

GOD HAS CHOSEN YOU

Deuteronomy 7:6

devoted

Fall 2015 || Vol. 6 Issue 1 || St. Mark Lutheran Church & School



What does it mean to be chosen? As a child, it means the world. Think about the first time you stood on a baseball diamond with your classmates. Your friends chose team captains, who then began choosing their respective teams. “I want Johnny” said one captain. “Well, I want Jimmy” said the other captain. As the teams began to be assembled, captains consulted their teammates as they whispered into their ears “Take Sally. She plays on a club team.” Or, “Take Jill. She’s really good, but don’t take Billy. He’s too slow.” It was an honor to be “chosen” and the worst thing was to be the last one picked. Why? Because you realize that the last kid left really wasn’t chosen at all. He or she was assigned because there was no one left, and the team had to live with it.

As the school year at St. Mark begins to ramp up and our new teachers and students begin to acquaint themselves with the building, we recognize that many choices were made. Parents chose St. Mark over other schools for its high academic achievements, quality, and loving staff. Our staff chose St. Mark over more money in the public sector and feel the call of God to serve Him in ministry here.

We all have been chosen by a great God! Our school’s theme verse this year, Deuteronomy 7:6, says it all: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

He has chosen us to be on His team. While the last kid left really wasn’t chosen at all, remember, that even if you were the only person on earth, Jesus would still have died for you. You are that important to Him. He gave us gifts and abilities to play our unique position. He has chosen you to join Him on His mission of life transformation!

In this issue of *devoted*, look through the stories of those who are serving God faithfully, ministering to one another and leading others to Jesus as they live out their vocations as those who have been chosen by God! Godspeed.

In His Service, For His Glory

Pastor Duerr

Staff

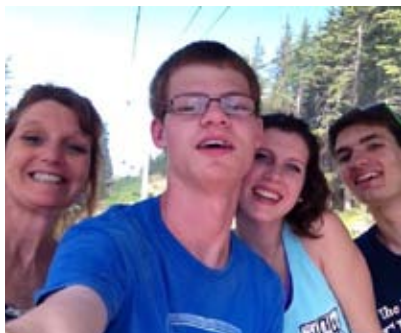
Timothy Duerr	713 255 3679	Senior Pastor
Scott Heitshusen	713 255 3611	Associate Pastor of Outreach
Andy Roettjer	713 255 3636	Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults
Susan Converse	713 255 3634	Director of Operations
Dallas Lusk	713 255 3612	Principal
Sheryl Seybold	713 255 3632	Early Childhood Education Director
Gabriella Gonzalez	713 255 3617	Director of Admissions
John Marrs	713 255 3616	Director of Music Ministry
Gail Williamson	713 255 3631	Associate Director of Finance
Susan DePue	713 255 3610	Office Manager
Suzanne Thompson	713 255 3619	School Office
Susan O’Connor	713 255 3618	Church Office

FALL FESTIVAL

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23
5-9 PM AT ST. MARK**



**Bring the whole family
and join us for an evening of food,
live music and games galore!**



A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to go with SM2 on a mission trip to Mescalero, New Mexico on an Apache reservation. The Lord taught me a few things while we were there, and granted us opportunities to talk to the Apache people, learn their culture, and see the glorious creation that He has made. All this while continuing to build relationships with the people in SM2.

At the end of the first two days, I had a headache. Upon first glance, one would consider this a bad thing. But God has a way of turning the bad into good. That second day, instead of going to evening program, I talked to Pastor Andy and he allowed me to lay down in my room for a while. While laying there, I opened up the Bible app on my phone. For the next hour or so, I listened to my phone read me Romans 6, 7, and 8. Through it, God taught me. What stuck out was Romans 8:26-27, where Paul talks about how the Holy Spirit helps us pray and intercedes for us! Even though I could not be in evening program with my brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord still taught me more about Himself and kept me in Him!

The next day, God taught me about how important it is that Jesus came, and the magnitude of what He did for us; for me! For you! God taught me how the Heavenly Father was not pleased with our sins. But He is a God of steadfast love! He loves me, He loves you! So He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross, taking the punishment for our sins! God was not pleased with our sins, so Jesus *became* sin, and took our punishment, and we can take His righteousness if we believe in Him! That is absolutely incredible, that He died and rose again to save me from my sins, so I can be with Him forever! He did it for you, too! All this is because of His steadfast love for me, for you, for everyone!

