



St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Messenger

Spokane, WA

Winter 2024

Vol. 2024, No. 4

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR GRETCHEN

It's happening.

In 1957, St. Mark's kicked off the dedication of the newly-built sanctuary and church school addition with a 24-hour prayer vigil. Seventy-two people sustained a continuous chain for those hours, praying that St. Mark's building would be used for God's good purpose in Christ and would serve the needs of our wider community. Though the building has changed further, what they prayed for has been happening since. As Pat Shelley said in her letter to the congregation, it's happening still, in ways that feel pretty magical.

Several, among many such moments, are especially close to my heart.

During June's Vacation Bible School, the whole place became a sea of story, song, art and play. Children and youth from across the community experienced the love of Jesus. An impromptu after-party erupted in the narthex each day as kids, alive with joy in God's presence, lingered to sing and dance together.

In August as in most months, this place was a haven for grieving people of wide-ranging faith identities. Pastor Edwin, lay leaders and St. Mark's gifted musicians lifted our spirits and nourished our bodies. Unconditional welcome to Christ's table had Catholics, Protestants and seekers sharing the same bread and cup. Months later, people in the wider community are still talking about their moving experience at a St. Mark's funeral, alive with hope.

In September, our beloved Pastor Lori fed us a final time with Word and Sacrament. We gave thanks for the profound ways her gifts enriched St. Mark's. Encircling her with countless hands of blessing, we prayed God's provision for her in the road ahead. It was a holy moment in this place, alive with love.

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ADVENT WEDNESDAYS

December 4, 11, 18 at 7:00 pm

St. Mark's will gather for vespers on Wednesday evenings in Advent, once again using Holden Evening Prayer.

Our reflections will come from peacemakers around the world who encourage us in Jesus' way of peace. These Advent reflections are from *Keep Watch with Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers* and are full of vision and gritty hope to sustain us in our daily call to be makers of peace and to keep watch for God's presence and work around us.

After vespers, join us for a light wine and cheese reception. Contact the pastors if you are interested in bringing something to share.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Tuesday, December 24

4:00 pm worship: Family worship with pop-up pageant, candle lighting, and Communion

8:00 pm worship: – Traditional worship with candle lighting and Communion, with the Chancel Choir

PASTOR GRETCHEN *continued from previous page*

This fall, Wonderful Wednesdays gathered all generations around potluck tables, across card games, and into an inflatable gaga pit. We even broke an occasional sweat! The fellowship supported our Confirmation students, birthed new relationships, and deepened belonging in this family of faith. The narthex was alive with laughter and kindness.

Throughout summer and fall, food and school supplies streamed in. Volunteers delivered the food to Crosswalk to care for our homeless youth. More volunteers convened to assemble backpacks of school supplies for Lutheran World Relief to send across the globe. Volunteers dedicated countless hours nearly every single day tending the building and the grounds and planning how to steward our slice of creation even more wisely. Again and again, St. Mark's is alive with generosity.

Just last week, the sanctuary was a quiet place of "Prayer for the Nation" before and after the election. In the stillness of candlelight and conversation among those within and beyond our congregation we brought to God our joys and fears, our hopes and dreams. It was alive with gentleness.

So, why recount these moments now? First, to say thank you. God's work gets done with our hands. Your "yes" with finances, time, talent and prayer made these and many more luminous moments possible.

Second, as we shape the ministry plan and budget for the coming year, prayerfully consider how you might lean in. These moments aren't just activities or programming. It's life-changing stuff. As we give time, talent, treasure, voice, heart, spirit, and intellect to whatever rhythms of St. Mark's most call to us, God ever transforms us into the fruits of the Spirit we seek — joy, hope, love, kindness, gentleness, generosity, peace and more. It's this fruit our world most needs.

Yes, it's happening still. Come be part of what's alive at St. Mark's. You might even find it a bit magical.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Gretchen

NOTE THIS !



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSURES

- Wednesday-Friday, November 27-29 for Thanksgiving break
- Wednesday-Thursday, December 25- 26 for Christmas break
- Wednesday, January 1 for New Year's Day
- Tuesday, January 7 for staff planning retreat
- Monday, January 20 for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Monday, February 17 for President's Day

CHURCH COUNCIL

St. Mark's church council meets on **Monday, December 19, and Monday, January 13, at 7:00 pm** in the conference room.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Our congregational meeting will take place on **Sunday, January 26, after the 10:45 am service**. We need a quorum of 40 members per our bylaws to have a valid meeting. Agenda items include approval of the 2025 general budget. Hope to see you there.

