



Our Mission
To Proclaim the Gospel
To Make Disciples
To Embody Christ's Love

From The Pastors Desk

Grace and Peace friends of St. Mark's,

I hope the start of the New Year brought you moments of rest and joy as we prepare for what is ahead. As we move into 2026, I continue to see many places where God is already at work among us and through the ministry we share. I want to take a few moments to name where I saw God at work in January and to share what I am looking forward to as we enter the month of February.

Compared to December, January was a slower month at St. Mark's, and I think many of us were grateful for the chance to catch our breath. Even in that slower pace, God was still at work behind the scenes. One groovy place I saw this was at the Council's annual retreat at the beginning of the month. Our elected leaders gathered for prayer, conversation, and planning as they looked honestly at the challenges we faced in 2025 and named goals for the year ahead. I am grateful for their faithfulness and hopeful about the leadership guiding St. Mark's in 2026.

Another place I saw God at work was during New Member Sunday on January 18. It was a groovy day as we welcomed and recognized 11 new members who have joined St. Mark's in the past eight months. I am thankful to Cathy Sigmon and the Outreach and Fellowship Teams for organizing the celebration and reception. I pray that our new members feel welcomed and encouraged as they grow in faith and find their place in the life of our congregation. I invite you to take time on Sundays and at other events to introduce yourself and help them feel at home.

Looking ahead to February, it will be a busy and meaningful month at St. Mark's. We will begin our Wednesday evening Lenten worship services with Ash Wednesday on February 18. These services are a gift—a time to pause in the middle of our busy weeks and turn our hearts back to God during this season of reflection and prayer. I hope you will join us.

February also marks the start of our Faith Challenge, which kicked off at the end of January. Through this challenge, every dollar marked "faith challenge" given will be matched, up to \$35,000, during the months of February, March, and April. This is an exciting opportunity to support the ministry we share and to step forward together with generosity and hope for what God is doing among us.

As we enter February, I invite each of us to take time to pray and to wonder: *Where is God inviting us to come and see?* How might God be calling us to live out our mission—to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and embody God's love?

I am deeply grateful for our staff, volunteers, and lay leaders who work faithfully to make St. Mark's a welcoming place for worship, learning, and service. And thank you, friends of St. Mark's, for the many ways you serve, care for one another, and share God's love in our community.

Peace and Blessings, Fraternally Quentin Surace"

ST. MARKS NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026



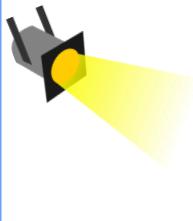
2026 Altar Guild and Council Installed



REYNOLDA HOUSE



Preschool Spotlight



Gifts from the Heart – Easter Event

Saturday, March 21st TBA

We are planning for our annual Easter Egg hunt for the special needs community and are expecting at least 100 participants, families and staff. We are in need of the following:

- Easter Eggs filled with candy or prize items
- Plastic eggs or candy (we can fill them)
- Cookies, individual chip bags
- VOLUNTEERS!!!!**



If you can help, please see Nobia Summer or Wendy Hefner - or sign up at the table in the church.



Claremont Easter Egg Hunt Saturday, March 28

St Mark's will be hosting the craft table again this year at the Claremont Easter Egg hunt. If you would like to volunteer to assist between 10:30 am and 2:00 pm, please let Wendy Hefner know. No craft experience necessary!



PRAYER LIST—MEMBERS and EXTENDED FAMILY & FRIENDS

Members:
 Mike Baker
 Libby Brown
 Gail Carpenter
 Gary & Susan Carpenter
 Jan Carpenter
 Alanna Dotson
 Bill Dotson
 Kathy Gibson
 Rachel Hall
 Jo Marilyn Hewitt
 Linda & Willie Hewitt
 Tammie Hoyle
 Ken Isenhour
 Pat Kale
 Miriam Keisler
 Rudy Little
 Gaye Morrison

Kelly Morrison
 Norman Morrow
 Betty Powell
 Kathy Ray
 Evelyn Setzer
 George Setzer
 Carolyn Sherrill
 Sandy Sherrill
 Carolyn Sigmon
 Johnny Sigmon
 Elaine Simmons
 Larry & Judy Smyre
 Tony Williams
Family & Friends:
 Zane Albert
 Carolyn Anderson
 Brittany Bailey
 Caleb Beatty

Mike Benfield
 Jerry & Wanda Bolick
 Barry & Sheila Brake
 Jo Ann Fox
 Tom Graybeal
 Carson Hollar
 William Hampton
 Forrest Huret
 Julie Jones
 Loretta Kiesler
 Mike & Alice Lawson
 Tonya Lawson
 Rita Ledbetter
 Bill & Laura McBrayer
 Betsy Roberts
 Dana Roberts
 Mark Sepulvador
 Jason Sharpe

Kathleen Sigmon
 Loretta Stephenson
 Rich Surace
 Michael & Rachel Swink
 Jo Carol Thomason
 Phil Williams
 Emory Addison Woods
 Baby Adaline Yang
 Danny Young
 Dylan & McKenzie
 Child with brain tumor
Active Military:
 Davis Tucker

Saint Mark's Lutheran Church Ministry Financial Analysis December 31, 2025

| 12/31/2025 | Month | Year |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| General Fund Offerings | 53,217.80 | 293,096.48 |
| Expenses | 32,499.79 | 324,851.75 |
| Balance | 20,718.01 | (31,755.27) |

December's Noisy Offering was designated for feeding needy families during the holidays. A total of \$185.50 was received.

