



St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Messenger

Spokane, WA

Fall 2026

Vol. 2026, No. 3



Ella and Pastor Gretchen

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our Christian vocations are lived within the relationships God has entrusted to us, as members of families, congregations, communities, and the body of Christ. Through these relationships, God calls us to “love one another with mutual affection,” to honor and care for one another.

As you may know, Pastor Gretchen began family leave on July 21 to care for her mother, Ella, who has been diagnosed with a rare, very aggressive form of lymphoma. Ella is now in hospice care.

Pastor Gretchen looks forward to returning to our shared ministry at St. Mark's when the time is right. In the meantime Pastor Amy Seymour will serve as Interim Pastor.

God in Christ has brought the St. Mark's community through unexpected developments in years past. Each time, we emerge with greater wonder at and deepened trust in God's provision for the sake of Christ's mission and ministry through St. Mark's. In this season as well, we give thanks that the Spirit is in our present and our future, just as God has faithfully been in our past, working all things together for God's good purpose.

In the coming months, please hold Ella, Pastor Gretchen, their family, Pastor Edwin, the

continued next page

INTRODUCING PASTOR AMY SEYMOUR

We are pleased to welcome the Rev. Amy Seymour to serve as our Interim Pastor during Pastor Gretchen's family leave. Over the next three months, Pastor Amy will help provide pastoral care, serve as a worship leader, and support several of our ministries. She is already a familiar face to some at St. Mark's, having previously *Pastor Amy* joined us as a guest preacher



Pastor Amy is a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister who lives on the South Hill with her husband and two teenage children. Her eldest will be heading off to college in Minnesota this fall. She brings more than 20 years of ministry experience and most recently served as Interim Pastor at Bethany Presbyterian Church.

Pastor Amy moved to Spokane in 2017 from Northern California. She earned her Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary and served for more than eleven years as solo pastor of Windsor Presbyterian Church. Originally from the South, she has spent much of her adult life in the West and Northwest, including Alaska. Over the course of her ministry, she has served alongside youth, women experiencing homelessness, farming communities, and affordable-housing ministries.

In addition to her MDiv, Pastor Amy earned a Master of Fine Arts in nonfiction creative writing from Eastern Washington University. Outside of ministry, Pastor Amy enjoys knitting, cooking and baking, reading, and hiking. We are grateful to welcome her into this season of ministry at St. Mark's and look forward to the gifts she will share with our congregation.

ELLA and PASTOR GRETCHEN *continued*

staff, and the whole St. Mark's community in your prayers as we support one another in all our Christian vocations and carry out Christ's mission for the sake of the world.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Edwin and Pastor Gretchen

To send a note or card to Pastor Gretchen, please send to her Spokane address. Her mail is being forwarded to Iowa.

Gretchen Olson
2108 E Southeast Blvd.
Spokane WA 99203

THANK YOU FROM PASTOR GRETCHEN

Dear Friends in Christ,

My heart ached as the stream of Watch Duty alerts tracked what was unfolding around you, as I traveled on August 1 to care for my mother. I am so very grateful to Pastor Edwin and the staff, the congregation council, and to each and every one of you for graciously supporting a leave of absence to care for my remarkable mom as she meets the end of her human life. It continues to be precious and important time with her. AND, as one of your pastors, my heart is stretched across the miles as I am away from you while Spokane faces losses of such magnitude.

Mom and I are making the most of each day as her strength rapidly wanes, AND you and the whole Spokane community are in my heart and my prayers as I listen to daily fire department briefings, and Watch Duty updates arrive. Thank you for all your messages of love and support. That you would think of my mom and me means even more, knowing that you are pouring yourselves out in care for affected neighbors there.

As mom and I worshipped with her church's livestream today, we sang along to "Great is Thy Faithfulness". That timeless anthem seemed right on time. In your caregiving for loved ones

and for a whole community impacted by the fires, may you indeed experience, as I am here, new mercies morning by morning, strength for today, and hope for tomorrow. God's faithfulness is indeed great. Your generosity to me in this season of my family's life is that faithfulness incarnate once again. From the depths of my heart, thank you, AND please know of my love and care for you as you meet the callings upon your life and this fire season there.

Pastor Gretchen

NOTE THIS !



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSURES

The church office will be closed for the following holidays:

- **Monday, September 7**, in observance of Labor Day.
- **Monday, October 12**, in observance of Indigenous People's Day
- **Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, November 25, 26, & 27**, in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday

SERVICE TIME CHANGES

On **Sunday, September 13** we switch to our winter worship schedule with two services on Sundays, at **8:30 and 10:45 am**. **Saturday's 5:30 pm** service remains the same.

NURSERY CARE

Childcare is available Sunday mornings during worship and the Sunday School hour in the upstairs nursery, for children from infancy through kindergarten. Children of all ages are always welcome in worship—St. Mark's delights in their joyful noises!

