

St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
Messenger  
Steven Neal, Pastor  
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January 2019



1306 Howard Ave, St. Paul, NE 68873  
[www.stmarkschurchsp.org](http://www.stmarkschurchsp.org)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I pray that warmth and peace has found you in these last weeks and that you feel encouraged as you look forward to 2019. You, the members and friends of St. Mark's, have accomplished so much together over the past year. Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and stewardship of your time and talents towards sharing the love of Jesus Christ locally and globally.

As I look ahead, I'm encouraged by many things. Your faithfulness. Your stewardship of yourselves and the gifts God has given to you. Your compassion for your neighborhood and the world.

What I'm most excited about, though, is that Christ is and continues to be the guiding light for the work that we do. The services we perform, the love we have, and the efforts we give are expansive, inclusive, and done for the love and worship of our Lord. But not everything is rosy. Times might seem tumultuous and difficult as you look ahead. Whether looking at the world or in your own lives, things are not perfect. Over this year, continue to look for God's work in the world. Where there is pain, look for the helpers. Look for the compassionate ones. And you'll see God hard at work. Let that be a source of joy and inspiration for you. Let your heart feel encouraged by the sights and news of the good work being done to "prepare the way of the Lord."

Do what Nebraskans seem to do best – pitch in and give a hand.

Friends, rejoice and be glad! God is making all things new. I pray that you know the peace of God that surpasses all understanding as we journey forward together. Amen.



## Report of the Church Council

St. Mark's Church Council Minutes December 12, 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  
308-754-1033

### 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

The St. Mark's Church Council met immediately following the Advent worship services.

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

President Mike called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. Pastor Steven opened the meeting with prayer. A motion was made, seconded and carried (M-S-C) to accept the minutes of the November Council Meeting as printed in the December newsletter. The Treasurer presented the financial report for the month of November 2018. It was M-S-C to accept this report.

**PASTOR STEVEN'S REPORT:** After last month's lengthy report I really don't have much to update. I am very excited about the influx of visitors and about receiving 9 new members this year! This speaks very well of your hospitality and the welcome that you share with others. I'm proud of the work of each committee and council members. Stewardship with the October emphasis and temple talks are expanding the ways people think about stewardship. The children's midweek program, or, as my daughter affectionately calls it, "Wednesday School," is growing in so many ways, numbers (and volunteers!) too. Ady recites the extended table prayer that she learned at Wednesday school before supper at home. Amen. The creativity in worship, the choir, the enthusiasm to do things a little differently are each very encouraging. The faithful service of the care committee is so wonderful in tending to the needs of our homebound folks and supporting our members and friends through birthday cards, phone calls, and more. Shout out to the trustees, too, for all the extra work you do especially this time of year ensuring the sidewalks are safe. WELCA's generosity never ceases to amaze me. The sheer amount of time and money those faithful women give is astounding. I'm so grateful for the resourcefulness of our members that run programs. Finally, those who serve on the council including its officers are really doing an outstanding job. Y'all have taken on an incredible burden of decision-making and leadership, of modelling generosity, and you're committed to extra study and leadership formation together. Council isn't about going to 1 meeting a month, and you all seem to get that. Thank You.

I believe we've put together a good budget proposal for 2019, and I'm so thankful for the work put in by our team. We were able to reduce the budget proposal from 2018, in large part by more accurately aligning expected costs with actual expenses, and by looking more closely at actual ministry needs. I understand there is some fear, doubt, and maybe even some grumbling about our financial state in 2018. Our expected total expenses for 2018 are about 7% lower than the 2018 budget. As of right now, we are on pace to meet our costs here and there. I understand money, even talking about money, can cause anxiety and worse. By some counts, over 2000 verses in the bible directly talk about money. Jesus talked about it all the time. But it's a topic that makes many people uncomfortable, myself included. I'm thankful for the receptiveness of Council and the congregation to open and honest conversation about our personal financial stewardship and the stewardship of our church budget.

**TRUSTEES:** Pam Wells reported that the Trustees put the Christmas tree up in the sanctuary and decorated it. They also assembled the nativity set, and placed it on the lawn, on the south side of the fellowship hall.

