

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Messenger
Steven Neal, Pastor
308-750-1318, church phone
402-705-1521, personal phone
December, 2018



1306 Howard Ave, St. Paul, NE 68873
www.stmarkschurchsp.org

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that you are finding the warmth of God in your heart and in your home as winter truly begins in earnest! My family has been enjoying watching Ellinor take sure steps in the snow for the first time, often with Adelyn right next to her, ensuring she doesn't end up falling over. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately from my point-of-view, the help does little good and both girls tumble over laughing together! Then they stand up and do it again. And again. And again!

Friends, that kind of playful, joyful spirit can keep our hearts warm and our moods cheerful as the temperature gets colder and the sky a bit more dreary. Now, I'm not encouraging all of you to don a snowsuit and go push each other over (or maybe... I am?), but I am wondering what brings you joy. How do you play? What makes you smile? What gets you laughing? Whatever those things are, I pray that your list is long, and I encourage you this season to find even more things that bring you peace and joy.

Beginning Advent and journeying a bit more everyday towards the manger, I'm reminded of how and with whom we share our most festive and intimate Christmas moments. I imagine the tenderness between Mary and her new baby boy, between her and Joseph, and between Joseph and little Jesus on that blessed night. Together, all three of them, as a family, attended to by angels and livestock and visitors and strangers from afar. Maybe this season is when you attend a big family get-together! Or maybe it's more like a quiet time that involves a book, a window, and hot tea. For me and Stefanie and our kids this year I'm sure it will involve wrapping paper and scotch tape getting everywhere! But the mess is going to be so worth it. Watching our girls play together, care for each other, and teach each other is heartwarming and reminds me of the level of ourselves we share only with people we love.

One of the marks of a church that functions well is that it (the members) provide friendship to each other. Some like to use the words "church family," and those fit too. In our church we come together to share the holiest of moments together – baptisms, funerals, communion with God in the eucharist that then shapes us all, together, into the body of Christ. We share other sacred moments, too – joys and fears in study groups, prayers in worship, diagnoses and test results. It's my sincere hope that St. Mark's helps to provide friendship, companionship to you in your life.

I appreciate so much our ministries that care for one another, both formally like in birthday cards and home communion, and informally through aisle talk and calls "just because." My family so appreciates the care, the love, and the heart-tending that many of you do for us. Thank you.

We know St. Mark's is a warm place. I hope St. Paul and the surrounding areas know it is, too. If not, how can we share that? How can we let others know? Especially folks that might not have much in way of friendship or warmth in their life. Especially the folks that live next door, or down the street, or up the road. Or serve on the team with us. Work alongside us. How can we go out and spread the love of Jesus to people that we might have known our entire lives but have no church home to call their own?

I encourage you to think about these things in the coming season. Christ is the "reason for the season," as they say. And spreading that love and warmth is part of the reason why we get "to have" Christmas. Christ comes to save us, and in turn calls – even commands – us to share his love with the world. I think we should take that pretty seriously. At least as seriously as we take this holiday season.

God Bless you & and Merry Christmas,
Pastor Steven



Report of the Church Council

St. Mark's Church Council Minutes November 14, 2018

CHURCH SECRETARY

Pat Hansen
308-336-3246

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Michael Bockmann
308-750-5222

COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT

Kevin Jorgensen
308-754-8065

COUNCIL SECRETARY

Janet Elstermeier
308-754-5506

CHURCH TREASURER

Barb Stefanowicz
308-750-4398

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Erik & Tanya Williams
308-750-0388

STEWARDSHIP CHAIRPERSON

Judy Johnson
308-754-1030

WELCA PRESIDENT

Val Killinger
308-750-7074

PARISH EDUCATION

Linda Schacht
308-754-5536
Brenda Wells
754-750-9333

CARE COMMITTEE

Linda McKnight
308-754-4490
Pam Switzer
308-754-4461
Ruthie Jacobsen
308-754-5407
Joan & John Oeltjen
308-894-3405
Emily McCray
308-754-4159

TRUSTEES

Gary Goldfish
308-754-6042
Tim and Pam Wells
308-754-5516
Tom Schacht
308-754-5536

BIBLE STUDY was held at 6:30 p.m. and President Mike was in charge of the discussion.

