



St. Mark's Lutheran Church

# Messenger

Spokane, WA

Summer 2026

Vol. 2026, No. 2

## MESSAGE FROM PASTOR GRETCHEN

After worship, one of you mentioned in passing that your sister joins St. Mark's worship by livestream most weekends. That might not be so unusual, but it turns out that sister lives on 2000+ acres of ranch land in the high desert of Central Oregon on the edge of the Umatilla National Forest. It's a place where church options are limited and cell reception is spotty. Most Sundays, his sister Mary leaves the home that she and her husband built from timber on their land, walks up into the hills above their place, finds a ridge where cell reception is best, sits in view of the vast landscape, and worships along with all of us who gather here at 24<sup>th</sup> & Grand. She said that on Easter Sunday, she was one of 108 others who were signed in online to St. Mark's YouTube feed. Among them may well have been the Challis Community Church which often joins us for worship from the rugged Salmon River Mountain town of Challis, Idaho, as their budget can no longer support a pastor.

I would not likely have become a pastor if Wartburg Seminary had not offered a virtual mode of connecting. It allowed students from Alaska to Florida and Arizona to Long Island to engage by Zoom in real time, alongside the residential students who gathered on the Iowa campus each day in the chapel and classrooms. For me, it provided a center that an entirely virtual community of learners would not have. Throughout those six years, the students worshipping and learning "in the room" grounded the experience for those of us "in the Zoom".

When you are able to gather in person at St. Mark's, the Spirit uses you to provide that same ballast for others. Whether they are homebound, vacationing, or live in places without access to the kind of faith community the Spirit continues to

*continued next page*

form through St. Mark's, your physical presence in this place – praying, singing, reading, sharing the peace and the meal – matters both for the person in the pew next to you and for those beyond whom you may never meet.

We are also grateful to those whose gifts and service make this virtual ministry possible: to Randy Darst who put together and maintains our sound system and who quietly creates the livestream slides each week, and to our sound and livestream volunteers who make our Sunday worship audible and viewable for those in the room and on YouTube. They are Everest Benson, Kevin Benson, Brendan Cesaratto, Randy Darst, Eric Manz, Matt Ophardt, Don Patterson, Kaden Pinyo, Charlie Wagner, and Rick Young. Gratitude also to all whom the Spirit gathers in person around water and the Word, the bread and cup. Thanks and praise to God for this place to gather and the technology to extend the good, nourishing news of God in Christ to the high desert, the rugged mountains, and wherever the Spirit might blow the humble signal from this place. And welcome to Mary, to the people of Challis Community Church, to those who are homebound, and to all who are fed by St. Mark's livestream. You are part of us. Thanks be to God!

---

## THANK YOU

Dear Mary Cares Members,

We so appreciate all the special birthday cards. So kind and thoughtful to remember Bruce on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. He is doing so well now, after his terrible fall last November. Rehab...He has gradually worked his way from "wheelchair" to a "walker" and now just needs a "cane"! We love St. Mark's and all the different programs offered. Our daughter Heidi (Hille) Rudy and son-in-law Scott have been St. Mark's members soooo many years. The move from Ritzville and Emanuel Lutheran was a tough decision. We know Mark John Nelson from that area. We so love music and appreciate this at St. Mark's – the choir, the pianist/organist, soloists, etc.

Again, we thank you for the thoughtful birthday greetings and kind words.

God's Blessings & Happy Easter,  
Dr. Bruce & Yvonne Hille



## NOTE THIS !

### OFFICE CLOSURES

The church office will be closed for the following holidays:

- **Monday, May 25**, for Memorial Day.
- **Friday, June 19**, for Juneteenth. Juneteenth is a holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.
- **Friday, July 3**, for Independence Day observed.

### SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

We will change to our summer schedule with **ONE service on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am starting Sunday, May 24**. We continue to have our Saturday evening 5:30 pm service as well. In addition to giving members an opportunity to get to know those who regularly attend other services, this will give our many volunteers time for summer pursuits. This schedule goes **through and including Sunday, September 7**.

### STAY CONNECTED THROUGH EMAIL, MAYBE EVEN SAVE PAPER

Want to get in the loop as to what is happening at St. Mark's? We send out an email every Friday morning with all that is going on around here. Please email [office@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:office@stmarks-spokane.org) to get on the E-news list.

