



December 2023

Life

A Publication of St. Mark Evangelical

The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new church year in which we reflect anew on the meaning of the incarnation, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus for us. In the season of Advent, we focus on the threefold coming of Jesus Christ to the world in the flesh, in the Word and the Sacraments, and in glory. At this time each year we in the church should ask ourselves the same question that Martin Luther asked as he pondered the rich meaning of the Christmas story, “Why would the Lord of all the universe care enough about us mortals to take our flesh and share our woes?”

We learned from our teachers in grade school that there is no such thing as a bad question. While this may be true, it is also true that some questions serve a greater purpose than others. By asking ourselves, during the season of Advent, why God would care enough about us mortals to take our flesh and share our woes, two important purposes are being served.

First, the connection between the manger and cross are brought into closer companionship. Luther would often say that the manger and the cross are made of the same wood. That is to say that they are both made by wood stained with the blood of the sin and disobedience of God’s creatures. They are also stained with the sweat and tears of our personal God who cares about his entire creation. His care is shown in his action to send his Son, Jesus, and close the gap of distance and separation between him and creatures that have forgotten to hear, listen, and obey the good and holy Word of their heavenly Father.

The second purpose that is served by asking the question, “Why would the Lord of all the universe care enough about us mortals to take our flesh and share our woes?” is that it leads us to consider all the ways in which our God comes to us. Since the season of Advent occurs during the four weeks prior to Christmas Day, it can be easy for us to focus our eyes only on the baby Jesus cradled in the manger. But if we pull back the curtains a little farther, we can bring into view all the ways that God comes to us.

Our God splits the heavens and comes down not just during the event that we celebrate one month from now on Christmas morning. The purpose of the season of Advent is not so that the church can transport itself back two thousand years ago and pretend to be first-century Jews who are waiting for their Messiah to be born. We live in the twenty-first century. So let us believe more firmly the truth that God has already come to us, is continuing to come to us, and will come back to us.

We certainly take time within our congregation and within our families to celebrate God’s coming to us on Christmas morning. However, at the same time, we embrace the fact that our God who is beyond time and space comes down to us in time and space every Sunday morning to deliver the fruit of his Son’s crucifixion and resurrection over two thousand years ago through his Word and Sacraments. He comes to us through his instruments: the water and the Word of God, the bread and the wine, the mouth of the pastor who forgives our sins, and the Bible which contains all of God’s promises in Christ. In these ways we receive, Immanuel, “God with us,” now! As we live in a world where the evidence of the sin, suffering, and brokenness of creation is all too evident, we receive God’s peace on earth as he comes to us “hidden” in the Word and Sacraments. We also embrace his promise of Christ to restore his broken creation and to completely “reveal” his victory over suffering and death in his coming again to us in glory, just as he said.

The truth that God cares enough for us mortals to take on our flesh and share our woes is shown to us in the wonderful Christmas story which we eagerly wait to celebrate. But take comfort now in this truth as it is made known to you now through God’s Word and his Sacraments. As members of his church, we should equip ourselves to share this good news with others who live among us and are confused in their questioning, suffering, and despair. And as you equip yourselves this Advent season and share the reason for the hope that you have in Christ, rest assured that he is coming again soon.