Those present included: President Michael Bockmann, Vice President Kevin Jorgensen, Secretary Janet Elstermeier, Treasurer Barb Stefanowicz, Stewardship Judy Johnson, Financial Secretary Erik Williams, Trustee Pam Wells, WELCA & Worship Val Killinger, Parish Education Linda Schacht, and Care Committee Emily McCray. Pastor Steven was excused.

't. But I'm going to show up. I'd rather error on the side of being too present than not present enough. I'd rather people know that I care, even if I'm overbearing, than have them wonder.

PASTOR STEVEN'S REPORT: Dates and Things: Saturday Nov. 17th – Pastor on vacation, no pastor present for worship.

Sunday, Nov. 18th– PMA Jan Anderson will lead worship, no communion.

Sunday, Dec 3rd – New members will be received at St. Mark's with potluck meal following services.

Tuesday, December 25th-January 2nd- Vacation for Pastor and his family.

Mon-Tues, Jan 14/15th- First Call Theological Conference (Camp Carol Joy Holling)

Sat, Febr 16th-Valentine's Day Babysitting Youth Fundraiser/event.

Jan or Febr-Pastor and Steph are planning a Baptism service for Ady and Elli.

Community Involvement: GCA Days Committee, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce (maybe, if elected), and the Hospital Palliative Care Board. It is a good thing for the community to see me working with each of these groups.

ELCA / Pastoral Involvement: Local Ministerial Association (Vice President), ELCA Cluster Group (text-study with Ord, Wolbach, Aurora, GI pastors), Nebraska Synod Outreach Table, which meets every other month.

Things are going well at St. Mark's: Stewardship campaign good. Confirmation good. Grief Group good. Youth Group-some weeks 4 youth, some weeks none.

Personal notes: My family is doing well. Stefanie's School Psych graduate program at UNK continues. Please remember her in your prayers.

Per church business and my ministry, I feel things are going well. I feel as if I'm continuing to learn and grow as your pastor in all areas of "the job" each day. In particular, I've become more pro-active in seeking out areas to help people, particularly in providing pastoral care. Showing up. I struggle with not wanting to impose.

I have relied on waiting for somebody to indicate they would like time or help, particularly when it comes to health concerns and pastoral care. No more. If somebody doesn't want me to show up, well, they can tell me, and I won't. But I'm going to show up. I'd rather error on the side of being *too present* than not present enough.

I'd rather people know that I care, even if I'm overbearing, than have them wonder. Synod Theological Conference in late October went well. I learned a lot about Paul and his relationship with the Jerusalem church leaders and how he saw Jewish and Gentile relations. This learning reinforces that we must keep our eyes on Jesus and not get distracted by making others fit our own personal models of faithfulness. I also connected with some other pastors and have gleaned a lot from their local mission and ministry efforts. Some places are really good at inviting their community members to church, and I've picked up a lot of ideas and energy from them.

I believe the "Because of God's great mercy" stewardship campaign went well. I haven't heard any negative feedback, anyway, and I've received very positive feedback regarding the letters in particular. We have already received an offering through a member's online bill pay. The check came in the mail and I dropped the envelope in the offering plate. Easy Peazy. I've heard from some members that they are increasing their giving. I pray that the people we serve continue to prayerfully consider their giving of their time, talents and treasures. I understand there is always some trepidation when it comes to talking about money, and even more so in talking about giving money, and even more so in *asking* people to give more money. I'm very proud of our congregation and the Stewardship Team for their honest and faithful approach to this stewardship conversation, and proud of the council in their support. People seem to be enjoying having the confirmands serve in worship, and I am so incredibly impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness of their sermon notes. Wow! There are 3 bright young men in Confirmation right now, and Tom and Linda Schacht ought to be very proud. I would like to keep the reformation hopes and prayers bowl available for the

month of the November. Please continue to add more hopes and prayers.

