



Issue: February 2025



A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

The Messenger

It's Groundhog Day...Again

I love to watch holiday movies. Every Thanksgiving, I grab some popcorn and take in “Planes, Trains, and Automobiles.” Every Christmas, we enjoy “It’s a Wonderful Life” along with so many other classics. Several years ago, our family started the tradition of re-watching “Groundhog Day” on February 2. This movie came out in 1993, and I remember seeing it in the theater on its first run. It tells the story of an egotistical Pittsburgh weatherman who is doomed to repeat the same day over-and-over again in the little hamlet of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. Viewers feel the angst and the hope as the protagonist undergoes a plodding progression from being an egotistical narcissist to a selfless servant. It’s a heartwarming story, but, in the end, it’s Hollywood magic.

I wonder how many of us fall into the trap of feeling one day is no different than the last. It’s easy to get caught in the familiar routines and lose track of time (and ourselves) in the process. Is there more to life than the “same old same old”? I believe scripture provides many words of hope as we hit the halfway point of winter. In the middle of Lamentations, the writer proclaims, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23.) God doesn’t want us to throw away any of our days or treat any of our time on earth as a waste. Too often, past regrets or anxieties about the future steal today’s joys and wonders.

Frederick Buechner writes, “Life is grace. Sleep is forgiveness. The night absolves. Darkness wipes the slate clean, not spotless to be sure, but clean enough for another day’s chalking.” I know there will be times where we place our hope in the upcoming spring, and there will be moments of dread thinking the winter will never end. May we all commit to living into each moment fully knowing that this is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24.)

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Dave

SESSION SNIPPETS

At the January 27 Meeting, the Session heard a report from Delegates to the December 14 Presbytery meeting regarding the final actions and resolution of the Administration Commission on Dardenne Prairie, as the legal process for that congregation to leave the Presbytery and the PCUSA has been concluded. Session also heard an update from the Design Committee.

Motions approved to:

- Allow the Design Committee to continue moving forward with plans as presented
- Approve Officers of the Corporation
 - o President Eleni Lieven
 - o Vice President Bob Lienemann
 - o Secretary Kim Michel
 - o Treasurer Mark Caplinger
- Emergency Operations Plan was approved, and is available in the Office

JANUARY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Sunday In Person	Sunday Online	Total Attendance
January 5	0	291	291
January 12	160	102	262
January 19	123	103	226
January 26	141	96	237

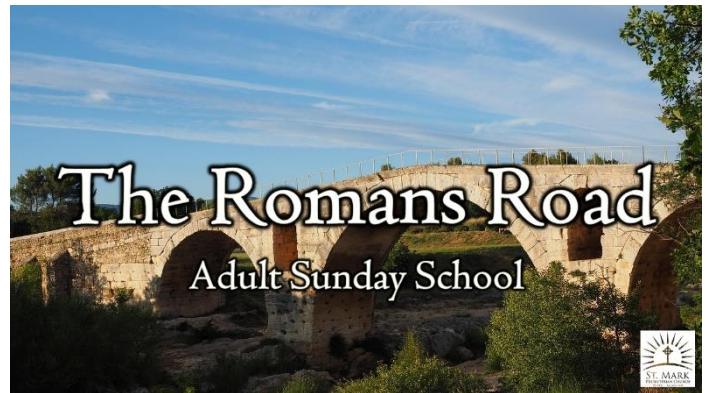
2025 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES

If you wish to increase your 2025 Stewardship pledge, you may do so in your SimpleChurch account. Sign in to SimpleChurch, select Giving, hover to the right of the Total Pledged for 2025 and click on the pencil that appears to edit your amount. You may also contact the church office for assistance. If you have set up your payment on the St. Mark website, please contact Support at Vanco, 888-237-7850, to make changes.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ST. MARK

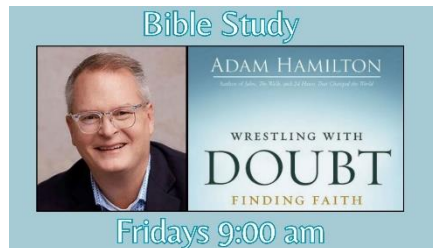
MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

St. Mark Men meet in Room 102 every Tuesday at 7:30 am. We are using the book, "12 Ordinary Men", by Joe MacArther. All men are welcome and can contact Bruce Cranston for more information.



