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Issue: December 2023

A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

# *The Messenger*

## **The Warm Light of Advent**

The English preacher, William Lonsdale Watkinson, is credited with coining the phrase, "It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness." I don't know if the sermon took place during Advent or in the December cold, but I like to think it did. The late sunrises and early sunsets testify the days are shorter, and the nights are longer. It's natural to think on other places where the darkness has laid hold with its icy grip. The war in Ukraine is about to enter its third year, the Holy Land is filled with terror, and it feels like the only certainty in our world is uncertainty. Closer to home, we witness the horrors of mass shootings, experience incivility whenever we dare to enter the political public square, and are living through wild economic swings.

I would not blame anyone if they felt a little swearing at the night was in order. There is a better way forward.

I believe the church liturgical calendar offers up hope (along with peace, joy, and love) for those of us willing to stand up to the night. The next four weeks are the darkest of the year, but we will light candles at the beginning of every worship service. We do this as a way of marking time as we approach Christmas Eve, but we also do it in anticipation of Jesus' triumphal return. The light was there at the very beginning and this light will lead us through the end. "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:4-5, NRSV.)

I do not know what long night you might be in right now, but I do know the darkness does not have the final say.

Hope wins.

Peace wins.

Joy wins.

Love wins.

Christ wins.

May we all experience the Advent season of anticipation and preparation with candles, prayers, and praise. May you have the light of Christ in your hearts even on the longest nights. May you reflect this light into the world so desperate to believe there is a better path forward. Little deeds of grace, kindness, and forgiveness might not seem like much, but these lights have the power to change the world. May we hold them up high for everyone to see.

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Dave

## SESSION SNIPPETS

### November 20 Meeting of Session:

- Plans for numerous upcoming events were discussed, including Jingle Mingle and the Children's Musical (December 3), Breakfast with Santa (December 9), Blue Christmas (December 14), Trivia Night, (February 24).
- It was noted that Sunday, December 24 is the last Sunday in Advent as well as Christmas Eve, with services celebrating both. Attend one and/or all: 10:00m a.m., 5:00, 7:00.
- Final numbers are not yet in, but the Christmas Boutique was a great success.
- Kathy Emge, attending as a St. Mark Commissioner, reported on the Presbytery Gathering on November 4. The guest speaker was Shavon Starling-Louis, General Assembly Co-Moderator. Her message of focus was the church's message must be "Your suffering matters to me". Rev. Dr. Dave Burgess was installed as the Vice-Moderator of GLPBY, which is a one-year term, with a second year serving as the Moderator, and the third year serving as the Moderator of the Vision Team.

## NOVEMBER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Saturday	Sunday	Sunday	Total Attendance
		In Person	Online	
<b>Nov. 4 &amp; 5</b>	12	126	75	213
<b>Nov. 11 &amp; 12</b>	13	143	91	247
<b>Nov. 18 &amp; 19</b>	12	173	69	254
<b>Nov. 25 &amp; 26</b>	17	157	68	242



What child is this? Jesus Christ, a perfect gift from a gracious God.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us—past, present, and future—who have pointed us to God.

We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Let's continue St. Mark's tradition of strongly supporting the Christmas Joy Offering. Use the envelope in your packet or simply designate the Joy Offering in the memo line on your check made out to St. Mark.



## CELEBRATING OUR SATURDAY SERVICE

The St. Mark Session recently voted to conclude the Saturday evening service. The church began offering this additional opportunity in the late 1990's for individuals who could not attend on Sundays. The world has changed plenty over the past 25 years as members and guests can now livestream services and watch worship on-demand. We will celebrate the conclusion of this Saturday gathering with a special service on December 16 at 5:00 PM. Everyone is invited to attend as we give thanks for this special season in the life of our congregation. Please contact Pastor Dave with any questions or concerns.

