



MESSAGE FROM PASTOR EDWIN

A Place to Belong

In July, I got to fulfill a dream I've had since I was a child: to go to Holden Village. My parents came with me, fulfilling their own ambition from their college years to visit that remote mountain retreat. There were plenty of magical moments: hiking to beautiful vistas, sharing stories and laughter, quiet afternoons with a book in hand.

But one moment in particular stays with me. We were gathered for worship, using Holden's Prayer Around the Cross. As the community sang, folks moved gently through the space, some lighting candles, others offering or receiving prayer, some simply kneeling in silence. I sat there with my parents, and I felt something rare: a great thinning of the unseen, unspoken things that often weigh on us.

It wasn't just the retreat setting that renewed my spirit. What moved me most was the sense of closeness, closeness with God, with my family, and with the gathered body of Christ. We embraced one another without speaking, but in that moment something deep settled in me. I felt like a child again, singing Holden Evening Prayer ('86), held by grace and by love, and by my parents. That moment offered me a profound sense of belonging.

Maybe you, too, long to belong. Maybe you are carrying weariness or worry and are yearning for peace, renewal, courage, or clarity. Maybe you're not sure what you need, but you know you're craving something more than another appointment on the calendar. Something deeper, something holy. You don't have to go to the mountains to find it!

That sense of sacred belonging — of connection, peace, and renewal — can be found right here in the body of Christ. That's what church is meant to be. Not just a place to "do ministry" or attend programs, but a space to rest in God's presence and in each other's care. We

continued next page



RALLY SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 7

Attention parents of children and youth ages three through grade eight!

Rally Day marks the start of Godly Play, Alleluia Choir, and will include the annual Blessing of Backpacks during both services. Bring your backpacks for a special blessing from the pastors and receive a small gift to help guide you through the school year.

We require families to register each fall, and this year's process is simpler than ever. Please register through the QR code above or online for the following programs:

- Godly Play, for children age three through grade six;
- Alleluia Choir, open to grades one-six;
- Christmas pageant, for children age three through grade eight.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER BLESSING

Godly Play teachers will be blessed on **Rally Day, September 7**, during the **10:45 am** service. **We invite all Godly Play teachers to attend.**

GODLY PLAY SUNDAY SCHOOL

Godly Play classes begin on **Sunday, September 7** in the Parish House from **9:45 - 10:30 am**. All children ages three years old through grade six are welcome.

At St. Mark's, we nurture the faith of our youngest people through worship, relationship, Vacation Bible School, choir, and through Godly Play, an approach to Sunday School that invites children of all ages to encounter the mystery of God through story, wonder, and play. This video <https://youtu.be/wvfVf13GhYA?feature=shared> gives you a flavor for it.

Are you intrigued? Might you feel called to join the teaching team?

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PASTOR EDWIN *continued from previous page*

gather around word and song, prayer and table. We bear one another's burdens. We share stories and wisdom. We teach and we learn, we bless and are blessed. And through it all, God is at work.

As the fall season begins and the calendar fills up, it's easy to think of church as just one more thing. But I want to offer you a different perspective. What we do together at St. Mark's isn't just a list of programs. These ministries are expressions of grace. They are places to reconnect, to be nourished, to remember who you are and whose you are, to be empowered to answer the callings God is summoning us into.

You don't need to do everything. None of us can. But I invite you to find one thing, one way of showing up this fall. Let it be something that will draw you and your loved ones closer to God and to each other. One opportunity for prayer, fellowship, learning, or service that brings joy and breathes peace into your week.

In the rush of back-to-school and busy schedules, let church be a place of calm. Let it be a source of strength and joy. Come, and join us. Taste and see the goodness of God!

RALLY SUNDAY *continued from previous page*

A volunteer team takes turns teaching Godly Play stories on Sunday mornings, fall through spring, in two classrooms: three-year-olds through second grade, and grades three through five.

We're seeking more teachers who feel called to this ministry. Through Godly Play, you'll build meaningful relationships with St. Mark's youth, lighten the load of the other volunteers, and rediscover the Bible through the eyes of a child.

Volunteers are asked to serve about once each month, and we offer training opportunities so that you'll feel fully equipped.

Please contact Kendra Chapman through the church office to learn more about this vital ministry.

ALLELUIA CHOIR



Children in first through sixth grades are invited to join Alleluia Choir, under the direction of Kendra Chapman. **Rehearsals begin on September 7** and will occur each Sunday in the Alleluia Choir loft. Please register online or on page one of this newsletter.

For children moving from Godly Play to Alleluia Choir, Kendra will accompany them from the Parish House to the Alleluia Choir loft each Sunday.

Parents whose children have not been at Godly Play should wait with their children in the Alleluia Choir loft until Kendra arrives (by approximately 10:40 am).

Rehearsal ends at approximately 11:30. Kendra will walk singers down to the sanctuary where they will rejoin their families for the remainder of worship.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

We are bidding a fond farewell to the Christmas Eve Pop-Up pageant. This year, children age three through eighth grade are invited to participate in a fully rehearsed Christmas pageant which will be presented to the congregation on **December 7**. Please register participants online or on page one.

YOUTH BIBLES AND CATECHISMS

On **Sunday, September 21 at the 10:45** service, youth in various grades will be presented with their own Bibles. Third graders and eighth graders will receive Bibles, and ninth graders will receive catechisms.

MONEY MATTERS

July 2025 Giving	Year-to-date 2025 Operating Budget			
	Giving	Expenses	Budgeted Expenses	Net YTD
\$ 76,408	\$ 487,378	\$ 490,765	\$ 503,425	(\$ 3,387)

We continue to stay on track with giving and expenses being almost equal. The summer attendance numbers do dip a bit, but thanks to automatic giving and those who plan ahead and give even when not in town, we are not far from where we should be. Please don't hesitate to contact the office at 509.747.6677 or office@stmarks-spokane.org to set up automatic giving. It only takes about five minutes and makes it easier to keep up with giving as you travel or miss worship.

