



*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 Lutheran Church,**

I hope you are doing well as we continue through the winter season—finding joy in both the outdoors and the warmth of our shared spaces. Winter is a good time in the life of the church to notice how God is at work among us and through us each day.

I want to share a few places where I saw God at work at St. Mark's in December, and then look ahead to where God may be inviting us to “come and see” in January.

December was a full and groovy month, but also a month filled with grief. At the beginning of the month, Marlene Epps and Kay Deal joined the Church Triumphant. We celebrated their life and resurrection together. God showed up through the love, support, and care of the congregation for Marlene's and Kay's families as they grieve, and we grieve with them. Also early on, many of you helped decorate the sanctuary for Advent and prepare our float for the Claremont Christmas Parade. Our youth helped decorate the Chrismon tree, and together we celebrated Jesus as the “sweetest name we know.” Even though it was cold, the day was filled with laughter, songs, and friendly waves to our neighbors. Thank you to everyone who helped and participated in these ministries.

Another meaningful moment was our Christmas Program during worship. Our youth led us in sharing the story, and the whole congregation joined in with response phrases. From the congregation, we heard animal sounds from the stable, the laughter of baby Jesus, and the choir of angels. It was a groovy way to tell the Christmas story together. After worship, we shared a meal with many kinds of soup and dessert, and we were well fed in both body and spirit.

I also saw God at work through the love and care of our Preschool Ministry's Christmas Program. It was a gift to pray and sing with our preschoolers as they shared the story of Jesus' birth with their parents. Thank you to our preschool teachers, board, and parents for your love and work.

As we look ahead to January, the calendar may be quieter, but God is still at work among us. This month we will hold our council retreat as we prepare our leaders for the year ahead. We are also looking forward to a New Member Sunday, where we will welcome those who have joined St. Mark's in recent months and celebrate the growth of our community.

As we enter the new year, I invite you to pray and wonder: *Where is God inviting us to come and see? Where is God calling us to live out our mission—to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and embody God's love?*



**ST. MARKS NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2026**

Thank you to everyone who offered prayers, presence, and support in December. Friends of St. Mark's, I am deeply grateful for the many ways you serve, love, and hope together. To God alone be the glory.

Peace and Blessings,
Fraternally Pastor Quentin

COUNCIL RETREAT

The St. Mark's Church Council Retreat will be Friday and Saturday, January 9-10th in the Family Life Center. 2026 Council members are: Jennifer Carpenter, Tim Carpenter, Judy Craig, Terry Hefner, Trey Hendren, Jerry Herman, Carol Schaefer, Tim Sherrill, Cathy Sigmon, Nobia Summer, Matthew Watkins and Susan Williams.

Let us be in prayer for these members to lead us in the coming year.



Winter Jam

Christian Concert


January 25th Charlotte

\$15 per person

Contact Wendy Hefner to register
before Sunday, January 18th

*Winter Jam is a music concert featuring 8–10
Christian artists who perform during the
3 hour show.*





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.*



Bishop Emily Hartner from the NC Synod presided over the worship service on November 23rd for Christ the King and Women's Sunday.

Special thanks to all who assisted with our Christmas Parade Float



St. Mark’s was represented in the Claremont Christmas Parade on December 6th. The float was decorated with all handmade decorations made by St. Mark’s members. The theme was “Jesus The Sweetest Name I Know”

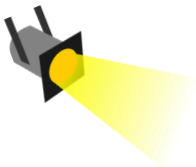


Also on December 6th, members gathered to setup the Nativity Scene on the front lawn.



Gifts From the Heart 2025 was a very successful event. It grows every year. We had 70 shoppers who chose 782 items (approximately). There were 40 volunteers at the shopping day. An estimated 300 hours in preparations was given by volunteers.

Special thanks to all of our volunteers and those who donated items, and to Nobia Summer and Wendy Hefner for a job well done. They are already planning for next year.



Preschool Spotlight

Children always look forward to seeing these two with their friendly smiles and charismatic personalities. We are blessed and thank the Lord for your presence everyday !!

SPOTLIGHT

Hello

MY NAME IS

JOAN COLTON

I have been with St. Marks since spring of 2017. I am a mom of two grown boys. I love to go hiking and spend time in nature

Teacher Assistant for 3 yr olds

SPOTLIGHT

Hello

MY NAME IS

CRYSTAL GRINDSTAFF

I've been at St. Marks Preschool since 2006, I have a wonderful husband, a son, a daughter and 2 beautiful grand daughters. I love cooking/baking and spending time with my family.

