St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Messenger

Spokane, WA | Winter 2026 | Vol. 2026, No. 4

ADVENT: KEEPING VIGIL IN THE NIGHT

At Christmas, we gather to celebrate the incarnation of Christ, the light that shines in the darkness. But in waiting for light to be kindled, a fragile spark must be struck in the darkness, nourished by gently blowing upon it, tending and growing that flame of hope. That is what Advent is about. As we kindle the Advent wreath, a small flame grows week by week. We tend it as a sign of hope while we wait for Christ's coming. Advent invites us to wait, and to notice what we might discover in the darkness: that the night is not to be feared but is a life-giving part of God's creation.

That may be difficult. Darkness can represent fear, uncertainty, and evil, things from which we long to be delivered. Scripture uses light and darkness in those ways, but its images are richer than a simple equation of darkness with bad and light with good.

In the beginning, God creates by separating light from darkness and names the darkness "night" and the light "day". Night and darkness are God's creatures, declared good by God, part of creation's cycle of rest and labor (Genesis 1:1–5). At Sinai, Moses draws near to "the thick darkness where God was" (Exodus 20:21). Scripture also describes God as shade and shelter when sun and heat threaten life (Psalm 121:5–6; Isaiah 4:5–6; 25:4; 49:10; Jonah 4:6–11). And in the prologue of John, read on Christmas Eve, the light shines *in* the darkness. The Word through whom all things were created does not stand as a rival to the darkness but rather darkness is but one creature who was created through the Word (John 1:1-5).

This Advent, you are invited into the holy work of waiting: keeping vigil, watching for what is yet to be. Patience can be both a blessing and a challenge. In the pregnant pause before new birth, we wait and rest. Night need not be feared, not only because dawn is coming but also because we trust that God is present in the thick darkness.

At St. Mark's, we will keep these themes through the season. Each Sunday, we will light the Advent wreath, watching its light grow as Christmas draws near. On Wednesday evenings, Holden Evening Prayer will offer time to rest and keep vigil, with reflections on night, attentive waiting, and the mystery of encountering God in darkness.

THE LONGEST NIGHT
Monday, December 21, 7 p.m.

December 21 is the winter solstice: the longest night of the year and the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Just a few days later, many of us will celebrate Christmas, a feast long associated with the return of light. At Christmas, Christians proclaim that God comes near in the midst of deep darkness. The maker of the cosmos lovingly draws close to our broken world in the birth of Jesus, entering the long night of human suffering. God's love for us runs deep, it does not fade or change with the seasons or our circumstances.

For many people, the lack of daylight can intensify other kinds of suffering. Depression may feel heavier when light is scarce. Holiday calendars fill with social obligations. Family gatherings may bring anxiety or painful memories. We grieve loved ones we have lost. The message of Christmas speaks especially to those who are hurting. It does not insist that "all is merry and bright." It proclaims the abiding truth that God is with us, even when we remain in the depths of darkness.

Join us on Monday, December 21, at 7 p.m. for a special Longest Night service. Darkness and light, song and prayer, silent waiting and hopeful watching will mark the close of our Advent observances. This service may be especially meaningful for those grieving a loss, finding the holiday season difficult, or longing for space for meditation and lament in our gatherings.



HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER FOR ADVENT

Each Wednesday during Advent, we'll gather at **7 p.m.** for Holden Evening Prayer (**December 2, 9, and 16**). This year's 30-minute services will include brief reflections on the Advent theme: Keeping Vigil in the Night. Through quiet and prayerful reflection, we will consider what it means to keep watch, rest, and encounter God in the night. After worship, we gather for a time of light cheese, wine, and wine alternatives. Invite friends and neighbors for quiet, contemplative worship this Advent!



COCOA and CAROLS
Sunday, November 29, 9:45 a.m.

Cocoa and Carols will take place in the Fellowship Hall. Join us for this festive intergenerational event featuring hot chocolate, Christmas music, and Advent crafts. Participants will have the opportunity to create a Godly Play Advent storytelling kit and collect candles for home Advent wreaths.