If you receive this newsletter in hard copy, but prefer to read it digitally, please let us know to remove you from the list that gets the paper version. Thank you.

### MORE FOR OTHERS (formerly the Poor Box)

Have you noticed the box in the narthex island? We use the donations from this box to buy grocery gift cards for people in need. Several times a week we have people stop by St. Mark's looking for some help. Your donations make a huge difference. Thank you!

---

## THANK YOU

Dear Mary Cares Group –  
Thank you for the birthday cards you sent for my 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday!  
Sincerely,  
Jan Herman

## MONEY MATTERS

April 2026 Giving	Year-to-date 2026 Operating Budget			
	Giving	Expenses	Budgeted Expenses	Net YTD
\$ 61,156	\$ 298,399	\$ 287,356	\$ 300,253	\$ 11,043

Coming into the summer months with a positive balance financially is a blessing.

We are so fortunate to have members of our congregation opt to give part of their Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). This is something which a financial advisor can initiate for you. Our net year-to-date positive numbers are partially a result of receiving QCDs from more and more folks that hit the required age. This is a great way to continue contributing to St. Mark's mission while reducing your taxable income.

We are grateful for any contribution, large or small. Receiving one lump sum a year does help with saving time bookkeeping and there is time saved on your end not having to write checks regularly.

As we look ahead to the summer, with increased travel and possible lake time, having monthly autopayments helps St. Mark's stay on track financially, and allows us to continue with all the special programming that the congregation appreciates. It's very easy to set up and can be changed as your needs change. Please call me to learn more.

Loris Stupel  
 Financial Secretary  
[finance@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:finance@stmarks-spokane.org)  
 509.747.6677

## THANK YOU

I want to thank each of you who gave of your time to give me rides to and from church. It was so kind of you. Thanks!!!

Also to Mary Cares! Your beautiful cards and thoughts are so important to me! They brighten my days. I'm healing from surgery but it's going to take time. Your service is very important to me!

Sincerely,  
 Donna Gumm



## GODLY PLAY VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION BRUNCH

By Kendra Chapman, Director of Godly Play and Alleluia Children's Choir

As the school year comes to a close, I invite you to join me in thanking the dedicated teachers who are the lifeblood of our thriving Godly Play program. This wonderful team of volunteers gives their time and talents so generously. Let's work together to show them how grateful we are.

On **Sunday, May 31**, St. Mark's will host a brunch to celebrate our teachers **following the 9:30 am service**. Please consider supporting the celebration by signing up to bring a dish or donating through a link in the flyer above.

Godly Play teachers will be recognized during the service on May 31 and are invited to attend the brunch in their honor immediately afterward.

# Youth

Hello and happy spring from St. Mark's Youth! We've had a busy last few months and are excited to share some stories and pictures of everything we've been up to.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the winter session of our inter-generational Wonderful Wednesdays programming. There were lots of delicious contributions to the potluck, as well as some very energetic sessions of Ga Ga Ball and 4 Square in the Air. Many a board game was played, and we even solved a puzzle over a couple weeks. If this programming sounds interesting to you, please check out Splendid Sundays over the summer, or give Wonderful Wednesdays a try when they return next fall.

We had a lot of fun between services on Sunday mornings playing games in the Fellowship Hall and then heading back to the Youth room for Sunday Cool. We've also had a lot of different activities going on in the afternoons. Just to name a few, we went to Northtown Mall for a scavenger hunt, had a plarn (plastic yarn) making session while we watched the film *The Princess Bride*, got creative with a Bob Ross painting afternoon, and made our own pizza with homemade dough. Most recently, we joined in on St. Mark's Homegrown National Park 2.0 and spent a wonderful afternoon learning about the world we live in, as well as planting flowers in the Children's Garden.

As we wind down the school year, we are looking forward to a fun summer. We'll be helping out with Vacation Bible School in June. Splendid Sundays will be making a return over the summer. This is an inter-generational brunch potluck that runs every other week on Sundays after the worship service. We are also planning another youth trip to Silverwood and a Camp Night at the church. Keep an eye out for dates for these events on the Youth board and in an email.

Thanks again to everyone who participated in the youth group this year, as well as all the support we receive from the parents and the congregation.