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

All Saints Sunday is **November 1** this year. We will send out letters to families who have lost a loved one since All Saints last year.

MONEY MATTERS

June 2026 Giving	Year-to-date 2026 Operating Budget			
	Giving	Expenses	Budgeted Expenses	Net YTD
\$ 71,450	\$ 430,359	\$ 421,942	\$ 450,380	\$ 8,417

Our congregation continues to amaze us with its generous support. We are in the black even though we are in the summer months, known as a slower giving season. After such an incredibly successful Vacation Bible School at the end of the month, we have several fun youth and intergenerational activities scheduled as the summer progresses. Spokane Public Schools starts earlier this year, so we've moved up our fall programming a bit. Stay tuned for details. See you in church!

Are you a member of Thrivent Financial? The company has recently made some changes that could benefit St. Mark's. Their Choice Dollars program, which in the past was only for certain members, now is available to ALL THRIVENT MEMBERS.

The impact of Thrivent members is significant at St. Mark's. In 2025, we received a total of close to \$ 2,500! This year, the Choice Dollars can be designated anytime during the calendar year. Learn more by checking in with your Thrivent financial advisor. We've also printed out some brochures that give more information of how to do this; they are near the church office.

Thrivent Action Kits are another way members can help St. Mark's. We got people involved for VBS this summer and the Godly Play program, and had seven households procure \$250 each for these important St. Mark's programs. We are grateful to all those who made an effort to get these funds.

CHOIR BEGINS FALL REHEARSALS

It's time to begin another year for the singers of the St. Mark's Chancel Choir. We meet on **Thursday nights at 7:15 pm beginning September 17**, in the sanctuary.

All are welcome! Come and see if you might enjoy singing with us. We'd love to see you there. If you have questions, you can reach out to Ann Benson through the church office.

ST. FRANCIS DAY

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

St. Francis Day is **Sunday, October 4**. St. Mark's tradition of Blessing of the Animals will take place at the **10:45 am** service that day. Bring your animals for a special blessing as we celebrate the life and ministry of St. Francis and God's goodness in creation which includes our pets.

We will also create space over all three worship services that weekend for remembering pets who have died. If you like, bring a picture of a beloved deceased pet to remember.

OKTOBERFEST

Sunday, October 18, 6:00 pm

Come for festive German folk music and brats with all the fixings. Bring a side dish to share. The Danowski family has graciously agreed to head up this event again. If you'd like to volunteer, reach out to them or Pastor Edwin. Watch for more information in the Sunday Bulletin.

NEW MEMBER CLASSES

If you, or someone you know, would like to learn more about St. Mark's and possibly join our church, we will be holding inquiry classes over the course of three Sundays this fall:

- November 8
- November 15
- November 22

These classes run from **5:00 – 7:00 pm** at St. Mark's. We will begin with dinner prepared by congregation members followed by an informational class. This is a wonderful time to learn more about St. Mark's history, what it means to be a Lutheran, and get to know the pastors in a small group setting.

The new members will be welcomed into the congregation on **Sunday, December 6 at the 10:45 am service**. If you would like to join or know someone who may be interested, please contact Mary Hoenecke through the church office at 509.747.6677.

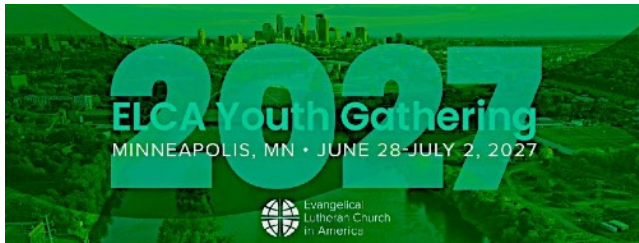
Youth

... and parents, too!
Ice Cream Social
Monday, August 24, 6:30 – 8:00 pm
Parish House Lawn

Join us for ice cream, lawn games, and fellowship as we celebrate the end of summer and the start of a new school year.

The evening will include a brief overview of the youth programming at St. Mark's in the year ahead. Learn about Godly Play, Alleluia Choir, Sunday Cool, Youth Group, Confirmation, and the ELCA National Youth Gathering. All ages are welcome!

NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING INFORMATIONAL MEETING



Wednesday, September 2, 6:00 pm or
Sunday, September 13, 12:00 noon

Do you have a child who will be in grades 8-12 during the 2026-'27 school year? This meeting is for you and your student!

St. Mark's will be taking a group of students to Minneapolis to attend the National Youth Gathering June 28 – July 2, 2027. Youth will gather with Lutherans from across the country for a week of faith formation, fellowship, service, and learning. Attend **either** of the informational meetings to learn more about this incredible opportunity.

THE NEW (FRIDGE-WORTHY) YOUTH CALENDAR

Please take a moment to look over the new youth calendar and refer to it throughout the year. It includes important dates and our on/off schedule for Sunday morning programming.