FLOWER CHART

A new flower chart for 2025 will be posted by the front door in the narthex soon. Thank you to those who provide flowers for our services in memory or honor of someone, or in celebration of a special event. Please sign up and include your phone number next to the date of your choice.

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

EMERGENCY CONTACTS, NUMBERS

The pastors would like to have an alternative contact number for members, whether a relative, neighbor, or close friend, for our congregational database. Please contact the church office with that information at office@stmarks-spokane.org or 509.747.6677. As many of us get rid of our landlines, sometimes the church is not aware of a cell number.

MONEY MATTERS

	October 2024 Giving	Year-to-date 2024 Operating Budget			
		Giving	Expenses	Budgeted	Net YTD
General Fund	\$ 60,751	\$ 578,334	\$ 596,252	\$ 515,158	\$ (16,918)

Well, here we are, closing in on the end of the year. Our attendance continues to grow and we love seeing new faces around the sanctuary. We look forward to a full and joyous Christmas season. Our stewardship drive is in full swing. We appreciate receiving your pledge card in the offering plate or by mail, or digitally. These figures are helpful in determining the annual budget for 2025.

Through Thrivent Choice, members can influence how Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funding through Choice Dollars. We appreciate any additional funds that are directed towards us by you, the congregation, through Thrivent Choice. Thank you!

Consider Vanco automatic giving (formerly Simply Giving). This simple system saves you checks, time, and wondering “Did I give this month?” “Did my partner take care of this?” Benefits to St. Mark’s include better information for budgeting for the coming year, and more consistent flow of revenue. This is super easy to set up (I can actually take information over the phone) and can easily be changed as your circumstances change. Forms are on the left wall when you walk into the church. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with questions.

Loris Stupel
Financial Secretary
St. Mark’s Lutheran Church
finance@stmarks-spokane.org
509.747.6677

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTH

Blessings on the birth of **Holden Michael Hammonds**, son of Laura Hammonds, and grandson of Kathy and Darryl Hammonds.

BAPTISMS

Blessings on the baptisms of **Ezra and Jonah Fuller-Kimball**, and the public recognition of baptism of **Sadie Kimball-Fuller** on September 22.

MARRIAGES

Blessings on the marriage of **Allison Grefsrud** (daughter of Rachel Lorenz Devlin and granddaughter of Dee Lorenz) and Ryan Rasor, who were married on August 24, in Cle Elum, WA.

Blessings on the marriage of **Calvin Moore and Rachel Peterson** on October 11.

Blessings on the marriage of **Elle Miyamoto** (daughter of Carol and Brian Miyamoto) and Thomas LaBelle on October 19.

SYMPATHY

Prayers for the family of **Gary Olson**, father of Pastor Gretchen Olson, at the time of his death on August 30.

Prayers for the family of **Bob Graham**, at the time of his death on October 11.

Prayers for the family of **Paul Boehnke**, son of Mary and Norm Boehnke, at the time of his death on November 3.

Prayers for the family of **Jean Kress**, at the time of her death on November 5.

FUNERALS

Sacha Kopp on August 22.

Karen Guthrie-Mehlert on September 12.

Bob Graham on November 16.

ST. MARK'S PREPARES FOR CHRISTMAS



LEFSE MAKING

Saturday, November 23, 9:00 am-around noon

Join congregation lefse chefs Randy Belstad and Roger Chase for a morning of lefse making at St. Mark's. There will be a special surprise for everyone who attends!

No experience necessary, however, if you'd like to prepare dough ahead of time there are several recipes on the lefse making sign up in the narthex. Please bring a lefse griddle, lefse board and rolling pin if you have them. The lefse will be enjoyed at the smorgasbord on Sunday, December 8.

COCOA AND CAROLS

Sunday, December 1, 9:45 am, Fellowship Hall

Get into a festive mood with this intergenerational event as we enjoy hot chocolate, Christmas music, and Advent crafts, including the opportunity to make your very own Advent wreath.

SMORGASBORD

Sunday, December 8, 5:00 pm

The smorgasbord is a popular St. Mark's tradition. All are welcome to this festive potluck where you can sample Scandinavian delicacies such as lutefisk and lefse, along with your own family favorites. Look for sign-up sheets and recipes posted in the narthex. We will begin with a traditional Norwegian table prayer and enjoy a festive evening of wonderful food and lively fellowship. *continued*

If you would like to volunteer with serving, cleanup or decorating we would love your help. Please contact Todd and Susan Hagen at 509.209.1004 or 509.220.7250. We have several spots to fill and much fun to have.

GERMAN CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Sunday, December 15, 3:00 pm at St. Mark's

The German American Society has scheduled their annual German Christmas Service in English and German. It is a joy to hear the spoken German and listen to their choir sing the beautiful hymns as well. All are welcome!