TRUSTEES: Pam Wells reported that the Trustees had gotten 3 bids for snow removal. Ice melt for sidewalks was purchased and is in the church. Pam explained the bids for snow removal and the Council voted to accept Frank Beck's bid. She will ask Pastor when the Christmas Tree should be put up in the sanctuary. The Council also talked about the outside nativity set, which

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is usually a problem because the figures fall over often. We will need to try to anchor the figures better so they don't get blown over.

CARE COMMITTEE: Ruthann Jacobsen had sent a report saying: A "Giving Tree" will be put up at the church during the Advent season. Members and/or visitors can choose a card from the tree that will tell them of a small 'gift' that they should provide. (It could be a special item for the food pantry, or a small monetary gift to some mission at St. Mark's, etc.) The Care Committee is still working out the mechanics of this project. They are also planning to provide gift baskets to individuals or families when they are received as members of St. Mark's.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT: Judy Johnson reported that the October stewardship emphasis with mailings, bulletin inserts, talks in worship and a newsletter article is now complete. The committee asks members to review their financial giving to St. Mark's and prayerfully consider taking a step up to the next level of weekly giving. December will have five Sundays. We will need to designate a recipient of the December 30th fifth Sunday offering.

WELCA: Val Killinger reported: All the school kits, sewing kits and quilts were delivered to Brown Transfer in Kearney who takes them for us for Lutheran World Relief. The Women had their Thank Offering service Sunday Nov 11. The Christmas party will be Sunday December 16th after services.

PARISH EDUCATION: Linda Schacht reported: Plans are underway for a 'Christmas Program' to be presented by the young children. The details have not been worked out yet. All other classes are continuing and we are delighted when any of our youth are able to participate in the programs that we are trying to provide.

OLD BUSINESS: Erik reported that he continues to work with the old company as well as the new company to get the Web Page up and running. This month, committee reports were e-mailed to the Secretary, and sent out to Council members, before the monthly meeting. At the meeting we discussed anything necessary and everything went well. Erik also reported that he is working on "Daily Devotions for Advent" that will be on Facebook, listed from St. Mark's. Last year this was done and they were viewed many times each day. Various members of St. Mark's are writing these daily devotions and Erik thanked everyone that has sent some to him. We had talked previously about ordering a new banner to hang by the large evergreen tree in the church yard. The sign tells the time of services. The summer banner is fine, but the other banner was destroyed by the wind and weather so we need a new one. It will be ordered so it can be put up ASAP. We will be putting a heater/air conditioner in the wall in Pastor's office but the hole has not been made yet. We have someone that is available to make the hole, so it will be done very soon.

NEW BUSINESS: Service time for Christmas Eve was discussed. In 2017, we only had the 6:30 p.m. service on Christmas Eve, because the 11:00 p.m. service had not been well attended for several years before that. Discussion was held at this meeting about changing the service time to 5:30 p.m. instead of 6:30. It was suggested that the earlier time might be better so that the evening meal could be served to members and their guests after church services. After some discussion, it was M-S-C to try the 5:30 time to see how that would work. The Council also decided to NOT have a worship service on Christmas Day.

The 5th Sunday Offering in December was discussed. Financially, we are over budget for the year so it was suggested that this 5th Sunday offering should be designated to go directly into the checking account. It was M-S-C to do so. This information will be given to the congregation, so that special offerings can be given through the month of December. Erik said that they had not planned on sending out "giving statements" for the third quarter. If anyone wishes to find out the total amount of their gifts to the church before the end of the year, they may call Erik and Tanya for the total.