You'll find a pullout copy in this edition of the *Messenger*. Fall programming begins on **Rally Day (September 13)** with the return of two worship services, Godly Play, Alleluia Choir, Sunday Cool, and Youth Group.



YOUTH PROGRAMMING REGISTRATION

To keep our records current, we ask all families to register each fall, and this year the process is easier than ever. Families can register for all youth activities across all grades and enroll multiple children at once using a single form. **Please pre-register using the QR code above.**

Registration is required in order to participate in any of the following activities.

- Godly Play (ages 3 – 6th grade)
- Alleluia Choir (1st – 8th grades)
- Sunday Cool/ Youth Group (6th – 12th grades)
- Christmas Pageant (ages 3 – 12th grades)
- Acolyte Service (opportunities begin in middle school)
- Confirmation (opportunities begin in 8th grade)



More youth news next page

HELLO FROM THE ST. MARK'S YOUTH GROUP!

It's been a fun filled summer with exciting events. We had an incredible turnout for our annual Silverwood trip, completely filling the church shuttle bus for our drive to the park.



It was a full day of rollercoasters, water slides, and one of the biggest bowls of ice cream we've even seen.



By the time you are reading this, we will have had our Camp Night, celebrating the end of summer in style with some s'mores and games at the church. We've also had a fun summer of Splendid Sundays, our intergenerational after-worship potluck. We played board games, ate egg bake, and had several intense games of Ga Ga Ball. Thanks to everyone who showed up for these events! We are looking forward to an action-packed fall and can't wait to start up Sunday Cool and Wonderful Wednesdays again.

Peace,
Calvin and Rachel Moore

CONFIRMATION CLASSES

Fall session September 2-October 21

Winter session January 6-February 3

Confirmation is part of our faith formation for youth as they come to affirm their baptisms as adults.

Opportunities start in eighth grade as youth gather in the fall and winter on Wonderful Wednesdays for a potluck **dinner at 6pm** and **class from 7-8 pm**. We use Manna and Mercy, a biblical survey by Daniel Erlander, for instruction. The book focuses on how God is present and active in human history and all creation, providing youth an overview of the Bible as well reflection on the ways the Bible applies to their everyday lives.

Please pre-register using the QR code on the previous page.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Children age 3 through 12th grade are invited to participate in a fully rehearsed Christmas pageant which will be presented to the congregation on **Sunday, December 13**, in conjunction with our annual smorgasbord.

All are invited to participate in this annual event! There are many ways to be involved, whether as a character with or without lines, helping backstage, offering a musical contribution, or serving as a narrator. **Please register participants online.**

ALLELUIA CHOIR



Children in first through eighth grades are invited to join Alleluia Choir, under the direction of Kendra Chapman. Rehearsals begin on **September 13 at 10:45** in the Alleluia Choir loft. Please refer to the 2026-27 Youth Calendar insert for details on which holidays we will observe throughout the school year.

Kendra will accompany children in Godly Play from the Parish House to the Alleluia Choir loft each Sunday. Parents whose children have not been at Godly Play should wait there with their children until Kendra arrives, by approximately 10:40 am.

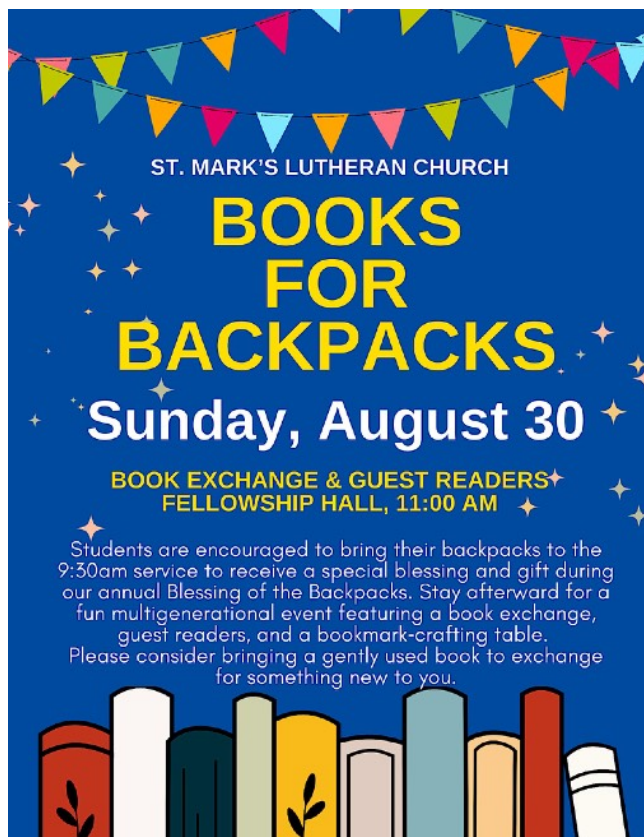
Rehearsal will end at 11:20 am and Kendra will then walk singers down to the sanctuary where they will rejoin their families for the remainder of worship.