On the flip side, God allowed me to learn more about the Apache culture! While we were there, the Apaches had their coming of age ceremony for the girls. They actually invited everyone on the mission trip to come and see it. It certainly was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

On Wednesday, our youth group had the opportunity to go to a place called SkiApache. The school we had been staying at was a little over 7,000 feet in altitude, and we drove up a mountain to SkiApache, and then took a gondola up to a much higher point. Then we hiked the rest of the way to the peak of that mountain, where we were 11,600 feet in altitude! From that height, we could see everything! It was an amazing view of God's creation! We took well over a hundred photos, and even those do not do it justice! God sure knows what He's doing! In addition, it gave our group the chance to grow closer to each other!

Finally, through youth group devotions, the car ride there and back, and just hanging out during the week, our youth group got the opportunity to grow closer to God and to each other! We had many good conversations, as well as opportunities to open up. We certainly grew closer to each other, to God, and even met some new people!

Thank you for helping us go on this trip! It was an incredible experience, where God taught me things I won't forget, and where I grew closer to my brothers and sisters in Christ who are in SM2!

In our new member spotlight this month, we interviewed Ben & Kari Cromeens. They are a school family that became members of our church in Spring of 2014. Since then, St. Mark has been blessed to have such a wonderful family be a part of our church in many ways. The Cromeens family live northwest of St. Mark (near 1960 and 290) and they brave the Houston traffic every single day to bring their three children to St. Mark: Hannah - 12, 7th Grade; Shane - 9, 4th Grade & Sarah (turning 6 on the first day of school, 1st Grade). Ben is a taxidermist in Spring Branch, owner of Tri-State Taxidermy. I have yet to personally visit Ben's shop though he has repeatedly invited me to come see their operation. Kari works for KWI, a company who manufactures oil & gas production, process and measurement equipment.

They heard about St. Mark through word of mouth and were attracted to St. Mark for the church and school's combined ministries. Though neither of them grew up Lutheran, they were looking for a school that would both provide a quality Christian education, which they could also call their church home.

St. Mark wasn't the first church where they attended worship. "We had visited many churches and had not been successful in finding the perfect one for our family. St. Mark just felt right. It felt like real structured Christianity. Each sermon was based on scripture from the Bible and not just someone's feelings or funny stories." They added that it was the "Scripture based sermons and the family atmosphere" which St. Mark prides itself on that brought them back a second, third and fourth time.

Kari also added, "The goals of the St Mark staff parallel our family's goals of a complete academic and Christian education." What makes them most excited about being a part of our church and school family is "seeing our children become smarter and watching them become more and more excited about their relationship with the Lord, and having answers to our children's growing questions that are based in the Word of the Lord."

In fact one of the most memorable experiences they can recall as a result of their experience at SML was "The day our son Shane belted out the Lord's Prayer in church. We had no idea he knew it by heart and you could tell he was proud of himself. Other church members around us tapped him on his shoulder to say good job."

Since then, they've been active in both the church and the school. Donating their time and energy by blessing the students through school parties, volunteering as library and class readers and being active in after-school sports. They've also provided for others spiritually for the church as well, by helping Julie Burgess with her annual Operation Christmas Child outreach event, and now helping Pastor Scott in his efforts to coordinate the spiritual gifts and abilities of our members on the G.I.F.T.S. Team.

When asked if there was something they would like to tell a school family that isn't a member of the church they said, "Please come have fun worshipping with us."

To a church family whose kids don't attend SML school, they said, "You should have your children come and shadow for a day. The Christian education along with academic education has far exceeded our expectations and we would love for your children to take part."

I have been blessed getting to know them better every time I've seen them since I first had them in the New Member Class over a year ago. We praise God for the many wonderful members, including the Cromeens family, who make St. Mark such a wonderful place to be as we join Jesus on His mission together. Be sure to say "hi!" to the Cromeens when you see them around St. Mark!

-Pastor Duerr





It is an honor to write to you on behalf of the staff at St. Mark Lutheran School. My wife Sarah and I have been blessed tremendously by the warm welcome we've received as we dive all in to the ministry at St. Mark Lutheran Church and School. I firmly believe that St. Mark is at a pivotal moment in our history with a tremendous growth opportunity the Lord has placed before us. He has chosen SML to join Him on His mission, building life-changing relationships with students and families.

Four years ago in Carrollton, Texas, I was sitting in a Middle School chapel, and I prayed a prayer asking God to use me in a leadership role. In our Bible study, we had just covered the story of Isaiah and "Here am I, send me" was resonating in my head. In the story of Isaiah's commissioning in chapter 6, he has the vision of the Lord seated at the throne and is confronted with his sin and unworthiness. Upon receiving the gift of grace and forgiveness in verse 7, Isaiah, in verse 8, hears the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Realizing how blessed he is to have received such a gift, Isaiah responds to the call and replies, "Here am I. Send me!"