WINTER LIGHTS

Saturday, January 4, 2025, 4:30-7:30 pm



After a warm reception last January, Winter Lights is coming back and will be open to the public on the Saturday evening before Epiphany. Winter Lights is a luminaria walk around Manito Park Pond to bring light to our community.

To make this happen, we need volunteers to help out on **Saturday, January 4**. We'll be making the luminarias, placing them, tending the lights during the walk, and cleaning up. If you're interested, please contact Eric Allen 253.278.2708 or ericballen@gmail.com.

Learning for All Ages

GODLY PLAY SUNDAY SCHOOL

Godly Play is a Sunday School program that uses the Montessori approach to nourish and guide children's spiritual growth and language through wonder and play. Children are able to use their everyday life to relate to the sacred stories, liturgy, and parables.

All children ages three years through grade six are welcome to attend Godly Play. We gather every **Sunday, from 9:45–10:30 am** in upstairs rooms of the Parish House.

As a result of the increase in our Godly Play attendance numbers, we're looking for more Sunday School Godly Play teachers. If interested, please contact Ann Benson, Sunday School coordinator, through the church office at office@stmarks-spokane.org or 509.747.6677.

Sunday School Holiday Schedule

December 1: No Sunday School due to the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

December 22, 29, and January 5: No Sunday School due to Christmas break.

January 12: Sunday School resumes in the Parish House.

NOTE: Alleluia Choir and Sunday Cool both follow the Godly Play schedule.

SUNDAY FORUM

Sundays, 9:45 am in the conference room

December 8, 15, 22 with Pastors Gretchen and Edwin

Reverence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been primarily the domain of the Roman Catholic tradition, but what in the theology around Mary might speak to our spiritual practices? Luther expressed deep respect and honor for Mary while also emphasizing that this should not diminish the importance of Christ, praising her faith and humility. We'll spend three sessions exploring different images of Mary and how they might be fruitful for your own theological reflection and spiritual practice.

December 29 and January 5: no Sunday Forum

January 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. It aims to bridge divisions, build understanding, and promote unity and action for the common good.

As an ecumenical and interfaith organization, *The Fig Tree* seeks to educate readers through its media and programs; connect people of faith on shared concerns; share stories of individuals living out their faith values; explore faith, ethical, and justice issues to find common ground; offer theological reflection and dialogue to foster understanding; network congregations and organizations to pool resources, and inspire collective action locally and globally.

January 19: Homegrown National Park panel discussion

Recognizing that our traditional national parks, though magnificent, are insufficient to fully protect biodiversity, Homegrown National Park is a grassroots movement that encourages individuals to transform their yards into mini-habitats for native species, extending the concept of national parks to our own backyards and communities. By planting native species, we can create a network of interconnected habitats that support local wildlife and contribute to a healthier planet.

Come and learn how to lower your summer water bills, help our aquifer stay healthy, and create a beautiful garden to attract pollinators.

January 26: ELCA Social Message "Earth's Climate Crisis" with Deaconess Katrina Martich

Drawing from existing church teachings, ELCA social messages provide a theological framework and social perspective to foster discernment and engagement on some relatively narrow matter that impacts our life together.

This social message on the climate crisis was commissioned in light of our increased understanding of the harm done to all of us by the degradation of our global home and the need for fresh action on the part of the church. It draws its framing from several social statements, particularly *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, and was adopted by the ELCA Church Council on April 20, 2023.

Youth

Hello and happy autumn from St. Mark's youth! We've had a great start to the school year and are excited to share all of our youth happenings with the congregation.

We kicked off the year with an ice cream social in the Parish House backyard. It was a nice opportunity to check in with families after the summer and meet all the new youth. We have a very enthusiastic group of sixth graders this year who are bringing a lot of fun energy to the youth group.

We settled into September with our regular programming of Sunday Cool and Sunday afternoon activities. Sunday Cool is our weekly programming between first and second service. This year we've been meeting in the narthex around 9:30 am, playing an active game in the Fellowship Hall, and then moving back to the youth room to share some highs and lows and doing a quick devotional. The more active start has been a big success, and hopefully provides a more accessible way for new youth to connect with the youth group. If you have any youth in grades six through twelve who might be interested, please send them our way and we'll make sure they feel welcome and get introduced to the rest of the group.



In addition to our regular youth activities, we started a new program named Wonderful Wednesdays that ran concurrent with Confirmation classes. Wonderful Wednesdays was a two hour block from 6:00 to 8:00 pm that was open to anyone in the congregation. The first hour was an intergenerational potluck and the second hour we split into smaller groups for activities like board games, arts and crafts, and even a hymn sing. We even broke



out our brand-new gaga ball pit for some high energy action.