Volunteers are needed! For more information or to help with the event, please contact the church office at 509-747-6677.



GERMAN AMERICAN CHRISTMAS SERVICE

The German American Society has scheduled their annual **German Christmas Service** in English and German at St. Mark's on **Sunday, December 7, at 3 p.m**. It is a joy to hear the spoken German and listen to their choir sing the beautiful hymns as well. All are welcome!



LEFSE MAKING
Saturday, December 12, 9 a.m.-noon

Join St. Mark's members and lefse chefs Randy Belstad and Roger Chase for a morning of lefse making at St. Mark's. No experience is necessary, however, if you'd like to prepare dough ahead of time, please do so. The preferred recipe is available in the church office.

Please bring a lefse griddle, lefse board, and rolling pin if you have them. There will be a few extras available. The lefse will be enjoyed at the Smorgasbord on Sunday, December 13.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING PARTY
Sunday, December 20, noon-2 p.m.

This year, we'll spread Christmas cheer throughout our own neighborhood by caroling to the neighbors who live around our church. Festive attire is encouraged, and please be sure to dress warmly for the weather.

We'll begin with a quick pizza lunch and cups of hot chocolate before heading out to make a joyful noise. Join us for this fun and meaningful intergenerational service opportunity as we share the joy of the season with our community.

Please sign up in the narthex so we order enough pizza.

YOUTH and FAMILY HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Sunday, November 29. Regular programming is on hiatus but please join us for Cocoa & Carols at 9:45 a.m. and our second annual Family Movie Party from 3 – 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 6. Regular programming and pageant rehearsal, noon – 2 p.m.

Sunday, December 13. Regular programming, Alleluia Choir sings at 10:45 a.m, Pageant dress rehearsal at 2:45 p.m, Christmas Pageant at 4:30 p.m., Smorgasbord at 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 20. Regular programming and Intergenerational Christmas Caroling Party at noon.

Sunday, December 27 and Sunday, January 3. No Sunday morning programming due to the Christmas break.

Sunday, January 10. Regular programming resumes (Godly Play, Sunday Cool, Alleluia Choir, and Youth Group).





Photos from last year's pageant.

ST. MARK'S CHRISTMAS SMORGASBORD
Sunday, December 13, 5 p.m.

Mark your calendars for one of St. Mark's most cherished traditions! Join us for an evening of holiday joy as our Christmas Pageant brings the story of Christ's birth to life through the talents and enthusiasm of our congregation's youth. Following the pageant, all are invited to stay and enjoy our annual Smorgasbord, a festive gathering filled with delicious food, warm fellowship, and Christmas cheer.

This beloved Scandinavian-inspired feast features traditional favorites such as lutefisk and lefse, along with a variety of dishes including salmon, ham, turkey, potato sausage, side dishes, and desserts shared by members and friends of St. Mark's. We will begin the meal with a traditional Norwegian table prayer, then enjoy an evening of wonderful food, laughter, and community.

Whether you are a long-time member, a first-time guest, or somewhere in between, there is a place for you at the table. Bring your family, invite your friends, and come celebrate the season with us.

We Need You!

The Smorgasbord is truly a congregation-wide effort, and volunteers are needed to help make this special evening a success. Opportunities are available for cooking, serving, decorating, setting up, and cleaning up. If you would like to be part of the Smorgasbord team, please contact **Melinda Bowman** through the church office at 509.747.6677. There are many ways to help and plenty of fun to be had along the way!



Watch for sign-up sheets and recipe information in the narthex. We look forward to celebrating this joyful St. Mark's tradition with you on December 13!

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT
Sunday, December 13, at 4:30 p.m.

All children and youth ages three through high school are invited to participate. There are a variety of ways to be involved: Students can play a speaking or non-speaking characters, narrate, help backstage, and/or offer musical contributions.

Rehearsals will be held on **Sunday, December 6, from noon - 2 p.m., and Sunday, December 13, from 2:45 - 4:15 p.m.**

Preschool and kindergarten participants are not required to attend rehearsals. Instead, they should arrive at **3:45 p.m. on December 13** to be fitted for costumes and walk through their part before the performance.