If you accept that you have been chosen by God and vow to live "Here am I, send me", your life is going to get interrupted. Wonderful, sacred interruptions will take place and you will find yourself in situations you never imagined. I never dreamed I'd have the opportunity to lead and serve the school at my home congregation. Yet I find myself filled with joy as I work daily with gifted servants that live as chosen people, carrying out His ministry.

Isaiah, an ordinary man, was willing to obey God and step out in faith and let God do extraordinary things through him. I know our faculty and staff have answered the call and are ready. I hope that you, as congregation members and school families, will join us on this journey. We are grateful for the chance to partner with you as we love, mentor, and guide our SML Cougars to strengthen the gifts God has blessed them with.

Please share your stories with me throughout the year so I can celebrate them with our SML staff and share them with our community. My email, phone line, and office are always open. I am privileged to be your Principal at St. Mark Lutheran.

Forever Grateful,

Dallas Lusk

dlusk@stmarkhouston.org // 713.468.2623

WELCOME TO SML!



Gabriella Gonzalez
Director of Admissions



Amanda Mellor
MS Mathematics



Paige Mellor
First Grade



Shawn Myers
Kindergarten



Ryan Schultz
Athletic Director/MS History

sml safari || children's ministry update



Hey Parents!

God put the wiggle in children, so don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome! If you have to leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. The presence of children is a gift to the Church and they remind us that our church is growing!

To help your children (and you!) relax a little during Worship, we've remodeled a wall in the foyer especially for our littlest attendees! Visit the SML Safari Exploration Station and pick up an Adventure Gear bag. It's filled with coloring sheets, crayons, and other little goodies. Feel free to grab a couple books to read as well! We hope this will be a valuable resource to help keep our families together for Worship.

Thanks for choosing St. Mark as your church family! We are grateful for the opportunity to join Jesus on His mission together.



On a muggy weekend in May, twenty men left St. Mark Lutheran Church to serve at Camp Lone Star in LaGrange, Texas. We were blessed by the gift of Thrivent's Action Teams to be able to purchase dinner for the team on Friday night so we could put in a long, hard day in the hot Texas sun. In the end, we finished one large project and assisted with two other minor projects.

The men of St. Mark came together in an amazing way, not only to work hard, but to mentor the young men of St. Mark's Boy Scout Troup #35. Side by side, men and boys cut timbers, laid boards, and demolished stones. We attached over 30 boards and planks that would become the seating area for Camp Lone Star's Lakeside Devotional Site. Hundreds of children will be blessed to sit on those benches, sing praises to God and hear the good news of His love for years to come.

St. Mark men are truly working hard to leave a lasting legacy at Camp Lone Star by giving back to this important ministry within our own district. Personally, I wouldn't be a pastor if it wasn't for the powerful witness of Christ's love I experienced at a Summer Camp growing up. Through our acts of service there, who knows how many young men and women will grow up to become pastors, teachers, DCE's, principals, professors, missionaries and other professional church workers.

I am blown away, not only by the hard work of our men's group, but also of the young Boy Scouts who worked just as hard, side-by-side with the men, demonstrating that serving God and blessing our community is a multi-generational endeavor.

I also imagine how many more children's lives will be touched and who will have a firm foundation of what it means to serve Jesus, minister to one another and lead others to Jesus with a Christ-like attitude of compassionate, selfless love and service for others. We are blessed to be a blessing as we join Jesus on His mission to serve His people at Camp Lone Star each and every year. Thank you all for making this such a fantastic experience!



MICAH

minor prophet // major message

New Series Begins Sunday, September 13

On Sunday, June 14, St. Mark's Stephen Ministry teams celebrated a rare milestone: 25 years of ministry! This program started in June of 1990, when Sharon Lem, Pastor Dasch and others attended their first Stephen Ministry Leadership Conference and trained their first class of over 30 Stephen Ministers willing to join the mission of Christ by ministering to other St. Mark members in a truly relational and personal way.

Stephen Ministry is a vital care-giving ministry that brings comfort and peace to those who are suffering and hurting by ministering to them with patience, counsel, a listening ear and a heart filled with Christ's love. Stephen Ministers listen and pray with their care recipients and help them overcome the trials and burdens of this world. Over the past 25 years, our Stephen Ministry program has cared for hundreds of individuals.