**CARE COMMITTEE:** Ruthie wants to remind members to see the "Giving Tree" and take a card from the branches and do what is suggested on the card. There are simple things listed that each of us could accomplish. You may also write a card and place it on the tree for someone else to take. They will also be sending Christmas cards to the shut-ins. Discussion was held about the use of the prayer cards for requesting prayers for friends and/or family. The policy was made to keep the name on the list for 4 weeks, then it would automatically go off the printed list. The Care Committee or Secretary need to have a written request, to put the name back on the list. A motion was made that Pastor Steven need only read the entire prayer list on the first weekend of the month, and the other worship services he will offer "prayers for those on the prayer list." We will continue to have the names printed on the bulletin insert, each weekend. M-S-C. This change will take place in January. The Care Committee is planning to prepare gift baskets for those that will be joining St. Mark's on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Ruthie also asked to have the order for the Christ in Our Home devotional magazines

revised, so that we could have 6 copies in large print available each quarter. This order will be taken care of immediately. The Care Committee members will offer these large print devotions to those who are homebound



**STEWARDSHIP REPORT:** Judy reported that the Stewardship Committee met on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. They discussed the “Because of God’s Great Mercy” Stewardship emphasis that was held the month of October. We decided it is difficult to know the impact the emphasis had. Carol Leth was asked to be the Stewardship speaker the second Sunday in December. We will encourage members to shop the ELCA Good gifts catalog to purchase farm animals, dig wells, provide latrines, mosquito nets, send future leaders to seminary, etc. The women of the ELCA will also make purchases through the catalog so church members can contribute, the women will do the shopping, if desired.

**WELCA:** Val had reported that the ladies will be having their Christmas party on the 16<sup>th</sup> right after church. And the WELCA Board has voted to give another gift of \$1000.00 to assist with the expenses of the church. St. Mark’s will be having a Soup Supper and Bake Sale for the public on February 6, 2019.

**PARISH EDUCATION:** The mid-week students and Sunday School students are working on a Christmas program which will be given on December 16<sup>th</sup>. Several adults and older youth will be assisting with the speaking and singing. Pastor announced the Youth will be hosting a Valentine’s Day Babysitting at the church, for those parents who would like to celebrate Valentine’s Day. There will be a town event on Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, that will be a fund raiser for the GCA Days celebration, that some parents may wish to attend.

**WORSHIP:** Pastor reported that he and Val meet regularly to pick out the hymns and prepare the worship service. We are using a revised liturgy for the Advent services. We will use one liturgy for part of the year, and then change about the time school starts again in the Fall. March 6<sup>th</sup> is Ash Wednesday and Easter is April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019. We will have soup suppers again during Lent, before worship services. The WELCA will determine the schedule for the soup suppers.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Janet brought up the work that has been done on the St. Mark’s constitution. Pastor has worked closely with the Synod office to determine the things that are required by the ELCA, to be in our local constitution. Pastor spent time going through the process, line by line on his computer, to be sure that we had all of the necessary parts in our constitution. There were no changes made to the constitution, it was just updated to reflect the language of the ELCA. A motion was made for the council to approve the updated constitution. M-S-C. It will now be brought up at the Annual Meeting in January and the congregation will need to vote on accepting the updates. This did not include working on our St. Mark’s Bylaws. That will be done in 2019. Erik reported that the Web page is now “up”. The address is [www.stmarkschurchsp.org](http://www.stmarkschurchsp.org). Erik talked about new vinyl signs that announce the times of our services and hang by the large spruce tree. Currently the sign talks about the Christmas Eve service time. He plans to also fix small ones for Lent, Easter and Advent. There will be a larger sign to explain times of regular worship times. Discussion was held about making a more permanent banner fixture and to use Memorial Funds to fund this improvement. It was M-S-C to do so.

