for regular hours on January 5 at 9 am. Email and voicemail will be monitored during this time.

PRAYER CHAIN

Did you know that we have prayer warriors behind the scenes praying for our church family and their friends and family. We also pray for ministries and situations. This is done via e-mail. If you would like to be one of our prayer warriors or need to submit a prayer request, contact Susan Wagner at susanbwagner59@gmail.com.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

The next blood drive will be Saturday, January 3, 8 AM to 1 PM @ St. Mark's For an appointment, please visit redcrossblood.org Or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

ST. MARK'S MEN

The St. Marks Men's Fellowship will meet on December 8 at 7pm!

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

We will take a break for December and meet again January 29, 2026.

TAME

The TAME Ministry will be doing less fundraising in 2026, so that they can sponsor more community efforts for feeding those that are "Food Insecure" in our area. They will be encouraging our church family to be in ministry together for these efforts. We will still collect donations towards the "Rise Against Hunger" Meal Packing in the fall. You can donate towards this on line on our church website or put a check in the offering in an envelope marked for TAME.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

There will be a Tuesday Morning Bible Study beginning in January. If you are interested in being a part of this, contact Susan Wagner susanbwagner59@gmail.com. Those who are interested in studying will choose the study together.

JOYFUL JOURNEYS

2026 Joyful Journey Trips confirmed with White Star Tours

April 13-16 Baltimore and Annapolis, Maryland

June 15-17 Sights and Sounds of Lancaster, PA featuring "Joshua", a visit to President Buchanan's Wheatlands, Kitchen Kettle Village, Li'l Country Store & Miniature Horse Farm, 3 days-2 nights, \$585 per person double occupancy, \$784 per person single occupancy.

Nov. 9-11 Festival of Light Wheeling, West Virginia One of the nation's largest holiday light shows. Over a half million lights and more than 300 acres of displays, and much more to get you in the holiday spirit.

Brochures and full details will be on the church website stmarksmethodist.com or by calling Julia Greer at 540-330-7933 (no texts please) by December 1st.

Stay healthy, happy, and safe. Happy holidays for 2025. Hope to see you in 2026. Blessings, Julia Greer

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PROJECT



Each December, our United Women in Faith "adopt" a Botetourt County Family or Families that are in need of some assistance and Christmas cheer. This year we have adopted one Family consisting of 3 Adults and 4 Children. The Botetourt

Resource Center coordinates with Botetourt County Social Services to provide us with these families in need. Last year, we opened this up to the congregation and you really came through. Once again, we invite the congregation to join us in this Christmas project to make one Family's Christmas a little merrier. Look for the tree in the narthex containing gift tags of items requested by the Family. Please take a tag, sign your name on the clipboard and list what item you are shopping for. Please return the gifts UNWRAPPED by Sunday, December 7. THANK YOU!!

HOLIDAY MARKET AND CRAFT FAIR

St. Mark's Family Life Center
December 6, 2025
9 am - 2 pm

Sponsored by GFWC Botetourt Town and Country Women's Club. December is an extremely busy month with many activities so mark this date on your calendar. Last year, the Women's Club spearheaded the FAIR and they will do that again. They will contact the vendors that always come. But our **St. Mark's Christmas FAIR** will still be a significant partner -- we are just not heading it up. We will still have our kitchen, bakery and craft items. We will serve a yummy breakfast and lunch utilizing many of the dishes we have served in the past. We know many of you in our St. Mark's family have cooking, baking, canning, hand-crafting and other skills. **We would very much welcome and appreciate any item that you would donate.** We will also have some candy-making, cheeseball workshops. We will be working on this in the FLC kitchen Wednesday, December 3 through the 5th beginning at 11 am. For over 47 years, our own **Christmas Fair** has used the funds raised for mission projects, paying off building debt and other Church and parsonage improvements, and we will continue that mission. **December will be here soon. We ask for your consideration in supporting this special Church project. For more information, please contact Donna Henderson at 540-520-8706.**

PECANS



Our annual Pecan Order from Whaley Pecan Company in Troy, Alabama, has arrived! They are delicious as always and are great for baking, munching, and sharing. What A Great Gift! They are packaged in 1 lb. bags in halves or chopped. Cost: \$15 per pound. Be sure to get yours to keep on hand all year by contacting the Church Office or Mona Tolley.



United
Women
in Faith

UWF NEWS

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY:

Monday, December 8 This is the happiest time of the Year --

our Annual "Get-Together" Party !!

ALL St. Mark's Women are invited to join us! Remember: What happens at the Party, stays at the Party! Join us at Bellacinos on Monday, December 8 at 11:30 AM. As you arrive, please place your food order and then head over to the Party Room. After our meal,

we will enjoy lively conversation and our White Elephant Exchange. We will then return to the Church to wrap our Adopted Families Christmas gifts.