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

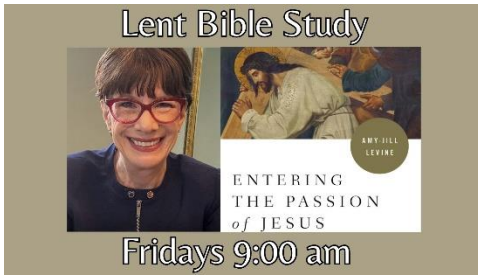
This new class begins Sunday, February 2!



“Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith” – by Adam Hamilton
Everyone has doubts. Where is

God when bad things happen? Does God hear our prayers? Is there a heaven? How can we know? Often, we treat such questions as the enemy of faith. But uncertainty doesn't mean our belief is lacking. Doubt can be a path to a deeper, richer encounter with God. In Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith, join best-selling author and pastor Adam Hamilton as he discusses some of our most significant sources of doubt and shows how a steady trust in God can emerge from them.”
Join us for 6 Fridays at 9:00 am January 10, 17, 24 and February 7, 14, and 28.

UPCOMING FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY



“Entering the Passion of Jesus” – by Amy-Jill Levine

Jesus’ final days were full of risk. Every move he made was filled with anticipation, danger, and the potential for great loss or great reward. Jesus risked his reputation when he entered Jerusalem in a victory parade. He risked his life when he dared to teach in the Temple. His followers risked everything when they left behind their homes, or anointed him with costly perfume. We take risks as we read and re-read these stories, finding new meanings and new challenges.

In *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner’s Guide to Holy Week*, author, professor, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine explores the biblical texts surrounding the Passion story. She shows us how the text raises ethical and spiritual questions for the reader, and how we all face risk in our Christian experience.

Join us for 6 Fridays at 9:00am March 1st, 21st, 28th, and April 4th, 11th, 18th

WHAT’S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH



Youth 6th grade – 12th. Join us for food, fun, faith, and fellowship! If you have any questions, contact Pastor MP mpanco@discoverstmark.org or call the church office.



Help Tackle Hunger by bringing your non-perishable food item/s or \$ to church. Vote for your favorite Super Bowl team by dropping your donation on your team’s side! All proceeds benefit our local St. Mark mission partners. Our goal for 2025 is to repeat or exceed our success of 2024. Which was \$1,300 + 700pounds of food = 2,000! Can we do it? YES, WE CAN!



The Youth Group and their families are invited to enjoy the Super Bowl at the Burgesses House on February 9h from starting at 5pm. Bring a friend, a favorite appetizer to share, and some football fever as we enjoy the game, the commercials, and this time together. Everyone is welcome to this annual event!





Grab 7 of your closest trivia-loving friends and head to St. Mark on Saturday, March 8th, 2025. Registration is open through February 23rd. Registration forms can be obtained through the church office.

The cost is \$200 per table – that’s just \$25 per person!

Doors open at 5 pm and trivia starts at 6 pm. There will also be a silent auction, games, and prizes.

Participants may bring their own beverage of choice –water and soda will be provided. Look for the registration forms on the Youth Table in the Narthex and on the St. Mark website, www.discoverstmark.org

All proceeds benefit the 2025 St. Mark Youth Group Summer Mission Trip to a Disaster Assistance Center in Ferncliff, Arkansas to help with disaster relief situations around the country.

Donations are also needed! We are currently seeking donations of gift cards, tickets to local sporting events, theater shows, or music venues for silent auction baskets. Donations of bottled water, cans of soda, and bottles of wine are also needed for the event. Please contact Heather Neal for more information.



Youth Mission June 8-14, 2025: Youth 12yr and older. Friends encouraged! Information packets available by contacting Pastor MP mpanco@discoverstmark.org.