Loris Stupel
Financial Secretary
finance@stmarks-spokane.org
509.747.6677

NOTE THIS!



OFFICE CLOSURES

The church office will be closed for the following holidays:

- Monday, **September 1**, Labor Day;
- Monday, **October 13**, Indigenous People's Day;
- Thursday and Friday, **November 27 & 28**, Thanksgiving Day.

SERVICE TIME CHANGES

On **Sunday, August 31**, we will continue the final week of our summer schedule, with one combined service Sunday at **9:30 am**. Saturday's 5:30 pm service remains the same.

Starting on **Sunday, September 7**, worship will be at **8:30 and 10:45 am**. This is in addition to our Saturday evening service at **5:30 pm**.

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

All Saints Sunday is **November 2** this year. We will send out letters to families who have lost a loved one in the past year.

REFORMATION SUNDAY

Reformation Sunday will be celebrated the weekend of **October 25/26**, 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!

OKTOBERFEST

Save the date! We will celebrate all things German on **Sunday, October 12, starting at 6:00 pm**.

The German American choir will start us off with some singing, then we'll eat brats with all the fixings. Bring a side 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 call the church office. Watch for more information in the Sunday bulletin.

There's more



MORE EVENTS TO NOTE

COME SING WITH THE CHOIR

The St. Mark's Chancel Choir rehearses on **Thursdays at 7:15 pm**, September through May, and we sing almost every Sunday. Our first rehearsal will be **Thursday, September 11**.

We sing a wide variety of music, and while you will likely feel stretched in some new directions, there's something for everyone in our musical repertoire. We are blessed to have a whole bunch of talented and committed singers in the choir at St. Mark's, but we are always happy to welcome new singers into our ranks!

If you are interested in joining us, or maybe even just giving it a try for a few weeks, please contact the church office and they'll put you in touch with Ann Benson, Director of Music - Choral.

CHURCH COUNCIL RECOGNITION

On Sunday, **September 14, at the 10:45 am** service, we will recognize our congregation council and give thanks for their direction and work.

A big thank you to both Gregor Thuswaldner and Pat Shelley for serving. Pat served for six years, and Gregor moved away this summer. Sue Connelly and Jane Summers will join the council this fall.

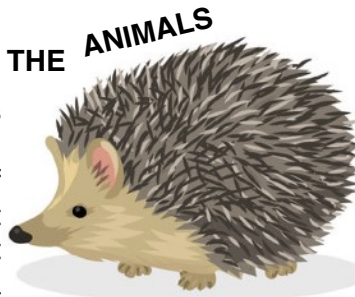
ST. FRANCIS BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

St. Francis Day is **Sunday, October 5**. 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 be creating 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.

LET US KNOW YOUR PREFERENCE

Our church newsletter The Messenger is available both digitally and in mailed hard copy. To make any change in how you receive it, just let us know at office@st-marks-spokane.org.



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:

- October 19
- October 26
- November 2

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 capacity.

The new members will be welcomed into the congregation on **Sunday, November 9 at the 10:45** 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.

CALLING YOUNG ARTISTS

Are you a young artist who loves to draw, paint, or create? We're looking for original artwork by children and youth to feature on upcoming worship folder covers. If you're interested in sharing your gifts in this creative way, reach out to Pastor Edwin. We'd love to see what you create!

THANK YOU

Please convey to the Mary Cares group our gratitude and thanks for the lovely birthday cards and greetings we received for our birthdays this month. We know it involves a lot of planning and thought to send them, and it is a lovely way to help us celebrate.

Gratefully,
Karen and Fred Stahl

Dear Ladies & Friends of Mary Cares,
Thank you for the many birthday cards & texts. I enjoyed them all as they still adorn my dining room table! Many thanks for your kindness and blessings to you.

Marilyn Warsinske

Volunteers

Opportunities to Serve

Gina Bloom, Volunteer Coordinator
volunteers@stmarks-spokane.org
509.747.6677

NEEDED

Costco: We are looking for someone who can do monthly Costco runs for the church.

Nursery: We are looking for volunteers who can help in the nursery when we are short staffed. This will be periodically when a nursery attendant is sick or away. Volunteers must be 18+ and complete a background check and online sexual abuse awareness training. Please contact the church office if you are interested, at office@stmarks-spokane.org or 509.747.6677.

VOLUNTEER SUNDAY, SIGN-UP SEPTEMBER 21

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

We do have spots where more hands are needed. St Mark's is a warm home for us on worship days, in part because of the greeters and ushers who serve monthly in these roles. You would be welcome to shake hands at our entrance or to assist our parishioners during worship. In fact, churchgoers of any age are invited to join in the many opportunities to volunteer. Saying it another way: Families with younger children are welcome!

Start thinking now about how you would like to be involved and then join us at the Volunteer Fair beginning the weekend of **September 13-14**. Again this year, to help emphasize where new volunteers are most needed, seasoned volunteers will be asked to **NOT SIGN UP** in the narthex. If you want to try something new, I'll be excited to see your name on a sign-up sheet. I'll look forward to seeing you there!

THANK YOU TO SUMMER VOLUNTEERS

Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain – his Spirit – where we all come to drink. (1Corinthians 12 The Message)

Deep and wide is the pool of volunteers tending to details at St Mark's, and as a community, we feel grateful for your abundant hearts for service. In the sanctuary, outside on our grounds, in our live-streamed worship services, everywhere the evidence of your good care abounds.