WHITE ELEPHANT EXCHANGE: If you wish to participate following our Party, bring a wrapped -- funny or not -- item that we will exchange with each other. So scour your home, garage, and basement -- or purchase a funny gift. Value: \$10 or less. Let's see what "treasures" we will all bring and exchange for another wonderful gift.

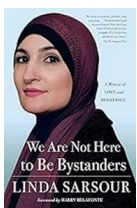
RESCUE MISSION We, along with the congregation, will be collecting \$5 Hardees and McDonalds gift cards to be given to the Roanoke Rescue Mission for their residents as a little Christmas treat. If you are unable to pick up a gift card, we can get them for you. A Box is placed in the narthex for cards or money.

LOOKING TO 2026 . . .

MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026 -- 11 am: Our January program will be our annual "A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial". We will begin at 11 am in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring your own lunch and beverage to enjoy together following the program. We will conclude with our Business Meeting. All Ladies are invited to join us !

UWF READING PROGRAM

We have some new books on the shelves of the library!! Both hard copy and audio, Contact Linda Koloda (992-2744) if you are interested in more information about the Reading Program. Here are some recommendations for your review.



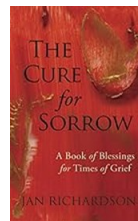
WE ARE NOT HERE TO BE BYSTANDERS: A MEMOIR OF LOVE & RESISTANCE

This powerful memoir from the co-organizer of the Women's March shares how growing up Palestinian Muslim American, feminist, and empowered moved her to become a globally recognized activist on behalf of marginalized communities across the country. From the Brooklyn bodega her father owned, where Linda learned the real meaning of intersectionality, to protests in the streets of Washington, D.C., her experience is a moving portrayal of what it means to find one's voice and use it for the good of others. *Leadership* Hard Copy & CD



I'M BLACK, I'M CHRISTIAN, I'M METHODIST

In this book, edited by Dr. Rudy Rasmus, personal narratives from 10 men and women reveal the distinct struggles of being Black in the church, facing both historic and modern racism. While the essays each begin with the central identities of Black, Christian, and Methodist, they also represent different journeys of confronting centuries of White supremacy in religious and secular institutions. Weaving together autobiography and spiritual formation, they represent a significant contribution to our theological understanding of racism. *Mission Education* **BONUS (2 credits)** Hard Copy & CD



THE CURE FOR SORROW: A BOOK OF BLESSINGS FOR TIMES OF GRIEF

When Jan Richardson unexpectedly lost her husband and creative partner, she did what she had long known how to do: She wrote blessings. These were no sugar-coated blessings. They minimized none of the pain and bewilderment that came in the wake of a wrenching death. With these blessings, she entered into the depths of the shock, anger, and sorrow. From those depths, she has brought forth words that, with heartbreaking honesty, offer surprising comfort and stunning grace. Those who know loss will find kinship among these pages. *Spiritual Growth* Hard Copy



WE ARE WATER PROTECTORS

This book is powerfully written and gorgeously illustrated, *The author* issues an urgent rallying cry to safeguard the Earth's water from harm and corruption, inviting readers everywhere to join the fight. *Water is the first medicine. It affects and connects us all . . .* When a black snake threatens to destroy the Earth and poison her people's water, one young water protector takes a stand to defend Earth's most sacred resource. *Social Action* Hard Copy Children's Section



DOWN AT THE POND

Children's Ministries

Thank you!!!

Thank you to all those who filled a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child last month!! We were blessed to have so many shoeboxes to donate to Samaritan's Purse for this important ministry! If you paid the shipping fee online, or mailed in your email address, you should be able to check online closer to Christmas and find out where on earth your shoebox went! Go to samriatanspurse.org/occ and click on "Follow My Box" and you should be able to find out where in the world your box(es) went! Please let Miss Lee Ann know!

FROGS and Tadpoles

Our next meeting will be on Sunday, December 14th **from 4-5 pm!** PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE! **We WILL NOT have dinner that night!!** We will have a Rehearsal for our Christmas Program that day, so please be in attendance! We will not have a meeting on December 28th.

FROGS and Tadpoles' Christmas Program

The Christmas Program will be held on Sunday, December 21st during the 10:00 am Worship Service!! All children need to be in the Choir room by 9:30 am that morning and ready to sing. Parents, your child(ren) will sit with you in the Sanctuary, once the program is over. There will be NO Children's Worship that day. All children may wear red, green and/or white Christmas attire!

Children's Christmas Party!!