The St. Mark's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday January 27, 2019 and committees will need to be thinking about their annual reports. The nominating committee will need to seek nominees for several positions on committees and on the Council. Kevin Jorgensen, as Vice President, will work closely with the 5 members of the nominating committee to complete this task. The Budget Committee, which is the Treasurer and the President, will need to work together to prepare the Budget for 2019. Barb and Mike will determine when they can meet.

The Living Lutheran magazine is being sent to members of St. Mark's and our treasury pays for this magazine. Pastor needs to review and revise the list of those receiving it. Erik mentioned that they get 2 copies at their house. The Pastor is the only one that can make changes to this list.

Val reported that Yandas have been here again, to check on the speakers at church. Someone had gotten into the sound system and messed with some of the caps on the wires. It has been repaired and no one should be touching the system! Val mentioned that Pastor's 'body pack' for the PA system has not been working well. It is old and not repairable. It was discussed by the Council and M-S-C to purchase a new unit and we will pay for it with memorial money. The hearing units are being used by several members during services. The wires should not be wrapped around these units because they get broken that way.

We discussed Christmas goodies for the children's program. It has become very expensive to purchase peanuts, 2 pieces of fruit and 2 candy bars, since we have been fixing enough bags for 50-60 people. This year, we will just get something for the few children participating in the Christmas program and the shut-ins.

Stefanie Neal has offered to host a painting session for anyone that would like to try painting on a canvas. She will purchase the supplies necessary and offer assistance for this class. She will choose a date in December and we will have sign-up sheets for



those who might be interested. We will each pay a fee for the class, to cover the cost of the supplies. Info will be available soon for those that are interested.

The council meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m. and we closed by praying the Lord's Prayer in unison.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Elstermeier, Council Secretary

President Michael Bockmann

Stewardship for Advent and Christmas

Many of us cherish everything about the Christmas season -- except those incessant advertisements telling us to buy this and by that. We ask, "Where's Jesus in all this commercialism?"

This is the right question. Though it asks us to examine every aspect of our lives, stewardship particularly challenges us to question the role money plays in our personal lives and our culture.

Christmas presents are wonderful expressions of love that makes both giver and recipient feel good. At the same time, we want to be wary of advertising's lure to make us overspend, or to think that the cost of our gift is proportionate to our love.

Most of all, we need to be sure that the main point of our Christmas is not the gifts *we give*, but the gift *we receive* from God – Jesus. Here are some ideas:

- Challenge yourself to spend less for presents this year. Set a budget and stick to it.
- Attend worship regularly in Advent and Christmas.
- Give some handmade presents: A scarf or hat, a photo album, a batch of fudge, a card, a poem.
- Prayerfully read Advent daily devotions (Richard Rohr's *Preparing for Christmas* is amazing!).
- Give your time: a concert together, a shared meal, a day at a museum, a walk in the woods
- Use an Advent calendar to help you remember all that God has given you.
- Give service: wash a loved one's car, help clean the garage, paint a room, babysit for an evening.
- Play Christmas music that has religious themes (More "Silent Night," less "Frosty the Snowman.")
- Instead of buying a present, make a donation to a charitable organization in honor of your loved one (or check out ELCA Good Gifts!).
- Make a generous year-end contribution to your congregation.

Our thoughtful practices for Advent and Christmas not only make for good stewardship of our time, talents, relationships and money, they also help us to draw near to Our Lord and experience God's greatest gift to us.

--Rob Blezard

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OCTOBER STEWARDSHIP REPORT

To model and encourage a life of faithfully sharing the Gospel through stewarding God's gifts of our time, talent and treasure.

I heard a popular adult beverage commercial on TV with the motto that goes something like this: "Live generously and life will treat you royally". (Crown Royal), Putting the product aside, isn't that the way we should live? The more we give the richer our lives will be.