Peace,  
Calvin and Rachel Moore



*youth cutting plarn*

## YOUR HELP REQUESTED

Our youth have been working together to create the "plarn" (plastic yarn) needed for making sleeping mats for our homeless neighbors. The plarn is made by tying and crocheting recycled newspaper bags.

A critical task in the process is cutting the bags into strips. **We are currently looking for people to help with the cutting. We have the tools – cutters and cutting boards available to use.** No previous crocheting experience required! This can be done at home, but we're also looking for some dates for "cutting bees" at the church. The mats in the picture are each made of over 800 newspaper bags. Please continue to bring your plastic newspaper bags to the basket in the narthex. Contact Gail Lancaster through the church office for more information.

*Below: finished mats.*



*making pizza*

## MORE YOUTH ...



*channeling Bob Ross*



*youth stacking apples*

## HELP SEND CHARLIE TO TANZANIA!

A St. Mark's youth, Charlie Wagner, will depart to Tanzania in June. Charlie is travelling with other members of our synod to visit the people of the Ulanga Kilombero Diocese.

All ages are welcome to the Sunday Forum on **May 17, at 9:45 am**, when Charlie talks about his upcoming trip and shares more information and pictures. This will also be an opportunity to provide any financial support to help Charlie cover the

outstanding cost of this trip. He hopes to raise another \$1500 before he departs. Come talk with Charlie and enjoy some light refreshments.



## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL June 22-26

VBS is right around the corner! Join us June 22–26 as we adventure into *Rainforest Falls*, where we'll explore the nature of God together. Register through the QR code, and volunteers are always needed.

Please sign up using the registration link or reach out to Kendra Chapman at [Kchapman@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:Kchapman@stmarks-spokane.org) if you're interested in volunteering and haven't yet had a chance to sign up.

**If you are a member of Thrivent**, you can help support our growing Vacation Bible School program by signing up for a Thrivent Action Kit. These kits include a \$250 gift card to help with expenses that support our VBS program to be the best that it can be. For more information, please contact Kendra Chapman at [KChapman@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:KChapman@stmarks-spokane.org).

# Social Ministry

## Opportunities to Serve

### SHALOM MINISTRIES DINING WITH DIGNITY

Shalom Ministries is growing and changing to meet the challenges of 2026. Breakfast is served Monday through Friday at 7:30 each morning, and dinner is served on Mondays at 4:30. While the number of diners fluctuates some days (last year Shalom Served over 80,000 meals) the need has, at times, been so great we have had to extend service hours so people can receive their meal.

The Connections Poetry Workshop continues to meet every other Thursday after breakfast. **All poets and aspiring poets should join us.** All are welcome. We have also been notified that we have received a grant of \$2000 through Gonzaga University that will pay for the editing and publishing of a book of poems created by the diners as part of this workshop. Books should be available for purchase by the end of summer if not sooner.

Shalom continues to partner with several local agencies to provide additional care for the diners during our meals. CHAS street medicine professionals are treating our guests during each meal; WSU Range clinic nursing instructors and students provide a foot care clinic and vaccinations; Frontier Behavioral Health outreach provides mental health support; the Spokane Regional Health District provides harm prevention with testing, treatment and needle exchanges; clothing is distributed weekly and coordinated by CHAS staff, and food is received from 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest and Northwest Harvest.

Under the direction of our Operations Director, Suki Goldman, Shalom is employing and establishing a number of diners as volunteers who assist in meal preparation and service, police the grounds during and after a meal, and clean up the church premises. We hope to continue this trend to create a valuable place for the diners to serve in the community that we live in.

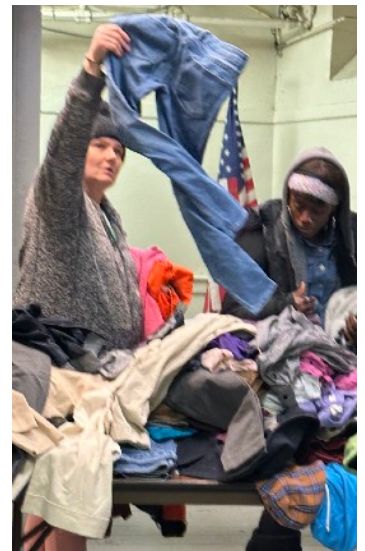
The church building where Shalom operates has been placed on the market, and it looks like a sale is pending. We are already in negotiation with the new prospective owners and anticipate no changes in location for at least a year from any sale, if at all. Shalom is also meeting with both the Spokane Police and the downtown business partnership to explore ways to minimize negative impacts and promote community service.