This programming was really fun to get to be a part of. I want to thank everyone who came, and announce that we will be picking it back up during the winter Confirmation session. If you are a part of a small group at St. Mark's, consider Wonderful Wednesdays as a time you could join up for a meal and then break off and meet with your group.

As for the rest of our fall programming, we've been busy on Sunday afternoons. So far we've had a Lego build day, an arts and crafts afternoon, as well as a few chances to play Mario Kart and some other party games.

In October we took a trip to the Harvest House up at Greenbluff where we got lost in the corn maze and had some caramel apple popcorn.





Recently we had our annual Youth Group Halloween party, complete with pumpkin carving, costumes, and some pumpkin bowling. And by the time you are reading this we'll have just had our first Cooking with Rachel afternoon activity where we will be making some tacos.



As for upcoming activities, we've got one event coming up soon, and then two bigger events that you should keep on your calendar.

First up is the church lock-in on **Friday, November 22**. This is open to youth in grades six to twelve and goes from **6:00 pm until 8:00 am** the next morning. The lock-in is our big event of the fall. We'll have games galore, a church-wide treasure hunt, a late-night trip to Denny's Diner, and many more surprises. If you are planning on coming, please bring \$10 and a sleeping bag. If you have any questions, feel free to text Calvin Moore at 509.844.6460.

Looking a little further down the line, we are planning on taking a group to the Building Youth Groups winter retreat at Lutherhaven camp in Idaho. This event is **January 31 through February 2** and is open to youth in grades six to twelve. We are also planning on going to the 2025 Holden May Youth Weekend. This event is **May 23 through May 25** and is open to youth in grades nine through twelve. We will be sharing info on how to sign up for these events as soon as it is available.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to work with the youth here at St. Mark's. It's been an incredible fall, and we are looking forward to all the fun times ahead.

Sincerely,
Calvin and Rachel
Youth Program Leaders

Social Ministry

Opportunities to Serve



TREE OF GIVING Supporting Lutheran Community Services

The Tree of Giving at St. Mark's supports Lutheran Community Services' efforts to bring Christmas joy to teens and young adults who have settled in Spokane as unaccompanied refugee minors. These young people, ages 15-20, are living in foster homes, group homes, and beginning to set up their own apartments. This year we are buying for 21 youth from Bangladesh, Guatemala, Honduras, Guinea, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Congo, Eritrea, Senegal, and Ghana, as well as three girls who are arriving soon.

As in the past, and at the request of LCS, we will be purchasing gift cards as well as an additional more tangible item for each of their foster youth with the money you contribute. These gifts will allow each recipient the opportunity to purchase exactly what they need or want while also having a tangible gift that expresses our love for them. St. Mark's congregation has always been amazingly generous, and these gifts are hugely appreciated by the young people who receive them

The tree will be up after Thanksgiving, but you can make your gift at any time. You can contribute by dropping an envelope in the offering plate, via mail, or by going to the Offering/Giving tab on our web page.

Please donate by **Sunday, December 8**. You may contact Susan Hagen at 509.220.7250 if you have questions. Thank you in advance for supporting these courageous young people!

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF SCHOOL KITS

We had a HUGE group of enthusiastic folks help us assemble 193 School Kits for Lutheran World Relief. This is a record according to the notes that have been kept over the years. These will be sent all over the world to places where youth are not able to get these items to attend school.



Lutheran World Relief Expands Program to the United States

We are thrilled to share the news with you that the LWR Quilt & Kit Ministry is expanding to reach neighbors in need in the United States. This means that quilts and kits will now comfort families here in the U.S. — and abroad, as they always have.

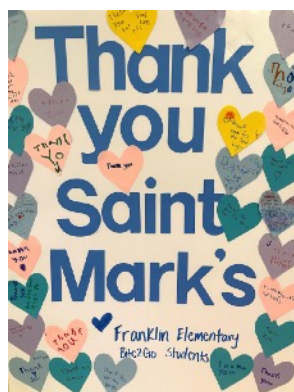
This expansion is possible entirely because of the enduring generosity of the LWR Quilt & Kit Ministry community — the tens of thousands of individuals across the U.S. who contribute their time and talents to make and assemble quilts and kits.

In fact, LWR quilts and kits are already on the way to partners in the U.S., with the first distributions expected to happen later this year.

The Quilt & Kit Ministry is our longest-running program, born in 1945 — the same year as Lutheran World Relief. Over these last 80 years, the Ministry has grown considerably, which means we can now expand our reach to comfort and care for more of our neighbors, both near and far.