Evidence of that same care abounds in the nitty-gritty details, too. You volunteered around summer travel. You filled in when the unexpected happened. You returned calls, even when you weren't free to help. You took breaks when you needed them. Graciously, you returned to service at just the right moment. All of you are important parts of the Body of Christ. Thank you!

THANK YOU

Thank you ladies from the "Mary Cares" group. You have made me appreciate getting older with your prayers and good wishes! Ursula and I are only two days apart, birthday wise, so we have a side-table awash in cards and happy thoughts to reminds us for days of the thoughts and prayers, and creativity that you have shown.

God's blessings and our ongoing prayers for each of you. Thanks again.

Jon and Ursula Lanam

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTH

Blessings on the birth of **Sally Noelle Bray**, granddaughter of Brenda and Bob Bray, daughter of Felicia and Matt Bray.

SYMPATHY

Prayers for the family of **Roger Buckaloo**, brother of **Neal Buckaloo**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Ryan McNamee**, grandson of **Alma Vogt**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Clay Worst**, father of **Susan Pine**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Odell Leffall**, husband of **Debbie Leffall**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Connie Martin** at the time of her death.

ST. MARK'S WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

On June 29, we welcomed eight new members into the St. Mark's community. Here is a little bit about them, in their own words.



Damon Delistraty

Damon was a military brat so does not claim any specific place in his years of growing up. He has lived in Spokane for 37 years and is a retired environmental toxicologist. Damon has two grown sons and is widowed. He enjoys biking as a hobby.

works for Spokane International Airport with special training in Aviation and Network Planning, and states he is an avid aviation geek. When not working he enjoys photography, hiking, other outdoor activities and has a fondness for travel. Joe has an interest in meeting people wherever he goes and hearing their stories.



Lauren Heine

Lauren has lived in Spokane for nine years, is originally from Wellesley, Massachusetts and lived in Scotland as a child. She is partially retired from her work as a green chemist and environmental engineer.

Lauren enjoys cross-country skiing, hiking for recreation and donates her time to drive for the Lilac Services for the Blind. She states her other languages are "bad French." She has enjoyed the St. Mark's community and the tangible love here.



Gregory and Lucinda Saue

Gregory and Lucinda have lived in Spokane since 1978 and went to Central Lutheran for many years. Gregory moved around a lot as a child and wanted to be settled in one place. For many years they lived near St. Mark's but now enjoy living on Clear Lake. They both like gardening and have a garden in the front of the house and a lake in the back. They have two daughters and five grandchildren who live in California.

Gregory is a long-retired rheumatologist. He was the first board certified rheumatologist in Spokane. He also worked as an internist and for several years worked at the Native Project clinic. He has been a painter for 60 years doing both watercolor and oil painting. He often enters art shows and has won prizes, however he rarely sells his paintings and so has many at his home. He says he spends most of his time as a dog mattress.

Lucinda is a retired lawyer who enjoys socializing, reading, writing and working with yarn. She is a member of four book clubs and

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Luana Maxwell

Luanna has lived in Spokane for eight years and is originally from Minnesota and then lived in Montana. She retired from 39 years in the grocery industry. Her hobbies are gardening and history. Luanna's two sons live in Spokane, plus six grandchildren and two great granddaughters.



Joe Nevill

Joe is from Colorado Springs, Chicago, and Houston, and has lived in Spokane for one year. He is in Air Service Development and

the Sons of Norway and Daughters of Norway. Gregory is not a member but does enjoy the parties.

Lucinda has been in a weekly writing group for 15 years. Group members write fiction and non-fiction essays and poetry and then share with the group. She also crochets, knits, quilts and makes prayer shawls for people experiencing difficulties in their lives.



Laura and Erik Strom

Laura was raised in Shoreline, Washington and attended college at WSU. She and Eric lived in Portland for 30 years.

Laura works as a veterinarian at the Lincoln Heights Veterinary Clinic and has special training in veterinary acupuncture and integrative medicine. She enjoys gardening, cooking, baking and music and can speak some German and Swiss. She plays the harp and piano and blessed St. Mark's with a beautiful harp rendition of "Be Thou My Vision" during communion on the Sunday she joined St. Mark's.

Laura loves Eastern Washington and is excited to be a part of a church family. She would like people to know she is really an introvert but is trying to overcome her shyness. She feels like she is a work in progress in many ways.

Eric is a retired financial advisor and stockbroker. He is from Valdez, Alaska and enjoys home improvement, outdoor swimming, the theater, ushering, umpiring fast pitch softball, fishing and traveling. One thing he would like people to know is that he has excellent handwriting for a man. We enjoyed his great sense of humor during the new member classes.

Laura and Eric have lived in Spokane for two years and have two children, Benjamin and Katherine. Ben is studying aerospace engineering at the University of Colorado and Katie is a graduate of the NW Culinary Institute and living in Portland Oregon.

MEET NEW ST. MARK'S STAFF



My name is Susan Hagen. If my face looks familiar, it's because my husband Todd and I are long-time members. I worked as the Director of Youth and Family Ministries here starting in 2011. After leaving in 2020 (what was I thinking!?) I took a short trip into the real estate world. I am now happily back at the church. You will find me at the front desk working as the office coordinator.

Outside of work, Todd and I are often traveling to visit family and friends. We frequently head to Seattle to see our son, Jacob, catch a Mariners game, and try a new restaurant. We also try to spend meaningful time with our moms. To Todd's chagrin, all my extra attention goes to my dog, Coco!

It is great to be rejoining the staff after being away for five years. I enjoy seeing your faces and hearing your voices over the phone every day. I am thrilled to be back to meaningful and heart-fulfilling work!