**NEW BUSINESS;** The proposed budget has been prepared by President Mike, Treasurer Barb and Pastor Steven, and Mike explained the proposal. They followed the 2019 guidelines from the Synod office regarding cost of living adjustment and salary for the Pastor’s salary. He pointed out that the total is less than the 2018 budget. It was M-S-C to pass the proposed budget. It will be voted on at the Annual Meeting in January. Pastor was on vacation and did not attend the November meeting of the Council. At that meeting, the Council voted to ask that the December 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday offering be used to help cover a shortfall in the budget. It has now been determined that financially we will be OK with the budget. Pastor feels that we should continue to use the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday offerings for “outward support” like assisting with a need in the community or for the needs of the ELCA. It was suggested that we rescind the November decision and change the recipient of the December 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday offering to ELCA Good Gifts. It was M-S-C. There have been some concerns about Pastor’s practice of giving bread and/or grape juice to younger children during communion. He explained that he is not serving them communion. He explained that he feels that it teaches children that they are welcome at communion and it serves as a practice for communion for them. He is still giving them a ‘blessing’ at that time. He says these words “This is child of God bread, because you are a child of God!” He does not offer the bread to those children that have not been baptized and he always checks with the parents before giving the bread. Following the procedures that we have used at St. Mark’s for over 20 years, when the children get a little older, they will attend a “communion class” that will prepare them. They will then be able to participate in receiving full communion. Many years ago, children did not receive communion until after they were confirmed. That practice is not followed in many churches any longer. Erik talked about the Advent Devotions that are now on Facebook. He said that the site is getting about 180 views per day. Linda Schacht expressed “Thank You” to the WELCA for additional funds that they have given to the church treasury to support improvements. It is appreciated. The heater has not been installed in the Pastor’s office yet, we are still waiting to get the hole made in the wall. Pastor asked that the Treasurer could write a letter explaining the \$12,500 of Pastor’s salary be designated for housing. It would make no difference in the amount that we pay him, but it could change how he is taxed for his income taxes. It was M-S-C and a letter will be written.

The council meeting was adjourned and we closed by praying the Lord’s Prayer in unison.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Elstermeier, Council Secretary

President Michael Bockmann



## 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.***

Here we are closing out 2018 and looking ahead to the New Year. This is a time when we all seem to reflect on where we have been and where we hope to go. We do this in our personal lives and as a congregation. We do so many things at St Marks's with our time, talents and treasures but we are always striving to do more to be God's hands in the world. Our Stewardship emphasis in October "Because of God's Great Mercy" challenged us to take a step up to the next level of weekly giving. If you haven't had time to think about this, please take a moment to search your heart, assess what you have coming in and see if you can work toward tithing or taking that step up in your giving. Together we can do great things. Your Stewardship Team wishes each and every one of you the richest blessing in 2019!

Judy Johnson, Stewardship Chairperson

### Care Committee

The Care Committee met on December 18, 2018. Meeting was open with devotions and prayer. Members reported on their visitations and cards sent. The committee was pleased with the congregation's response to the "Giving Tree" during Advent. It was discussed doing something during Lent.

**PLEASE NOTE:** A new policy will begin January 1<sup>st</sup>. Pastor will read the entire prayer list on the first Sunday of every month. The rest of the month he will pray "for those who are home bound and on our prayer list".

**PLEASE NOTE:** Remember to issue a new prayer card – provided in pews- every 30 days for those you wish to be on or remain on the prayer list.

The Care Committee will be providing "welcoming" gifts to new members on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Committee hopes everyone had a blessed Christmas and looks forward to the New Year serving St. Mark's members with loving care and concern in the name of the newborn King. Ruthie Jacobsen.

### WELCA

#### Happy Near Year!

2018 was quite a year, hopefully 2019 will be one of harmony, peace and joy for all.

Wasn't the Christmas Eve service beautiful?

The 2019 Winter Retreat (Saturday January 19<sup>th</sup>) in Grand Island at St. Paul's Lutheran Church will be a wonderful day with different speakers joining about a variety of subjects, Bishop Brian will be joining us for a study and lots of information will be shared. The registration sheets are on the bulletin board so please sign up soon. The cost is still \$18.00. (I checked the almanac it says fair and milder)!

Our annual Soup supper will be held Wednesday February 6, 2019. Soups, breads, desserts and bake sale. Mark your calendars!

The 2019 WELCA books will be ready shortly but until then:

Esther Circle: Monday, January 7, 9:30 am at the Sweet Shoppe with Arlene as leader.

