

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

messenger

“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15

December 2020



Advent Midweek Services will begin on December 2

During the season of Advent, we will be holding our traditional Advent Midweek services. These services will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., beginning December 2.

At these services, we will be following a series titled *The Great I AM: Almighty God in a Manger*. In this series, we will be exploring three of Jesus' statements from the Gospel of John, in which He identifies Himself as the great I AM from the Old Testament. In this way, we will come to see the true glory of that little baby, born among us so many years ago, recognizing Him as the Almighty God incarnate, who has lovingly taken on our flesh for our salvation.

Please join us for these services! At each service, we will be following the beautiful Service of Evening Prayer, beginning with a candlelight procession. We hope to see you there!



Join us as we celebrate Jesus' birth

With great joy, we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus, who came to us long ago to save us from our sins by His blood and to rescue us from the darkness of death! This year, in order to enable all worshipers to space out in our sanctuary, we will be holding two identical services on Christmas Eve (December 24). We will be holding one service at 4 p.m. in the afternoon and the other at 6 p.m. in the evening. As in previous years, these services will close with the hymn *Silent Night* sung by candlelight.

We will also be holding our traditional Christmas Day Divine Service at 10 a.m. on December 25, which will include Holy Communion.

We hope you will join us for our celebration of Jesus' birth! For those who are unable to attend, we will also be recording portions of these services and posting them online, just as we have been doing for our Divine Services on Sunday.

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The *Messenger* is the monthly newsletter of:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

7979 Commerce Road

West Bloomfield, MI 48324

Phone: (248) 363-0741; Fax: (866) 649-6870

Website: www.stmarkwb.org

Pastor: Rev. Aaron Vergin

E-mail: pastor@stmarkwb.org

Editor: Debbie LoCascio

E-mail: debbie@stmarkwb.org

Sunday

Divine Service with Holy Communion 8:30 & 10:00 a.m.

Sunday School (Sept. - May) 10:45 a.m. **(ON HOLD)**

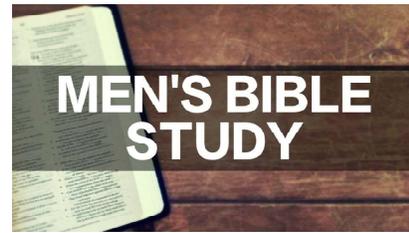
Wednesday

Midweek Advent Services 7:00 p.m.

One Saturday/month

Men's Bible Study/Breakfast 9:00 a.m.

Handicap accessible.



All men are invited to December's Men's Bible Study and Breakfast

Attention Men of St. Mark's! Our next Men's Bible Study will be held on Saturday, December 5. We will gather from 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. in St. Mark's fellowship hall. Breakfast will be provided, and we will be continuing our study of the book of Acts.

We hope to see you there! This is a great opportunity to be formed together as men of God in the image of Christ!



Here are the details regarding this year's Adopt-A-Family Program

Due to COVID-19, the Open Door Outreach Center in Waterford will only be accepting, and giving, store gift cards this year. Area churches will not be given a "Wish List" and shopping for families as in the past. Instead, if you'd like to help a needy family or two this Christmas, please provide a \$25 gift card from Meijer, Target or Walmart. This way, the recipients can purchase food, clothing or toys. Please place the gift cards in the box located on the table at the back of the sanctuary no later than December 13.

Thank you in advance for your generosity in helping families in need!

Pastor's Page

The Church's hope in a hostile world

My friends, as we Christians live in this world, we are living in a hard and hostile environment, a fallen world opposed to Christ and to His Word. Although at times it might seem as if the world is our friend, as if we can expect to live here peacefully and unharassed, the Scriptures are clear: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:17).