In Christ,

Pastor Travis



December 2023

December 2023

January 2024

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Nov 26 <div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>3:00pm Grief & the Holidays</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	27 <div> <div>Office Closed</div> <div>4:30pm Centering Prayer Via Zoom - Grace sponsored</div> </div>	28 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> </div>	29 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study</div> <div>6:00pm Choir Rehearsal</div> </div>	30 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	Dec 1 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	2 <div> <div>8:00am Baroque Piano Recital</div> <div>9:00am Luther Hall private event (Luther Hall)</div> <div>5:00pm Worship</div> </div>
3 <div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>3:00pm Grief & the Holidays</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	4 <div> <div>Office Closed</div> <div>4:30pm Centering Prayer Via Zoom - Grace sponsored</div> </div>	5 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> </div>	6 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study</div> <div>6:00pm Choir Rehearsal</div> </div>	7 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:30pm Study: Unexpected Advent</div> </div>	8 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	9 <div> <div>9:00am Confirmation</div> <div>10:00am Prayer Shawl Group - Lounge</div> <div>1:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>5:00pm B.I.G. Night</div> <div>5:00pm Worship</div> </div>
10 <div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	11 <div> <div>Office Closed</div> <div>4:30pm Centering Prayer Via Zoom - Grace sponsored</div> </div>	12 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> </div>	13 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study</div> <div>6:00pm Choir Rehearsal</div> </div>	14 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:00pm Finance</div> <div>6:30pm Study: Unexpected</div> </div>	15 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	16 <div> <div>10:00am Habitat Lunch</div> <div>1:30pm Special Olympics - Westenders</div> <div>5:00pm Worship</div> <div>6:00pm Bunco</div> </div>
17 <div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	18 <div> <div>Office Closed</div> <div>4:30pm Centering Prayer Via Zoom - Grace sponsored</div> </div>	19 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>6:30pm Council Meeting</div> <div>7:00pm LIFE articles duel</div> <div>8:00pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>8:30pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> </div>	20 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study</div> <div>6:00pm Choir Rehearsal</div> </div>	21 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:30pm Council - moved 12/19</div> </div>	22 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	23 <div> <div>1:30pm Special Olympics - Westenders</div> <div>5:00pm Worship</div> </div>
24 <div> <div>Christmas Eve (United States)</div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	25 <div> <div>Christmas Day (United States)</div> <div>8:00am Office Closed - Holiday</div> </div>	26 <div> <div>OFFICE CLOSED</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> <div>6:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> </div>	27 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study</div> <div>6:00pm Choir Rehearsal</div> </div>	28 <div> <div>9:30am - 2:30pm Office Hours</div> <div>10:00am - 2:00pm Food Pantry</div> <div>4:30pm Special Olympics - C. Williams</div> </div>	29 <div> <div>Office Hours by Appointment</div> </div>	30 <div> <div>1:30pm Special Olympics - Westenders</div> <div>5:00pm Worship</div> </div>
31 <div> <div>New Year's Eve (United States)</div> <div>8:30am 3rd-5th gr Bible study</div> <div>9:30am Worship</div> <div>4:00pm A. Kyle Basketball - Gym</div> <div>5:00pm Emmaus Worship - Chapel</div> </div>	Jan 1, 24 	2 	3 	4 	5 	6

Thank You For Your Commitment!

Thanks to those of you that have turned in your pledge for 2024. If you haven't turned in your pledge yet, it's not too late! You may use the one below or pledge forms are available in the narthex, in the lounge, and in the office. Your completed form should be returned to the church office.

Remember: You ARE a vital "piece of the puzzle" that allows St. Mark Lutheran Church to continue serving the community through welcoming, worshipping, and Witnessing.

Stewardship Vision for 2024



Name _____ Telephone _____

Email _____

Address _____

My/Our estimate of giving to St. Mark for 2024 is:

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

Envelopes will be sent to you throughout the year.

I am/We are unable to make an estimate of giving for 2024...for the following reason (optional) _____



We are looking for a few St. Mark members who are not afraid to put in work, lead, and serve on church council members. If you are interested, please let Amber Sherrod, Council President, or Candy Nagel, Council Secretary, know of your willingness to serve in this important way.

Your Council Members for 2023

Amber Sherrod (2024) - President	Barb Jakubowski (2024) - Treasurer	Beth Claeys (2025)
Cathy Barton (2025) - Vice President	Linda Ray (2025)	Doug Rowley (2024)
Candy Nagel (2023) - Secretary	Rick Martin (2023)	Tom Leibold (2023)

There are now options online to give through Vanco and our Website www.stmarkcares.org for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter designations. For those households who are using Vanco or another form of automatic giving through your financial institution and would like to opt-out for envelopes being mailed to you, please call the church office 563.322.5318.

Any questions or if you want to sign up for Vanco please contact Jodee Williams or Barb Jakubowski through the church office.

Finance Update

General Fund Summary

October Offerings	\$ 26,623
October Expenses	\$ 25,667

Regular Offerings 2023 Through October

Received	\$ 194,624
Budgeted Amount	\$ 208,333

December 2023 - Merry Christmas from Lutheran Services in Iowa !

At LSI, we recognize that the holiday season can be a challenging time for many, especially for the populations we serve throughout the year.

We know parents who feel hopeless, with few resources to raise their young children. We know adults with disabilities who feel voiceless, with no support system or connection to their community. We know immigrants and refugees working to become U.S. citizens, with little community support or help along the way. We know teens who are aging out of foster care, fearing they will never have a forever home.

In the spirit of giving, the spirit of love, and the spirit of working together, let us stand with them and lift them up this Christmas season.

