



Issue: December 2022

A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

The Messenger

Keeping the Christmas Lights On

Our family was so excited for the new adventure of life in St. Louis when we moved to Ballwin a little over five years ago. The Claymont neighborhood felt like the ideal place to raise a young family, and the proximity to the church was a huge bonus. I have to admit feeling a little perplexed when Halloween came around, and there were very few trick-or-treaters coming to our door. December brought cold winds and long nights, but there weren't many houses lit up for the holidays. A lot can change in five years, and there's a new energy in Claymont. The neighborhood association is much more active and is sponsoring a Christmas lights competition again this year. There will be a special event on Saturday, December 17 from 5:30-7:30 PM in our lower parking lot with food trucks and voting on the holiday lights.

The many houses lit up for the holidays reminds me of a story I recently read.

In his book, Lord, It Has Been One of Those Days, Bob Brown tells of a pastor who visited an elderly blind lady who was a member of his church. It was during the Christmas season, and he noticed that the Christmas tree in her house was brightly decorated with lights and ornaments. He said to her, "Do you do this every year?"

"Yes," she replied, "this is one of the big things I do. I always look forward to it. My nephew always goes out and gets a Christmas tree, then together we get the Christmas decorations and decorate the tree."

The pastor thought to himself, A blind woman with a brightly lighted Christmas tree?

He then indicated to her that he did not want to be offensive, but he

could not quite understand why a blind woman would want to have a brightly decorated tree and lights in the window. The dear little lady tilted her head towards him and said, "Pastor, everybody is not blind."

The Halloween candy is never just for the homeowner. The Christmas lights we put up are for everyone to enjoy. St. Mark opens its doors for members and guests alike to experience the love of Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages us, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NRSV.) The days are getting colder and the nights are getting longer, but we're going to keep the lights on so everybody knows they're home at St. Mark.

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Dave

SESSION SNIPPETS

November 21, 2022

Wednesday Night Potluck Suppers are starting January 17, 2023. Plan to come at 5:00 pm and stay for the discussion on Finding the Gospel in Unexpected Places at 6:00 pm. Childcare will be available after the kids get to eat! The Finance Committee will be the “hosts” that evening, so make your plans to come, bring a dish, have time for fellowship with friends, and stay for a robust discussion with Pastor Dave.

There’s lots happening at St. Mark all the time, but even more so during December. Check the bulletin, the website, and all other sources. AND there will be church on Christmas morning. Pajamas, anyone?

Many thanks to the congregation for strong financial support these last years. Being in a good position with cash flow and knowing that those funds were given to be used, extra donations of needed items to four of our mission partners will be made. Each partner will receive specific item(s), based on their individual needs: Lafayette Industries—a large screen TV to use for training purposes; Mound Ridge—an ADA-compliant picnic table; Peace Meal—as they return to hosting guests in the building, paper goods are needed as well as an industrial mixer in the kitchen; Isaiah 58— items needed (blankets, housewares, and socks) for their holiday “store”.

NOVEMBER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Saturday	Sunday	Sunday	Total Attendance
		In Person	Online	
November 5&6	15	103	32*	150
November 12&13	17	136	103	256
November 19&20	22	157	120	299
November 26&27	16	117	61	194

*Please note that there was an issue with the livestream and it could not be accessed immediately.

DEACONS IN ACTION

COMMUNION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Communion Committee was required to find out how to have Communion and protect the Congregation from COVID. Church had been closed to in-person worship from March 2020 until May 16, 2021. It was proposed by Cay Noble that we use “Truevine” chalices. After checking reviews on it and other similar products, this proved to be the “best in class.” 500 were ordered. We were able to use these chalices in our first in-person Communion on Jun 6, 2021. We have continued distributing the chalices along with a tissue for their disposal for communion during worship services on the first weekend of each month. We have three ordained members, one at each door of the Sanctuary, to distribute the chalices and to collect the empty ones after each service.

Judy Richardson, Chairman
& Valerie Steiner, Committee Member



CHRISTMAS CANTATA



From the earliest Christian time, the rose has been a symbol of divine love. It gently reaches across the ages in ancient illuminations and freely spills from the pens and brushes of countless poets and artists. Echoing through our sanctuaries in the melodies and texts of many beloved carols, it brings to life the beautiful visions of biblical prophets and the hope of early Christian pilgrims.