My name is Kendra Kimball Chapman and I am excited to join the church staff as the Alleluia Choir director and Godly Play coordinator. My family and I have been attending St. Mark's since we moved from New York City in 2015. My husband, David, and I have three children: Jane (12), Norilee (10), and Henry (7). We attend church with my parents (Kent and Norilee), my sister, Hannah, her husband, Evan, and

their children, Ezra, Jonah, and Sadie. You'll recognize us as the big family that makes all the "joyful noise" from the back of the sanctuary during second service.

Directing Alleluia Choir and taking on more leadership with Godly Play feels like a natural step for me. I've been volunteering as a Godly Play teacher for years. I love singing in the choir on Sundays, and for the last four years I've been volunteering as the co-director of VBS along with my dear friend, Kate Bassett. God has been quietly working on my heart, nudging me to use my experience and training in this new way to support the children's ministry at St. Mark's. I hold a BA in Music Education from Whitworth University, a Master of Music in Music Theater from Oklahoma City University, and I have experience teaching general and choral music to preschoolers through high school. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue building relationships and making music with the children we serve through VBS each summer.

Youth

Hello from St. Mark's youth! We have had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to an exciting school year with some fun opportunities for youth and families.

Over the summer we've been trying out a new activity called Splendid Sundays. Every other week we've had a family/youth/intergenerational potluck after second service, followed by time for games and fellowship.

This programming has given people a space to socialize and connect in the church outside of worship, and we are excited to bring it into the school year. Splendid Sundays will continue as a monthly event starting in September, running from **12 noon to 2 pm**. The dates for the fall will be **September 21, October 19, and November 23**. This programming is open to EVERYONE.

We have also been busy with some fun youth activities this summer. At the end of July we went on a day trip to Silverwood. The kids rode the rollercoasters and cooled off at the water park.



By the time you read this, we will also have had our Camp Night at the church where we are going to be setting up tents on the Parish House lawn, cooking s'mores on a camp stove, and playing some classic camp games.

Looking forward to the school year, we have a busy fall planned. **Sunday Cool starts September 7**. That is our weekly hangout for youth grades 6 - 12 between first and second service. We meet in the narthex for a game or competition and then head back to the youth room for some donut holes and a quick devotional.

Wonderful Wednesdays will resume on September 10. This programming runs from **6:00 to 8:00 pm every Wednesday** throughout the fall and winter Confirmation sessions. Everyone is welcome to join us for a potluck followed by social time and games.

In addition to all this, we have several fun youth events planned for the fall. Our annual Halloween party will be **Sunday, October 26** and the Fall Youth Lock-In is scheduled for **Friday, November 14**.

Finally, for youth and families looking for service opportunities, **we are starting a new group called the Servant Corps**. Our goal is to plan a monthly service project for anyone in the congregation who wants to get involved. For our first month, we will be meeting on **September 28** and working with the Spokane Riverkeepers to clean up a trail. Keep your eye out for more information on the Servant Corps.

Thanks for the opportunity to work with the youth here at St. Marks!

Calvin Moore and Rachel Peterson

Learning for All Ages

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find information about Godly Play Sunday School, Alleluia Choir, Confirmation and other youth learning activities. Here is the Fall schedule for the Sunday Forum:

SUNDAY FORUMS

Sunday Forum meets most Sundays from September through May, between services from **9:45–10:30 am** in the conference room. Each week features a different topic, from deepening our understanding of our Christian faith to hearing from ministry partners who are living out God's call in practical, hands-on ways. The variety of speakers and subjects keeps our conversations lively and engaging. All are welcome to join in learning, sharing, and growing together.

September 7: Rally Day, no Sunday Forum

September 14: Shalom Ministries with St. Mark's members.

Dedicated to serving the poor and homeless here in Spokane, Shalom Ministries provides over 60,000 meals annually through their Dining with Dignity program. Their Pathways initiative offers job and life skills training, mentoring, and housing assistance. Shalom Ministries continues to be a beacon of hope, fostering healing and renewal by extending hospitality and dignity to some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

September 21: Manzanita House with Patricia Castaneda and Sam Smith.

Since its inception in 2021, Manzanita House has assisted immigrants and refugees from over 105 countries, collaborating with more than 64 community partners to provide comprehensive support and stabilization services. The name reflects the resilience of the individuals they serve, drawing a parallel to the hardy manzanita tree known for its ability to thrive in challenging conditions.

September 28: Spokane Riverkeeper

Spokane Riverkeeper is a nonprofit engaged in the vital work of protecting the health and dignity of the Spokane river. As advocates for clean water and environmental restoration, they will help us explore

how caring for our watershed connects to our call to steward creation. Come learn how we can be good neighbors to the river that runs through our community, then join us for a service project after the late service and help keep our river clean.

October 5: International Companion Synod Partners with Pastor Ezekiel Mwambungu.

We welcome Pastor Ezekiel Mwambungu from our companion synod, the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese in Tanzania. Join us to learn more about this global partnership rooted in shared faith and mutual accompaniment.

October 12: *The Fig Tree* with Marijke Fakasiieiki.

The Fig Tree is an independent, nonprofit newspaper and resource directory dedicated to fostering communication among faith and nonprofit communities in the Inland Northwest. As an ecumenical and interfaith organization, it aims to bridge divisions, build understanding, and promote unity and action for the common good.

October 19 Confirmation Sunday, no Sunday Forum.

Other Sunday Forum topics coming this fall... dates to be announced:

Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Statement with Pastor Edwin.

As part of our call to honor our Christian neighbors, Pastor Edwin invites us to explore a new joint statement from Lutheran and Orthodox theologians addressing the historic tension over shared and differing beliefs. This study builds on our ecumenical ministry at St. Mark's, including last year's visit to an Orthodox church. Come learn how shared faith and respectful dialogue can draw us closer as the body of Christ.