Together, we serve a God of incredible abundance! Thank you.

You'll be happy to know that our U.S. partners are thankful, too. Humanitarian and social services organizations — including our newest partner Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains — are eager to share your gifts of care and comfort with children, women and men in their communities. These organizations reach people who are affected by disasters, coping with crises or struggling in poverty.



BITE2GO

By Patti Berg

A huge thank you to everyone at St. Mark's who came forward and paid \$180 to support a child at Franklin Elementary in the free lunch Bite2Go program for the school year.

The Bite2Go program is a part of

Second Harvest Food Bank and ensures that these children get a bag of shelf stable food to take home every Friday during the school year. That bag of food may help other children that are in the home but don't go to school.

As of this writing, St. Mark's is supporting 42 children at Franklin. Did you know that St. Mark's has been supporting Bite2Go for ten years straight? We started contributing in 2015. WOW! THANK YOU, ST. MARK'S.

CROSSWALK

Crosswalk is a downtown center that cares for teens in need. There is a high school program at the site. Some teens are houseless, some just need a community.

Crosswalk serves three meals a day to any teen who needs one. St. Mark's provides dinner and lunch food on the **fourth Thursday of the month**, when we cook tacos. The items you donate provide their lunch for every day of the following week. The Sunday before our day, there are sign-up sheets for people to see what is needed for lunches: lunch meats, cheeses, bread, fruit, veggies, juice, milk. Cookies are always welcome! Food donations can be left in the refrigerator and on the kitchen island. It is helpful if you mark the items "Crosswalk." Please bring your donations to St. Mark's by **3:00 pm each fourth Thursday** of the month. Thank you for all your contributions.

SPEAR

It is with mixed emotions that the SPEAR board will be closing doors on November 30, 2024. SPEAR has been serving the East Central community since 1969. At its height it operated at seven different sites and was sponsored by many area churches. Over the years many more programs have been created for youth from low-income families. There are more summer camps, more after-school programs, and more food pantries all over Spokane. SPEAR has fulfilled its mission.

The property that was donated by Grace Lutheran Church before it closed will become available for low-income housing through Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium. Mission Community Outreach Center, which is also in the area, is thriving and will continue to offer clothing, diapers, and household items to those in need. The East Central Food Bank at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center operates seven days a week.

Food from our collection bins will now be channeled to a new organization. We are looking into the best fit for a destination for what our members regularly give. If you are interested in being involved in that process, please reach out to Pr. Edwin.

The Shalom bin, which collects warm clothing, will remain. As another cold winter sets in all of us in the St. Mark's community will find new ways to help those less fortunate than us. The SPEAR board is very grateful to the long-standing support from all of you!

Volunteers

Opportunities to Serve

SHALOM MINISTRIES

Thank you for the outpouring of support for the Shalom Ministries Dining with Dignity benefit, A Gala Event, which took place on October 26. We appreciate table hosts, attendees and donations for the silent and live auctions. This year approximately \$32,000 of much needed funds were raised, a 200% increase from last year.

A poetry group meets at Shalom every other week and has been increasingly well attended. A group poem is created at each gathering and is displayed on site.

Despite the effort to move unhoused people out of the downtown area, Shalom Ministries, which is centrally located, has not experienced a decline in need for meals or the other services provided. Clothing, coats, hats, gloves, shoes, blankets and sleeping bags are distributed to the guests. It is anticipated that the need will be great this winter as shelter space is extremely limited.

Community Health Association of Spokane outreach workers and health professionals from the street medicine team assist diners with housing, addiction recovery referrals and support, along with on-site medical care. Frontier Behavioral Health's outreach team comes on-site to assist guests with mental health services.

Volunteer opportunities:

- Meal service: Six meals are served weekly, four breakfasts and two dinner meals. St. Mark's members serve every day and would be glad to help you join the team.
- Food is provided by Second Harvest Food Bank and Northwest Harvest. Volunteers are greatly needed to help pick up, unload and put away the large amounts of food needed.
- Shalom Ministries volunteers Peg Johnson and Anne Stuyvesant Whigham

have created Project Warm Blanket. Participants will be meeting monthly to make blankets for people in need. Each blanket takes about two hours to complete and costs approximately \$20.

- Obtaining, sorting and distributing clothing and other items is an additional opportunity to help Shalom's guests.
- For anyone with a love of the written word, the poetry group would gratefully appreciate your participation.

Shalom Ministries Dining with Dignity thanks the congregation of St Mark's for its on-going generosity and support. Volunteers find serving at Shalom Ministries rewarding and life-giving. You are very welcome to join!

