



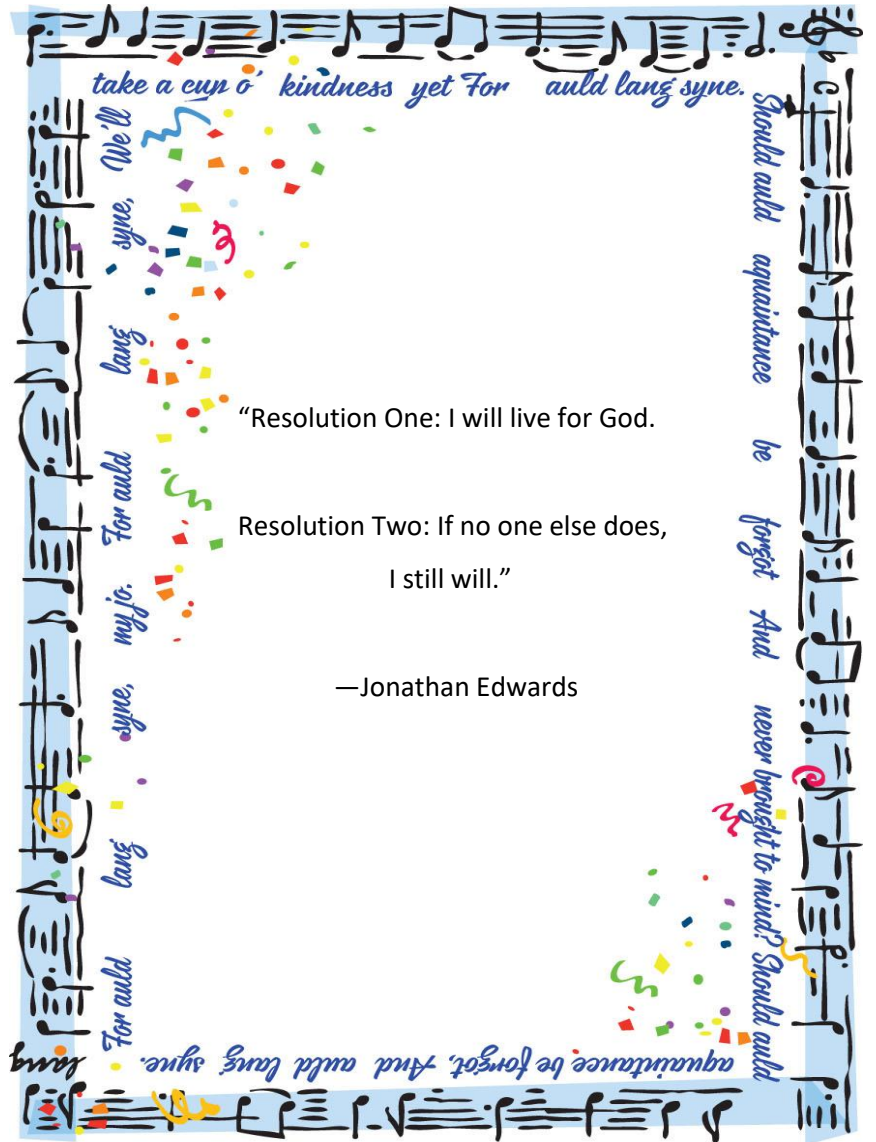
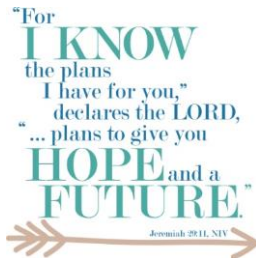
The Light

St. Mark Lutheran Church



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VISION STATEMENT

St. Mark Lutheran Church glorifies God and makes disciples by making caring connections with the people of our community.