Learning for All Ages

BLESSING OF BACKPACKS

Sunday, August 30, 9:30 am

Students are encouraged to bring their backpacks to worship to receive a special blessing and gift during our annual Blessing of the Backpacks. Stay afterward for a fun **multigenerational event** featuring a book exchange, guest readers, and a bookmark crafting table. Please consider bringing a gently used book to exchange for something new to you.



SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, CHURCH COUNCIL BLESSING

Godly Play teachers will be blessed on Rally Day, **September 13 at both the 8:30 and 10:45 services. We invite all Godly Play teachers to attend.**

On that same day, we'll bless the church council members at **8:30**, thanking those going off and welcoming our new council members.

GODLY PLAY

Godly Play classes begin on **Sunday, September 13, from 9:40–10:30 a.m.** All children ages three through grade six are welcome.

We'll start each morning together in the Parish House living room for music and fellowship before moving into classrooms for story and work time.

Thanks to your generous support—and the tireless work of **Randy Belstad, Roger Chase, Dan & Amy Heinen, Mark Copeland, and Bob & Judy Palrud**—we are expanding from two classrooms to three this fall. As our numbers grow, we're grateful for this additional space, which allows us to nurture children in more age-appropriate settings. **Please pre-register for Godly Play using the QR code provided.**



GODLY PLAY FOR GROWNUPS

You might think of Godly Play as being something just for kids, but this fall grownups will get **OUR** turn to awaken (or re-awaken) the wonder that the stories of God and God's people can stir within us. Come hear the stories and curiosities with each other and take the time to explore your own thoughts and reflections about those stories.

Godly Play for Grownups is open to anyone ages 17 and up. We will meet in the conference room on **Wednesdays from 7:00 – 8:00 pm for eight weeks starting September 2.** You are invited to take part in the Wonderful Wednesdays potluck at 6:00 pm or you can just show up for Godly Play; either is just fine.

Questions? Contact Ann Benson through the church office at 509.747.6677 or office@stmarks-spokane.org.

VOLUNTEER SUNDAY

September 13, Rally Day

We'll have information about various fellowship volunteer opportunities. Learn about the many volunteer opportunities available at St. Mark's and sign up for those that best suit you!

Our Worship Volunteer Day will occur at a later date.

CONFIRMATION SUNDAY on REFORMATION SUNDAY

Join us on **Sunday, October 25 at 10:45 am** as we celebrate Confirmation Sunday, when our young people affirm their baptismal promises. This joyful mixed jazz service will lift up the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of our youth.

Reformation Sunday will be celebrated as well with mixed jazz on Sunday. We'll honor the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit reforming the church and renewing our faith. **Please wear red!**

IS GRACE COMMONS FOR YOU?

Grace Commons Spokane is seeking a new member for its board of directors. A ministry of the ELCA, Grace Commons accompanies young adults as they connect their faith with everyday life, community engagement, and service to their neighbors. Through relationship-building, faith formation, and public witness, Grace Commons is helping cultivate a new generation of Christian leaders in the Spokane area.



Board members help provide vision, governance, and support for this growing ministry. If you have a passion for young adults, campus and community ministry, or helping innovative ministries flourish, serving on the board may be a meaningful way to share your gifts. To learn more, please speak with Pastor Edwin.



Following mudslides and extensive damage to the road connecting Holden Village with the boat landing at Lucerne on Lake Chelan, the Village remains temporarily closed to guests and is being cared for by a small on-site team. Even while the community cannot gather in person, there are meaningful ways to support Holden's ministry from afar.

One of the simplest ways to help is by shopping at the online Holden Village Store, <https://holdenvillagestore.com/>. Purchases of books, apparel, household goods, and one-of-a-kind Holden items provide important revenue during the closure. You can also support Holden when purchasing books and audiobooks through its affiliated Bookshop.org and Libro.fm accounts.

Social Ministry Opportunities to Serve

Another stellar year for the members of St. Mark's. You stepped up to support 36 hungry children through the Bite2Go program at Franklin Elementary. This program provides a kit of shelf-stable food each weekend through the school year for those in need.

With the economy in dire straits, the new school year may require more support. So, in September, I will be asking St. Mark's members to answer the call once again.

To support a child at Franklin Elementary, you can either write a check to St. Mark's or provide your credit card number (cash is always welcome) in the amount of \$180 and mention it is for the Bite2Go program. One other option is to send money directly to Second Harvest mentioning that is for the Bite2Go program for Franklin Elementary.

Thank you for your continued support for a most worthy cause.



