

Newsletter December, 2025

"Wait for the Lord, whose day is near. Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart." ELW #262

Advent is here and the time of waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of our Savior has also arrived. But what really happens during this season of Advent? Are we waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of the Christ child or are we caught up in the hustle and bustle and commercialization of the season. As I write this, I'm starting to feel my blood pressure rise and my mind starts to race about how I'm going to get everything done! And you know what, I haven't even had my Thanksgiving dinner yet!

I wonder are we waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of Jesus or are we part of the crowds waiting, watching and preparing for the early opening of stores and the rush to get the best bargain or that perfect gift. Are we part of the hundreds and probably thousands of people who are waiting in lines watching for the best bargain and preparing how we will ship those packages, so they'll arrive at their destination on time? And then there is all the other stuff happening in our lives and in the world that may cause us to be focused on other things during this season of Advent. This season of waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of the Messiah.

I would like to suggest that as people of faith we consider doing something different and maybe even a little radical during this Advent season. What if we slowed down. What if we didn't buy into the hustle and bustle. Like I recently talked about during a Sunday morning worship. What if we took a "PAUSE" amid all the chaos. What if we took the time to reflect on what it means to wait and watch and prepare for the *Lord, whose day is near*. What would that feel like or look like if each of us actually took the time to "PAUSE." To slow down to wait, watch and prepare during this busy season. Might it give us time to reread the story of how an angel of God came to a young woman, Mary, and told her that she would be the mother of the Savior of the world. And then how the angel came to a carpenter, Joseph, to tell him not to be afraid to marry Mary. Maybe by taking a "PAUSE" we too, like Mary and Joseph, might be able to wait and watch and prepare for the birth of our Savior Jesus. Waiting, watching and preparing can be hard. It means slowing down! Maybe taking a deep breath. It means some things might not get done in the same way or maybe won't get done at all. But waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of our Savior is what this season is all about.

What do you think? Do you think that maybe doing something different and radical like taking a "PAUSE" this Advent season could be worth a try? Slowing down, taking that "PAUSE" may give us the time we need to wait, watch and prepare for the arrival of Jesus and it may give us time to reflect on what the arrival of God's Son **means** for us and for a hurting world.

Today, I would like to encourage all of us to use this Advent season, this time of waiting, watching and preparing for the birth of Jesus to take a "PAUSE" and reflect on the truly best gift ever given. The gift of our Savior Jesus Christ!

God's Peace and Blessings to all during this Advent and Christmas season. Pr. Janine

2025 Holiday worship schedule

Advent Sunday services-

Nov. 30th – 1 Advent Service 9:30

Dec. 7th – 2 Advent Service 9:30; 4:00

Dec. 14th – 3 Advent Service 9:30

Dec. 21st – 4 Advent Service 9:30; 4:00

Christmas Eve – Dec. 24th (Wed.) One service 7:30

Christmas Day – Dec. 25th (Thurs.) no worship

Epiphany – Jan. 2, 2026 – celebrate arrival of the Magi (Jan. 6)

Baptism of Our Lord – Jan. 11, 2026

Financial Report:

General Fund Summary for October

October Weekly Offerings \$14,839

October Expenses \$24,812

Income from January-October 2025

Income Received Including Supplementary Resources \$260,144

Amount Expected to Maintain Budget \$314,314.

The pledge commitment forms for 2026 are available in the lounge, the office and LIFE. Thank you so much to the people that have already submitted their forms. The Finance Committee has started working on the 2026 budget. Knowing the offerings that will be coming are a tremendous help as we plan for the mission and operation of St. Mark for 2026.

Currently Serving as Church Council Members:

Nancy Beaderstadt, President

Diane Fellman

Barb Ericksen

Beth Claeys, Vice President

Linda Ray

Tom Liebold

Robert Sherrod, Secretary

Julie Ginn

Mike Crews

Barb Jakubowski, Treasurer

Candy Nagel

Council Corner – The following was discussed at the November 20, 2025 meeting:

1. Finance has prepared a draft budget. Pledge forms from members are a vital part of that process. Please take a moment to complete your commitment form. The budget will be presented at the annual meeting on February 8th.
 2. We continue to monitor our Sunday 4pm service. No change is planned at this time, and Council will readdress the issue after the first of the year.
 3. The JOY Fellowship subject for December 9th will be an Advent program. All are invited – more information can be found in the lounge.
 4. Our Christmas Eve candlelight service will be held December 24th at 7:30pm. Please join us, and invite others, to this beautiful celebration of our Savior's birth.
 5. Bids are being taken as we look into replacing the flooring in the lounge.
 6. Pastor Janine will be meeting with the Property Committee in the near future. She is concerned about the "burn out" that some may be experiencing due to the constant maintenance issues that need to be addressed at St. Mark.
 7. The snow removal contract with ONEeighy has been signed for the coming snow season.
- Our next Council meeting is Thursday, December 18th at 6:30 p.m.
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Notes From the Organ Bench by Ross Jallo, Director of Music Ministry