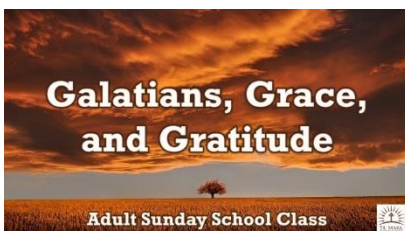


JOIN US ON  
**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
5:00 PM FAMILY WORSHIP  7:00 PM CANDLELIGHT



THE NEWBORN  
KING  
Christmas Cantata  
December 10

## ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ST. MARK



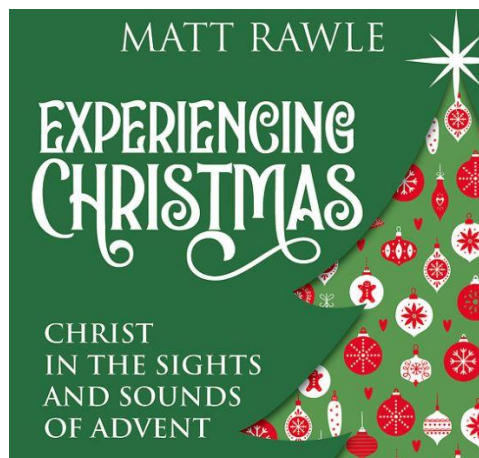
Galatians, Grace,  
and Gratitude  
Adult Sunday School Class

Please join us for the final Sunday in the study "Galatians, Grace, and Gratitude" on December 3 at 8:50

AM in Room 102. Let Pastor Dave know if you have any thoughts, questions, or if you need the ZOOM link for remote participation.

## ST. MARK MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The men's bible study meets in room 102 every Tuesday at 7:30 am. We are reading, What's So Amazing About Grace by Philip Yancy. All men are welcome! You may contact Bruce Cranston or Glen Corlett for more information.



MATT RAWLE  
EXPERIENCING  
CHRISTMAS  
CHRIST IN THE SIGHTS  
AND SOUNDS  
OF ADVENT

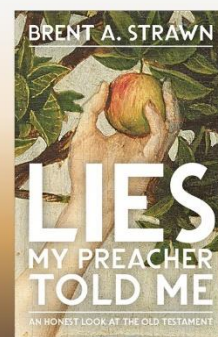
## Friday Bible Study

Join us Friday mornings from 9:00 am - 10:00 am on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup>, either in person or on Zoom. You can

buy the book if you desire but it is not necessary though we will be drawing from parts of it for the discussion. If you have any questions or want the Zoom link, contact pastor MP [mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org).

All-Church Book Study  
Arriving in January 2024

Pick up your copy today!



## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

### CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

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

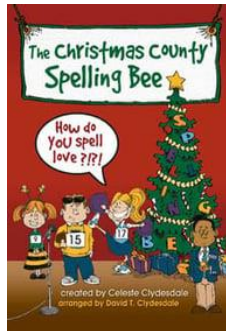
### NURSERY

Nursery Care, for ages 0 - 2yrs, is available Sunday mornings from 8:30 – 11:00 am.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL SIGN IN!

Please be sure to sign in your student(s) for Sunday School! Parents will receive a card after Time With Children with a QR code for access to the sign in. We ask that you have your student(s) registered so that we can contact you via text in the event that you are needed.

# Jingle Mingle



## DECEMBER 3 CHILDREN'S MUSICAL - 4PM, JINGLE MINGLE - 5 PM

Join **Children's Ministries** and the **Fellowship Committee** on December 3rd for the Children's Musical "The Christmas County Spelling Bee" 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!

**SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM THE NORTH POLE**

Return to Candy Cane Lane, and Enjoy Breakfast with Santa

**MENU:**  
SCRAMBLED EGGS,  
BISCUITS/GRAVY,  
SAUSAGE, PANCAKES,  
FRUIT, COFFEE/HOT COCOA

OUR FUN ACTIVITIES INCLUDE- A BAKE SALE AT THE LITTLE ELF BAKE SHOP, ARTS & CRAFTS, CAKE WALK, AND COOKIE DECORATING

**SATURDAY 12/9 @ 9:30-11:30**

St Mark Presbyterian Church 601 Claymont  
Dr Ballwin, MO 63011

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH

### Youth Music Ensemble

Rehearsals Dec. 3rd & 10th

11:15am - 12:15pm

Contact Pastor MP

[mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org)

Play in worship December 17th

Join Us For...