Directed by the LORD

*A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.
Proverbs 16: 9 (NKJV)*

The events of 2020 were a rather stark reminder that we have little control over our lives. We plan, strategize, organize, and set goals, only to have those plans and strategies upended by circumstances we did not foresee. This happened to us as a church and it happened in our lives as individuals and families. Very few things were unaffected. Celebrations were drastically altered or cancelled; moments of crisis were severely complicated. As a new year dawns, we find ourselves in a similar mode, and there may be a hesitancy to make firm plans of any kind, because we have experienced how quickly things can change.

However, looking back, we can take stock of the many new things that we are doing now that we were not doing just a year ago. It has been said that "Today's innovation is tomorrow's tradition," and I have found that to be true in many respects. For example, our church has vastly expanded our online outreach since last March. Operation Christmas Child also filled a vital space in the servant's heart of St. Mark, and these are things that I am certain will continue to be part of our congregational life moving forward. We did not so much *plan* to do these things as we were *led* to do these things in reaction to the needs that presented themselves. We responded to situations we did not foresee by using the gifts God has given us, empowered by the Good News of Jesus and a Spirit-led desire to keep making caring connections with our community.

We have lived in the truth of the verse that appears at the top of the page. God permits us to live in a dynamic balance. He does not tell us, "Do not make any plans." He wants us to approach life in a thoughtful way. But we make plans with the caveat, "Not my will, but Yours be done." And when His will is different than ours, we adjust accordingly, trusting that He has a good reason.

Therefore, we would not say, "My choices are the only ones that matter, and God is not involved." Nor would we say, "My choices do not matter—God has everything already planned out." Instead, it is a "both/and." We would say, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." What an honor! God lets us think and act freely. What comfort! God is always guiding our steps in the best possible direction.

-- *Pastor Matzke*

NEWS AND NOTES ABOUT THE CONGREGATION (AND BEYOND!)

From the Newsletter Editor



Oops! In last month's issue of *The Light*, I reminded all of you that we were keeping a running total of how many years of marriage we were celebrating at St. Mark, and directed you to the "Celebrations" column to see the final totals. Then I forgot to put in the totals! So, here they are: years of marriage for December – 242; total years for 2020 (drum roll, please) – 4001! Blessings abounding!

If you have any news that you would like to share with your St. Mark family, be sure to drop the information into the newsletter box in the church office by the third Sunday of the month, or email me at churchelf@sbcglobal.net by the third Sunday of the month.

You have the option of receiving the newsletter via email. Just send a quick note saying "Please send the email version of the newsletter to (insert your name here) at (insert your email address here)" to newsletter@stmark.org and you'll be on your way to receiving the electronic version.

-- the church elf



- Sally Ahrens
- Rev. Randy Blankschaen and family
- Matthew Boddy, son of Bob and Connie Boddy
- Boise Bouton School in Haiti
- Building Hope in the City
- Joshua Burke, studying at Bowling Green
- Donna Cartwright, mother of Diana Monaghan
- Beth Christopherson
- Dan Cicchella
- Ardis Danicic
- Carol Deau
- Ruthann Dular
- Dale and Bobi Fellinger
- Gayle Gifford
- Grace School in Haiti
- Gerry Grubec
- Ted Holt
- Matt Huston, son of Rick and Cathy Huston
- Nancy Johnson
- Betty Judkins
- Gloria Leagan
- Love and Hope Children's Home in El Salvador
- Ron Meister
- Ministry in Mission

- Stan Moczulski
- John Monaghan
- Barb Nicholson
- Jim and Lorraine Podojil
- Beth Reksten
- Steppin Out Missions
- Ed Stone
- Trinity Lutheran, Ohio City
- Capt. Matt Webb, continuing his residency in neurosurgery
- WomenSafe
- Grace Wright, studying at Ohio State



We extend our love, prayers and sympathy to: **Byron Whitney** and the entire Whitney family on the death of his wife, **Jean**, on November 28; the family of **Shirley Gleske**, who died on December 1; the family and friends of **Dorothy Wiegand**, who died on December 2; **Jodi and Todd Chambers**, on the death of Jodi's father, Jack Allen Jones; **Connie Boddy** and her family on the death of her brother, Jim Magovac.