Please contact Steve Nash, Mike Connelly, or Deidre Jacobson and we will direct you to the person who can help you get started. The church office can give you their contact information.



Shalom diners waiting in line.



The Connellys at the fundraiser.



Shalom volunteers ready to serve dinner.

READING BUDDIES IN THE SPOKANE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Would you be interested and willing to invest one hour a week of your time to make a huge life changing difference in a child's life? Please take a few minutes and review this short video <https://youtu.be/bDD3qRUDEyw?si=VmBEWJYF90uQJ9nr>.

Research from the U.S Department of Education confirms that children who cannot read by the end of third grade are much less likely to graduate from high school. You can change that by encouraging them to learn to read and to love reading, by reading to them and having them read to you. You and your reading buddy will love having this time together! You will be able to pick your school from the participating elementary schools in the application below. As we have a connection with Franklin Elementary with the Bite2Go program, it would be a positive additional connection to support reading at that location.

The steps to becoming a Reading Buddy are easy. Please click this link and follow the instructions.

core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/4094/spokaneschoolswa/4962747/Reading_Buddies_Getting_Started_2.pdf

Thank you for considering this incredible opportunity to help a child learn to love reading.

STILL HAPPENING - DON'T GET CAUGHT!

No one from St. Mark's will ever directly ask you for funds (or gift cards) by email or text. We have recently had several instances of staff emails (work and personal) or cell numbers being hacked and messages have gone out requesting these types of items. When in doubt, please contact the church office at 509.747.6677 or office@stmarks-spokane.org.

DO YOU LOVE ART?

Do you have an interest in the beautiful sculptures, paintings, and pictures that enrich our spiritual lives at St. Mark's? We could use your help!

St. Mark's is starting a process of cataloging our art, in part to get it appraised to make sure we have it appropriately insured. If you are interested in helping to inventory our art and learning more about it, reach out to Pastor Edwin or Barbara Filo.

PASTOR EDWIN JOINS PANEL

On September 23, Pastor Edwin participated in an LGBTQ+ Panel Discussion at Rockwood South Hill. This forum was hosted by the CEO of Rockwood and included Beth Jarrett alongside Rockwood residents and other community members. Topics of discussion included diversity of belief among people of faith and the welcome St. Mark's extends to all people, including those who have been marginalized for their sexuality or gender identity.

Pastor Edwin was honored to accept the invitation to speak in furtherance of his calling to "witness to the Kingdom of God in the community... and speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world." (St. Mark's constitution)

THANK YOU

To the folks involved with Mary Cares,

Thank you so much for the many beautiful and positive birthday cards. They were really cheery and much appreciated.

Bob Filo

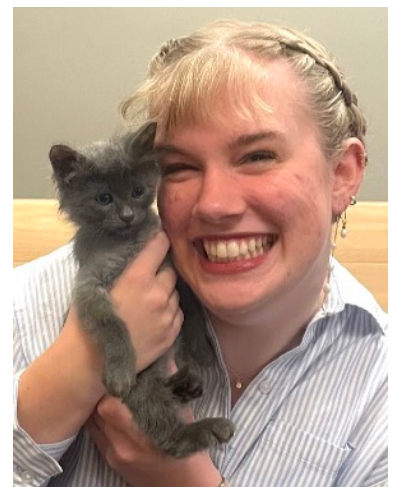
To the Mary Cares Card people,

Karl and I so appreciated the birthday cards from Mary Cares group. You are wonderful people.

Thank you,
Karl and Mary Harder

FALL ACTIVITIES AT ST. MARK'S

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



OCTOBERFEST



STEWARDS OF CREATION

See Learning for All Ages, page 5, for descriptions of two Sunday Forums centered on Stewards of Creation themes.



Howie Goertz with produce from the gardens.

FEBRUARY 2025 LEARNING SERIES

Interpreting the ELCA's Social Message on Earth's Climate Crisis for Our Time and Place, Saturday February 1, 8, 15, 22, 10:30 am-noon

We are happy to announce that Deaconess Katrina Martich from Salem Lutheran Church will facilitate a four-week learning series here at St. Mark's on the ELCA social message about the climate crisis, on the four Saturdays in February.

Brief overview:

- Finding our Place in Creation
- Our Wellbeing in a Warmer World
- Caring for Home and Community
- Active Hope

Please join the Stewards of Creation and other local ELCA communities to take a deep dive into the ELCA April 2023 Social Statement on the Climate Crisis. Look for a sign-up in the narthex.