## YOUTH WEDNESDAYS

December 6th, 13th, 20th

SEEK \* DISCOVER \* SHARE

Youth 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up meet Wednesdays from 6:00 – 7:00 pm for food, fun, fellowship, and faith! If you have any questions, contact pastor MP [mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org) or call the church office.



December classes are December 3, 10, and 17 at 9 am.

## Zoo Wild Lights

December 17th

TICKETS \$10 ON SALE NOW!!!  
(REGULAR PRICE \$18 - SAVE \$8)

Contact Pastor MP to reserve your tickets

Our December Youth Hangout will take place at the ZOO! If you have not reserved your tickets or have any questions contact Pastor MP [mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org).

## MISSION AT ST. MARK DECEMBER FOOD PANTRY CRITICAL NEEDS



- Kid-friendly Cereal
- Instant Oatmeal
- Jelly (we have peanut butter – yay!)
- Adult personal care products – shampoo, deodorant, bar soap, toothpaste & toothbrushes, lotion\*



All year long, we collect food and hygiene items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58 Ministries. \*Non-food products cannot be purchased with food stamps. Please place donations on the table in the Pastors' hallway.



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

Our mission partners will ensure someone in need receives your gift of warmth! Place your donations in the foyer outside the office.

## EQUAL EXCHANGE / FAIRLY TRADED –

December 3, 10, & 17  
in the Narthex

Great host/hostess gifts and treats for you and your loved ones!



When you choose Equal Exchange, you're supporting a more equitable alternative trade system that empowers local communities and small family farms worldwide. Cash, Credit, Debit, Tap accepted.



### GO GETTER CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Our Go Getter Christmas luncheon will be held at St. Mark on December 12 at 12 pm.

Please let Jan Graves or Judy Richardson know of your plans to attend.

Please bring a gift (\$10) for a gift exchange.

Invite a friend to join us for food, fun, and fellowship!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

### THANK YOU, ST. MARK!

The Presbyterian Women of St Mark wish to thank everyone who assisted in making our 2023 Christmas Boutique and Angel Street Café a resounding success. We grossed over \$10,000 dollars, leaving a profit after expenses of over \$8,000 to be distributed among our mission partners. Whether you donated time with set-up and clean-up, worked in the kitchen/café or assisted with vendors, provided baked or cooked items for our café, or any other tasks, we are so very grateful for the support of our church family.



PW Book club will meet on Wednesday, December 20, at 9:30 am. The book for this month is *The Maid* by Nita Prose. Judy Richardson will lead the discussion. There is an option to participate virtually. Please contact Judy Richardson for more information.

**Save the Date!**

**Wednesday**

**January 24 2024**

*The Event Formerly  
Known As The PW Tea*



Parents of preschool and elementary age kids (and anyone else who wants to join) - Join us Friday, December 15, at 6 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. Got to this link to RSVP by December 11.

<https://www.evite.com/event/02BAQMXERRINLU7QE/EPOM7K4AHX4EQ/> or contact Shelley Lester.



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.

The service will be led by Pastor MP and is sponsored by the St. Mark Stephen's Ministry Team. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pastor MP [mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org).



On Sunday, December 17, we invite you to share your nativity/creche with St. Mark before and after worship service. Tables will be provided in the Narthex to set up your display and we encourage you to share your family traditions with the church. For more information contact Sally Shepherd or Mary Beth Powell.



## 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.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CLAYMONT PRESCHOOL



This past month, Claymont Preschool at St. Mark was so happy to welcome the St. Louis Zoo to our school!



Miss Angie came to each all of our classes about different animals. We heard several stories, moved like animals, and were able to touch the furs of rabbits, squirrels, bears, and alligators.