Pastor, Sue, and Andy would like to thank you for the thoughtful cards and gifts during the Christmas season. Your year-round love and support mean so much to us. And thank you for your involvement in the lovely music this on December 13. It was a delightful bit of normal.



Feed the Hungry

A New Year has begun. We have new opportunities to serve our Lord by serving others. Please help hungry families by donating to the food pantry at Trinity Lutheran Church. We collect canned soups, stews, pastas, canned tuna, canned and/or dried beans, canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, jelly, macaroni and cheese, and rice. Thank you for your generosity.

-- Chris Meister

Ways to Support St. Mark

Please remember that just because the building is closed, ministry is still happening, and we need your support. You can donate online (acionlinegiving.com/4549), text a donation (text the amount to 440-709-8049), or mail your check to the church office (11900 Chillicothe Road, Chesterland 44026).

Do you shop at GFS (Gordon's Food Service)? If so, you can support St. Mark by doing what you are already doing! When you are checking out at GFS, please let them know that you are supporting St. Mark Lutheran in Chesterland and we will get credit for your shopping trip, which will save us money on our next trip there.

You can also support St. Mark by shopping at Amazon, Just go to smile.amazon.com and choose Saint Mark Lutheran Church (Chesterland, OH) and then shop – it's that simple!

And you can support our preschool by placing an Avon order with Beth Christopherson (440-729-4506 or churchelf@sbcglobal.net), who will donate 10% of the price of your order to the preschool.



FYI – For Your Information

One of the ways St. Mark disseminates information is through FYI emails. If you are not receiving these

informational emails, send a message to for_your_info@stmarkchester.org asking to be placed on the FYI email list.



A Note about Security

Anytime you leave our building, please be sure that the doors are locked, the lights are turned off, and the automatic doors are turned off. We appreciate your help ensuring that our building stays safe.

Also, **DO NOT PROP THE AUTOMATIC DOORS OPEN.** We have had to call in the repair man twice because of the motor burning out when the doors were propped open.

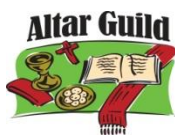


From the Library Committee

Check out the new card rack located on the table just inside Fellowship Hall. There are cards for all occasions as well as calendars and other small items. You can pay for them right there in our "St. Mark Library Cardboard Church" located next to the display.



GROUP HAPPENINGS



The new altar flower chart for 2021 is up and ready for sign-ups. When you add your name to the chart remember to also fill out an information slip and return it to the church office desk. The cost of the flowers will remain at \$25.00.



Thank you to all that donated the gift cards for the Geauga County Seniors! We sent \$955.00 worth of gift cards! We know they are needed and much appreciated. *"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."* (Matthew 6:2-4).



Elders

After experiencing 2 major power outages, the Elders wanted to let the congregation know that we are offering the use of our church as a Safe Haven for those who lose power, heat and electricity. We urge you to call to be sure the church has power and heat before coming to the church; you are welcome here to warm up, and have a hot cup of coffee or tea. A few members in the congregation are willing to lend you a generator, so if you need one, let us know so we can get one hooked up for you. Of course, we require masks, social distancing, and hand sanitizer or hand washing.

The Elders would like to give a shout out of thanks to the Women's League and all those who participated in Operation Christmas Child (OCC). When the pandemic

forced Women's League to close down the Christmas Boutique, it would have been easy to just wait until next year. Instead they looked for another project and found the Franklin Graham's Samaritan Purse, Operation Christmas Child, (a project of Samaritan's Purse, headed by Franklin Graham), becoming the lead congregation for this project in our area. It became an outreach as we worked with other Christian brothers and sisters outside of our congregation, serving those who are the least of us in this world: *"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."* (Matthew 25:40). We look forward to doing this again next year and pray that this continues to grow as we serve the Lord and his children. Soli Deo Gloria!