Following the 10 am Worship Service on Sunday, December 21 st , we will have a Children's Christmas Party for all Preschool and Elementary aged children, their Sunday School teachers and FROG and Tadpole Leaders in rooms 101/102 downstairs. There will be NO Sunday School classes that day for those age children; however we will have Nursery Sunday School.

Children's Worship During Advent

There will be changes in our regular Children's Worship Schedule during Advent. We will NOT have Children's Worship on November 30th, December 7th and December 21st . We will have Children's Worship on December 14th and 28th.

St. Mark's Family Christmas Eve Service

All are invited to our child-friendly Family Christmas Eve Service on Wednesday, December 24th at 5 pm! We will celebrate the birth of our Savior with The A, B, C's of Christmas! This Worship Service will be child-friendly; however ALL are invited to attend! The service will include Holy Communion and conclude with the traditional lighting of candles in a circle around the Sanctuary.



St. Mark's Youth has an exciting month ahead as we move through Advent and into the New Year. **Sunday, December 14**, we'll meet as usual and continue our Advent Bible Study, diving deeper into the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love as we prepare for Christmas. To close out the year, we'll gather for a **New Year's Eve Lock-In on December 31**, celebrating with games, worship, food, and plenty of fun. Looking ahead, our first meeting of 2026 will be on **Sunday, January 11**, where we'll spend time planning events, studies, service projects, and activities for the first half of the year - so bring your ideas and help shape what's next for St. Mark's Youth!



TO ALL WHO CELEBRATE THIS MONTH

Newsletter Deadline is 9 am the 20th of each month Bulletin Deadline: Thurs. 9 AM St. Mark's United Methodist Church 19 Cedar Ridge Drive Daleville, VA 24083 Phone: 540-992-3030	E-mail: Rev. Samuel Plymale: samuelplymale@vaumc.org Amanda Dillard: stmarksumcdaleville@gmail.com Lee Ann Critz: leeanncritz@yahoo.com Jessica Graham: jessicagraham109@gmail.com Deborah Wiley: dwiley4music@gmail.com Website: www.stmarksmethodist.com
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Office Hours: Amanda is in the office Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 9:00-12:00.
 Lee Ann is usually in her office on Wednesdays and Thursdays beginning at 9 am.
 Pastor Samuel is in office Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-12. He is also regularly available by text (434-218-2688) and email (samuelplymale@vaumc.org)

December 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Pickleball 5pm - 7 pm NarAnon 6:30 pm AA 7 pm Al Anon 7pm	2 Pack 211 6:30pm Boy Scouts 7pm	3 Christmas Fair Kitchen Set up 11 am Pastor's Bible Study 11am AA Meeting 3 pm Choir Practice 6:30pm Women's Hope AA 7 pm AA Meeting 7 pm	4 Christmas Fair Kitchen Set up 11 am	5	6 Christmas Fair 9-2 Al-Anon 1pm
7 Worship 10 am Sunday Classes 11 am <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i>	8 Pickleball 10 am - 12 pm UWF 11:30 at Bellacinos NarAnon 6:30 pm AA 7 pm Al Anon 7pm St. Mark's Men 7pm	9 Pack 211 6:30pm Boy Scouts 7pm	10 Pastor's Bible Study 11am AA Meeting 3 pm Choir Practice 6:30pm Women's Hope AA 7 pm AA Meeting 7 pm	11	12 Christmas Lights 6-9pm	13 Al-Anon 1 pm Christmas Lights 6-9pm
14 Worship 10 am Sunday Classes 11 am FROGs/Tadpoles 4-5 Youth 4-6 Christmas Lights 6-9pm <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i>	15 Pickleball 10 am - 12 pm NarAnon 6:30 pm AA 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm	16 Pack 211 6:30pm Boy Scouts 7pm	17 Pastor's Bible Study 11am AA Meeting 3 pm Choir Practice 6:30pm Women's Hope AA 7 pm AA Meeting 7 pm	18	19 Christmas Lights 6-9pm	20 Al-Anon 1 pm Christmas Lights 6-9pm
21 Worship 10 am Sunday Classes 11 am Christmas Lights 6-9pm <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	22 Pickleball 5pm - 7 pm NarAnon 6:30 pm AA 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 5pm Christmas Eve Service 11 pm Church office closed	25  Church office closed	26	27 Al-Anon 1 pm
28 Worship 10 am Sunday Classes 11 am <i>1st Sunday after Christmas</i>	29 Pickleball 5pm - 7 pm NarAnon 6:30 pm AA 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Church office closed	30 Church office closed	31 AA Meeting 3 pm Women's Hope AA 7 pm AA Meeting 7 pm Youth Lock in 7pm Church office closed			