**Please mark Saturday, October 17, from 5:00 - 8:00 pm on your calendars for the Dining with Dignity Fall Benefit, "Everyone has a Story."** This year is crucial for our fundraising efforts as we absorb the full cost of a paid operations director and paid staff, as well as shrinking funds from other governmental bodies. Our speaker this year will be the inspirational Spokane poet laureate, Mery Noel Smith and the presentation will include video of poems read by a number of diners. It should be a fun and inspirational evening for everyone.

If you have any questions, please contact Deidre Jacobson or Mike Connelly through the church office.

Shalom's Dressing with Dignity Closet urgently needs gently used or new donations. Our shelves are empty of the items listed below—please help us support our houseless neighbors.

- Men's jeans/pants - all sizes
- Men's sweatpants - size M/L
- Men's underwear - med/lg
- Men's sport/athletic shoes – sizes 11 -13.5
- Women's pants - size 0-10
- Women's tghts/leggings - all sizes
- Women's underwear -S/M
- Women's bras - small
- Men and women's belts - all sizes
- Blankets - gently used or new
- Deodorant - men's and women's
- Tampons



Shalom also has an Amazon Wish List:  
<https://a.co/09HHmAMy>

Thank you from our hearts for your continued support and generosity! For questions or to arrange for drop-off or pick up call Suki at 509.418.7225 or Ray at 509.842.4088.

*continued next page*

# LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF PERSONAL CARE AND SCHOOL KITS



Our congregation is involved in many social ministry activities. One that is dear to our hearts is the creation of Personal Care Kits made for Lutheran World Relief to distribute globally as needed.

With YOUR HELP, we were able to assemble 193 Personal Care Kits last week. **Thank you to everyone who contributed items or donated their time to putting together all the kits.** We were thrilled with the turnout. Ukraine received 6,000 personal care kits. These towel-wrapped kits have a toothbrush, comb, nail clippers and bars of soap. Imagine how much that is appreciated by someone living in a refugee camp. Getting a new, clean towel with these items must be a comfort to those who have lost so much.

**In 2025, in the US alone, over 73,000 school kits were distributed.** The need is great for these all over the world. This summer we will start collecting items for the school kits once again. As summer sales start, it is great to get a head start of purchases. The quantity needed for each school backpack is in parentheses. We will be packaging the following items:

- **Spiral notebooks** - 70 sheets, wide or college ruled (4)
- **Ruler** – 30-cm or centimeters on one side, inches on the other (1)
- **Pencil sharpener** (1)
- **Scissors** – blunt safety scissors with embedded steel blades (1)
- **Pencils** – unsharpened #2, bundled with rubber band (5)
- **Ball point pens** – blue or black, bundled with rubber band (5)
- **Crayons** – box of 16 or 24 (1)
- **Eraser** – pink 2 1/2" length (1)



**803,181 QUILTS & KITS  
IN 15 COUNTRIES**

COUNTRY	SHIPPING WAREHOUSE	QUILTS	SCHOOL KITS	PERSONAL CARE KITS	BABY CARE KITS	FABRIC KITS
GEORGIA	Maryland	35,000	19,700	27,000	9,000	
	Minnesota	9,500	15,225	6,510		
HONDURAS	Minnesota	49,500	29,290			
JORDAN	Maryland	6,600	6,500			
LIBERIA	Minnesota	5,100			3,500	
MADAGASCAR	Minnesota	9,520			7,350	
MALI	Maryland	51,975	19,500	15,000	6,000	1,568
ROMANIA	Minnesota	6,270	3,380	3,900	0	
SERBIA	Maryland	7,425		6,300		
SIERRA LEONE	Minnesota		15,225		7,350	
TANZANIA	Maryland	9,520			7,350	
UKRAINE	Minnesota	8,250		6,000		
UNITED STATES - EAST	Both	85,737	40,794	65,561	20,950	5,360
UNITED STATES - CENTRAL	Both	17,720	4,350	9,150	784	1,800
UNITED STATES - WEST	Both	10,581	28,036	33,800	1,200	640
ZIMBABWE	Minnesota	5,100			3,500	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>315,818</b>	<b>179,200</b>	<b>231,811</b>	<b>66,984</b>	<b>9,368</b>

## BITE2GO 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR



THANK YOU ST. MARK'S!