Christmas marks the intersection of two observances: 1) one of the chief feasts of the Christian year, the observance of the birth of God's promised Messiah, and 2) the most important day in the calendar for the forces of consumerism -- the manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers who want you to buy things you don't need. I think that most of our stress at this time of year stems from the conflict between these two very different occasions.

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus sums it up pretty well: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." As you feel yourself being pulled in all sorts of directions this December, ask yourself: *Am I busy, overworked, stressed out, because I'm serving God, or because I'm serving money?* The answer is usually pretty clear.

Pastoral Needs When Pr. Janine is off:

Please be aware if any new or urgent pastoral needs (death, serious illness or accident, hospitalization, etc.) occur when Pastor is on vacation the first week in November, or off the first week of any other month, Beth Claeys, Volunteer Parish Nurse is to be notified. You may also contact Sue Geise, Administrative Assistant.

Thank you – from Maureen Currier: A huge thank you to those who stuck around after worship on Sunday to help with decorating for the Advent and Christmas season-many hands truly made light work!

Thank you – from Julie Ginn: It was a successful Angel Tree project to provide foster children with a much merrier Christmas thanks to the gifts that were donated by those in our congregation. Thank you so much for your kindness and support to the foster children in providing these gifts.

Thank you – for Prayer Shawl: Our Parish Nurse, Beth has presented a very pretty prayer shawl to me. To those who have this talent please know that I appreciate it so much. I miss Lisa. Walking through the shadow of death is hard. I pray she is in the hands of Jesus. Sincerely, Linda (Wescom)

Thank you – Hygiene for Holidays: A huge THANK YOU to all those who gave or assisted with the “Personal Care/Hygiene Support for the Holidays” project! Initial support was provided by a \$250 grant from Thrivent, with several individuals adding additional financial support, and many members from St. Mark donating personal care supplies. I estimate the value of the personal care support items purchased/donated exceeds \$1,000. I don’t have a final count of all donations, as they continue to come in, but the following totals represent the majority of what has been purchased or collected:

125 Shampoo or conditioner bottles, 145 bars of soap, 86 deodorant bars, 102 tubes toothpaste, 104 toothbrushes, 5 toothbrush protectors, 10 floss, 78 packages feminine hygiene products, 60 combs, 55 lip balm tubes, 200 hair ties, 12 nail clippers, Assorted items such as baby wipes, lotion, body wash, Kleenex, and Vaseline.

I am so thankful for the enthusiasm and dedication of all who have donated or helped with the logistics and organization of this project, including the St. Mark leadership and staff, the St. Mark Food Pantry volunteers, and those who have donated money or personal care items, and those who have donated money or personal care items. YOU ARE ALL ROCK STARS! The items will be distributed via the Food Panty (Tues. & Weds. 10am-1pm). Thank you again to all involved and wishing blessings to you this holiday season and always, Kathy Sparbel

Foot Clinic:

The next bi-monthly foot care clinic will be held on the morning of Monday, December 1st. It is by appointment only. Please contact Nancy Beaderstadt if you are interested in this or future foot clinic dates. There is a \$35 fee and bringing a towel is suggested.

Iglesia Camino de Emaus (Spanish speaking congregation) meets Sunday afternoons at 4:00pm where they share space in the St. Mark building. Pastor Pilar may be reached by e-mail at pastor@caminodeemaus.org for further information. For those who may be interested, Pr. Pilar's Spanish congregation on the Illinois side of the Quad Cities is inviting all to attend their 1:00pm worship service at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moline which will include the Day of the Dead or Dia de los Muertos. This is a lively and vibrant cultural celebration of life and a way to honor deceased loved ones, remembering them with joy and affection.

From the Parish Nurse, Beth Claeys:

The holidays are a wonderful time for family, friends, and celebrations. But winter can take a toll on your physical and mental health. I wanted to share some reminders to have a happy and healthy holiday season.