Email Pageant director, Kendra Chapman, at kchapman@stmarks-spokane.org with questions.





THANK YOU

Dear Mary Cares,

Thank you, card markers of the church. I enjoyed hearing from you while I was recuperating from my hip surgery.

Mary Harder

THANK YOU

St. Mark's Family,

Thanks to all of you for prayers, love, and wonderful visits from the pastors. This time has been life-changing, reflective, and a blessing in disguise. I felt Him holding me, really holding me in those dark and difficult times. I was not alone. I love y'all!

See y'all in the pews . . . sooner than later.

Blessings,
Nancy Collins

THANK YOU

The family of Vange Moeller would like to thank you for the care and support you gave her all her years at St. Mark's. She enjoyed the opportunity to serve the church, whether in the choir or in the office. It truly was her "happy place."

The family of Vange Moeller

THANK YOU

Dear St. Mark's,

I wanted to thank you for all the prayers and cards that have come my way.

The heartfelt cards from Mary Cares have really lifted my spirits. I look at the cards every day.

I have felt all the uplifting prayers from our congregation. Sending warm hugs & thank yous for all of this.

Love, Dotty Thomas

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who gave us gift cards in gratitude for Edwin's ministry. We've enjoyed date nights at some of our favorite restaurants, along with a few other small pleasures made possible by your generous gifts. Even when things are busy at St. Mark's, we feel how deeply this community cares for our family. Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and support.

Pastor Edwin Weber and Freddie Hampton



Note This!

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSURES

- Wednesday through Friday, **November 25 - 27**, Thanksgiving break
- Thursday and Friday, **December 24 & 25**, Christmas break
- Thursday, **December 31** and Friday, **January 1**, New Year's Day
- Monday, **January 18**, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Monday, **February 15**, President's Day

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

St. Mark's Congregation Council meets on Monday, **December 14**, and Monday, **January 11, at 7 p.m.** in the conference room.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

St. Mark's is planning to hire a Pastoral Visitation Coordinator. Learn more by going to our website, www.stmarks-spokane.org.

STAFF UPDATES

Pastor Gretchen Olson continues to be on leave following her mother's death. Prayers are greatly appreciated. Cards to Pastor Gretchen may be mailed to:

2108 E Southeast Blvd
Spokane WA 99203

Pastor Amy Seymour remains our pastoral interim through the end of December.

FLOWER CHART

A new flower chart for 2027 is near the front door in the narthex. 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.



LUTHERAN Community Services NORTHWEST

LCSNW UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS

We are once again giving gifts to the teens and young adults who have settled in Spokane as unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) with Lutheran Community Services Northwest.

These young people, ages 15 - 20, are living in foster homes and group homes, and are beginning to set up their own apartments. This year we are buying for 18 young men and women from Guatemala, Honduras, Guinea, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Angola, and Senegal.

Your donations will allow us to purchase gift cards as well as an additional more tangible item for each of the URM youth. 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 care for them. Our congregation has always been amazingly generous, and these gifts are hugely appreciated by the young people who receive them.

You can make your gift at any time by dropping it in the offering plate, via mail, or by going to the Offering/Giving tab on our web page. **Please donate by Sunday**, **December 6** so that we can get the gifts delivered in time for their party.





world relief SPOKANE

WORLD RELIEF COAT DRIVE

St. Mark's has opted in again in 2026 to support the World Relief Coat Drive. Many refugee families are experiencing their first holiday season in a new country, often without the familiar traditions and comforts of home. Our Christmas tree will hold tags with specific information regarding gender, age, country of origin, and size range. For children under 13 we are asked to purchase a toy as well. **Please return the gifts in a gift bag and staple the tag to the gift bag.** The World Relief tree will be up after Thanksgiving.

Donated items need to be returned to St. Mark's by **Sunday, December 6** at the very latest.

Please contact Susan Hagen at 509.220.7250 or 509.747.6677 (church office) if you have questions. Thank you in advance for supporting these courageous people!