Once again, you were so generous with your financial contributions and supported 39 kids at Franklin Elementary in the Bite2Go program.

These kiddos were able to take a shelf stable bag of food home every weekend during the school year to help assist in their lack of food in the household. Sometimes, that also helps a sibling that may not be school age yet. Each year, we hope to continue this support, and we can, with your help. Thank you.



# FOSTER A REFUGEE YOUTH

The Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program serves teenage youth seeking refuge in the U.S. who do not have family to provide care.

For unaccompanied refugee youth, a foster home provides not only shelter, but the opportunity to achieve their dreams. You can be the person who makes their dreams possible.

Join a Virtual Information Session to learn more:

**THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH**  
**12:00-1:00pm or 5:00-6:00pm**

LUTHERAN  
**Community Services**  
NORTHWEST

For More Information:  
509-747-8224  
theirhope@lcsnw.org

SCAN TO REGISTER



# World Refugee Day

Spokane, WA  
everyone belongs

**Save the Date!**  
**Saturday, June 20,**  
**11:00 - 3:00**  
**Spokane Community College**

## LUTHERAN COMMUNITY SERVICES (LCSNW) and WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Please come to a special Sunday Forum on Sunday, June 7, at 10:30 am. Kelsey Doerr, Foster Recruiter for the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program LCSNW, will be hosting a presentation about World Refugee Day. The discussion will highlight the rich diversity of refugee communities and deepen the understanding of those who have fled conflict and persecution in the hope of finding a better life.

Then be sure to check out the **World Refugee Day celebration on Saturday, June 20, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm**, at the Spokane Community College, Lair Building. Connect with the refugee and immigrant community in Spokane, enjoy music, food, and help celebrate the resilience and contributions of the millions of refugees worldwide.

## THANK YOU

To the Mary Cares group,

Thank you so very much for the many cards and wishes. We are so happy to receive blessings and good memories from you.

We are essentially homebound except for eating out. Ursula has improved but is still not recovered from her cognitive problems. I am providing her care

and trying to assimilate the many facets of our lives that she has been taking care of over the years.

We are into our 61<sup>st</sup> year of marriage, and we are still loving each other and things like the cards you've been sending. The Lord's blessing to every one of you for being a member of such a wonderful group, and to St Marks for its support.

Sincerely,  
Jon and Ursula Lanam

## **STEWARDS OF CREATION**

More information: Contact Janet Farness or the church office.

We meet the first Monday evening of the month by Zoom. Your ideas are welcome!

**PLANTING OUR GARDEN BOXES.** We will plant on **Saturday, May 16 from 10:00 am - noon**, to grow healthy food which is donated to hungry people. Please join us!

**ECOANXIETY CAFES.** Come explore your anxious feelings about climate change at Manito United Methodist Church with a qualified, talented team from **10 am – 12:00 noon on first Saturdays** of the month.

**EARTH DAY 2026: HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK 2.0.** We celebrated on April 26 with a wonderful Creation Sunday liturgy followed by lunch and earth-oriented activities. Among other things we explored:

*What's the journey of a seed? We interacted with a seed puppet to help us learn!*



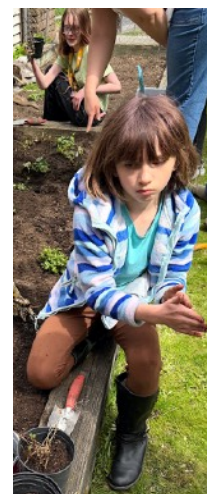
*What's in that compost anyway? We peered into the inner world of compost critters with magnifying glasses and were amazed by what we saw!*



*How do you make a fairy garden? We created miniature live gardens full of imagination!*



*And finally, we went outside to plant our second pollinator box in the children's garden. Many hands got dirty by digging, planting and watering these newest pollinator plants. We admired what we accomplished last year and how beautifully it had grown in the past 12 months!*





**SATURDAY, JUNE 13**

**Parade begins at 12:00 noon**

Come march or ride with St. Mark's at the Spokane Pride Parade. We will meet at St. Mark's at **9:30 am** and carpool down. Another option is to meet there at 12:00 noon, at 507 N. Howard St.