1. Eat Healthy. Eating well supports muscles and bones, boosts immunity, helps the digestive system and helps in weight management. Sweets and desserts can be tempting. Limit them to small portions.
2. Stay physically active. Cold weather can discourage you from keeping up with fitness routines. Choose indoor exercise if it's cold outside. You can walk at the gym or the mall. If you like group fitness classes, there are options at the Y and also at Casi.
3. Get enough sleep. Try to keep to a typical sleep schedule. Avoid or limit caffeine, alcohol and large meals before bed.
5. Stress Less. Prioritize what's important. Make time for family and friends. Carve out "me" time to do things you enjoy....watch a movie or read a book.
6. Keep germs away. Wash your hands. This is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness.
7. Spend time each day focusing on the reason for the season. With all the activity this time of year, we can get caught up in the busyness and lose sight of the great gift we were given at Christmas, Jesus.

Hospitals are no longer notifying churches when church members are admitted. If someone in your family is ill or in the hospital and you want the church to be aware, please call the church office.

JOY Fellowship – December 11th :

Joy Fellowship will be Thursday Dec 11th at 1:00pm in the lounge. Advent Program will be presented by Sister Bobbi of the Benet Retreat House. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Beth Claeys, Volunteer Parish Nurse.

Theology on Tap – December 2nd : The next “Theology on Tap” gathering will be on Tuesday, December 2nd at 6:00pm. The book that will be discussed is “Two From Galilee: The Story Of Mary And Joseph” by Marjorie Holmes. Amidst the noisy busy holiday season in the community, we will be utilizing our lounge space at the church building and also supporting our food pantry in this season of giving. Those attending are asked to make a donation of \$10 (\$5.00 for meal cost + \$5.00 toward group food pantry gift). A pasta meal with green salad, and bread will be provided. There will be beverages available, but you are free to bring your own specific favorite as well. All are welcome (regardless of whether you read/complete the book or not). If you plan to attend please utilize the sign-up sheet in the St. Mark lounge in order that appropriate group reservation can be made. Also if any unexpected changes would occur those signed up may be notified. This will be the only remaining gathering for 2025. We will resume again in 2026. Contact persons: Beth Claeys or Sue Geise.

Bunko – Thursday December 5th

New or experienced, all are welcome to this fellowship and game time. If you do not know how to play we will be glad to teach you. Snacks may be brought to share if you wish. Please sign-up in the lounge so that we may contact you in the event of weather changes. Questions: Contact Beth Claeys, Volunteer Parish Nurse.

Social Ministry- Habitat for Humanity News:

Because of the holidays, construction will be minimal so volunteers can have 4 day weekends to spend with family. That means that we will take December off as well and regroup in January and plan on providing a meal either the 24th or 31st for construction volunteers. Thanks to all who are involved in this ministry.

Grief Support Opportunity:

MercyOne Genesis has started a grief support group. It meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 1:00pm in the Genesis East in Conference Room A. The group is led by hospital chaplains and all are welcome.

Stewardship Committee: Ahhh, Autumn....

The time when folks break out their sweaters, their rakes, their footballs, caramel apples and all of their pumpkin spice accoutrements.

It's also the time when churchgoers start planning their giving for the upcoming year.

Many congregations send out commitment cards and letters, asking their congregations to pledge their giving amount for the upcoming year. Here at St. Mark pledge forms were included in LIFE in both October and November (and will be in December also).

Please remember, filling out and turning in these forms helps your church set their budget, plan activities, and contribute to our community among other things.

Thank you for your investment in YOUR St. Mark Lutheran Church.

Social Ministry-St. Mark Food Pantry October Report and Update:

- During the month of October there were 343 households/families comprised of 1032 individuals served by the St. Mark Food Pantry. This is another increase from the previous month. A total of 3,359 pounds of food was donated by businesses (including food rescue program) and individuals. October's purchase from River Bend Food Bank at a discount totalled \$1,055.27 (4,310 pounds).
- The food pantry hours were adjusted to 10:00 am – 1:00pm effective November 15th. This redistribution of volunteer time is better allowing us to have an adequate number of volunteers available during the busiest of the times we are open. There will be one set of 3 hour shifts instead of four sets of 2 hour shift.
- There are opportunities for persons to restock the large drop River Bend deliveries and pick up donated food out in the community as well. Several long time volunteers are no longer available so if you are interested and/or available please let Linda Ray, Pantry Coordinator, or the office know.
- Thank you to all who continue to donate food items, monetary gifts, and volunteer their time. All contributions to this ministry are greatly appreciated! The food pantry is only one of the ministries of our congregation, but it is a very functional one that uses us as tools/facilitators to share God's love and care with many people.