SHALOM MINISTRIES

Thank you, St. Mark's, for your generous support of Shalom Ministries Dining with Dignity.

As most of you know, on August 14, 2026, Shalom received notice that we could no longer serve meals and provide essential services to our unhoused and hungry neighbors at the location we have called home for 32 years.

We now contract with City Gate Fellowship to use their commercial kitchen for meal preparation. On Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings, meals are prepared there. The meals are then handed out Friday mornings from 9-11 a.m. in conjunction with the Community Health Association of Spokane and Spokane Regional Health District in the parking lot at 302 E. Pacific Ave.

On Monday afternoons, prepared meals are transported by volunteers to locations where hungry people are congregated.

These initial offerings of food for the hungry reflect the beginning steps of fulfilling Shalom's mission of providing life-sustaining nutrition and coordinating with agencies who provide support services.

It is our great hope to find an indoor location to serve the prepared meals as winter approaches. We are constantly looking for new locations and avenues for increasing service.

The vision for the future involves connecting to a bigger solution, beginning with meals and clothing, and being part of a local movement to provide pathways for recovery and renewal. Communication is in place with multiple organizations currently providing services.

For more information contact Mike Connelly, Deidre Jacobson, or Gail Lancaster, through the church office.

YOUTH

Hello from St. Mark's Youth! We've had one of our busiest autumns in years and are excited to share all of the youth group happenings with the congregation.

We kicked off the school year with our annual ice cream social at the end of August and then hit the ground running in September with Sunday Cool, Wonderful Wednesdays, and our Sunday afternoon youth activities.

Sunday Cool has been a fun opportunity to play some games and connect on a weekly basis. If any youth are interested in joining in, we meet on Sundays in the Fellowship Hall at 9:45.



We always start with an activity where the youth compete for a prize. So far this year we've had a fruit rolling challenge, built pasta structures, and constructed catapults. Then we head back to the youth room to share some highs and lows from the week and enjoy some apple juice and donut holes.

It's been a joy to watch Wonderful Wednesdays continue to grow as we enter the third year of this programming. We meet on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. for an intergenerational potluck, play some games in the Fellowship Hall, and then break into smaller groups at 7 p.m. for Confirmation and other faith formation activities. As our numbers have continued to grow, the potlucks have become more and more impressive. We ended our last week with a Thanksgiving prelude including a turkey cooked by Pastor Edwin and a variety of classic Thanksgiving side dishes. While our fall session of Wonderful Wednesdays has wrapped up, we will be back in January for our winter session.

Our Sunday afternoon youth activities are still going strong. We've had game days in the youth room, cooking in the kitchen (both pizza and chili), a service event where we made plastic yarn to be woven into waterproof sleeping mats, a Halloween party, and a trip to the north side for some roller-skating. By the time you are reading this we will have just had our annual youth Lock-In at the church and will be getting ready for some hot cocoa and caroling.

Finally, we are looking forward to the summer as we are planning on taking a group to the National Youth Gathering for the first time in almost a decade. You may have already noticed our youth fundraising with a pie sale. We have some other fun fundraising activities planned throughout the year as we prepare for the trip to Minnesota in June.

Thank you for all the support. It is an honor to serve the youth here at St. Mark's.

Sincerely,
Calvin and Rachel Moore
St. Mark's Youth Leaders

More YOUTH next page.

YOUTH *continued*



Going to Silverwood. (See also previous page.)



Fruit rolling.



Making s'mores.



Pumpkin bowling.



Working a puzzle.

… still more …

YOUTH *continued*



Skating at Pattison's.





MONEY MATTERS

October 2026 Giving	Year-to-date 2026 Operating Budget			
	Giving	Expenses	Budgeted Expenses	Net YTD
$ 66,301	$ 697,403	$ 714,505	$ 750,633	$ -17,102

It's that time of year again, when giving doesn't quite keep up with our expenses. Besides hiring a new position and paying an interim pastor, we've also incurred some building maintenance expenses with repairs, so we have higher than normal costs.