**We are looking for a coordinator for this event.** Contact the church office at [office@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:office@stmarks-spokane.org) if you are interested.

All ages are welcome!

Sign up in the narthex or online at: [stmarkslutheranchurch.formstack.com/forms/pride\\_parade](http://stmarkslutheranchurch.formstack.com/forms/pride_parade)

---

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **BAPTISMS**

Blessings on the baptism of **August Lee Swenson**, son of Carl and Morgan Swenson. Sponsors are Shelby & Ian Craig-Scott.

Blessings on the baptism of **Nora Hope Davis**, daughter of Cara Strickland and Chris Davis. Sponsors are Pam Strickland & Hope Lyda.

Blessings on the baptism of **Steve Nash**, sponsor is Cathi Nash.

### **SYMPATHY**

Prayers for the family of **Chris Huck, brother of Donna Huck**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Marilyn Ahrendt** at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Anna** at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Lori Cornell** at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Kingston Cassell, grandson of Judy Cassell**, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Val Adkins, sister of Yvonne Davis & Liz McGaughy**, at the time of her death.

### **FUNERAL**

The funeral of Connie Walker took place at St. Mark's on March 14.



To show appreciation for our wonderful pastors and all they do, Lauren Heine and Linda Partoll collaborated on a special project combining their skills in needle felting and sewing to create personalized stoles. Lauren conceived and crafted the stoles, and Linda provided needed sewing skills.

Pastor Edwin's stole is crafted from green merino wool with needle-felted Christograms and adorned with a vibrant community of wool human figures. Pastor Gretchen's white stole features a graceful murmuration of purple birds, inspired by her sermon, along with the words "Joy, Lord, and Strength." Lauren wanted the stoles to reflect the Pastor's strengths and gifts to our community. We hope these gifts serve as a reminder of how deeply they are appreciated.

---

## BREAKING DOWN THE WALL

We are joyfully transforming two little-used rooms upstairs in the main church into one warm, welcoming, and beautifully appointed Godly Play Sunday School classroom. This expanded space will also be a wonderful gift to our community as we prepare for this summer's Vacation Bible School program.

Some of our youth even had a blast "Breaking Down the Wall" to help support the project through their donations. Thanks to your generosity we have already received \$5,000, bringing us within reach of our \$7,000 goal.

Thank you, sincerely, to everyone who is able to contribute financially. Your support is helping us nurture faith, joy, and growing opportunities for our youth.

**FAT TUESDAY** was celebrated in February with Dan Keberle's jazz liturgy joined by singer Angela Hunt. The offering of \$2150 went to Second Harvest Food Bank. Then, decadent desserts were enjoyed by all.

Among the photos: Julie Clark and Sue Luppert, the acolytes, Mary Ann Frandsen's King Cake, so many dessert choices, the musicians, and ... check out Pastor Edwin's socks!



## SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2026 Kennewick, WA, April 24-26



*Thanks to all from St. Mark's who attended: Charlie Wagner, Pastor Edwin, Lance Jacobson, Anna Wagner, Patti Berg, Deidre Jacobson, Dick Thiel, Pastor Gretchen, and Randy Darst.*

From April 24–26, voting members from across the Northwest Intermountain Synod gathered at First Lutheran Church in Kennewick, WA, for our annual Synod Assembly. With over 200 voting members representing congregations in Washington, Idaho, and parts of Oregon and Wyoming, and nearly 50 guests and presenters from across the country, the synod came together for worship, conversation, and shared decision-making in the life of the church.

One of the most compelling updates came from Bjørn Peterson, who serves with his wife, Elise, as Executive Director of Holden Village. After significant winter flooding forced an evacuation, a small caretaking team has now returned. The road into Holden has sustained major damage, and full restoration will take time. Even so, there is hope: plans are underway for repairs to begin later this year, with a goal of resuming programming in summer 2027. An invitation was extended to all of us to be part of that return.

In her report, Bishop Meggan Manlove reflected on the work we share as a synod, now encompassing 88 ministry sites, including congregations, campus ministries, and outdoor ministry camps. She named both the challenges we face, especially in raising leaders for ministry, and the creative ways congregations are responding. She also highlighted the strength of shared resources, including the SHARE Fund and Fund for Leaders, which continue to support ministry and leadership development across the synod.