Preschool

Preschool has closed due to the purple status of surrounding counties. Virginia and Donna, the teachers, are preparing and dropping off learning packets to their families so that the children can continue to maintain the skills that they have developed thus far. This will continue until in-class resumes on Tuesday, January 19, providing there are no more spikes in COVID. Please continue to keep our preschool in your prayers.

Stewardship

The blood drive on December 13 collected 39 units of blood on goal of 28. Thank you to donors and volunteers! Save the date for next blood drive at St. Mark, Thursday, April 24, 2:00-7:00 p.m.



Lutheran Women's Missionary League



Renewed Strength as we begin a new year. We pray that our strength will be renewed to continue the race to Lexington, Kentucky, and the 2021 LWML Convention. A marathon can dehydrate us and make us thirsty and hungry. We grow weary. The Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Sacraments, prayer, hearing and studying God's Word, all give us that renewed strength to continue the race toward the goal of bringing all plans to completion. We pray for God's blessings on this convention; that the Lord supplies volunteers from the Host Convention Districts, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, to serve in one of the 500 plus positions available. Go to the LWML Indiana District website, www.lwmlindiana.org to find the Call for Workers! Volunteer Application Form and share the form with others. Workers are needed in all positions. Check the positions where you want to serve

by marking them first choice, second choice, etc. Download the form and send or email to Penny Letterman at the address on the form as soon as possible. By volunteering at least eight hours, you will receive a generous discount on your registration fee. You will receive a special registration form along with the discount coupon in a Worker's Packet. Have you ordered your LWML Convention Logo Polo Shirt? Download the order form at www.lwmlindiana.org and order before the March 1, 2021, deadline. See the winter issue of the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* for convention information. **DO** select a hotel from the options in the *Quarterly*.

Stamps for Missions

Thanks to all who have been collecting used postage stamps for LWML. They are sent to a gentleman in Fort Wayne who sells them to overseas stamp collectors and returns the profits to our mite gathering.

A reminder of the guidelines:

- U.S. commemoratives (defined as honoring a person, place or event)
- Foreign stamps
- Stamps ON postcards

And some guidelines that haven't changed:

- ¼ inch of paper around the stamp
- Perforations on edges of stamps must be intact
- Stamps must be cancelled
- No stamps that have been torn, creased, or taped

See the new flyer on the board next to the Women's League table for complete details.

-- Beth Christopherson



The Secret Sisters Prayer Ministry is open to all the ladies of St. Mark. Throughout the year you pray for your "sister" and encourage her through anonymous cards and notes. The 2021 Secret Sister forms are in a folder on the Women's League table outside of Fellowship Hall. If you would like to participate in the Secret Sister Prayer Ministry for 2021, please complete a form and return it to the folder. Your 2021 Secret Sister will be assigned by the end of January. If you have any questions regarding this ministry, please contact **Chris Meister** (440-729-3669).



Are you experiencing a "winter" in your life? In addition to the cold weather outside, many people experience "winters" in their personal lives. A recent loss through death, divorce or relocation may leave them feeling lonely. A hospitalization, cancer diagnosis or ongoing medical problems may leave them feeling isolated. The loss of a job, the fear of layoffs, or a financial setback can devastate one's self-esteem. Family and personal struggles may leave them with nowhere to turn for support.

If you are going through a difficult time, our Stephen Ministers can bring God's warm love back into your life. They provide **confidential**, one-to-one Christian care. They will meet with you privately on a weekly basis to listen, support, and encourage you, to pray with and for you, and to walk with you for the duration of your crisis. To find out more about Stephen Ministry, or to receive a Stephen Minister's care, contact **Sue Matzke, Ron Croucher or Pastor Matzke**. Our Stephen Ministers are ready to care for you!



Those Serving Us in January

[Editor's note: Due to the on-going uncertainty caused by the coronavirus, volunteers will be scheduled on a week-to-week basis. The church secretary will be arranging volunteers. If you would be able to help, please contact her at the church office.]