We were so excited to have both past and present Stephen Ministers in attendance. During the worship service, we commissioned a brand new class of Stephen Ministers including Dennis Rochow, Katie Tonn, Kathy Symmank, Jim Symmank and Mike Henke. It was a momentous sight, seeing dozens of past and present Stephen Ministers come forward and lay their hands upon the new Stephen Ministers and bless them as they are sent out to help those who are hurting.

Sharon Lem shared a story of what Stephen Ministry means to her and Pastor Duerr presented her with a plaque and a letter written by Dr. Ken Haugk of Stephen Ministries - St. Louis, commemorating this special and momentous occasion.

Finally, everyone gathered in the Cafeteria for a special barbecue luncheon in which Stephen Ministers past and present were able to gather, fellowship, laugh and share stories of 25 awesome years of lives transformed by the love of Christ.



Sunday School Registration

Please register your child(ren) at stmarkhouston.org/sundayschool

Sunday School classes begin September 13

Sunday School Teachers

We are looking for adults/youth to be teachers, assistants, and greeters.

Volunteer and make a difference!

Contact Pastor Andy to learn more about these opportunities.

aroettjer@stmarkhouston.org or 713 255 3636

SM FALL EVENTS

Back to School Party
September 18 (6 pm - 9 pm)
at St. Mark

SM2 Fall Lock-In
October 16 - 17 (7 pm - 8 am)
at St. Mark

Invite your friends and get away for a night of fun and games with SM2!



Our week at Everest VBS this Summer was filled with singing, playing games, doing some neat experiments, eating delicious snacks, making new friends and digging deeper into God's Word. A Daily Bible Point and theme were taught that focused on the lesson for the day. We were blessed with 220 children ages 3 years - 5th grade and 55 staff to help as Crew Leaders, Station Leaders, Skits, Registration Volunteers and a Photographer. Thank you to everyone who supported this ministry and to all the staff who helped share the message of God's power and love with all the children!



REFORMATION WORSHIP

9:45 AM BIBLE CLASSES

11 AM ONE WORSHIP SERVICE

12 PM REFORMATION LUNCHEON

Welcome to St. Mark Lutheran!

We want you to feel at home with us as we worship, praise and proclaim God's eternal love and joy in Jesus Christ for each one of us! We offer several types of worship services in order for everyone to worship at a service that best fits their needs.

If you are interested in membership at St. Mark or would like more information, stop by the Visitor Center as you exit the Sanctuary before or after services or contact the Church Office during the week at 713 468 2623.

Worship Services

SUNDAYS

8:30 am - Traditionally Focused

Using worship that is rooted in our rich heritage of grace, this service is for all who enjoy traditional elements of worship such as liturgy, Lutheran hymns, organ and classic instruments.

11 am - Contemporary Service

Offering a relaxed blend of majestic worship style and contemporary, this service includes praise singers, praise band and instrumentation to accompany praise songs and modern worship music.

WEDNESDAYS

7 pm - This midweek service is designed as a worship/Bible study hour with singing.

For Parents With Young Children

We love kids and are happy to have them join us for Worship in the Sanctuary! Adventure Gear (bags filled with books, crayons and pictures to color) is available at the Exploration Station in the foyer for young children attending Worship. The Nursery is also available for children under 3 years of age.

Worship Message on DVD/CD

DVDs & CDs of the worship message may be received by filling out the information on the Media Ministry envelope located in the pew rack and dropping the envelope in the offering plate. DVDs/CDs are duplicated and mailed weekly.

Hearing & Visual Assistance

For those with difficulty hearing, we offer a "hearing assistance" system. The individual systems can be obtained from the sound technician at the back of the sanctuary. We also offer large print bulletins for those that might need them.

Prayer Needs

If you'd like to have a request prayed for during Worship, please write at the bottom of the Communication Card on the "Member" side. To keep it confidential or publish to the prayer chain, please mark the appropriate box. You may also send your prayer request to prayer@stmarkhouston.org and your prayer will immediately be placed on the prayer chain.

About St. Mark

St. Mark Lutheran Church is a Christ-centered community that is dedicated to sharing our love for Jesus Christ by caring for people and equipping them to live out their faith in the world.

We believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior from sin. We believe that the Bible is the foundation of all truth and guide for our lives. Because of God's great love for us, we believe that we best show our love for Him by our response of caring and kindness to others.

Our mission statement is:

In response to God's call, we live to **SEEK, STRENGTHEN AND SEND** fully devoted disciples for Christ.



St. Mark
LUTHERAN
CHURCH & SCHOOL

1515 Hillendahl Houston, Texas 77055 stmarkhouston.org