Today, the rose remains a vital expression of love and peace both inside the Church and the outside world. Her appearance in the garden is a treasured harbinger of the coming spring's abundance. As a gift, the rose's delicate beauty is usually reserved for the most meaningful expressions of the heart. No flower holds our dreams of love more beautifully than she.

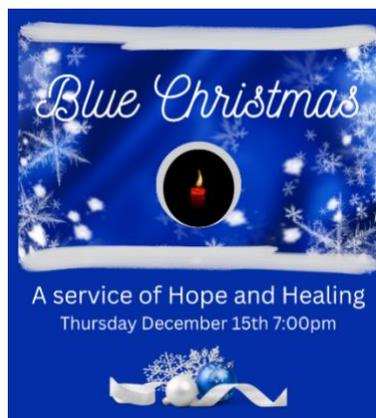
It is in that same spirit that the present work was conceived and written. It is our sincerest prayer that as Christ, the Rose of Sharon, opens before you this Christmas, your spirit will be encouraged by the beauty of God's greatest gift. Let the words and music of this cantata remind you that even in the deepest winter, we are people of joy and life... children of the garden.

~Joseph and Pamela Martin

GO GETTER CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON.



Please mark your calendars now to attend the St. Mark Go Getters Christmas luncheon to be held at the church at 12:00 pm on December 13. In typical fashion, we will cater our lunch, so it is very important to get your reservation in soon. We will have our usual Christmas White Elephant gift exchange (\$10.00), and a surprise guest will entertain us. Please contact Jan Graves if you have any specific dietary needs and to RSVP.



Blue Christmas service provides a quiet and contemplative worship space as an alternative to the more traditional Christmas gatherings. This service is in honor of those who are experiencing grief and struggling with

loss, and is a holiday tradition in the U.S. dating back to 1990.

Join us here at St. Mark Presbyterian Church for a service of hope and healing where you will have an opportunity to honor your loved one as you are invited to light a candle in their name. As you depart, you will be handed a small keepsake in remembrance of the service.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pastor MP mpanco@discoverstmark.org.

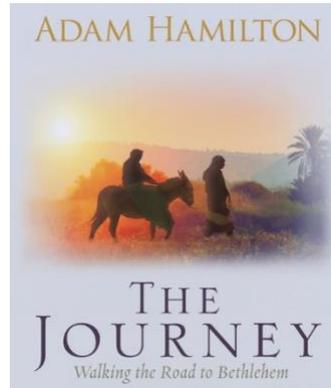
The service will be led by Pastor MP and is sponsored by the St. Mark Stephen's Ministry Team



UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER PARTY

Parents of preschool and elementary age kids (and anyone else who wants to join) - Join us Friday, December 16, at 6:30 pm for a holiday potluck and Ugly Sweater Contest. Bring your favorite side dish! Childcare will be provided at St. Mark from 6-10 pm. RSVP by December 11 to Shelley Lester.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ST. MARK



ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

November 4th and 11th,
December 2nd, 9th, and
16th

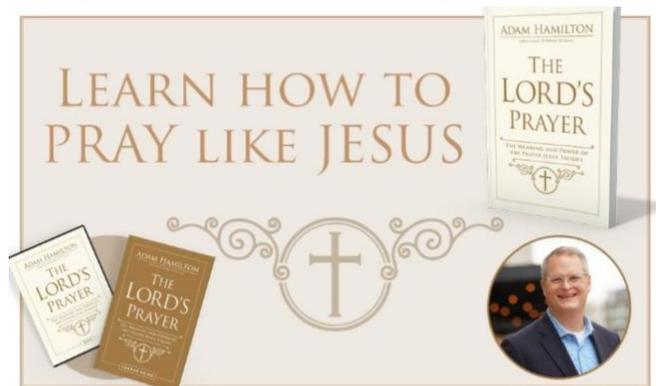
Join us on Friday mornings
from 9:00-10:00 am online
or in person in room 102
as we journey with Adam
Hamilton through the
Advent season.

In *The Journey*, Adam Hamilton travels from Nazareth to Bethlehem in a fascinating look at the birth of Jesus Christ. As he did with Jesus' crucifixion in *24 Hours That Changed the World*, Hamilton once again approaches a world-changing event with thoughtfulness.