ST. MARK'S WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



KEVIN SCHAFER

Kevin is a retired educator with special training in music. He is originally from Tacoma and was a member of Trinity Lutheran until he moved to Spokane and lived here from 1978-1991. He attended St Mark's during that time and worked as an educator at Gonzaga Prep. He then lived and worked overseas for 35 years in Italy, India, and Oman, returning to Spokane in 2025. He retired and currently lives part of the year in Oman. His interests include travel, music, and outdoor activities such as walking and hiking.

ANTHONY, MARJORIE and BENJAMIN SCHOEN

Anthony is a Spokane native and a mechanical engineer specializing in HVAC with NW Engineers. Marjorie is a family physician with interest and training in primary care, urgent care, basic life support /cpr and first aid.

Anthony and Marjorie love calling Spokane their home. They have a growing family with son Benjamin and dogs Scout and Wrigley. Their activities include enjoying hiking, skiing, snow shoeing, biking, and anything else that connects them with nature and being outside.



SHARON BURKWIST

Sharon Burkwest was born in Spokane and has lived here for 56 years total. She spent 20 years in Seattle. Her occupation was as a construction project manager with special training in architectural drafting.

JEREMY and STACEY WINKLE, ELLOWYN and EMER

The Winkle family has transferred their membership from All Saints Lutheran Church in Browne's Addition. They have lived in Spokane since 2008. Stacy is originally from Poulsbo and is a teacher with the Spokane Public Schools, at her children's school. She is also a commander in the Navy Reserves. Stacey enjoys her family and friends and volunteers at the kids' school as well as going to thrift stores.



MARGIE CLARK

Margie Clark has lived in Spokane for six months and was originally from Seattle where she attended Bothel United Methodist Church and retired from a career as a paralegal. She has two children and enjoys knitting, gardening and cooking.

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WINKLE

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Jeremy is originally from Portland and an electrical engineer with McMillen. Emery is in eighth grade and Ellowyn in fifth grade; they both speak Spanish. The family enjoys traveling and spending time together.



CODY and LAURA BRINCKEN, LUKE and ELLIOT

The family is transferring from Redeemer Lutheran Church. Cody and Laura are both teachers. The family enjoys lake time and all things outdoors. Additionally, Laura enjoys cooking, baking, and reading. Luke is six and Elliot is four.

The Brinckens also have created a nonprofit called Isaac's Bookshelf to provide new books on hospital pediatric units for young patients to enjoy and keep. Donations of NEW BOARD books (for very young children), or funds for purchase, can be left in the church office.



LISA and STEVE WOODARD

Lisa and Steve are transferring from Redeemer Lutheran in Spokane Valley. Steve is a retired dentist, and Lisa is a retired pharmacist. Their daughter is Laura Brincken.

Not Pictured:

SHELLEY BARTON

Shelley Barton is a retired teacher who worked for the Spokane Alternative High School and has special training in grief counseling. She was Teacher of the Year for Washington State for opening the first alternative high school in Port Townsend.

Her talents include performing as a professional pianist for the Seattle Symphony. She has four grandchildren: Kaihoa who is 19, Emma, age 17, Bethanie, age 10, and Kassidy, who is 9. Other activities she enjoys include gardening and part-time grief counseling at Cancer Care NW.

Shelley has very deep faith that supported her during her serious illness. She loves St. Mark's as the members are kind, it has a gender affirming ministry, and she is excited to pursue spiritual formation.

CROSSWALK

Crosswalk is the program and shelter run by Volunteers of America for homeless and runaway youth, and supported by St. Mark's. We ask that donations be labeled when dropped off at the church. Such good rule followers we have!



Our generous congregation collects food every month that Mark Copeland (pictured with Parish Administrator Jane Somers) then takes to Crosswalk where Spokane's homeless youth can expect a hearty meal.

Thanks to all who contribute, and to Cathy Thornton and Adrienne Goodwin who regularly cook a healthy meal for the youth who are there.



WE WELCOME KENDRA CHAPMAN AS FAITH FORMATION MINISTER



In 2023, St. Mark's began an ambitious journey of discernment toward calling a Faith Formation Minister into the ministry of this community. Inspired by Pastor Lori Cornell's spirited invitation to think creatively about our calling and mission, this work has been carried forward by the Vitality Task Force, Discernment Team, call committee, congregation council, pastors, and staff for over three years.

Our path has not always been direct. We paused the process during Pastor Lori's medical leave, and we came to understand that, although our original hope was to call a deacon, God was leading us toward a lay professional minister. Through it all, we have been grateful for your insights, prayers, encouragement, and support. Our discernment has continued to affirm St. Mark's need for a Faith Formation Minister who will nurture children, youth, and adults in the Christian faith, build relationships across generations, and equip the people of this congregation to share in the ministry of faith formation.