Grace Commons Spokane with Pastor Emily Kuenker.

Grace Commons Spokane is a reimagined ministry offering a spiritual home for curious, compassionate, and thoughtful young adults. Building on its roots in campus ministry at Eastern Washington University, it now serves a broader Spokane community that meets young people where they are: in classrooms, coffee shops, protests, and community spaces. Join us to learn how Grace Commons is helping young adults live out their faith in public through community, organizing, and justice-seeking.

CONFIRMATION and REFORMATION: Two Sundays, One Spirit

One of the biggest shifts this fall is how we'll celebrate two powerful traditions. Reformation Sunday has long been observed on the last Sunday in October, and for many years, St. Mark's has also held our annual Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation) on that same day.

This year, we're spreading things out so each celebration can shine.

- **Confirmation Sunday** will be celebrated at the **10:45 service on October 19.**
- **Reformation Sunday** will follow the weekend of **October 25/26.**

On both weekends, we'll give thanks for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, poured out in baptism, alive in the church, and shared across generations. You're invited to wear red both Sundays as we celebrate the Spirit's movement among us: through our young people affirming their faith, through the church's continual reformation, and through the sacred calling we all share.

WELCOMING OUR SIBLING IN CHRIST FROM THE ULANGA-KILOMBERO DIOCESE

On **Sunday, October 5**, we are honored to welcome Pastor Ezekiel Mwambungu from our companion synod, the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese (UKD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Pastor Ezekiel will join us for worship and will be our featured speaker during Sunday Forum. He will proclaim the Words of Institution from the table in his native Swahili, deepening our sense of the global Body of Christ. We hope you'll be present to offer hospitality and to learn how our shared faith connects us across continents.

The ELCA's Companion Synod Program fosters relationships between ELCA synods and Lutheran churches around the world. These more than 120 partnerships are rooted in *accompaniment*, the practice of walking together in mutuality, trust, and shared mission. In our relationship with the UKD, we express this through the Swahili phrase "Bega kwa Bega," meaning "Shoulder to Shoulder."

Over the years, the Northwest Intermountain

Synod and the UKD have walked together through mutual visits, prayer, ministry collaboration, and practical support. These friendships deepen our sense of the global church and remind us that we are not alone in the work of ministry.

Pastor Ezekiel Mwambungu currently serves as Acting General Secretary of the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese, functioning as the diocese's chief administrator. He also directs Strobelt School, the UKD's pre- and primary school. In the late 1990s, Pastor Ezekiel completed an internship at Grace Lutheran Church in Wenatchee, Washington, strengthening a relationship with our synod that has continued to bear fruit.

The UKD is located in southeastern Tanzania, a region of stunning natural beauty and significant economic challenges. The diocese is active in evangelism, education, healthcare, and community development. One of its central ministries is Tumaini Lutheran Seminary, located in the town of Malinyi. Tumaini includes a Bible school for training lay evangelists and a secondary school that provides quality education to young people.

Our synod has supported several projects at Tumaini, including the construction of a much-needed dining hall. For many years, students ate outdoors or under temporary shelters. Thanks to the generosity of congregations across our synod, students now gather in a covered space—a visible sign of our shared ministry and enduring hope.

There are still ways you can support this important work. Current priorities include:

- Girls' scholarships for students attending Tumaini Lutheran Secondary School (TLS),
- Lugala Lutheran Hospital,
- The Tanzanian Travel Fund, which helps make guest exchanges possible.

Gifts sent to the synod's Global Mission committee will be put to use in close collaboration with UKD leadership. If you're interested in joining this committee, let Pastor Edwin known or reach out to the synod office.

On **October 5**, we'll have the chance not only to hear about this partnership, but to meet the people behind it. We invite you to join us as we renew our connection to the global church and give thanks for companions who walk with us, in the Spirit of Christ, "Bega kwa Bega."

Stewards of Creation



Acknowledging that our call to creation stewardship is ongoing, we will be weaving Creation Sundays throughout the upcoming liturgical year. Our first celebration took place on August 10, with special music by Barb Belstad and Rick Young. You can find it also on St. Mark's YouTube channel at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xf5Mgay5a_Q&t=2913s



Our vegetable gardens have produced a bounty of produce to share: green and yellow squash, cucumbers, carrots, snow peas, green beans, lettuce,

arugula, kale, chard, lemon balm, spinach, radishes, cilantro and parsley.

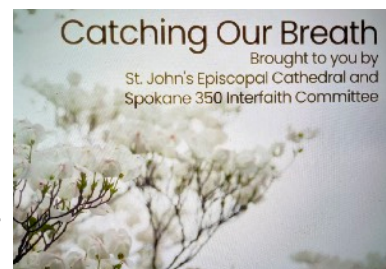
We need one or two harvesters for September 21 and 28. Contact Janet Farness through the church office if interested, or if you'd like to join the gardening team this fall or next year.

Share your extra produce now into fall. Look for the table in the breezeway on Sundays, to leave your extras and take whatever you can use.

Thanks to the volunteers who wash our glass communion cups after each use: Barb, Pat, Cynthia, Jan, Matt, Camille, Sande, Diana and Janet. The use of glass cups reduces our reliance on single-use plastics.

CATCHING OUR BREATH: Hope for Creation

Prayers on Video



The video comprises prayers for creation submitted by diverse sacred communities in Spokane. It is a joyful celebration, a soulful lament and a heartfelt prayer. It lasts about 20 minutes.

You can find it on the St. Mark's video channel. A digital book of prayers is available through the church office.



The Peace with Creation Prayer Service will be available September 1 on YouTube, beginning at 8:00 am, or anytime after that.