Indeed, even here in America this is becoming increasingly evident. More and more, we're seeing the Truth of Christ maligned and rejected. Among many politicians, academics, and entertainers, orthodox Christian doctrine is now labelled as "hate-speech" and its adherents smeared as bigots. All around us, the world is taking its stand against the Church, even as the devil fills the globe with disaster, famine, storm, and plague. Day by day, we are learning what exactly our Lord means, and how much He truly requires of us, when He bids us, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

And in the face of this reality, as we endure the scorn of those around us, as we suffer loss for the sake of Christ, as we bear all the hardships of the world in the devil's raging against us, it can be easy for us to become discouraged and to despair. Truly, the cross is a heavy burden, far heavier than we can carry on our own. We might feel at times like little Jerusalem when she was surrounded and besieged by the great Assyrian army, powerless to withstand by her own strength and stature (Isaiah 36-37).

However, at such times we must turn our eyes away from every threat and set them firmly upon Christ, recalling especially, I believe, His last words to His disciples as recorded in the book of Matthew. Here, having risen from the dead, Jesus gives His final charge to His Church before His ascension into heaven. And what does He say? "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). With these words, I contend, Jesus tells us all we need to know regarding how to live as Christians in a hostile world. And, therefore, it's the perfect place to look when the cross lies heavy upon us and we are tempted to despair.

(Continued next column)

And what specifically does Jesus teach us here? First, He teaches us that He now exercises authority over all creation. "All authority in heaven and on earth," Jesus says, "has been given to me." In other words, Jesus tells us here that He is now in control over everything, without qualification. Yeah, it might look like the world is in charge. It might look like we are harassed and helpless, and like we have no hope. However, no matter how our situation may appear, we can be sure that Jesus is still reigning over everything. He's reigning over our politics. He's reigning over our families. He's reigning over our health and our finances. He's reigning even over the holy angels in heaven, as well as over the devil and all His demonic forces. Nothing is outside of Jesus' control, whether in heaven or on earth.

And this should give us Christians the greatest comfort. We are God's people. We are those redeemed by Jesus' blood. We are heirs through faith of our Creator's heavenly kingdom. Therefore, we can be sure—even when things don't make sense—that Jesus is truly working all things out for our good. As the Scriptures say, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

But, even more, Jesus teaches us here about something else: He teaches us about our duty as the Church in this hostile world. "Go therefore," our Lord continues, "and make disciples of all nations." Yeah, Jesus wants all people to return to Him. He wants to gather all people into His kingdom. He shed His blood for the forgiveness of all, and His will is that all would repent and believe in Him, and so be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, Jesus sends out His Church with a solemn duty, to make disciples by baptizing and by teaching.

And, in this way, Jesus orients all of our work as we live in this hostile world. We are not to be overcome by this world. We are not to be silenced by this world. We are not to be overthrown by this world, no matter how hard things might be. Rather, in the face of all opposition, we are to work for the salvation of this world, as we have come to know it in Christ. We are to make disciples. This is our duty, the singular calling which directs all our work.

But, lastly, Jesus also assures us here of His constant presence in the midst of all hardship: "Behold, I am with you always," He says, "to the end of the age." Yeah, it might feel at times like we're alone. It might feel like everything is against

(See Pastor's Page Page 6)



Let's decorate St. Mark's for Christmas!

We are seeking volunteers to help decorate St. Mark's for the Christmas holidays. Toward that end, our Decorate the Church event will be held on Saturday, December 5 starting at 10 a.m.

Many hands make for light work, so if you are available to help that morning to help, we'd certainly appreciate it!



Order your poinsettia plants today!

We are now accepting donations to help purchase Christmas poinsettias that will be used to adorn the altar area for Christmas. Since our flower coordinator, Nancy Salo, has to order a set number of poinsettias anyway to fill the tree stands, monetary donations of any amount are welcome. You can make your donation in honor, or in memory, of a loved one, or just to help beautify the church

Poinsettia order forms can be found as an insert in each Sunday's bulletin. Please complete the form, place it in a pink flower envelope (found in the pew racks), write "Poinsettias" on the front, and place it in the offering plate no later than December 13. The names of those honored or remembered will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletins. We ask that all plants be left in the sanctuary through the holidays, after which time you may take a plant or two home with you, if you desire.