As part of her ministry, she also participated in the consecration of Dr. Imad Haddad as Bishop of Jordan and the Holy Land, a reminder of our connection to the wider, global church (photo).



We also heard about the ongoing importance and challenges of campus ministry. While these ministries continue to have a meaningful impact, anticipated funding reductions will require new models and partnerships in the years ahead. It was also shared that All Saints Lutheran Church in Spokane's Brown's Addition, has discerned a faithful path toward holy closure, slated for the end of September.

The assembly itself was deeply rooted in prayer and holy conversation. Our opening worship introduced a new liturgy, *Sighs Too Deep for Words*, which lifts up biblical themes of inclusion while offering new language and musical resources for Holy Communion. Throughout the assembly, participants gathered in small groups for more personal conversation, sharing stories of how our Lutheran way of life continues to shape faith, and reflecting together on the impact of recent changes in immigration policy.

Finally, the assembly celebrated our connections beyond the synod. This summer a group of twelve will travel to our companion synod, the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese in Tanzania, continuing a relationship of mutual learning and shared mission. This group includes St. Mark's member Charley Wagner who, along with the other travelers, was blessed during closing worship as they prepare for the journey.

Throughout the assembly, one theme remained clear: Even amid change and challenge, the Spirit continues to call the church forward into deeper partnership, faithful witness, and hopeful service in the world.

## **NORTHWEST INTERMOUNTAIN SYNOD PASSES RESOLUTION TO ALIGN WITH THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTION.**

At our recent synod assembly, a resolution passed that affirms our commitment to live out our call to creation. This resolution is consistent with the ELCA's statements and teachings on climate justice. Individual congregations are urged to design projects and take action however they are called.

### **BACKGROUND**

This resolution was developed by the Rev. Dr. Jim Martin-Schramm (Luther College, retired professor) in collaboration with ELCA leaders including the Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Professor of New Testament), Rev. Ann Svennungsen (retired Minneapolis Area Synod Bishop), and Rev. Chris Boerger (retired ELCA Secretary). It is currently under consideration in at least three synods (and has now passed in ours!), and more than \$200,000 has already been pledged toward the \$1 million "Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World" fundraising campaign mentioned in the resolution.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR SYNOD AND THE ELCA**

The ELCA has been a prophetic voice on creation care since our 1993 social statement Caring for Creation, and our 2023 social message Earth's Climate Crisis declared the climate crisis a "Kairos moment"—God's urgent call for decisive action in history. The Northeastern Iowa Synod was one of 17 synods whose 2022 memorials on greenhouse gas emissions led to the churchwide assembly's overwhelming 672-45 vote to reaffirm our commitment to creation care and advocacy.

### **HOW THIS RESOLUTION SUPPORTS CONGREGATIONS**

This resolution is designed to direct ELCA resources toward congregations, not away from them. The requested churchwide staffing and \$1 million fundraising campaign would provide concrete support for congregations facing the dual challenges of rising energy costs and climate impacts:

- Technical assistance for congregations investing in energy efficiency and renewable

energy systems (reducing long-term operational costs)

- Educational resources for preaching, worship, and programming on creation care
- Pastoral care tools for addressing climate anxiety, especially among young people
- Organizing support to help congregations build resilient communities and "anticipatory communities" (emergency shelters, cooling spaces, community gardens)
- Financial resources for greenhouse gas reduction projects that strengthen congregational sustainability.

This resolution provides a concrete pathway for our synod and the broader ELCA to:

1. Align with the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, demonstrating ecumenical leadership
2. Resource climate justice work at the churchwide level comparable to our commitment to racial justice and gender justice
3. Equip congregations with practical tools for creation care through worship, education, pastoral care, and advocacy
4. Address climate anxiety among our young people while building resilient communities
5. Honor our theological commitment to the most vulnerable and marginalized, who bear the heaviest burden of climate impacts.

Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry's December 2025 message on the Paris Climate Accords reminds us: "With God, it is never too late. Kairos means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address earth's climate crisis."

---

## **TABLE RUNNERS FOR TANZANIA**

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find more information about the June visit to our sister synod in Tanzania. Among the gifts to be presented there are seven table runners that church members, and their friends, have lovingly created.



## MAKING ST. MARK'S OWN BLEND



A special Sunday during Lent included an interactive sermon focused on the fragrance of anointing oil. Pastor Edwin led a unique multi-generational, interactive teaching on the use of anointing oil in the Bible and in our life of faith. Together we explored how oil has been used for blessing, healing, and in baptism.