Using historical information, archaeological data, and a personal look at some of the stories surrounding the birth, the most amazing moment in history will become more real and heart-felt as you walk along this road.

Contact Pastor MP to be added to the Friday morning Bible Study group email and to receive your Zoom link. mpanco@discoverstmark.org

Friday Bible Study Looking ahead 2023:



Study on the Lord's Prayer

Learn How to Pray Like Jesus – Adam Hamilton

January 6th, 13th, and 20th

February 3rd, 10th, and 17th



CHRISTMAS EVE OPEN HOUSE

The Burgess Family invites you to join us for an informal open house on Christmas Eve. We will open our doors (419 Claymont Dr.) at 6:00 pm, and everyone is invited to come by for a time of light refreshment after the Family Service or before the Candlelight Service.



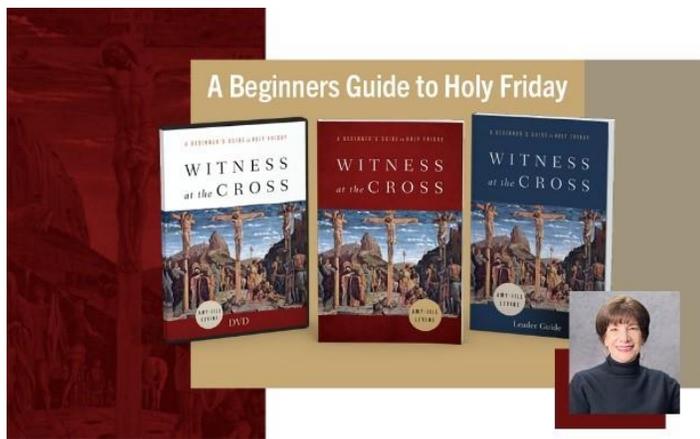
St. Mark will begin a 16-week journey through the Gospel of Mark on Sunday, January 1, 2023. We will cover a new chapter each week in worship and our adult education. This is a fantastic opportunity to read through the earliest gospel with others and to explore Jesus' teachings, miracles, and mission. We encourage everyone to commit to allowing time for personal reading and devotion. The program will conclude on Easter Sunday as we hear from Mark 16. We are excited to have everyone "On Your Mark" in 2023.

Thank You St. Mark

Dick and I want to thank St. Mark for all the love, support, prayers, cards, and meals during my shoulder surgery re-cooperation. We are keeping you in our prayers.

With loving thanks,

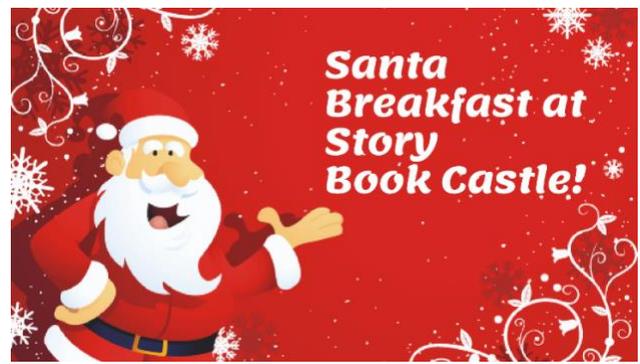
Betty Jo (Elizabeth) and Dick, Wallace



Lent Study

Witness at the Cross – Amy-Jill Levine

March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st, and April 7th



You're Invited to BREAKFAST WITH SANTA! Saturday, December 10 from 9:00 am to 11:30 am. Gleason Hall (Gym) at St. Mark Presbyterian Church for a morning of fun! We will serve pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, biscuits and gravy, fruit, juice, milk, and coffee! (Freewill offering) Activities include Storybook Castle, crafty projects for children, and a visit with Santa! This year we are featuring original Christmas stories and illustrations from some of our youngest writers. Check out our display at the Children's and Youth table in the Narthex and submit your story by November 15. Also, don't forget to bring hats, gloves and scarves to give to the kiddos at PCHAS (Presbyterian Children's Home and Services). Our Presbyterian Women will be selling some of their boutique items and we will have a Book Fair with proceeds going to Lydia's House and other local missions. Follow Candy Cane Lane to the Storybook Castle for all the activities!

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday school for children PreK – 5th grade takes place during Sunday worship, immediately following the Children's Message.