The EcoFaith Action Network of the Northwest Intermountain Synod has created this beautiful prayer service through which we can express our joy in creation as well as our sorrow for human's harm to it. Thanks to Neal Buckaloo and Martha Harvie who recorded a segment.

Access the prayer service using the link below, and while there also subscribe to EcoFaith's newly established YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLI26SAoK58>.

You can also access it by going to YouTube and searching for EcoFaith Action Network.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

The first hopeful book about climate change, *The Future Earth* shows readers how to reverse the short- and long-term effects of climate change over the next three decades.

This is the book for anyone who feels overwhelmed by the current state of our environment.

MEET OUR NEW PRESIDING BISHOP: The Rev. Yehiel Curry



Bishop Curry with Erica Dornfeld at her ordination.

On July 30, 2025, the Rev. Yehiel Curry was elected as the next Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), succeeding the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton. Elected on the fifth ballot during the churchwide assembly in Phoenix, Arizona, Curry received 562 of 799 votes cast. He is the first Black pastor to serve in this role, currently serves as Bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, and will assume office in October.

Bishop Curry brings with him a story rooted in faith, perseverance, and a deep commitment to community. Though he was raised in the church, he didn't always have the language to name what he was feeling as a call. "I was just a guy sitting in the pew," he told the assembly. "I never really learned the language of discernment. I just knew I had this feeling." He tried to follow that feeling through several careers—first as a teacher, then a social worker, then in business—but it wasn't until he found himself serving in the church that he realized: "I could do this for the rest of my life."

That journey led him to Shekinah Chapel, a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community in Riverdale, Illinois. There, after initially declining

the role for two years, he said "yes" to becoming a lay mission developer. That yes would eventually grow into a call to ordained ministry, seminary at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and ultimately service as Bishop of the Metro Chicago Synod, a role he has held since 2019.

For Bishop Curry, this journey is not just personal, it's communal. He reminded the assembly that the church's support, especially through mission dollars and shared ministry, made his leadership possible. "If you want to know what your benevolence dollars look like," he said, "it looks like me. And I want to say thank you. Thank you for your investment."

Curry is also a family man, and he made sure to lift up his wife, LaShonda, in his remarks after the election. "While I take my work seriously, I also take my first ministry seriously, and that is the ministry of my family," he said. Together they have three daughters, and Curry has spoken frequently of how deeply his family grounds and supports him.

His leadership style is rooted in approachability, storytelling, and a deep sense of humor. He shared with the assembly a lighthearted explanation for the limp he carried into the assembly: After playing 38 holes of golf in one day while his wife was out of town, he injured his foot. "To ensure it wasn't broken," he joked, "I played 18 more the next day. And then 18 that Tuesday."

Curry's election comes at a time when the ELCA is deeply discerning its identity and future. The theme of this year's assembly, *For the Life of the World*, echoes the kind of ministry Curry has long embodied: contextual, inclusive, rooted in justice, and propelled by a gospel of hope.

As we welcome Bishop Curry into this new leadership role, may we pray for his wisdom, joy, and continued witness among us. And may his story remind us all that God continues to call leaders from every pew, every community, and every corner of our shared life. A brief video of the election is on YouTube https://youtu.be/f-P_fMDfj4U?si=OofudBW9WA1CWa6f.

A small connection with St. Mark's is that Pastor Erika Dornfeld, daughter of St. Mark's members Holly and Steve Dornfeld, was ordained on November 10, 2024, in Chicago. It was Pastor Curry who presided over her ordination. The world truly is small.

ENVIRONMENTAL WORK CREATES BIG SAVINGS



Did you know that St. Mark's qualified for new LED interior & exterior lighting fixtures through Avista? Our church was retrofitted with these lights over the summer and Avista estimates that it will save us close to \$6000 a year. That is a mortgage payment!

We also worked hard to map our sprinkler system and cap sprinklers we didn't need. A special thank you to Mark Copeland, Dan Heinen, and Bob Palrud! Our July utilities bill showed a savings of 9,836 cubic feet of water - that is 73,573 gallons of water!



We have received 14 cubic yards of free wood chip mulch from ChipDrop. That amount of mulch would cost close to \$600 delivered. Watch as our grounds are transformed with this free mulch.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

We had such a successful VBS this year, again coordinated by the wonderful team of Kate Bassett and Kendra Kimball Chapman. The joy to participants of all ages was palpable.



Social Ministry

Opportunities to Serve

By Patti Berg



Another school year is upon us and that means many kids will need the extra energy boost from the **Bite2Go** kits again.

For those of you new to St. Mark's, we support Franklin Elementary in a program with Second Harvest that provides a bag of shelf-stable foods every week during the school year to children within a certain income level, to help carry them over the weekend.

Each year, the numbers grow with the downturn of the economy. So, as part of our Social Ministry at St. Mark's, we ask members to help with this program and support at least one child in the amount of \$180 for the year. You can either write a check to St. Mark's, noting that it is for the Bite2Go program, or you can charge it on your card with St. Mark's. Should you have an employer who likes to help, they can send it directly to Second Harvest with the designation that it is for Bite2Go for Franklin Elementary, and it will go into our account.

Thank you for your caring and charitable actions as we continue to serve those in need.

SHALOM MINISTRIES DINING WITH DIGNITY Hunger is on the rise!

- In 2021 40,154 meals were served to downtown low-income and homeless people at Shalom Ministries Dining with Dignity
- Three years later, 72,929 meals were served (2024)
- 43,926 meals served in the first six months of 2025 - anticipate reaching more than 80,000 meals in 2025
- Did you know? A solid team of 67 volunteers and 14 outreach agencies provide hope and affirmation that each diner has self-worth and they "matter" regardless of their situation. Vital support and needed resources are always available.
- Community Health Association of Spokane (CHAS) street medicine professionals

provide medical treatment for dining guests on site at each meal.