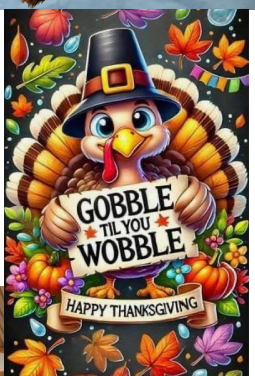
Teacher Assistant for 3, 4, & 5 yr olds

Preschool Highlights



Cupcake Birthday Fun

Ms. Ginny Art



Pastor Quentin joined in the music with his guitar




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 Carolyn Sigmon Johnny Sigmon Elaine Simmons Larry & Judy Smyre Betty Williams Tony Williams Family & Friends: Zane Albert Brittany Bailey Caleb Beatty Mike Benfield	Barry & Sheila Brake Deanna Butcher Jason Carpenter Jo Ann Fox Carson Hollar William Hampton Forrest Huret Julie Jones Mike & Alice Lawson Tonya Lawson Rita Ledbetter Bill & Laura McBrayer Nicole Nimrod 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 Active Military: Davis Tucker

Saint Mark's Lutheran Church Ministry Financial Analysis November 30, 2025		
11/30/2025	Month	Year
General Fund Offerings	24,220.39	239,878.68
Expenses	25,279.70	292,351.96
Balance	(1,059.31)	(52,473.28)



November's Noisy Offering was designated for Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministries. A total of \$132.00 was received. December's offering will help feed needy families during the holidays.

Special donations received:
~A donation was received in memory of William Hollar given by Chris Cloninger.
~A donation was received in memory of William Hollar given by Marcus Midgett.
~A donation was received in memory of Kay Deal given by Paul & Kathy Gibson.
~A donation was received in memory of Ron Cox and in honor of Hilka Cox to St. Mark's Preschool given by David Cox.
~A donation given by Jim and Marlene Stewart was received.
She will not grow elderly, as we that are left behind.
Age shall not weary her nor the years bend her. At the going down of the sun and in its return in the morning we always remember our dear daughter
Melanie Stewart Cranford (1973-2023).

November-December 2025 Worship Attendance		
	Present	YouTube
November 23	72	12
November 30	68	11
December 7	76	7
December 14	90	13
Total	306	43
Weekly Average	77	11



St. Mark's lost two very special ladies in early December. Wednesday, December 3rd, Marlene Epps was called home. Thursday, December 4th, Kay Deal was called home. These ladies were a big part of St. Mark's and will be dearly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families as they grieve.





Tuesday, December 2nd was ELCA Good Gifts Giving Tuesday. The Stewardship Team used \$500 from Milk Pail Fund to contribute to the churchwide ministries throughout the US and abroad. Donations are sent where they are needed most. On Giving Tuesday the donations are matched (or doubled). The \$500 purchased 4 goats, 4 pigs, 9 chicks and 6 roosters. Total given will equal \$1000 or 8 goats, 8 pigs, 18 chicks and 12 roosters.

“As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we believe that God is calling us into the world — together. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. “




**BEWARE OF
FAKE EMAILS**

Pastor Quentin will **never** email, call, or text you asking to purchase gift cards, give personal financial information, or wire money to him.

If you have received messages like these from quentinfsurace@gmail.com asking you to do so, then please report them for phishing and notify Pastor Quentin and the Church office.

St. Mark’s Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 550
3216 W Main Street
Claremont, NC 28610

NON-PROFIT ORG.
Permit #2
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Claremont, NC

Church Staff		Congregation Council		
Pastor Quentin Surace		2026	2027	2028
pastor@smarklc.org	(704) 280-9921	Carol Schaefer	Tim Carpenter	Jennifer Carpenter
Wendy Hefner: Family Ministries Director		Matthew Watkins	Judy Craig	Terry Hefner
wendy@smarklc.org	(828) 270-6008	Nobia Summers	Jerry Herman	Trey Hendren
Emily Schuttenberg: Minister of Music		Cathy Sigmon	Susan Williams	Tim Sherrill
emily205@icloud.org	(706) 248-3323	<i>*The year denotes rotation off Council at year’s end.</i>		
Maria Wright: Preschool Director		Congregation Council meets on January 19th at 6:30pm.		
mw9268@gmail.com	(828) 234-5943	Council Retreat will be January 9-10th.		
Randyl Abernathy: Preschool Director		The next newsletter mailing will be January 21st.		
mimab@charter.net	(828) 781-1702	Church Office Hours		
Deanna Butcher: Finance Secretary		Monday - Thursday, 9:00am—2:30pm		
deanna@smarklc.org	(828) 459-2161	Follow Us Online		
Patricia Hoke: Administrative Assistant		f	St. Mark’s Lutheran Church....Claremont, NC	
secretary@smarklc.org	(828) 459-2161		 www.smarklc.org	
Larry Smyre: Church Sexton	(828) 459-2161	 YouTube	St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Claremont NC	
			http://www.youtube.com/@st.markslutheranchurchclar6483	



Vol. 16, No. 1
January 2026



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