Please attend the upcoming Semi-Annual Voters' Meeting

All members of St. Mark's ages 18+ are encouraged to attend our upcoming Semi-Annual Voters' Meeting on Sunday, December 6, in the sanctuary directly following the late service. Items on the Agenda will include voting on the Election Slate, 2021 Budget, an update on the split and sale of the two back lots, and various board and financial reports. As always, for safety's sake, attendees are asked to space themselves out in the pews and wear face masks.



We are now accepting Lutheran Witness subscriptions

It's that time of year again when we are now accepting subscriptions to *The Lutheran Witness* (LW) magazine, the official periodical of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The LW is published 11 times per year and it provides laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, fosters personal growth in faith, and helps interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective. Each issue of LW includes the *Michigan in Touch* supplement from our Michigan District LCMS offices in Ann Arbor.

The subscription year runs from March 2021 through February 2022. Yearly subscriptions are \$11.60 each when ordered through St. Mark's. If you'd like to subscribe, please place your check, made payable to St. Mark's Lutheran Church, into a pink flower envelope (found in the pew racks), write "LW Subscription" on the front of the envelope, and place it into our offering plate no later than Sunday, December 6. You will then receive your first copy of LW in February some time.



IN OUR
Thoughts and Prayers



MORE URGENT PRAYER'S:

Clarence Arnold—is having health and memory issues.
Butch Fitzgerald—is having multiple health issues.
Barbara Jewell—is recovering from back surgery.
Mac McConnell—needs extra prayers.
Jim O'Brien—awaiting test results.
Kay Reynolds—Hospice has been called in.
Marlene Steck—needs extra prayers for memory issues.
Marilyn Turner—needs extra prayers.
Mandy Vergin—prayers for a safe pregnancy/healthy baby.
Lynne Welty—is having health issues.
Larry Whitehead—needs extra prayers for medical issues.
Sharon Williams—continues to battle cancer.
Barb Allen's friend, **Teri Aldini**—is having financial issues.
Joan Freeman's brother, **Ernie Sampson**—is having multiple health problems.
Barbara Jewell's friend, **Patricia**—is receiving rehab.
Barbara Jewell's niece, **Denise**—will be undergoing a biopsy for abnormal test result.
Barbara Jewell's nephew-in-law, **Carl Fieler**—is having heart problems.
Debbie LoCascio's cousin, **Cheryl Tippett**—is battling cancer.
Debbie LoCascio's cousin, **Cheryl Hale**—is receiving chemotherapy & radiation and struggling.
Debbie LoCascio's father, **Bob Tippett**—has memory issues.
Mary Ann Lockwood's friend, **Sharon Richards**—is battling cancer.
Mary Ann Lockwood's sister, **Sandra Kempisty**—is having health issues.
The Lockwood children's (Anna, Christian, Michael) grandfather, **Milton Javery**—is battling cancer.
Scott Miller's dad, **John Miller**—is having heart issues.
Cindy Parks' friend, **Linda**—is battling breast cancer
Cindy Park's mom, **Rose Mielke**—has health issues.
Jean Swainson's friend's son, **Connor Donahue**—was hit by a car; is in an intensive inpatient rehab center.
Carolynn Taylor's grandson's wife, **Stephanie Payton**—is battling breast cancer.
Mike & Kyle Tolman's grandpa, **Dave Scroggie**—Alzheimer's is worsening; has Stage 3 kidney disease.
Mandy Vergin's father, **Bruce Ketcher**—has health issues.
Rob Wheeler's dad, **Rick Wheeler**—is recovering from a brain bleed.
The Whitehead's friends, **Jim, Holly & Jean Smith**—have all tested positive for COVID.
Lori Whitehead's friend, **Vickie Tucker**—is battling cancer.
Lori Whitehead's great niece, **Morgan Duggin**—needs extra prayers.
Lori Whitehead's sister, **Linda Head**—has health issues.
Sharon Williams' friend, **Carol York**—is very ill; praying that she'll come to faith in Christ.