- CHAS outreach assists diners to access drug treatment and housing.
- Frontier Behavioral Health outreach provides mental health support.
- Washington State University nursing instructors and students provide a foot care clinic weekly.
- Consistent Care Services provides onsite housing and employment case management.
- Spokane Regional Health Outreach helps diners with opioid drug dependence and the effects it has on the diners' lives.
- REVIVE assists diners with housing intakes and the long process of getting them housed.

CAN YOU HELP? Our neighbors at Shalom Ministries downtown are in extreme need of bottled water.

Many of Shalom's unhoused and low-income guests have limited resources to obtain fresh cool water. On very short notice, St Mark's was able to provide enough water for all our Monday evening dinner guests!

We will continue to collect cases of bottled water while the temperature remains uncomfortably high. Just bring them to the church during office hours (M-Th. 9-3:00, F. 9-12 noon) and we will get them downtown.

If getting the cases to the church is an issue, please call the office at 509.747.6677. Thank you!

continued next page



Gerry Wigren brought water for Shalom.

SHALOM MINISTRIES GALA

October 18, 5-8:30 pm

**Southside Community Center,
3151 E 27th Ave., Spokane**

Please support our Dining with Dignity, A Gala Event. This event serves as the cornerstone of our fundraising efforts

TICKETS \$60 / Individual

Purchase On-line: <https://fundraiser.support/ShalomMeals>. Hors d'oeuvres, dinner, dessert and beverages included.

DONATE

If you enjoy donating a "Theme Basket" or items for the auction, please contact Peg Johnson at (509) 953-1391. She's available for questions and can pick up your items. Donations are accepted at <https://fundraisersupport/shalommeals>

AUCTION

A year ago Spokane's Stephanie Vigil came to serve breakfast at Shalom Ministries and so many of our homeless friends felt valued. We are blessed to have Stephanie return to be our live auctioneer to support the life-changing ways we are making a transformative difference in our community.

AUCTION PREVIEW

A preview of auction items will begin 10 days before our Gala Event starts at <https://fundraiser.support/ShalomMeals>

EVENING PROGRAM

Join us in an uplifting and inspiring evening experiencing why Shalom is vital to our community, as we share a common vision to renew broken lives, food insecurity, reducing homelessness, and preventing fentanyl deaths.

Relax with Tim G's original song writing with familiar covers to give a blend of popular music that spans genres and decades.

Keynote Speaker Dr. Pam Kohlmeier volunteers every Monday and is a strong advocate for our community-at-large. Living her transformative messages, Pam offers a better and safer place to thrive and grow.

Be empowered by CHAS social worker,

Patrick Allen's testimony, what it's like to be homeless. By holding onto hope, he provides tools for a renewed life

Thank you so much to every person who volunteers with Shalom Ministries Dining with Dignity, and to those who donate clothing, blankets and sleeping bags or contribute financially. We are grateful to St. Mark's Lutheran Church for abundant generosity and kindness. For more information contact Steve Nash, Mike Connelly or Deidre Jacobson at St. Mark's.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO SHAWN VAN GORDON

We would like to extend a huge thank you to Shawn Van Gordon for his outstanding service as our treasurer over the past six years.

Throughout his time with us, Shawn navigated many transitions in both staff and technology with unwavering dedication, all while maintaining his trademark smile and good humor. His commitment to ensuring the smooth operation of St. Mark's, especially during times of change, has been invaluable.

PRAYERS AT STAFF MEETINGS

Staff members at St. Mark's take turns leading our meetings on Tuesday mornings. We begin our time with devotion and prayer, including sharing prayer requests from five households of St. Mark's. We reach out to those families in the days prior, connecting with folks over prayerful thanksgivings and requests. When we reach out to you, we hope you know that these prayer requests are kept confidential within the staff unless otherwise requested. This is different from the printed prayer list which appears in the Sunday bulletin.

If you don't have any prayer requests or we don't hear from you, we still pray for you, trusting that God knows what you need.

If you would like to add someone to the printed prayer list, used most Sundays for the Prayers of Intercession, either for yourself or someone else, feel free to reach out to staff in whatever ways are most comfortable for you. There is even a tab on our website where you can make prayer requests.

ST. MARK'S VISITS HOLDEN VILLAGE



In July, a group of 18 from St. Mark's traveled to Holden Village for a week of summer fun, fellowship, and renewal. Tucked in the heart of the North Cascades, Holden Village invites all into the wilderness to encounter God, creation, and community in fresh and life-giving ways.

Our journey began at Field's Point on Lake Chelan, where we boarded a ferry bound for Lucerne Landing. From there, a dusty bus carried us up steep switchbacks into the mountains. Along the way, we entered the burn scar of the Wolverine Fire, which scorched the valley ten years ago. This summer, Holden marked that anniversary with their summer theme of resurrection and restoration. The hillsides now bloom with magenta Fireweed, the first of the "fire followers", whose bright stalks stabilize the soil and make way for new life to return.

At the village, we were warmly welcomed and quickly settled into the rhythms of Holden

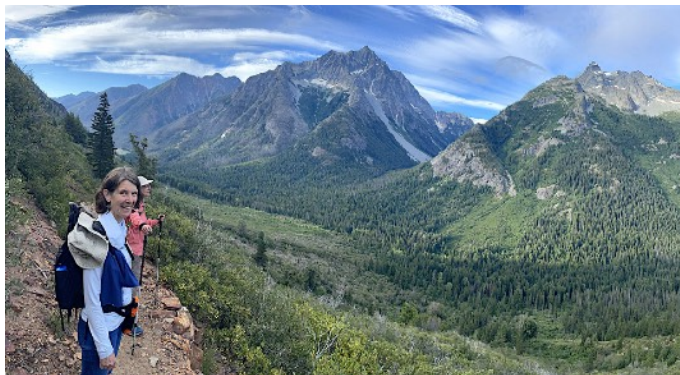
life. Meals, classes, and Sacred Space formed the heart of each day, all punctuated by the ringing of the village bell, which calls the community to worship, reflection, and shared learning.