COMPOST GARDENS (aka our Resurrection Garden)

Thanks to all who are faithfully placing food scraps in one of the three bins outside the kitchen door on our St. Mark's campus. As a result of our shared efforts, we had fabulous fresh compost so we could put our BGEM gardens to bed with healthy nutrition for the winter. Please note our

signs that say "BED RESTING" or "ADD MATERIAL HERE." We alternate these beds.

COMMERCIAL COMPOSTING/RECYCLING

We are still working on improving our campus habits. Thanks to Oktoberfest organizers Aaron and Keri Danowski for monitoring the composting/recycling bins at the event this year, so we could be better stewards! If you're confused about what goes into what bin, grab Laren, Pat, Janet, Rick, Pastor Edwin or Martha during coffee time at St. Mark's.

OUTREACH through the Babylon, Gethsemane, Eden, Manito (BGEM) Gardens

Thanks to all who volunteered to grow, tend and harvest our garden boxes and ensure that there would be fresh produce for our SPEAR friends!

2024 was a terrific growing year! Our gardeners harvested produce for 14 weeks beginning July 7 and concluding on October 6. The garden was 'put to bed' on Oct. 12.

Crops for the year (16): arugula, green beans, carrots, Swiss chard, cucumbers, herbs (basil, cilantro, marjoram), kale, lettuce, jalapeno peppers, radishes, snow peas, spinach, yellow squash and four varieties of tomatoes.

Quantity: An estimated 111 lbs. of tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, squash, peas and beans were harvested, along with 16 quarts of arugula, lettuce, spinach, kale, chard and also 16 lunch bags of herbs.

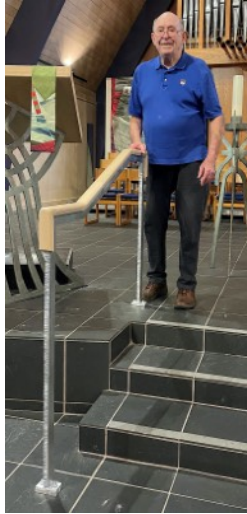
ADVOCACY

Stewards of Creation team members were excited that the three ELCA Bishops of Washington all supported the retention of Washington's Climate Commitment Act in this year's election. The Bishops' written statement translated to an encouragement of a No vote on 2117 as an act of faith in line with our call to earth stewardship.

As we learn more during ongoing implementation of this critical piece of legislation, the Climate Commitment Act can be amended and improved, but should not be retracted.

THANK YOU

An extra hearty thank you to Frank Payne who worked tirelessly to make a new railing for the center steps to the altar area of our sanctuary. He was even able to match the wood stain and the metal work to coordinate with the items made by local artist Harold Balazs. This project included the installation of the railing as well. This is helpful for folks going up and down the steps.



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Dear Mary Cares,

Many thanks for beautiful, caring birthday cards. Your group is truly a caring group. The wishes are much appreciated.

In Christ,
Alma Vogt

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Thank You, All.

When you called me as one of your pastors, we could not have imagined the losses that would soon happen in my family. Yet, true to the Spirit alive in the St. Mark's community, you've shown up with unbounded compassion upon the loss of my husband and my dad. Thanks to Pastor Edwin, to the entire St. Mark's staff team, and to each of you for your steady outpouring of meals, cards, texts, emails, flowers, hugs and encouraging words; your leadership, presence at, and help with Sacha's memorial service at St. Mark's; and your understanding and flexibility when I've been away for other memorial services or to be with our adult children.

To quote Paul's words from I Thessalonians 3, "How can I thank God enough for you in return for all the joy I feel before our God because of you?" Please know what a great gift you are in my life and my gratitude for the privilege of serving as one of your pastors, in times of joy and sorrow.

Pastor Gretchen

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"The Cup of Our Life" Women's (not so) Small Group

We had a huge response to our Women's Fall Group, to the point where we had to cut off enrollment. I know we'll have more of these



There are so many jobs around St. Mark's that people do tirelessly, and with great finesse. One of these is the livestreaming of a worship service each week throughout the year. Rick Young and Erik Manz are part of the group that does this. Thank you for your service!

opportunities in the future for both men and women. Here are a couple of perspectives on the small group.

From Barb Belstad:

I attended "The Cup of our Life" women's book study the past several weeks. I have so much gratitude for Pastor Gretchen and Gail Lancaster as they led us through this amazing book. I cherish the deeper relationships I have formed with other St Mark's women and look forward to deepening my spiritual practices and journey. I am learning to slow down and listen as God speaks to me. My hope is that we can all benefit from recognizing if our cup is full or needing a refill. Grace abounds.