We are towards the end of our giving campaign entitled "Wellsprings of God's Love." Many of you have filled out stewardship cards (or completed the form online) and are helping us to plan ahead for 2027. Thank you for continuing to put St. Mark's as a priority for giving, and sharing with us the information we need to have a solid budget planned for the coming year.

As Christmas approaches, we'll be experiencing so many special times at St. Mark's. Cocoa and Carols, midweek Holden Evening Prayer services, the youth Christmas pageant, the Smorgasbord with the Lucia Brides singing and serving cookies are just a few. There are so many things happening around here, there is something for everyone. We hope those who are able can give a little extra to help make up the deficit we see now.

See you in church!

Loris Stupel
Financial Secretary
finance@stmarks-spokane.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHS

Blessings on the birth of **Remi Mae Thompson**, daughter of Alyssa and Mitch Thompson, granddaughter of Andy and Tammy Walker.

Blessings on the birth of **Eliana Michael Raphael**, daughter of Therese Buyange and Michael Raphael, born on September 28.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BAPTISMS

Blessings on the baptism of **Avery Ann Danowski**, daughter of Aaron and Kerri Danowski. The sponsors are Katie and Manoj Thirupal.

Blessings on the baptism of **Kai Alexander Kopczynski,** son of Kathryn and Quinn Kopczynski. The sponsors are David and Natalie Alexander.

MARRIAGE

Blessings on the marriage of **Paul Myers and Meg Rolland** on September 26.

SYMPATHY

Prayers for the family of **Brett Flanagan** at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Gary Jensen**, husband of Judy Jensen, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Jack Smith**, husband of Mary Ann Smith and father-in-law of Susan Pine, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of **Ella Olson**, mother of Pastor Gretchen Olson, at the time of her death.

Prayers for the family of **Jon Merrell** at the time of his death.

Prayers for the family of the **Rev. Mark J. Nelson**, brother of Donna Nelson, Janet Ryden, and Caroline Shelton, at the time of his death.

Prayers for the friends of **Theodore Delaney**, friend of St. Mark's, at the time of his death.

FUNERALS

The memorial for **Jon Merrell** took place on October 24, at St. Mark's.

The memorial for **Gary Jensen** took place on October 24, at Sunset Memorial Chapel.

UPCOMING FUNERAL

The funeral for **Pastor Mark Nelson** will take place at St. Mark's on Saturday, December 5 at 1 p.m.

Volunteers

Opportunities to Serve

St. Mark's worship volunteers are the best sort of folks. Take a moment at worship to notice their work. Please, if you think of it, thank one of them for their acts of service and love for our community. Consider joining them in a way that fits your style and helps lighten the load for all. I'm happy to help you find the right spot. My appreciation for all of you as we enter 2027.

Gina Bloom
Volunteer Coordinator
volunteers@stmarks-spokane.org
509.413.8300

A Blessing for Worship Volunteers

By Gina Bloom

Blessed are you who arrive early,
Who prepare the Word, the coffee, the day.
Blessed are you who wash, you who greet, you who share a smile.

Blessed are you who tend to details,
Who notice the needs, the holes, the numbers.
Blessed are you who watch, you who count, you who protect.

Blessed are you who serve,
Who share the Body, a bulletin, an ear.
Blessed are you who practice, you who tidy, you who button up.

Blessed are you who guide,
Who offer an arm, a seat, a prayer.
Blessed are you who process, you who drive, you who extinguish.

Blessed are you who pivot,
Who adjust, swap and even sometimes forget.
Blessed are you who answer, you who correct, you who can and can not.

Blessed are you who connect,
Who come together in a holy collaboration of human hands and voices,
Ministering with time and talents.



Bridgette Nancy Richardson made her Affirmation of Baptism, and was confirmed at St. Mark's on Reformation Sunday, October 25.

Affirmation of Baptism (commonly known as Confirmation) marks the completion of a period of instruction in the Christian faith as confessed in the teachings of the Lutheran Church. Those who have completed this program are made members of the Church in Holy Baptism. Confirmation includes a public profession of the faith into which the candidate was baptized, thus underscoring God's action in their baptism.