We are overjoyed to share the good news that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we have invited one of our own, Kendra Chapman, to serve as St. Mark's Faith Formation Minister. Kendra has accepted this appointment, and we give thanks to God! Kendra and her family have been part of the St. Mark's community for some time, and she already serves on our staff as Godly Play director and leads the Alleluia Choir with our children, as well as co-chairs Vacation Bible School. As she enters this new role, Kendra will continue to bring her energy, dedication, creativity, and joy to our shared ministry.

As we celebrate, let us also remember the good work that has brought us to this moment, what we have learned along the way, and who we are striving to become as people of faith. Faith formation belongs to all of us, not only to a staff member. It includes children and youth, but it also reaches into every part of our common life: our households, worship, volunteer ministries, daily vocations, and relationships across generations. Kendra has been appointed not simply to conduct programs, but to equip others and help us grow together in faith. May we support her with our prayers, encouragement, partnership, and shared service as we look forward to the good work God's Spirit is doing among us.

We give special thanks to the members of St. Mark's call committee, Rose Baker, Shane Bassett, Michael Phalen, and Jeanine Stolp, whose prayerful work was essential to our discernment and the appointment of Kendra Chapman. The committee also included our pastors and St. Mark's president, Ira Gardner. We are deeply grateful for their time, wisdom, and faithful service.

**PLEASE JOIN US
for the installation of Kendra Chapman
as St. Mark's Faith Formation Minister**

Sunday, August 30, at the 9:30 am service.

Bring your children to witness this special service. The Blessing of the Backpacks will also take place, another reason to gather those kids and bring them to worship.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PASTOR EDWIN

Pastor Edwin has recently participated in several continuing education opportunities and is looking forward to new ways to continue growing in ministry and faith.

This winter and spring, Pastor Edwin took part in a clergy discussion group called **Common Table**. Convened by Dr. Elizabeth Abbey, Associate Dean of the School of Health Sciences at Whitworth University, Common Table brought together pastors from across Spokane to explore the relationship between food and faith. Conversations included food ethics, care for the body, access to healthy food, sustainability, and the rituals that surround shared meals. The group also provided a valuable ecumenical space to build relationships with other clergy and learn from a variety of Christian traditions. For Pastor Edwin, the experience was both personally enriching, reflecting his love of food and cooking, and a meaningful opportunity to deepen connections between food, faith, and community. From potlucks to Holy Communion, gathering around the table remains an important part of our shared life at St. Mark's.

In April, Pastor Edwin met Sherman Lee at the funeral of Pastor Lori Cornell. Sherman had known Pastor Lori through the Crossings Community, an association of preachers dedicated to Lutheran Law and Gospel preaching, where he now serves as Executive Director. Together they reflected on Pastor Lori's deep commitment to the Crossings Community and her joy in mentoring fellow preachers through its mentoring program. Sherman encouraged Pastor Edwin to apply, and he was accepted into the next Crossings mentoring cohort. Beginning this fall, Pastor Edwin will work one-on-one with the Rev. Ruth Hanusa, a semi-retired pastor, teacher, chaplain, and grief counselor. The program will culminate in January 2027 when he will preach at the annual Crossings Conference in Missouri.

St. Mark's provides time and financial support for continuing education for its pastors and lay professional staff as an investment in the



congregation's ministry. Continuing education gives church leaders opportunities to deepen their knowledge, develop new skills, and reflect on emerging challenges and opportunities for ministry. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expects its rostered ministers to complete at least fifty hours of continuing education each year, recognizing that lifelong learning is an essential part of faithful and effective ministry.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHS

Blessings on the birth of **Avery Ann Danowski**, daughter of Kerri and Aaron Danowski, born April 30.

Blessings on the birth of **Casper Ronan Fuesi**, great-grandson of Sue Gilman, born June 10.

Blessings on the birth of **August Luke Purinton**, son of Kenna Parker & Jordan Purinton, born July 1.

BAPTISMS

Blessings on the baptism of **Bridget Ann Kurth**, daughter of Angelica & Derek Kurth. The sponsors are Lesley & William Jones and Kevin Eagen.

Blessings on the baptism of **Henry Kane Rasor**, son of Allison and Ryan Rasor. The sponsors are Rachel Devlin (also grandma) and Tim Devlin.

Blessings on the baptism of **Ria Thorpe Deboer**, daughter of Marian Thorpe and James Deboer. The sponsors are Hyunki Ahn and Norm Thorpe, her grandparents.

Blessings on the baptism of **Kailash Myers Kochhar**, son of Cara Ann Myers and Shubhdeep Kochhar.

SYMPATHY

Prayers for the family of **Marvin Simmons**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Thelma Streng**, at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Will Martin**, father of Hilary Berg, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Rick Allmon**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Barbara LePard**, mother of Kate LePard, at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Chuck Karschney**, at the time of his death.

FUNERALS

Memorial for **Marilyn Ahrendt** Saturday, July 11.

Memorial for **Chuck Karschney** Saturday, July 18.