(continued next column)

Sharon Williams' granddaughter, **Erika Williams**—needs extra prayers for guidance.
Sharon Williams' great-grandson, **Emmitt Reynolds**—diagnosed with Autism.
Sharon Williams' son, **Jeffrey Williams & his family**—several of them have tested positive for COVID.

MILITARY PRAYERS FOR:

Scott Schwiesow—he has been deployed to the Middle East

ONGOING PRAYERS:

Joan Freeman—needs prayers for health and family issues
John Freeman—needs prayers for health issues
Cathy Fitzgerald's niece, Kim Trombley—recovering from a car accident
Cathy Fitzgerald's sister, Charlotte—recovering from a stroke
Friend of St. Mark's, Thisvi Steiger—has medical problems
Barbara Jewell's sister, Bunny—recovering from surgery
Barbara Jewell's sister-in-law, Phyllis Tharp—has lung cancer
Barbara Jewell's niece's son, Tim Brydges—has health issues
Barbara Jewell's niece's friend, John—his health is poor
Barbara Jewell's neighbor's grandson—confined to home
Barbara Jewell's neighbor, Ed Perez—having health issues
Barbara Jewell's friend, Pam Perez—is having medical issues
Julie Kosmalski—her cancer is in remission
Angela Peters' ex father-in-law, Karl Peters—has health issues
Debbie LoCascio's cousin, Bob Tanis—has health issues
Debbie LoCascio's friend's neighbor, Marilyn—health is failing; praying that she'll come to faith before it's too late.
Mary Ann Lockwood's cousin's kids—Abigail and Amelia List—are ill
Cindy Parks' sister, Jeane Schaefer—awaiting back surgery
Cindy Park's brother, Jerry Mielke—is having medical problems
The Salo's daughter-in-law, Joni—is recovering from a stroke; receiving therapy
Mike & Kyle Tolman's grandma, Margaret Scroggie—needs extra prayers
Dorothy Vermeersch's cousin, Gloria Maire—has medical issues
Larry Whitehead's daughter, Tracy Whitehead—needs prayers for wisdom and guidance
Sharon Williams' daughter-in-law's nephew's fiancé, Rachel—cancer is in remission
Sharon Williams' daughter-in-law, Pam Williams—has health issues



December Birthdays

- 2 Carolyn Achimov
- 6 Kathy Benson
- 7 Brianna Krus
- 8 Jaxson Reynolds
- 10 Cindy Turner
- 15 Sarah Zienert
- 20 Juanita Reardon
- 22 Brian Krus
- 27 Clayton Benson, Phoenix Benson

Special Fund Donations

We thank those listed below who made special donations in October:

- Memorials:** Diane Burnett (in memory of Frank Salo)
- Remodeling - Sanctuary:** Nancy McInnis
- Trunk-or-Treat Event:** Lynn Thomas



We celebrate the baptism of two children

In the past month, Pastor Vergin baptized two young children here at St. Mark's--Elijah Lee Williams, son of Jacob & Bethany Williams, on October 25, and Lianna Marie Tomsa on November 8, daughter of Bernie & Elena Tomsa.

We welcome Elijah and Lianna into our family of faith, and rejoice with their families that the Lord is working faith in their tiny hearts, even at this young age!



December Anniversaries

- 1 Clarence & Gail Arnold 41st
- 28 Dean & Sherry Hyrkas 56th
- 31 Brian & Sarah Dwyer 10th



Transferred out:

Scott & Melanie Schwiesow
to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV on 11/1/20



Please remember these folks in your prayers

Those shown below have lost loved ones this past month. Please keep them and their families in your prayers.

- ✠ The Breen family as Trent Johnson's good friend, Colin Breen, passed away on 10/27.
- ✠ The Eastman family as Barbara Jewell's niece's best friend's husband, Chuck Eastman, passed away in early November.