As we reflect on the past year, we thank you — our generous supporters and community partners — for stepping up to give and help the people LSI is privileged to serve. We are grateful for your contribution in bringing the light of Christ to your neighbors who rely on these essential services.

LSI wishes you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

LSI's annual matching gift campaign is currently active, and those making a new or increased financial gift can double their impact through the end of the year. If you would like to learn more about how you can support Iowa children and families, contact Deb Whitford, LSI's Senior Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org or 563-676-2065.

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at LSIowa.org and Facebook.com/LSI.Iowa.



Notes from the Organ Bench by Ross Jallo

Liturgy is not, generally, a high-stakes enterprise, at least if you aren't a church musician. But on December 24th this year we have the closest thing to a liturgical disaster: Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. This means that our Sunday morning service, liturgically speaking, is still the fourth Sunday of Advent: it's not Christmas Eve until nightfall. This tends to confuse everybody. It's fairly certain that at least somebody will arrive for our morning service on December 24th expecting to celebrate Christmas, only to be disappointed when we're still singing Advent hymns.

I say this just about every year, but I am a big fan of Advent, the season of preparation before Christmas. You'll never hear Advent hymns in pop culture or on the radio (with the possible exception of "O come, O come Emmanuel"), but there is some truly great music for this liturgical season. Every Sunday of Advent (the first four Sundays of December, this year) has at least one hymn that would number among my top twenty.

We are conditioned to think about Christmas earlier and earlier every year: Christmas decorations are out in stores before Halloween, and Christmas music is played from at least early November. But this is nothing more than a marketing ploy by retailers to get you to buy more products -- it has nothing to do with the Christian observance of the Feast of the Incarnation. The twelve days of Christmas *start* on December 25th. While I realize I can't singlehandedly change our society, I would encourage you to view Advent not as something that gets in the way of Christmas, but rather as a time to prepare. Hymn #241 in the ELW (which we'll sing on December 17th) may not be the catchiest tune, but it's a marvelous text to consider:

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?

Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!

Oh, kindle, Lord most holy, your lamp within my breast

to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Thank
You!



Food Donations

St. Mark Lutheran Church Food
Pantry would like to thank the following members,
friends, churches and groups for their generous
donations during the month of October 2023

Midwest Food Bank / St. Anthony's Church
Faith United Methodist / Asbury Gardens
Mike Shimbori
St. Mark Church Members and Friends

Together we served **132** families!!!

Grace Lutheran Church

Centering Prayer

Mondays 4:30pm via Zoom

(Excluding holidays)

Cheryl Kritsch facilitates the Centering
Prayer Group which meets via ZOOM every
Monday (except holidays) at 4:30pm.
Periodically the group will meet in-person in
the Grace Lutheran Church Choir Room
providing the ZOOM option, as well. Please
contact Cheryl Kritsch with any questions
and to verify if the group is meeting in-
person on that Monday at 563-343-0135.
Zoom Meeting ID: 392 407 7028
Passcode: 2020

We offer the Families of:

Susan Beamer
Michael Nielsen

words of love, support,
and comfort. May they rest
assured in the midst of their challenges and
adjustments that God will sustain them in the loss of
their loved one through faith in our Risen Lord.

Welcome to St. Mark, Jill! We are pleased to
welcome Jill Halligan to our church office staff. Jill
brings a wealth of various business office experience
that is quickly becoming a valuable resource to our
congregation. If you call the office, you may hear a
new welcoming voice. If you stop by the office you
will see a new friendly face to introduce yourself to.

Stewardship

One of the fastest growing "traditions" of the holiday
season is a day like "Giving Tuesday," a day in which
non-profits across the spectrum promote an extra day
of donations among its members.

The easiest way to make a Giving Tuesday donation to
St. Mark is to simply go to www.stmarkcares.org and
click on the navy blue GIVE NOW button and fill out
the form that pops up. Please make sure you choose
"in honor of" from the Optional > Gift Is selections
and type in Giving Tuesday.

Although Giving Tuesday is technically November
28th, and it would be cool to see how many members
of St. Mark donate on that date, I'm sure if you want
to make this extra gift anytime during this holiday
season, it would be greatly appreciated..

Please note that a Giving Tuesday donation should not
replace your annual Advent gift.

Thank you for your generosity and Happy Holidays.

Your Stewardship Committee,

Nancy B. and Rick M.



Our Angel Tree will be sponsoring **foster children of Scott
County** during the 2023 Christmas season. Please pick
an angel from our tree with their gift suggestions.