QUESTION:

What has 39 dogs … four guinea pigs … two cats … two chickens … one parakeet … one garter snake … one leopard gecko … one Mack Snow albino gecko … and two Madagascar hissing cockroaches

?

see page 12

ANSWER:
BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS,
October 4













THANK YOU



As many of you know, our building and surrounding landscape is feeling its age. We've had a significant number of faithful folks work tirelessly to improve our surroundings.



We even had **Dale Johnson along with Bob Palrud** repair and replace parts of our rock wall at the corner of 24th Ave. and Grand Blvd. Thank you to each and every one of you who donates talent and time to keep us looking our best.





The children of St. Mark's continue to be blessed by the talents, generosity, and servant hearts of our congregation. Recent improvements to our Godly Play classroom were made possible by several gifted craftspeople.



We extend our sincere thanks to **Randy Belstad** and **Roger Chase** for building a beautiful temple and dozens of People of God figures, and to **Frank Payne** for crafting new bookshelves and two Bible stands. These additions will enrich the faith formation experience for our children for years to come.

A big thank you to everyone who helped make **OKTOBERFEST** such a fun event! We're so grateful to all who volunteered, brought a dish, and came out to enjoy the evening together. It takes a lot of helping hands to make an event like this happen, and we're grateful for all of you. Hope to see you next year!

You may also have noticed some exciting changes taking place in our **PLAYGROUND AREA.** The old equipment has been removed, and a dedicated team of volunteers spent time weeding, laying a weed barrier, and spreading 14 tons of fresh pea gravel. This project is an important step toward the installation of new playground equipment, which we plan to complete in the spring.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time and energy to make this project possible, including **Eric Allen; Shane Bassett; Baron Bechtold; Randy Belstad; Will Bloom; David, Jane, Norilee and Henry Chapman; Gib Dominguez; Ryan Hughes; Hannah Kimball-Fuller; Lindsey and Ellie Merrell; Kit, Margot and James Parker, and Nick, Sadie, and Emilia Zollinger**.

Thank you for helping create welcoming, beautiful spaces for the children of St. Mark's!

For those new to St. Mark's or to Spokane, Bite2Go is a program run by At the Core in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank. Each week of the school year, volunteers deliver bags of food to schools that then get sent home with children who may not have enough to eat over the weekend.

St. Mark's members support Franklin Elementary School, which has 39 children in the program at this time. That number may grow as the school year continues, and families move. If you are able to sponsor a child at Franklin, you are welcome to send a check or give online to St. Mark's in the amount of $180. It is amazing that just $180 can show so much love to a child. Thank you, St. Mark's!



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF SCHOOL KITS

We had a HUGE group of enthusiastic folks help assemble 216 school kits for Lutheran World Relief in late October. These will be sent all over the world to places where youth are not able to get these items to support school attendance. We collect the personal care items during Lent. Lutheran World Relief is now including the U.S. in their distribution of these kits. Thanks to all who contributed by purchasing items, sending cash, and helping assemble the backpacks to get them ready for distribution.

More information page 20.



BLESSING OF CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

The council comprises President **Kate Bassett,** Vice President **Ben Baker,** Secretary **Jane Summers,** and Treasurer **Sue Connelly**. Other council members are **Patti Berg, Janet Farness, Ira Gardner Jr., Theron Miller, Susan Pine, Michael Stolp,** and new members **Angela Sams and Dave Troyke**. Thanks for making the commitment to serve and help direct St. Mark's as we enter changing times with lots to consider in our congregation.



Sunday, August 30, was a very special day here at St. Mark's. We installed our new Faith Formation Minister, **Kendra Chapman**.

On October 11, third and eighth graders received Bibles of their own, with different styles of Bibles for the different ages.



There was a full house for Blessing of the Backpacks.



GODLY PLAY SUNDAY SCHOOL



BLESSING OF GODLY PLAY TEACHERS

Here at St. Mark's, we use the Godly Play curriculum as our Sunday School program. Godly Play is a Montessori-inspired approach to spiritual formation that invites children to explore sacred stories through wonder, play, and open-ended response. Rooted in deep respect for each child's spiritual journey, it creates space for curiosity, creativity, and meaningful participation in the mystery of faith.