Lois Circle: Tuesday, January 8, Margie is hostess and Val is leader.

Winter Retreat: Saturday, January 19, 8:30-3 at St. Paul's Lutheran in Grand Island.

Please come and enjoy all of the opportunities for fellowship and friendship.

The new officers that take over for 2019: Barb Lepper, President; Pam Switzer, Vice President; Margie Townsend, Secretary; Barb Stefanowicz, Treasurer; Val Killinger, Sec of Education; Linda McKnight and Kaye Tomlinson, sec of Stewardship.

Just a thought: Flowers are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul. (Luther Burbank) and one more; Teach us, O Lord, the disciplines of patience, for we find that to wait is often harder than to work. (Peter Marshall). Have a great Epiphany Season! Val Killinger.



## STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

*O God, teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.* -**Psalm 90:12**

What does it mean to count our days? Certainly, the poet who wrote Psalm 90:12 was thinking of more than arithmetic, which may not necessarily gain us a wise heart. Wisdom comes from perspective, from painful introspection and prayerful deliberation.

We count in order to know not only how many days we have lived, but to ponder how many days we might have left. Counting, we remember that we are finite creatures whose lives march forward in steady 24-hour steps, carrying us from birth to death. Knowing, then, that our days are numbered, we appreciate each one more fully.

We count our days to gain the wisdom that every day is sacred; every day presents opportunities to live more fully in relationship with God and our neighbors; every day is for love and joy and peace and fulfillment. Yet it's all too easy to let the days slip away.

This month consider a focus on stewardship of your time – how you spend every day God gives you. Here is a “to do” list for making the most of every day:

- ▮ **Pray:** Begin each day communicating with the creator of the universe, meditating on Scripture or a wise Christian author. Even 10 minutes. End by praying Psalm 118:24: “This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
- ▮ **Care:** Convey through word or deed how much you care about someone in your life. Call up an old friend or relative. Invite a co-worker to lunch.
- ▮ **Help:** Look for some way to assist someone. Volunteer. Hold a door open for someone entering a store behind you. Stop for a pedestrian who wants to cross the street.
- ▮ **Enrich:** Find something that will deepen your knowledge, understanding or appreciation of the world. Read a poem or book. Listen to a sermon podcast or educational news program.
- ▮ **Stop.** That's right, do nothing. For at least 10 minutes (use your smart phone timer) sit quietly, breathe deeply and try to clear the busy thoughts from your mind. Open your spirit to God's presence.
- ▮ **Be healthy:** Do something to increase your physical health, such as eating a nutritious meal or taking a walk.
- ▮ **Pray:** End every day thanking the creator of the universe for another wonderful day. A day you have counted and that you have made count. Focus on stewardship of time and see how your own life will change. Make it a permanent part of your discipleship.

--Rob Blezard

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**“Thank you” to the families that provided Poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas!!**

**Steve and Barb Stefanowicz  
Ken and Emily McCray  
Dave and Mini Sprague  
Jim and Ruthie Jacobsen  
Dennis and Dera Klanecky  
Gene and Val Killinger  
John and Joan Oeltjen  
Larry and Barb Lepper  
Tom and Linda Schacht**

**Glen and Pat Hansen  
Steve and Carol Leth  
Bryan and Theresa Robinson  
Tim and Pam Wells  
Smoke and Nancy Glinsmann  
Robin and Janet Elstermeier  
Margie Townsend in Memory of Warren  
Maurice & Maedean Mathews in Memory of Mark  
Erik and Tanya Williams**

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

**4<sup>TH</sup>-Tim Wells  
15<sup>th</sup>-Sydney Lukasiewicz  
17<sup>th</sup>-Brandi Glinsmann  
18<sup>th</sup>-Michael Killinger  
19<sup>th</sup>-Margie Townsend  
20<sup>th</sup>-Eli Larsen  
22<sup>nd</sup>-Timeree Andreasen  
25<sup>th</sup>-Ron Switzer  
29<sup>th</sup>-Barb Bockmann  
Lori Maddox**

**JANUARY ANNIVERSARYS**

**28<sup>th</sup>-Jimmy and Ruthie Jacobsen**