STEWARDS OF CREATION

Stewards of Creation invites you to join others at St. Mark's to live out our calling to heal and protect creation in these various dimensions: worship, campus life, education, community outreach and thoughtful advocacy. To learn more about how your passion for creation can be expressed here at St. Mark's, join our Zoom meeting on **August 31 at 6 p.m.** Please reach out to the church office at office@stmarks-spokane.org for the zoom link. We welcome you and your ideas!



NEW WORLDWIDE SEASON OF CREATION September 1-October 4

The Stewards of Creation team is delighted that a new Feast of Creation in Christ has officially become part of our liturgical year. St. Mark's has enjoyed periodic worship Sundays focusing on creation to ensure that actively caring for and praying for creation are part of our spiritual practices.

This year's theme is "Living Water." As we are dependent on the aquifer and the Spokane River and its tributaries for our survival, we hope to continue to keep the theme of water in front of us all year long. Stay tuned for worship and educational opportunities on this theme.

Our biblical text for this year is drawn from Ezekiel 47:1-12, which portrays God's life-giving water flowing from the temple of God. The river grows deeper and deeper restoring barren land, reviving waters, and sustaining flourishing ecosystems. The vision invites human responsibility to recognize ecological damage, embrace interconnectedness, and actively safeguard and work for the renewal of creation so that environmental healing and human well-being may flourish together.

SYNOD ECOFAITH ACTION GROUP

Feast of Creation Prayer Service September 1

You're invited to participate via YouTube in a Feast of Creation Prayer Service offered by the EcoFaith Action Network of the Northwest Intermountain Synod. The service will premiere on their YouTube Channel at **9:00 am PT** and will be available to view anytime afterward. Subscribe to the EcoFaith Action Network's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@EcoFaithNWIM>.



The Feast of Creation (also being called Feast of Creation in Christ) is a new, ecumenical feast day. To get on EcoFaith's distribution list for more information about the prayer service and future events, send an email to EcoFaithNWIM@gmail.com. More information about the proposed feast is available at <https://www.feastofcreation.com/>.

BECAUSE YOU'RE CURIOUS

Thursday, September 3, 3:00 PT on Zoom

EcoFaith Conversation about Solar for the Good of the World featuring Bishop Meggan Manlove and Bill McKibben

Join Bishop Meggan Manlove and Bill McKibben in conversation to talk about the biggest thing shaping the future of humanity in our lifetime: the sun.

If you've ever wondered if solar has a place in your home, your church, or your community, this conversation will let the sunshine in!

We'll look through the lens of faith to see all energy as a sacred gift, learn how solar is changing lives around the world, and take a close-up look at a solar-powered congregation right here in our synod.

Be curious. Bring your questions. Because curiosity, like the sun, is a God-given natural resource, given for the good of the world. Register with this QR code and we'll welcome you to the conversation with a Zoom link. Or send an email to EcoFaithNWIM@gmail.com to sign up.

Because you're curious is a Zoom conversation organized by the NWIM EcoFaith Action Network, a group of curious people joyfully living into a life of Earthcare as part of our faithful witness. Bill McKibben's contribution will come in the form of video clips from our webinar earlier this year that featured his latest book, *Here Comes the Sun*.





WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A SYNOD?

A synod is a regional expression of our Lutheran church, similar to dioceses or conferences in other denominations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America includes 65 synods, which vary widely in geography, membership, staffing, and ministry. The smallest has about 30 congregations while the largest has nearly 250.

Synods connect congregations with one another and with the churchwide organization. They accompany congregations and rostered ministers, guide candidates preparing to become pastors and deacons, support congregations in times of transition, and coordinate work that congregations can accomplish more effectively together. In this way, the synod helps us remember that St. Mark's is part of a church much larger than ourselves.

WHAT IS OUR SYNOD?

St. Mark's belongs to the Northwest Intermountain Synod, which includes 88 ministry sites: congregations, campus ministries, outdoor camps, and mission sites. Its large geographic territory encompasses Washington east of the Cascades, all of Idaho, and portions of Oregon and Wyoming.

Like a congregation, the synod is led through a partnership of rostered and lay leaders. The Rev. Meggan Manlove serves as our bishop, with particular responsibility for the synod's ministry of word and sacrament and for providing pastoral and ecclesial leadership to its congregations and rostered ministers. Our other elected officers are Jeff Campbell, Vice President; Tami McHugh, Treasurer; and St. Mark's member Randy Darst, Secretary.

The Synod Council includes 28 pastors, deacons, and laypeople elected from the synod's 12 geographic clusters. It serves as the governing authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. Pastor Edwin currently serves on the Synod Council representing our cluster as an at-large, rostered minister. Clusters are local groupings of congregations within the synod, ours being the Spokane Westward Cluster.

WHAT DOES OUR SYNOD DO?