Advent Giving:

Advent is here and it is that time of year when we start focusing on giving gifts to the many people in our lives. Wondering if St. Mark is a part of that gift giving list? If not, then we encourage each of us to add St. Mark to that gift giving list. Over the next four weeks Advent Offering envelopes are available in the pew racks in the sanctuary. (To save the cost of postage, there will be no extra mailing of envelopes or folders to your home.) We ask that these envelopes be used to provide your Advent gift to the continued work and ministry of St. Mark Lutheran Church. Blessings on your Advent and Christmas season.

Annual Meeting for 2025:

Has been scheduled for Sunday, February 8th, 2026 following the worship service at approximately 10:30am in the sanctuary. We will need a quorum of members. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. Annual reports will be sent out in advance via email. You may request a printed copy from the church office.

Annual Report Materials: All reports and materials to be included in the 2025 annual report need to be submitted to the office prior to January 12th, 2026.

Preschool Notes: Our Preschool Christmas Program will be held on **December 18th at 6:30 PM**. We can't wait to celebrate the season with our families and showcase the wonderful work our little learners have been preparing!

We're Hiring!

We are currently looking for a **cook** to join our team. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact our office for more details. We'd love to find a caring, dedicated addition to our school community!

Location: St. Mark Preschool

Position Type: Part-time

About Us:

St. Mark Preschool is dedicated to creating a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment for young children. Nutritious meals are an essential part of our day, and we're seeking a caring, dependable Cook to join our team.

Position Summary:

The Preschool Cook is responsible for preparing and serving healthy meals and snacks for children ages 3-5 during the school year and during the summer we serve ages 3-10 while following food safety guidelines and all CACFP requirements. The ideal candidate is organized, knowledgeable about nutrition standards, and enjoys contributing to a positive school environment.

Key Responsibilities:

- Prepare and serve daily meals and snacks that meet CACFP meal pattern requirements
- Maintain accurate CACFP documentation, including menus, production records, and portion tracking
- Ensure all food handling and kitchen sanitation practices meet state guidelines
- Maintain kitchen cleanliness and oversee inventory and supply ordering
- Collaborate with administration on menu planning and compliance
- Supporting occasional school events requiring food preparation

Qualifications:

- **Experience with CACFP meal patterns and documentation strongly preferred**
- ServSafe Certification (or willingness to obtain)
- Strong organization, communication, and time-management skills
- Friendly, reliable, and child-centered attitude
- **Must pass a Background Check.**

Schedule

- Hours: 8:30-1:00
- We follow Davenport Community Schools Holiday breaks and weather closings

How to Apply:

Please send your resume and a brief cover letter to kboydstmarkpreschool@gmail.com with the subject line "Preschool Cook Application".



Christmas Decorating Sponsorship: It is a long-standing tradition for many to sponsor Christmas decorations for our sanctuary in memory or honor of someone. Payment of \$15 must be turned in (offering plate or office) no later than December 14th. Envelopes are available in the lounge, or you may simply send the payment and information to St. Mark Lutheran Church, 2363 W 3rd Street, Davenport, IA 52802 (Attention: Sue). If you send it or put it in the offering plate without a designated envelope, please be sure to include for whom it is in honor of, in appreciation of, or in memory as well as your name (and offering envelope # if you know it). Thank you. Any questions contact Sue in the office.

Special Meeting with Pastor: Sunday Dec. 7th after worship all are invited and encouraged to attend a **Special Property meeting** to be held in the conference room. A significant maintenance update will be shared and discussed. Please plan to be part of this conversation. Hope to see you there, Pr. Janine.

St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church

2363 West Third Street, Davenport, IA 52802

Phone: 563-322-5318

E-mail: stmark@stmarkcares.org or sgeise@stmarkcares.org

Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 9:30am to 2:30pm and Thursday 9:30am to 1:30pm.
(Monday by appointment only. Closed Fridays.)

Food Pantry Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 10:00am to 1:00pm
(Serving Iowa residents only)

(St. Mark is a member of the Southeastern Iowa Synod - ELCA)

Thank You For Your Commitment!

It is time to start planning for 2026. Please consider your commitment to the future of St. Mark.

You may use this pledge form to express your financial support for 2026. Printed forms are available in the lounge and church office if needed. Also, consider your support by giving your time and talents. Your completed form can be returned to the church office.

Giving Pledge to St. Mark for 2026



Name(s) (print please: _____)

Telephone _____ (cell or landline ?)

Email _____

Address _____

My/Our estimate of giving to St. Mark for 2025 is:

\$ _____ ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ As follows: _____

My/Our planned giving of Time/Talents is:

Envelopes will be sent to you throughout the year unless the office is otherwise notified.
We are unable to make an estimate of giving for 2026...for the following reason (optional)