Pastor's Page

(Continued from Page 3)

us. It might feel like God Himself has abandoned us. But Jesus reminds us here that this couldn't be further from the truth. He is with us always, at every moment, for all time.

Therefore, in the face of every threat, we can walk confidently. We never need to despair. For the Lord who reigns over everything, the Lord who died and rose again for our salvation, is by our side. No matter how long any difficulty drags on, this will never change. He is with us to the end of the age.

So, my friends, even as we see this world turning against us, don't be discouraged. Don't despair. Indeed, we will have to bear the cross, each in our own way. But even as we do, remember your calling. And remember your Lord. He has been given authority over all things. And He is with you. So stand strong. Do the work that God's given you to do. And all the while, await eagerly His salvation, when He will at last "deliver the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24).



December's special decade birthday wish

We wish the Lord's richest blessings upon Cindy Turner as she celebrates a special "decade" birthday on the 10th of this month! As always, we can't tell you which decade, but we know all of you will join us in praying that our Lord will continue to bless her with faith, peace and happiness throughout this next year.



Church Council Minutes - Summarized November 17, 2020

Attendees: Pastor Vergin, Tom LoCascio, John Reardon, Debbie LoCascio, Mandy Vergin, Karen Kaufman, Debbie Sidelinker, John Sidelinker, Darryl Swainson and Nancy McInnis

Call to Order at 7:30 p.m. followed by Opening Prayer and Devotion (Matthew 28:16-20) by Pastor.

Agenda was approved without additions, and the Previous Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Vice President's Report per John - Things in the political arena aren't looking so great for Christians right now, and our tax exempt status could be in jeopardy someday down the road.

Pastor's Report per Pastor

- Review of COVID plans in regard to future church meetings. Per Council, continue meeting in the basement with 6' spacing between people.
- Thanksgiving Eve Service - Wed., Nov. 25 @ 7 p.m.
- Advent Midweek Services start on Dec. 2 @ 7 p.m.
- Will be decorating the church on Sat., Dec. 5 @ 10 a.m.
- We need to upgrade our speakers and stands for the sanctuary sound system. Can we take an additional \$800 from the Thrivent Fund for this? Per Council, yes.
- Christmas Eve services will be at 4 & 6 p.m.

BOARD REPORTS

Elders per Darryl

- Working with Pastor re: service times on Christmas Eve
- Working on the usher and elder schedules for Dec.

Family & Youth per Mandy

- Plan to meet Sun., Nov. 22 after the late service to plan events for 2021
- Trunk-or-Treat event went well! We had 200-300 kids drive through the parking lot for goodies!

Gospel Outreach per Pastor for Sharon Williams - Due to COVID, not sure if the Christmas Caroling can take place this year.

Human Care per Karen Kaufman - The Adopt-A-Family program has been changed this year due to the virus. We will be accepting gift cards of \$25 from Meijer, Walmart or Target instead. A drop box is located at the rear of the sanctuary for these. Please turn them in by Dec. 13.

Properties by John Sidelinker - Still making phone calls to get regularly-scheduled maintenance items completed.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Treasurer's Report distributed by Debbie L. for Kari.

Financial Secretary's, Parish Reports & December's Church Calendar distributed by Debbie L. Per Debbie L., she is expecting the PPP Loan Forgiveness instructions to arrive soon.

Update on the sale of the two back lots per Debbie L. - the splits were approved by the West Bloomfield Planning Department and the Assessor's Office. The latter sent the diagrams to Oakland County to be recorded so that the two new lots could be assigned Parcel ID numbers. In the meantime, Debbie L. met with Val McFarland, our realtor, and completed the paperwork to have the lots listed for sale.

Reviewed the 2021 Election Slate that will now be submitted to the voters on Dec. 6.

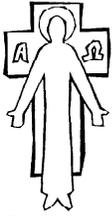
2021 Budget per Debbie L. - Reviewed and discussed budget draft including any possible salary increases. Council unanimously accepted the budget draft that will now be submitted to the voters for approval on Dec. 6.