Our older students also went on a scavenger hunt, around the room, to look for different animals. We were grateful for this opportunity that was given to us by a very kind donation



by Boots Berry.



Our students also had the opportunity to give back this month. We collected over 180 items for those in need. We were happy to be able to help Circle of Concern this Holiday Season.



## HONORING FAMILY AND FRIENDS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE GIVING



Finding the perfect gift for someone who has many wonderful possessions is a difficult task! With this in mind, in 2001 the newly formed Mission Committee at St. Mark created "Christmas Alternatives." Purchasing a gift through Christmas Alternatives honors the recipient and also helps deserving people who have so little but need so much.

## Honoring Family and Friends Through Alternative Giving

Because we are blessed with many material possessions, when Christmas comes around, we encounter a huge challenge selecting gifts for family and friends. Finding the perfect gift for someone who has many wonderful possessions is a difficult task! With this in mind, in 2001 the newly formed Mission Committee at St. Mark created "Christmas Alternatives."

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

Thank you for your faithful support during the past 22 years (2001-2022)  
Your generosity has transformed lives and had a lasting impact around the world!

### Christmas Alternatives 2023 - Our 23rd Year!

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you want Christmas Cards?  YES  NO  
 St. Mark Member?  YES  NO  
 If Yes, contributions will be included on your annual giving statement.  
 If No, would you like us to mail you a receipt?  YES  NO

**DEADLINE: December 24th, 2023**

Please include payment with form.

Place in Mission Committee Mailbox in Church Office

-- or --

Mail to:

St. Mark Presbyterian Church  
 ATTN: Christmas Alternatives  
 601 Claymont Drive  
 Ballwin, MO 63011

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

DATE SUBMITTED: \_\_\_\_\_

PAID? \_\_\_\_\_

## Shopping List 2023 Christmas Alternatives

Marion Medical Mission (Africa)	Price	Qty	Total
Contribute to Build a Well (\$450/well)	\$ 25.00		
<b>Total</b>			

Medical Benevolence Foundation	Price	Qty	Total
Nursing school scholarships: Malawi, Haiti, DR Congo, Kenya	\$ 30.00		
Life Saver Clinics: DR Congo, Malawi, Kenya and Haiti	\$ 25.00		
Share for Greatest Needs (e.g., vaccinations, malaria nets)	\$ 15.00		
<b>Total</b>			

Education Scholarship Partnership with Presbytery of Giddings Lovejoy	Price	Qty	Total
Plan Grande #2, Nicaragua High School (\$200/year/student)	\$ 50.00		
<b>Total</b>			

PCUSA International Food and Income Security Missions	Price	Qty	Total
Family of Chickens (\$25/family)	\$ 25.00		
Share of Cow (\$450/dairy cow)	\$ 50.00		
Share of Goat (\$178/pair)	\$ 30.00		
Piglet (\$40/piglet)	\$ 40.00		
Share of Bee Hive (\$240/hive)	\$ 20.00		
Share of Moringa Seeds (food for humans - \$40/bag)	\$ 20.00		
Share of Rainwater Catchment (\$75/system)	\$ 25.00		
Share of Sewing Machine (\$50 each)	\$ 25.00		
<b>Total</b>			

PCUSA Mission Co-Workers	Price	Qty	Total
Rev. Jed and Jenny Koball, Peru	\$ 50.00		
Chenoa Stock, Peru	\$ 50.00		
<b>Total</b>			

Presbyterian Childrens Homes and Services	Price	Qty	Total
Support Farmington Service Center community, family, and youth therapeutic programs	\$ 50.00		
<b>Total</b>			

General Gift to Christmas Alternatives	Price	Qty	Total
St. Mark Mission Committee to Designate Recipients	\$ 50.00		
<b>Total</b>			

SHOPPING LIST GRAND TOTAL	Qty	Total
Checks to: St. Mark Presbyterian Church		\$
Memo Line: Christmas Alternatives		