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.

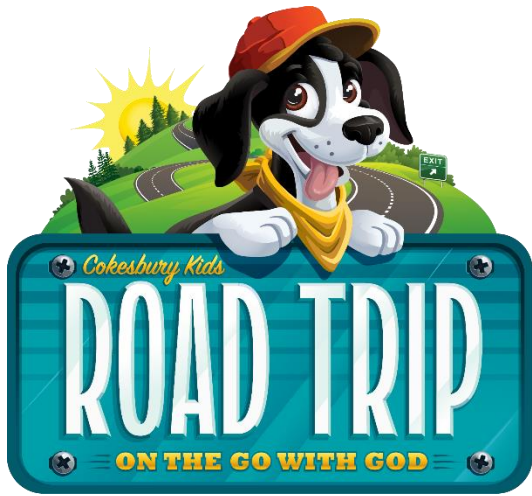
NURSERY

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

WEDNESDAY EVENING ACTIVITIES

Midweek Praise Club, 5:30 -6:30 pm





VBS AT ST. MARK – JULY 14-18

You've saved the date - now it's time to write it in your calendar. You have been invited to go on the most fun and extraordinary road trip adventure ever. You won't be alone as our mascot Scout is coming along and we will learn Joshua 1:9 "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go." We need early teams to sign up so - sign up today!



Registration is open! Use this QR code or go to discoverstmark.org to register!



Volunteers are also needed! If you can help for a few days or the entire week, use this QR code or go to the St. Mark website to register!

MISSION AT ST. MARK

FEBRUARY FOOD PANTRY CRITICAL NEEDS

- Pasta
- Pasta Sauces
- Condiments - Ketchup, BBQ Sauce, Salsa, Salad Dressing, Mayo
- Shampoo and Conditioner

All year long, we collect food and hygiene items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58 Ministries.

*Non-food products such as shampoo and conditioner cannot be purchased with food stamps.



CLEAN OUT YOUR WINTER CLOTHES! February Last Month for the Coat Drive



New and gently used clean winter coats and clothing are STILL needed for men, women, and kids, all sizes, and styles. Our mission partners will ensure someone in need receives your gift of warmth! Please place your donations in the bins in the office foyer.

LET US RESOLVE TO RECYCLE TOGETHER IN 2025 ...

Plastic caps and lids STILL needed!

Plastic in our world is not going away anytime soon, so let's keep it out of the landfill and turn it into a new picnic table for Mound Ridge!



We need:

- caps/lids of all types from food grade containers and household items up to 8" in diameter
- look for the recycle symbol with number 2, 4, or 5

Please drop off your caps and lids in the collection bin near the Youth table in the Narthex.

EQUAL EXCHANGE, FEBRUARY 9

EQUAL EXCHANGE HOT COCOA.... AN INTERNATIONAL TREAT



Every time we serve Equal Exchange coffee at St Mark or sell Equal Exchange products we are making a strong statement about our values. We are proclaiming that our congregation believes that it's vital to keep small farmers on the land providing food for their families and having some economic control over their lives; that it's important to work with indigenous producers and women; that sustainable agricultural methods are a vital way to address climate change.

Cash, Credit, Debit, Digital Wallet Payments Accepted

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

BOOK CLUB

Book club will meet Wednesday, February 26, at 9:30 am. There is an option to participate virtually as well as in person. Please contact Judy Richardson for a Zoom invite to participate virtually.



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE BLANKET & KITS MINISTRY

Blanketing the world in love is easy when people of faith unite through the Church World Service (CWS) Blankets and Kits ministry. Together, we can offer comfort, hope and warmth to our neighbors during their most challenging times. When disasters strike, families are left vulnerable, often without even basic comforts. Many of our neighbors face the harsh reality of winter without adequate warmth. But here's the good news: we can help. \$10 provides a warm CWS blanket to someone who desperately needs it. \$25 provides a blanket and a hygiene kit to help someone start fresh. \$60 provides an entire family bundle of blankets and kits, bringing comfort and care to a whole household. Please help Presbyterian Women spread love, share warmth, and deliver hope to people who may feel forgotten by donating in the month of February.