Next Meeting: Voters' Meeting on Dec. 6. There won't be a Council Meeting in December.

Adjourned at 9:23 p.m.; closed with the Lord's Prayer

(Continued next column)

St. Mark's Lutheran Church



7979 Commerce Road
West Bloomfield, MI 48324

Phone: (248) 363-0741
Fax: (866) 649-6870
Email: info@stmarkwb.org
Website: www.stmarkwb.org

Address Service Requested

For the latest church news, visit our website

What types of information can you find
on St. Mark's website (www.stmarwb.org)?

- Monthly church calendars
- Sunday bulletins
- Weekly announcements
- Monthly newsletters
- About St. Mark's
- Event Registration Forms
- Those on Duty (scheduled to help out at church)

...and more! Check it out for all of your worship/
church needs!



The two lots along Bywater Avenue are now up for sale

During the month of November, St. Mark's received lot split approval by both the West Bloomfield Planning Department and the Assessor's Office. The Assessor's Office then sent our documents to Oakland County where the lots were assigned new parcel ID numbers. Next, our realtor had aerial photos taken of the lots, and the lots were then listed for sale on the MLS (real estate) site on Monday, November 23. We are now in the process of receiving offers on both lots.

Stay tuned for additional information in next month's newsletter as we move closer and closer to being able to have a brand new parking lot installed in the spring!

December 2020

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Sunday Divine Service 8:30 & 10 a.m.

Wednesday Adult Bible Class 7 p.m. (starting January)

Sunday School (Sept. - May) 10:45 a.m. (On Hold)

Men's Bible Study/Breakfast - One Saturday per mo. 9 a.m.

For live, up-to-date versions of ANY St. Mark's calendar, visit our website at:
www.stmarkwb.org

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Pastor out of office in p.m. 7:30pm - Council Mtg.	2 7pm Midweek Svc.	3	4	5 9am Men's Bible Study at St. Mark's 10am Decorate the Church
6 2nd Sunday in Advent Elder on Duty: Tom LoCascio 8:30 & 10am Divine Service 11am Voters' Meeting	7 Pastor's Day Off	8 Pastor out of office in p.m. 7pm - Bd. Of Elders Mtg.	9 7pm Midweek Svc.	10	11	12
13 3rd Sunday in Advent Elder on Duty: Darryl Swainson 8:30 & 10am Divine Service	14 Pastor's Day Off	15 Pastor out of office in p.m.	16 7pm Midweek Svc.	17	18 DEADLINE TO SUBMIT NEWSLETTER ARTICLES	19
20 4th Sunday in Advent Elder on Duty: Tom LoCascio 8:30 & 10am Divine Service	21 Pastor's Day Off	22 Pastor out of office in p.m.	23 DISTRIBUTE NEWSLTR.	24 Christmas Eve Church Office closing at 3pm 4pm Worship Service 6pm Worship Service	25 Christmas Day 10am Divine Service Elder on Duty: Tom LoCascio Church office closed	26
27 Elder on Duty: Darryl Swainson 8:30 & 10am Divine Service	28 Pastor's Day Off Sec'y Debbie Off Church Office closed	29	30	31 New Year's Eve Church Office closing at 3pm		

ALTAR GUILD: Sharon Williams & Julie Kosmalski
COUNTERS: Jennie & Karen Kaufman

ACOLYTES (either svc):	GREETERS (either svc):	USHERS: 8:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	VIDEO TECHS (either svc.)
6 Jay Anderson	6 Sharon Williams	6 Tom K. John R.	6 John Sidelinker
13 TBD	13 Mary Lockwood	13 John S. Mel M.	13 Debbie Sidelinker
20 TBD	20 Sue I./Judy S.	20 Tom K. Matt M.	20 Kim Olsen
27 TBD	27 Carolynn Taylor	24 TBD 25 Darryl	24 John S. 25 Debbie S.
		27 John R. Mel M.	29 Kim Olsen