All children ages three years old through grade six are welcome to attend Godly Play. We gather most Sundays, from 9:40–10:30 a.m. in the Parish House.

GRANTS RECEIVED

We're grateful to share that our Godly Play program received support from two grants this fall. Through the Godly Play Foundation's Circle of We, we received more than $750 worth of much-needed story materials.

In addition, the Northwest Intermountain Synod ELCA awarded us a $1,000 micro-grant, which will help fund blinds for the windows in our new classroom, making the space more comfortable and energy efficient. This micro-grant has also enabled us to expand and refresh our collection of books and story sets. In several cases, we've updated materials to replace outdated imagery and ensure they reflect our commitment to welcoming, inclusive storytelling.

We are grateful for these gifts, which help us enhance our Sunday School environment, making them more nurturing and engaging for our children and families.



To start the new Sunday School year, teacher Ann Benson presented a Godly Play story about the liturgical calendar as the sermon. It was engaging and really conveyed the beauty of Godly Play, which is a Montessori-inspired Christian spiritual formation program that helps children explore their faith through storytelling, wonder, and creative play.

ST. MARK'S RECEIVES AWARD

Pastor Edwin attended the Lutheran Community Services Northwest luncheon in October and accepted an award on behalf of St. Mark's.

Said LCSNW, "We are deeply grateful to everyone who joined us on Saturday as we celebrated the power of community and the life-changing work happening through LCSNW. Congratulations to St. Mark's Lutheran Church, recipient of our Light in the Community Award. Together, we gathered for good, and together, we continue creating health, justice, and hope for our community."





Get ready for an evening of laughter, creativity, and community as St. Mark's showcases the amazing gifts of our church family! Whether you sing, dance, play an instrument, perform comedy, act out a favorite scene, juggle, tell stories, or have a talent all your own, we'd love to see you shine on stage.

Not a performer? Share your creativity in another way! Visual artwork created by members of our congregation will be displayed throughout the event for everyone to enjoy.

Interested in performing or displaying your artwork? Registration is open until February 14 or when the roster is filled. Sign up by scanning the QR code.

And if sharing your talent feels a little too brave this year, come be part of the audience! Cheer on your friends, neighbors, and fellow church members as we celebrate the many gifts God has given our community.

A freewill offering will be collected during the event, with all proceeds supporting St. Mark's youth as they fundraise to attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering.



WINTER LIGHTS

For two years St. Mark's has put together the first public luminaria walk around Manito Pond, which was a wonderful success. People from around Spokane came to enjoy the candlelit walkway held the first Saturday of the new year. The event is a gift to the community and enjoyed by all ages.

We're doing the luminaria walk again on **Saturday, January 2, 2027** and are looking for volunteers to help with pre-event activities. These include distributing flyers, advertising, soliciting donations from local vendors, and recruiting day-of volunteers.

If you're interested or want to learn more, please contact Eric Allen by email ericballen@gmail.com or phone at 253.278.2708. Thank you and we're looking forward to another successful luminaria walk!

SAVE THE DATES

- Wonderful Wednesdays and Confirmation programming, **January 6.**
- Fat Tuesday, **February 9.**
- Ash Wednesday, **February 10.**

More information: Friday E-news, Sunday Bulletin, and St. Mark's calendar at www.stmarks-spokane.org/calendar.

STEWARDS OF CREATION

Stewards of Creation invites you to join others at St. Mark's to live out our calling to heal and protect creation in these various dimensions: worship, campus life, education, community outreach and thoughtful advocacy.

To learn more about how your passion for creation can be expressed here at St. Mark's, join our Zoom meeting on **Monday, December 7, at 6 p.m.** Please reach out to the church office for the zoom link (office@stmarks-spokane.org). We welcome you and your ideas!

We meet by Zoom on the first Monday of most months at 6 p.m.