Return the WRAPPED gifts to the Church by:

December 10, 2023

Everyone is invited to **Bunco night: Saturday Dec 16th at 6:00.**
 Please bring a snack to share and sign up on the sheet in the lounge.
 There will be door prizes. Beginners welcome!
\$ 5.00 Donation Appreciated



Peace and greetings from Beth Claeys, Parish Nurse!

Tips For A Healthy Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time of celebration, gift giving, and of course, plenty of food. With the right tips and strategies, you can enjoy the holidays without compromising your health.

Some tips to consider -

Get plenty of physical activity. Exercise can help you balance out all of the holiday indulgences.
 Eat a balanced diet. While it's ok to indulge a bit, remember to fill your plate with healthy options too.
 Get enough sleep. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep a night.
 Drink in moderation. Alcohol can add unwanted calories to your diet.
 Practice stress management. Stress can take a toll on your physical and mental health.
 Stay hydrated. Water is essential for proper hydration.

Stress Management Tips for the holidays -

Make a plan to stay organized and on top of tasks.
 Take breaks. Make sure to take breaks throughout the day to relax and recharge.
 Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or yoga.
 Set realistic expectations.
 Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.



Some Positive mental Health Strategies-

Connect with friends and family. Connecting with friends and family can help you feel supported and less alone during the holidays.
 Make time for yourself. Do things that make you happy.
 Be kind to yourself and practice self care.
 Practice gratitude to help keep your spirits up.
 Reach out for help if you're overwhelmed or struggling.

If you would like to speak to the parish nurse, please call the church office. I will call you as soon as I am available. I am still working full time & it is difficult for me to take phone calls during work hours. Thank you for your understanding.

Prayer Shawl Group will meet in the church lounge Sat Dec 9th from 10-11.



There will be a foot clinic on December 4nd. Sign-up sheet is in the lounge. Appointment is required. Cost is \$35.
 Please watch for 2024 schedule announcements in LIFE.

Sponsor Flower Decorations for Advent

If you would like to honor or remember a loved one by sponsoring Advent and Christmas decorations, you may use this form and include it and your \$15.00 in an envelope and bring or mail it to the church office.

Forms are due in the Church Office no later than December 14.

We will include a list of those you choose to remember or honor in our January Newsletter and also the emails that will include our Christmas Eve worship links and bulletin.



Given by (your name) _____

Offering Env. # _____

In memory of _____

Or

In honor of _____

Forms and money (\$15.00) are due in the office no later than December 14th.

Habitat For Humanity Lunches - December 16th

The year is coming to a close and several houses have been completed, dedicated and now occupied with new owners who have worked hard alongside construction volunteers putting in their required sweat equity hours. The need for simple lunches for the construction volunteers is ongoing. St. Mark will provide the lunches to one to three different locations; the number of volunteers working on these days will be known closer to the date. We will meet between 10-10:30am on Saturday 12/16/2023 to put everything together and have lunches delivered by 11:30am. Sign-up sheets will be in the lounge. Questions can be directed to Maureen Currier ([563-940-8744](tel:563-940-8744)). Thank you to all who have contributed to this wonderful cause!



SERVICES SUNDAY, December 24th

9:30 am Worship

4th Sunday of Advent

and

Christmas Eve Worship

5:00 pm and 9:00 pm





ST. MARK LIFE
St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church
PO Box 3248
Davenport, Iowa 52808

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 909
Davenport, Iowa



Advent Study

"Unexpected Advent: Characters in the Christmas Story"

Facilitated by Beth Claeys, Parish RN

December 7th and 14th at 6:30PM

All are invited to attend. If you know you are planning to attend, please let Beth know, or call the church office. This way we can make sure we have enough handouts ready.

2024 ALTER FLOWERS AND SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP

Sign Up Notebooks are now available in the Lounge

Please consider signing up to be a Fellowship Host
following our 9:30am Sunday Worship Services

and

Sponsor our Weekly Alter Flowers for the
upcoming 2024 Year



Saturday

5:00pm

Sunday

9:30am



**Office
Hours**

Tuesday - Thursday:

9:30-2:30

Friday:

by appointment

Call Church office
at 563.322.5318
for an appointment

Visit Us! St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church • 2363 West Third Street, Davenport IA 52802

Send Correspondence to: St. Mark Ev. Lutheran Church • PO Box 3248, Davenport IA 52808 Phone: 563-322-5318

Annual subscription of \$1.00 per year is included in payment of weekly pledge of members. Email: stmark@stmarkcares.org