From Lily Miller:

I recently participated in "The Cup of Our Life" women's group on a whim; having literally wept during a service the day it was announced and at a tricky post-grad time in my life, I felt called to seek guidance from God and from the people I was surrounded by. And, oh my! Was I so greatly rewarded. There was never a night that I left our little sanctuary without feeling better than how I had felt walking in. Towards the end of our time together, I made a comment to the group that I finally felt like I belonged at St. Mark's, that I knew others and they knew me. The power of prayer and of sharing your joy and shame and hurt with another person cannot and should not ever be underestimated. Thank you, each and every one of you, for making a space for a youngun' like me and for creating such a wonderful, supportive environment. I will hold our time together forever in my heart.

FALL ACTIVITIES AT ST. MARK'S



Alleluia Choir sang in November.



*On Reformation Sunday, October 27, we observed the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism for six of our youth: **Eloise Marie Benson, Eliza Ruth Manz, Ava Elyse Smith, Joseph Ryan Campanella, Alex Thuswaldner, and Sean Joseph Kadlec** (not pictured).*



Pastor Lori's goodbye celebration included a hands-on blessing from the congregation, and participation by Pastors Edwin, Kate LePard, and Gretchen.



A group of St. Mark's members traveled to Pullman to view the art exhibit Icons in Transformation at St. James Episcopal Church.



A lively blessing of backpacks inaugurated the school year.

Faith and Fellowship Groups

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

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.

EAT, PRAY, LAUGH

First Tuesday of the month, December 3, 7:00 pm
Questions: Pastor Gretchen

All women are invited to this fellowship group for conversation, laughter, prayer and refreshments.

SUNRISE SAINTS & SINNERS

Second & Fourth Wednesdays, December 11 & 25 (this date will be changed), 7:00 am
Questions: Dave Troyke

This **men's group** has lots of laughs and interesting discussions about a variety of topics. All men are welcome, saints and sinners! We usually meet at the Chalet Restaurant at 2918 S. Grand Blvd.

THEOLOGY ON TAP

Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm
Questions: Pastor Edwin

This group has great conversation and fellowship with **adults in their 30s**, rotating through local brewpubs and wineries.

THE MEANDERING GROUP

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

This group plans regular outings to walk along with others while socializing. Sometimes we eat at a location to be determined. Our next outing is on **Friday, December 13** at Clinkerdagger Restaurant to celebrate the holidays. On **January 10, 2025**, we will have a planning meeting to discuss possible sites as well as the future of this group.

STEWARDS OF CREATION

Varying Mondays, by Zoom, 6:00 pm
Questions: Janet Farness

This small group meets to learn more about care of the earth and our divine calling to be good stewards of creation. Feel free to call the church office to get a link.

REPORT OF THE FALL 2024 SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING

The Northwest Intermountain Synod Council met on September 6-7, 2024, at St. Mark's to address the business of the synod.

One of the key appointments was Greg Steeber, from Faith Lutheran in Leavenworth, WA, to the Congregation Constitution Review Committee. While Greg's appointment was confirmed, the committee continues to seek additional members.

Several committee appointments were also confirmed, including Cory English from Calvary Lutheran in Post Falls, ID, to the Global Mission Committee, and Sarah Bates of Grace Lutheran, Wenatchee, WA and Wayne Stevens of New Day Lutheran, Idaho Falls, ID to Bishop Manlove's Mutual Ministry Committee to serve alongside Kate LePard and other members.

A notable decision was the adoption of a three-year cycle for synod assemblies and regional gatherings. This cycle includes an in-person assembly in Year A and online assemblies with regional gatherings in Years B and C. However, this plan remains flexible; for instance, if a bishop election arises, an in-person assembly could be convened.

The council also approved synod sabbatical policy guidelines and shared a sample model

policy for congregations to follow. Other personnel matters included a 2.5% wage increase for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service, to align with anticipated Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. Additionally, the council approved a \$5 increase per service for pulpit supply compensation. These compensation changes will become effective in the new year.

Four new working groups were created to tackle key areas. These include researching funding for Lutheran Campus Ministries, conducting a deep dive into compensation guidelines for rostered ministers, reviewing the synod's website, and planning for the sabbatical of the executive assistant of the Synod, Cathy Steiner. Updates were received from the EcoFaith Action Network, and there was discussion around stewardship, mission support, and an upcoming revision of the synod constitution regarding bishop elections.

St. Mark's has TWO members on Synod Council. Pastor Edwin Weber serves as one of the at-large clergy members, and Randy Darst serves as synod secretary.

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

316 E. 24th Avenue
Spokane, WA 99203

SERVICES

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

OFFICE HOURS

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

PASTORS

Gretchen Olson
Edwin Weber

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

MESSENGER

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