In her report to the 2026 Synod Assembly, Bishop Manlove described our synod's congregations and ministries as "wellsprings of God's love." Each makes God's love known in ways shaped by its own community, while sharing in a common mission across the region.

Much of the synod's work happens through relationships and accompaniment. Synod staff help congregations call pastors and deacons, accompany people discerning a vocation to rostered ministry, support congregations during transitions, and connect leaders with training and continuing education. The synod is also strengthening lay ministry through courses in preaching, prayer, worship leadership, and church governance. The synod supports new and evolving ministries, including Grace Commons Spokane. Formerly Lutheran Campus Ministry at Eastern Washington University, Grace Commons has expanded its ministry beyond Cheney to serve college students and young adults throughout the Spokane area. The synod also connects congregations with Lutheran Community Services Northwest, which serves people throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho through refugee resettlement, behavioral health, family support, and other community-based ministries.

Beyond our immediate region, the synod maintains a companion relationship with the Ulanga Kilombero Diocese in Tanzania, and participates in the ELCA's partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. It also supports ecumenical cooperation, rural congregations, campus ministries, new worshiping communities, and the development of future church leaders across the region.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Another successful year of VBS is in the books. We registered close to 100 youth for this action-packed week and had so many volunteers of all ages that we could hardly find jobs for them all. An extra special thank you to Kate Bassett and Kendra Chapman – our dream team co-directors!



MORE VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Faith and Fellowship Groups

We use the church office telephone number, 509.747.6677, for all our groups; this is to avoid scam texts. Those who have a directory can phone leaders directly.

FAITH AND FERMENTATION

Third Sunday of the month, 3:00 – 5:00 pm,
meeting at various area breweries
Questions: Barb Belstad or Cynthia Moore

This group is for **those close to retirement, already retired, and possibly empty nesting**. We meet for fellowship and meaningful discussions that pertain to this point in our lives. It's a great opportunity to connect with other folks from St. Mark's.

VINYASA FLOW YOGA AT ST. MARK'S

Mondays, 4:30 – 5:30 pm, in the Fellowship Hall
Questions: church office

This yoga class is for **everyone!** Our instructor, Kendra Mauer, has been practicing yoga for more than a decade and still considers herself a beginner. Hope to see you soon!

STEWARDS OF CREATION

First Monday of the month, by Zoom, 6:00 pm
Questions: Janet Farness,

jkfahiti@comcast.net for Zoom information.

This group meets to learn more about care of the earth and our divine calling to be good stewards of creation.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE SUPPORT

Second Monday, 2:00 pm in the conference room.
Questions: Sue Connelly or Carolyn Payne

Some St. Mark's members who have had a **Parkinson's disease diagnosis** have formed a support group and extend an invitation to anyone in the congregation who is on the same journey. **Spouses/caregivers** are welcome.

SCRIPTURE & COFFEE

Tuesdays, 10:30 am
Questions: Pastor Edwin

This group meets for a Bible-based conversation with a pastor to study the scripture texts for the following Sunday, in the conference room. **All** are welcome.

EAT, PRAY, LAUGH

First Tuesday of the month. Check our calendar and the Sunday Bulletin for our next meeting date.

Questions: church office

All women are invited to this fellowship group for conversation, laughter, prayer and refreshments. We meet in the narthex.

THEOLOGY ON TAP

Mostly third Tuesdays, May 19, 7:00 pm
Questions: Pastor Edwin

This group has great conversation and fellowship with **adults 21 and over**, rotating through local brewpubs and wineries.

SUNRISE SAINTS & SINNERS

Second & fourth Wednesdays, May 13 & 27,
June 10 & 24

Questions: Dave Troyke

This **men's group** meets at **7:00 am** at The Chalet Restaurant, 2918 S. Grand Blvd. In this group you'll have lots of laughs, interesting discussions about a variety of topics, plus a good breakfast. All men are welcome, saints or sinners!

PICKLEBALL IN THE PARKING LOT

Thursdays, 8:00 – 9:30 am
Questions: Gina Bloom

Remember that equipment is available to borrow anytime during St. Mark's regular office hours for play on our 25th Ave. parking lot.

THANK YOU

Thank you for the generous outpouring of support for our neighbors at Comunidad Cristiana. We collected more snacks and juice than would even fit in a Suburban. Such a great problem to have! The children affected by immigration detention and enrolled in their summer program will appreciate these items.

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

316 E. 24th Avenue
Spokane, WA 99203

SERVICES

Sunday 8:30 and 10:45 am
Saturday 5:30 pm
Nursery provided all services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9 am-noon, 1:30-3 pm
(Friday-noon)

PASTORS

Gretchen Olson
Edwin Weber

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MISSION STATEMENT: To share the gospel through worship and service. To be an inclusive community for justice and peace among diverse peoples.

MESSENGER

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Newsletter submissions due in the church office by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

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