Stewardship – the sharing of our time, our talents and our possessions is something we need to keep at the top of our minds, so that we can give generously in all of those areas to do God's work. Call me a tight wad or cheap if you wish, but I prefer thrifty. I call it being a good steward of our resources. I keep the heat turned down, burn wood and throw on more clothes to keep warm, saving money on the electric bill so I have more to give. I use scraps of paper, cutting off the blank portions, rather than throwing barely used whole sheets away, saving our precious trees and production costs of more paper. I rarely grab overpriced items at a convenience store. I can make coffee, drink water from the tap or grab a snack at home. I shop the grocery specials to have a reserve of items so I don't have to purchase them at full price when the urge to cook something comes up. I rarely eat out when



I'm in town. I can open a can of soup at home for lunch. It's a lifestyle I've developed so that I can give and also have extra put aside when travel calls me to seek adventure. That's just me, but maybe we could all adopt this way of thinking when it comes to the church. What can we do to help save money and resources so we can do more as a church body? If we are the last in the building, we can make sure the heat/air conditioning is turned down before we leave. We can check for dripping water or running toilets to be sure all is well. We can be sure doors and windows are closed completely and the blinds pulled in the sanctuary during summer heat. The little things add up. We can all do our part to care for God's house.

Blessings to each and every one of you this Advent and Christmas season from your Stewardship Team!

Judy Johnson, Stewardship Chairperson

REMINDER: THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF DECEMBER IS A SPECIAL OFFERING TO HELP WITH A BUDGET SHORTFALL!!! THIS OFFERING WILL BE FOR ST. MARK'S MINISTRIES.

Care Committee

1 Corinthians 12:25

"This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other."

During this Advent season, the Care Committee has a "giving tree" in the fellowship hall. There are tags in which an act of kindness is written. We encourage members to take a tag and perform an act of kindness. There is also a basket with blank tags for members to write an act of kindness and tie on the tree for someone else to do.

Welcome baskets will be given to new members on December 2nd. The committee will meet on December 2nd. We continue to send birthday and anniversary cards, and visit and give communion to shut-in's. Ruthie Jacobsen.

NOVEMBER WELCA REPORT

Dear Ladies of St. Mark's:

The Advent Season is so rushed with looking forward to Christmas celebrations, but it's really the time for us to prepare our hearts & minds for the coming of Christ. We all know it, it's just hard to ignore everything else! The best of luck to all in the preparations of our hearts.

The All Faith's Ladies Luncheon is set for Wed Dec 5, at noon at St. Peter's & Paul's living center, everyone is welcome. St. Mark's provides food and workers. Thanks, ladies for doing that.

The St. Mark's Ladies Christmas luncheon is Sunday Dec 16th right after church, a casserole will be provided and entertainment, please bring a side dish. Once again instead of a gift exchange we can donate to the "farm" thru the Good Gifts. Everyone is invited to all of the activities, come join us:

Esther Circle Monday Dec 3 @ 9:30 am. at the Sweet Shoppe for Bible study.

Lois Circle Tuesday Dec 4th at the Church: Val hostess, Barb S leader at 5:15 pm.

Spirit Book Club: Wed's @ 7:00 pm. Bad Girls of the Bible"

Grief meeting Thursday's 7:00 pm. 1St & 3rd

Saturday Jan 19, 2019 Winter Retreat! What an education this year. Please check out our St. Mark's website or Facebook to enjoy the Advent Devotions. We also have some booklets on the table at the back of the Church for your convenience.

May God continue to bless you now and always. What book does some of our words of the Church service come from? Check it out. Blessings to all, Val Killinger ,President, 308-750-7074



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2ND-Rene' Derner
4th-Ashley Wells
Tanya Williams
5th-Tessa Arnett
12th-Ruth Schrader
Tucker Killinger
14th-Carol Leth
Warren Glinsmann
15th-Jenna Byabato
21st-Kayley Wells
22nd-Christy Nelson
23rd-Victoria Griffin
26th-Bill Barnett
27th-Vince Tomlinson
31st-Theresa Robinson
Troy Lukasiewicz

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARYS

1st-Tim and Pam Wells
22nd-George & Jean Matthews
31st-Steven & Stefanie Neal



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