Celebrations



JANUARY Birthdays

- 1 Andrew Csepi
David Toth II
- 3 Kimberly Clough
Nancy Johnson
Jessa Wilson
- 5 Kelly Bidlack
David Toth
- 8 Rebecca Wright
- 9 Charlette Douglas
- 10 Christopher Webb
- 11 Margot Fretz
- 14 Holly Myers
Jim Burke
- 16 Bryan DesGravise
Kimberly Palivec
Ruth Ziehm
- 19 Jack Dvorak
Lauren Dvorak
Keenan Morgan
Mort Myers
Joseph Pavilonis
Michael Woodard
- 22 Donna Toth
Tim Burke
- 23 Shari Large
Shawn Ziccarelli
- 24 Lisa Feigle
Laurence Keil
Gary Paoletto
Chris Powell
- 26 Lorraine Podojil
Brett Zeitz
- 27 Stephanie Hyde
Dennis Lee
Deborah Turk
- 28 Thomas Zeitz
- 31 Melitta Syperko



JANUARY Baptisms

- 2 Nicole Pavilonis
- 7 Bob Boddy
Robyn Paterniti
- 8 Taylor Atwara
- 9 Elfrieda Krause
- 10 Hildred Tornberg
- 11 Dwight Miller
- 14 Camden Hedrick
- 15 Leah Spisak
- 17 George Fretz
- 18 Ainsleigh Monaghan
Ashley Monaghan
- 20 Polly Larrick
Alec Wright
- 22 Paityn Brenkus
- 27 David Toth
- 29 Christina Repas
- 30 Caitlin Shulman
- 31 Melitta Syperko



JANUARY Anniversaries

- Mark and Wendy Zimmerman
January 5, 1985
- Michael and Frances Atwara
January 8, 2000
- Mark and Amanda Hedrick
January 13, 2001
- Tom and Alisha Allen
January 14, 1987
- John and Diana Monaghan
January 15, 1988
- Nick and Elizabeth Wassel
January 17, 2016
- Steve and Ellie Mercsak
January 18, 1992

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 9:30am - Longer Look at 10am - Contemporary	28 9:30am - Devotions online 6pm - Stewardship Board 7pm - Education Board	29 9:30am - Prayer Group	30 9:30am - Children's Chapel	31 9:30am - Devotions online	1 7:30pm - @ the Cross	2
3 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 10am - Blended Service	4 9:30am - Devotions online 7pm - Elder Meeting	5 9:30am - Prayer Group 11am - Bible Study	6 9:30am - Children's Chapel 6pm - Confirmation Class 6pm - Youth Group	7 9:30am - Devotions online	8 7:30pm - @ the Cross	9
10 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 10am - Contemporary 11:30am - Council Meeting 3pm - Women's League	11 9:30am - Devotions online	12 9:30am - Prayer Group 11am - Bible Study	13 9:30am - Children's Chapel 6pm - Confirmation Class 6pm - Youth Group	14 9:30am - Devotions online	15 7:30pm - @ the Cross	16
17 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 10am - Blended Service 5pm - Newsletter Due	18 9:30am - Devotions online	19 9:30am - Prayer Group 11am - Bible Study	20 9:30am - Children's Chapel 6pm - Confirmation Class 6pm - Youth Group	21 9:30am - Devotions online	22 7:30pm - @ the Cross	23
24 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 10am - Contemporary	25 9:30am - Devotions online 6pm - Stewardship Board 7pm - Education Board	26 9:30am - Prayer Group 11am - Bible Study	27 9:30am - Children's Chapel 11am - Feed the Flock 6pm - Confirmation Class 6pm - Youth Group	28 9:30am - Devotions online	29 7:30pm - @ the Cross	30
31 8:15am - Traditional 9am - Sunday School 10am - Blended Service	1 9:30am - Devotions online 7pm - Elder Meeting	2 9:30am - Prayer Group 11am - Bible Study	3 9:30am - Children's Chapel 6pm - Confirmation Class 6pm - Youth Group	4 9:30am - Devotions online	5 7:30pm - @ the Cross	6