It's time! The St. Mark 28th annual Women's Retreat...**Relax, Refresh, Renew**...will take place at St. Mark on February 21 and 22. Registration forms for this unique experience are now available at the PW Table in the Narthex. Gathering at St. Mark provides an easy-to-get-to location for you to attend and with more flexibility to be part of it...Friday only, Saturday only, both or even just for a couple of hours. And, you can sleep in your own bed with your own pillow.

The Retreat Mission Project will be Friday afternoon as we assemble hygiene kits for Church World Service/Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Our youth will deliver these to the Ferncliff staging facility when they go there on the summer mission trip. If you are interested in donating items or \$\$\$\$ for the project, there is information on the PW Table. A chocolate tasting will be a special treat on Friday afternoon! What is more refreshing than a good piece of chocolate? Our Reverend MP Panco will lead Friday evening and Saturday sessions as we find ways to relax, refresh and renew ourselves spiritually, emotionally and physically. Group and individual activities will give you opportunities to relax with new and long-time friends. Renewing our individual relationship with our loving God and together will conclude with worship and communion on Saturday afternoon.

Registration is now open with forms on the PW Table in the Narthex. The fee is \$50.00 for Friday **AND** Saturday. If you can only join us for **one** day, Friday **OR** Saturday, the fee is \$35.00. This covers dinner, a continental breakfast and lunch on Sunday along with all retreat study materials. Please send your registration to Sharon Cardwell, Retreat Registrar. If you have any questions, contact Sharon or Mary Beth Powell.



Grief is a journey we are never prepared to take. Have you lost a spouse, family member, or

close friend? Are you finding it difficult to talk about your loss? Do you feel nobody understands? GriefShare is a place you can come with caring compassionate people to walk with you on your grief journey. GriefShare meets weekly for 13 weeks. It is very helpful, but not required to attend all the sessions. Our next session starts Tuesday February 11, 6:30 – 8:00 pm.

Book fee: \$10.00

For information, contact Debbie Hames.

UPCOMING 2025 BLOOD DRIVES



St. Mark & the American Red Cross are pleased to announce the 2025 Blood Drive schedule as follows:

- February 23
- April 27
- August 17
- October 26

These Blood Drives are held in Gleason Hall on Sundays from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM

For years St. Mark has participated in this very valuable community service. For donors who regularly give blood, please add this schedule to your 2025 calendar. For members & community residents who have been thinking about giving for the first time, let year 2025 be the beginning of a new habit in your life.

A member of your community may be the one who receives your blood because of cancer, transplant surgery, other life-saving surgeries, genetic blood disorders, various illnesses & a multitude of various accidents. **BE THE ONE WHO BRINGS HOPE & HEALING TO THOSE PATIENTS IN NEED.**

The Deacon's Health & Wellness Committee looks forward to seeing our past donors & renewing old friendships & hopefully meeting new donors & making new friendships in this coming new year.

Go Getter Luncheon
February 11, 12 pm

The luncheon will be held at church and we will play Valentine Bingo! The cost is \$10. Please invite a friend and join us for food, fun, and fellowship. Please let Judy Richardson know of your plans to attend.

TROOP 631

SPAGHETTI SUPPER
March 1, 4 – 8 pm
 All you can eat!
 \$10 per person

(dine in or carry out) includes spaghetti, meatballs, bread, salad, and desserts. Children 5 and under are free. Vegan and gluten free options are available.



Use the QR code to purchase tickets online.
 (Online purchase includes a \$.50 processing fee.)



POTLUCK & PROGRAM,
FEBRUARY 19
AT 5PM. More details to follow soon!

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CLAYMONT PRESCHOOL

January has flown by quickly at Claymont Preschool at St. Mark! We have been keeping busy with golfing in Fellowship Hall, biking and obstacle courses in our wonderful Gleason Hall, and, of course, music and snacking along with learning in our classrooms!



Save the Date!

May 19 is the
19th Annual
Circle of Concern
Golf Tournament