Children and adults alike had the opportunity to smell traditional biblical scents such as frankincense, myrrh, and nard and to help blend a new fragrant anointing oil for St. Mark's. This oil was then blessed and will be used throughout the coming year whenever we baptize or anoint for healing. Those who came up during the service enjoyed the experience of smelling the various oils and helping to make a blend that was appealing.

*PICTURED: Exploring ingredients, smelling the oil, Kendra Chapman shows that oil can sustain flame.*




## LENT and EASTER at ST. MARK'S

The Alleluia Choir sang on Palm Sunday and helped us process into the sanctuary with palm fronds in hand. On Sunday, April 19, under the direction of Kendra Chapman, they presented a spirited rendition of *Joyful Noise* by Jimmy & Carol Owens, with the playful addition of kazoos.

The fourth Wednesday in Lent included the Prayer Around the Cross, in addition to our beloved Holden Evening Prayer. We ended that evening with a beautiful fire that warmed us as we took the prayer cards from the last several months and tossed them into the fire.

Easter Vigil is always a special and somber evening that later moves into celebration. After starting outside around a fire, we gathered in the candlelit Fellowship Hall and enjoyed listening to several storytellers, including Matt Daly & Camille Sturdivant-Daly jointly telling the story of Jonah and the Whale in play form. We used a newly purchased projector to accentuate parts of the stories, with huge whales displayed on the ceiling. Expect to see the projector used for VBS and other events throughout the year.

We then moved into the narthex and celebrated the baptisms of Steve Nash and Nora Strickland. The juxtaposition of a smiling and energetic young person next to a gentleman that could be her grandfather, both going through the baptism verses, was a sight to behold. The baptism font was adorned with live greenery and flowers to add to the festive nature of the experience.

Finally, we moved into the sanctuary and sang and heard the Easter proclamation from our pastors. 



## 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** (formerly Faith and Fellowship)  
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/or 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: contact the church office

This yoga class is for **everyone!** Our 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. A free will offering is suggested. Hope to see you soon!

### **STEWARDS OF CREATION**

Mostly first Monday of the month, by Zoom, 6:00 pm

Questions: Janet Farness, ([jktahiti@comcast.net](mailto:jktahiti@comcast.net)) for Zoom link

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

### **SCRIPTURE & COFFEE**

Every Tuesday, 10:30 am

Questions: Pastor Edwin, Pastor Gretchen

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 of the month. We're off for the summer, so check our calendar and the Sunday Bulletin for our next meeting date.

Questions: Pastor Gretchen

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

### **THEOLOGY ON TAP**

Mostly the third Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm.

Questions: Pastor Edwin

We'll meet on Tuesday, May 19, at the Peacock Lounge. This group has great conversation and fellowship with **adults 21 and over**, rotating through local brewpubs and wineries.

### **SUNRISE SAINTS & SINNERS**

Second & fourth Wednesdays of the month, May 13 and 27, June 10 and 24, 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 a variety of topics, plus a good breakfast. All men are welcome, saints or sinners!

### **PICKLEBALL IN THE PARKING LOT**

Thursdays at time to be determined

Questions: Gina Bloom

Sign up in the narthex for summer play beginning in May. **All skill levels** are welcome. Remember that equipment is available to borrow anytime during St. Mark's regular office hours for play on our 25<sup>th</sup> Ave. parking lot.

### **ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

316 E. 24th Avenue  
Spokane, WA 99203

Phone: (509) 747-6677  
FAX: (509) 458-2757

[office@stmarks-spokane.org](mailto:office@stmarks-spokane.org)

[WWW.STMARKS-SPOKANE.ORG](http://WWW.STMARKS-SPOKANE.ORG)

#### **SERVICES**

Memorial Day through Labor Day  
Sunday 9:30 am  
Saturday 5:30 pm  
Nursery provided all services

#### **OFFICE HOURS**

June-August  
Monday-Thursday 9 am-noon, 1-3:00 pm  
Friday 9 am-noon

#### **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.

#### **MESSENGER**

Published quarterly  
by St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

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

Newsletter editor: Hulda Bridgeman  
(509) 465-9591  
[hulda.bridgeman@gmail.com](mailto:hulda.bridgeman@gmail.com)