MEMORIALS:

*To the Quilting Mission:

In memory of Marlene Epps by Chris Cloninger
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Rob & Regina Darcy
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Jan Carpenter
 In memory of Hazel Setzer by Tracy Martin & family
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Melva Cooper

*To St. Mark's Memorial Fund

In memory of Pastor Hollar by Susan Harris
 In memory of Kay Deal by Chris Cloninger
 In memory of Kay Deal by Hilka Cox
 In memory of Kay Deal by Bob & Camile Patrick
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Donna Buchanan
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Cathy Sigmon
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Linda Hewitt
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Janice Sigmon
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Hilka Cox
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Geraldine Helton
 In memory of Marlene Epps by Bob & Camile Patrick
 In memory of Kay Deal by Jan Carpenter

Loving Yourself Women's Bible Study



10 AM - Thursdays in February
*Using Scripture and other media,
 we will study God's Word focusing on
Loving God - Loving Ourselves
 Please register on the sign up sheet
 in the church before January 25th.*

December-January 2025 Worship Attendance

| | Present | YouTube |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| December 21 | 62 | 12 |
| December 28 | 63 | 10 |
| January 4 | 62 | 9 |
| January 11 | 75 | 8 |
| Total | 262 | 39 |
| Weekly Average | 66 | 10 |
| Christmas Eve 4pm | 84 | 4 |
| Christmas Eve 8pm | 46 | 7 |



St. Mark's sends our deepest sympathies to the family of Betty Williams. Betty joined the church triumphant on December 31st. Betty was a long time devoted member and supporter of St. Mark's.

Lenten and Easter Schedule

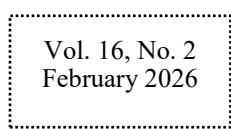
| | | |
|---------|-------------------------|--------|
| Feb. 18 | Ash Wednesday | 7pm |
| Feb. 25 | 1st Lent meal | 5:45pm |
| | Service w/communion | 6:30pm |
| Mar. 4 | 2nd Lent meal | 5:45pm |
| | Service w/communion | 6:30pm |
| Mar. 11 | 3rd Lent meal | 5:45pm |
| | Service w/communion | 6:30pm |
| Mar. 18 | 4th Lent meal | 5:45pm |
| | Service w/communion | 6:30pm |
| Mar. 25 | 5th Lent meal | 5:45pm |
| | Service w/communion | 6:30pm |
| Mar. 29 | Palm Sunday Service | 10am |
| Apr. 2 | Maundy Thursday Service | 7pm |
| Apr. 3 | Good Friday Service | 7pm |
| Apr. 5 | Sunrise Service | 8am |
| | Breakfast to follow | |
| | Easter Sunday Service | 10am |

The NC Synod invites our youngest creatives to help shape the look of the 2026 Synod Gathering! Inspired by the theme "Come and See, Go and Tell," we're inviting children to share how they witness and wonder at God's good news. Open to artists **12 and under** from NC Synod congregations. As part of our Children in Ministry "And God Says It Is Good" initiative, supported by a grant from the Lilly Foundation Inc., we are highlighting the gifts and perspectives of children across our synod. Their creativity reminds us of God's delight in play, imagination, and curiosity—and we want those gifts front and center at Synod Gathering. For more details, go to <https://nclutheran.org/art-opportunity-for-children/>

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
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Claremont, NC

| <u>Church Staff</u> | | <u>Congregation Council</u> | | |
|--|----------------|---|---|--|
| Pastor Quentin Surace pastor@smarklc.org | (704) 280-9921 | <u>2026</u> Carol Schaefer Matthew Watkins Nobia Summers Cathy Sigmon | <u>2027</u> Tim Carpenter Judy Craig Jerry Herman Susan Williams | <u>2028</u> Jennifer Carpenter Terry Hefner Trey Hendren Tim Sherrill |
| Wendy Hefner: Family Ministries Director wendy@smarklc.org | (828) 270-6008 | <i>*The year denotes rotation off Council at year's end.</i> | | |
| Emily Schuttenberg: Minister of Music emily205@icloud.org | (706) 248-3323 | Congregation Council meets on February 16th at 6:30pm. The next newsletter mailing will be February 18th. | | |
| Maria Wright: Preschool Director mw9268@gmail.com | (828) 234-5943 | <u>Church Office Hours</u> Monday - Thursday, 9:00am—2:30pm | | |
| Randyl Abernathy: Preschool Director mimab@charter.net | (828) 781-1702 | <u>Follow Us Online</u> | | |
| Deanna Butcher: Finance Secretary deanna@smarklc.org | (828) 459-2161 |  St. Mark's Lutheran Church....Claremont, NC |  St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Claremont NC http://www.youtube.com/@stmarkslutheranchurchclar6483 |  www.smarklc.org |
| Patricia Hoke: Administrative Assistant secretary@smarklc.org | (828) 459-2161 | | | |
| Larry Smyre: Church Sexton | (828) 459-2161 | | | |



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.