A Stewards Of Creation retreat took place on October 22. So great to gather with members of this ministry for more than our monthly 1-hour Zoom. We shared our call stories (some of which will be shared at the November 22 event), brainstormed our vision and mission and looked ahead at our plans for the year.

What an inspiring and inspired team helps to lead this ministry at St. Mark's! Attendees: Neal Buckaloo, Janet Farness, Martha Harvie, Marianne Ophardt, Laren Sunde, and Rick Young.

Save the following dates and come learn with us!

Sunday Forum, January 31, 9:45 a.m.
Roundtables "Of Wisdom and Curiosity"

Stewards of Creation members will facilitate, and your expertise and/or questions are welcome! Come join a conversation table (or several) on a variety of topics including:

- Daily life hacks for sustainable living
- Compost, including human compost
- St. Mark's Homegrown National Park
- Solarizing your home
- Spokane Riverkeeper
- Spokanescape (creating a drought tolerant, bio-friendly landscape)
- How to grow houseplants (including pest control)
- How to plan and plant your veggie garden (including pest control)
- Hybrid/Electric transportation
- Recycling at home
- Planning/Installing a drip system
- Fly fishing

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WATER
Sunday, April 25, after late worship

All generations are invited to enjoy pizza while learning about our local water systems and exploring ways to conserve water. Look for a sign-up in the spring!

We'll also plant our third drought tolerant, native plant perennial garden together!



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.

VINYASA FLOW YOGA AT ST. MARK'S
Every Monday from 4:30–5:30 p.m., 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 and still considers herself a beginner. Hope to see you soon!

SCRIPTURE & COFFEE
Every Tuesday, 10:30 am, conference room
Questions: Pastor Edwin

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

STEWARDS OF CREATION
The first Monday of the month, by Zoom, 6 p.m.
Questions: Janet Farness, (jkftahiti@comcast.net) for Zoom information

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

EAT, PRAY, LAUGH
The first Tuesday of the month. Check our calendar and the Sunday Bulletin for our next meeting date.
Questions: the church office

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

PARKINSON'S DISEASE SUPPORT
The second Monday of each month, 2 p.m. in the conference room
Questions: Sue Connelly or Carolyn Payne

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

SUNRISE SAINTS & SINNERS
Second & fourth Wednesdays of the month, **November 11 and 25, December 9 and 23.**
Questions: Dave Troyke

This **men's group** meets at 7 a.m. 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!

FAITH AND FERMENTATION
The third Sunday of the month, 3–5:00 p.m., meeting at various area breweries
Questions: Barb Belstad or Cynthia Moore

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

THEOLOGY ON TAP
Mostly the third Tuesday of the month, at 7 p.m.
Questions: Pastor Edwin

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

PICKLEBALL IN THE PARKING LOT
Thursdays from 8–9:30 a.m. during the summer months
Questions: Gina Bloom

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

More information page 14.



315,818 QUILTS
179,200 SCHOOL KITS
231,811 PERSONAL CARE KITS
66,984 BABY CARE KITS
9,368 FABRIC KITS

COUNTRY	SHIPPING WAREHOUSE	QUILTS	SCHOOL KITS	PERSONAL CARE KITS	BABY CARE KITS	FABRIC KITS
ANGOLA	Maryland	33,000	16,900	27,000	9,000	
DJIBOUTI	Minnesota	9,520	15,225			
GEORGIA	Minnesota			65,100		
	Maryland	49,500				
HONDURAS	Minnesota		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	Maryland	6,270	3,380	3,900		
SERBIA	Maryland	7,425		6,300		
SIERRA LEONE	Minnesota		15,225		7,350	
TANZANIA	Minnesota	9,520			7,350	
UKRAINE	Maryland	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	
	TOTAL	315,818	179,200	231,811	66,984	9,368

This shipping information is from LWR's 2025 Fiscal Year (Oct. 2024 - Sept. 2025).

lwr.org | facebook.com/LuthWorldRelief | instagram.com/LuthWorldRelief | youtube.com/LutheranWorldRelief

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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FAX: (509) 458-2757

office@stmarks-spokane.org

WWW.STMARKS-SPOKANE.ORG

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

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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