NURSERY

Nursery Care, for ages 0 - 2yrs, is available Sunday mornings from 9:45 – 11:00 am.

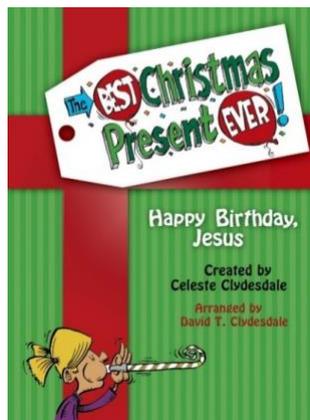
CHILDREN'S WEDNESDAYS

Joins us for PreK – 5th grade activities and curriculum-based programs every Wednesday from 5:00 – 6:00 pm!

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH



Join **Children's Ministries** and the



Fellowship Committee on

December 4th with our kick-off of December including our Children's Musical "The Best Christmas Present Ever!" beginning at 4 pm in the Sanctuary. Immediately following the show please join us for the Jingle Mingle in the Narthex from 5 pm to 7pm. Bring an appetizer or dessert to share and Fellowship will provide a festive punch to wash down all the yummy treats!



Youth Wednesdays 6pm - 7pm

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship. December 7th 6-7pm and December 14th 6-7:30 pm Youth Wednesdays will then take a break and weekly Wednesday meetings will resume January 11th, 2023.



Sunday, December 18, 4-6 pm. Wear your favorite Christmas get-up! Bring a “White Elephant” gift. Be ready to play games and have fun!

MISSION AT ST. MARK

DUE TO HIGH DEMAND, THE COAT DRIVE WILL CONTINUE THROUGH END OF JANUARY



New and gently used clean winter coats and clothing are needed for men, women, and kids, all sizes, and styles.

Many people in our region lack enough warm clothing to stay protected throughout winter. Our mission partners will ensure someone in need receives your gift of warmth!

FOOD PANTRY MOST WANTED

We are collecting the following items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58:



- *canned pasta with meat*
- *meal helpers*
- *canned tomato products*
- *boxed potato mixes*
- *lotion**
- *baby wipes**



All year long, we collect food and hygiene items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58 Ministries. Please place your donations on the table in the pastors’ hallway. *Non-food products such as lotion and baby wipes cannot be purchased with food stamps.

EQUAL EXCHANGE / FAIRLY TRADED IN THE NARTHEX



Through fair trade, small-scale farmers are better able to support their families and stay on their land with better income and support from their co-operatives. St. Mark supports this mission to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sustainable, and to foster mutually beneficial relationships between small farmers and consumers (that’s us!). *Credit and Debit cards accepted.*

Celebrating 22 years as part of St. Mark’s Christmas Alternatives Program!

**CHRISTMAS ALTERNATIVES 2022
A Twenty Two Year Tradition**

Are you struggling to find just the right gifts for family members and friends? Look no further than the St. Mark Christmas Alternatives shopping list!

Purchasing a gift through Christmas Alternatives honors the recipient and helps those who have so little, but need so much.

Please visit our displays in the narthex December 4th, 11th and 18th. We look forward to helping you select the perfect gift! Of course, you are also welcome to drop your completed shopping list and check (Christmas Alternatives on the memo line) in a collection plate, the church office or via mail. You will find the Christmas Alternatives Shopping List on the back of the bulletin.

THE TRADITION CONTINUES ...



The Angel Tree will once again be making an appearance in the Narthex. Please select an angel or two to help provide a Merry Christmas for one or more children. This year, Children's Ministry has selected Isaiah 58 as the recipient and they have provided a wish list for our Angel Tree. Please return your gift (\$15-25 range) and place it under the tree with the angel attached by December 18th.

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TRIVIA NIGHT IS BACK!



Details coming soon!
Proceeds benefit the 2023 St. Mark's Youth Group Mission Trip to Puerto Rico

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



*Woman of God[®]
 Wonderfully Made*

St. Mark 26th Annual Women's Retreat

February 10-11, 2023

Toddhall Retreat Center

Save the date!



Feasts of the Bible

Wednesday, January 25, 2023 1:00 p.m.

Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded the children of Israel to observe his holy days to remember the mighty things he had done in the lives of Israel's forefathers. These were the celebrations during the times in which Jesus lived. FotB, Rose

Save the Date!