There was something for everyone. Some explored the Craft Cave, painting, weaving, and throwing pottery. Others attended a daily Bible study on the Psalms, led by Pastor Katie Hines-Shah of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale, Illinois. One visiting faculty offered thought-provoking insights and bold new ideas. Victor Menaldo, a political science professor at the University of Washington, spoke on AI, economics, and Christian ethics. Another faculty member, Lutheran theologian Paul Griffith, shared his passion for astrophotography which included a late-night stargazing session under some of the dark skies of Holden.

One of the week's highlights was the daily Glocal singalong, led by Dr. Keith Hampton, cantor at the Lutheran School of Theology at

Chicago. Together with other international musicians, “Doc” introduced us to a vibrant tapestry of global Christian song.

Fellowship also abounded. We shared a wine and cheese reception, lingered on porch swings with books and laughter, and hiked mountain trails lined with waterfalls, glaciers, and remnants of Holden’s mining past. Wildlife surrounded us: chipmunks, marmots, and deer, including doe and fawn who wandered with us along village paths. Even the lingering signs of wildfire reminded us of the fragility and resilience of this sacred place, and of the whole earth, entrusted to our care.



Gina Bloom and Mary Hoenecke hiking.

When the week drew to a close, the Holden Sending Prayer was spoken over us, a moment both tender and bittersweet. With grateful hearts, we boarded the bus, the ferry, and finally returned home. Yet something of the mountain still lingers with us: the songs, the silence, the signs of resurrection. We return to Spokane changed, carrying a bit of Holden’s light into our lives and our world.

A special thank you to **Kimberly Manz**, who volunteered to organize this trip for us.



Erik and Kimberly Manz, Sylvie Manz

Faith and Fellowship Groups

We use the church office telephone number, 509.747.6677, for all our groups. This is to avoid scam texts. If you have a directory, you can phone leaders directly.

VINYASA FLOW YOGA AT ST. MARK’S

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



This yoga class is for **everyone!** Instructor, Kendra Mauer, has been practicing yoga for more than a decade. She is a novice yoga teacher and would love to continue learning alongside you. Bring your mat (if you don’t have one, Kendra will have a few extra), your joy, and a friend or two. A free will offering is suggested. Hope to see you soon!

STEWARDS OF CREATION

Varying Mondays, by Zoom, 6:00 pm

Questions: Janet Farness, (jkftahiti@comcast.net)

This small group meets to learn more about care of the earth and our divine calling to be good stewards of creation. Our next Zoom meeting is **Monday, September 1.**

SCRIPTURE & COFFEE

Every Tuesday, 10:30 am

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

EAT, PRAY, LAUGH

First Tuesday, September 2, 7:00 pm

Questions: Pastor Gretchen

Eat, Pray, Laugh meets in the conference room. **All women** are invited to this fellowship group for conversation, laughter, prayer and refreshments. *continued next page*

GROUPS

continued from previous page

THEOLOGY ON TAP

Third Tuesday of the month, mostly, at 7:00 pm

Questions: Pastor Edwin

This group has great conversation and fellowship with **adults in their 30s** rotating through local brewpubs and wineries. Check the calendar or the Sunday bulletin for more details.

SUNRISE SAINTS & SINNERS

Second & Fourth Wed., Sept. 10 & 24, Oct. 8 & 22,
7:00 am

Questions: Dave Troyke

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

WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS

Wednesday evenings, 6:00 pm, in the narthex

Questions: the church office

Potluck at 6:00 pm, Confirmation (eighth and ninth graders) and fellowship for those who wish it or board games for all ages at 7:00 pm.

PICKLEBALL

Thursday evenings, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm.

Questions: the church office

Join us for our weekly evening pickleball session. No equipment is needed, but sunglasses or hats encouraged. This is a great opportunity to learn the game or work on your skills! Remember that you can also borrow equipment from the church when the office is open, and you are welcome to arrange your own games anytime.

THE MEANDERING BUNCH

Second Friday of the month, 10:00 am at St. Mark's
Questions: Martha Harvie

This group plans regular outings to walk along with others while socializing. The next get-together is on **Friday, September 12**. We'll meet at St. Mark's, then head to Kendall Yards, walk a bit, then find a place to eat lunch.

PRAYERS AT STAFF MEETINGS

On page 15 you can read about the prayers for congregation members offered at St. Mark's staff meetings. Here is a reply received from one member who was contacted.

Thank you for your lovely note and promise of prayers. I am a LONG time member of St. Mark's and used to be very active. I am 90 years old now, widowed twice and don't get out much. Two of my children were married there by my brother, Pastor Phil Falk.

I have had an active life here in Spokane. In volunteerism I helped start the Crosswalk program and asked St. Mark's for support. We did and still do.

I helped Habitat for Humanity for 20 years. St. Mark's allowed our first office to work out of the church choir room.

My years are slowing me down, but I am well.

Thanks again for your attention to me.

Sincerely,

Carol Phillips Rankin

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

Phone: (509) 747-6677

FAX: (509) 458-2757

MESSENGER

Published quarterly
by St. Mark's Lutheran Church

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9 am-noon, 1-3:00 pm
(Friday -noon)

office@stmarks-spokane.org

WWW.STMARKS-SPOKANE.ORG

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

PASTORS

Gretchen Olson
Edwin Weber

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

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