



Issue: December 2025



A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

The Messenger

Routine Maintenance Revelations

I am writing the December newsletter message from the comfort of our auto dealer's service center waiting room. This is my second visit this week for routine checkups on our two vehicles. I wonder what good news can be drawn from a place of maintenance and repair, of anxiety and uncertainty, of waiting and hope. It occurs to me there are things to learn and appreciate amidst the uncomfortable chairs and substandard coffee. God is with us as we wait.

The liturgical year concluded on November 23 with our Reign of Christ Sunday and Giving Thanks Dinner. Our journey each day, each year, each season is toward a God who sits enthroned above everything seen and unseen. We flip the page to a new year on November 30 with the beginning of our Advent journey toward Christmas and the hope of Jesus' return. During the shortest days of the year, we proclaim HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE, and CHRIST. Through the longest nights, we light candles and proclaim the darkness does not have the final say.

The prophet Isaiah announces, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive

and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Matthew's gospel proclaims the fulfillment of the promise made manifest in Jesus and his mother, Mary. Immanuel means God with us.

God is with us as we wait with our anxious thoughts. God is with us in our doubts. God is with us in our brokenness. The God of Love is with us and will never let us go.

We have four weeks to wait and wonder, to pray and ponder, to receive and to give. I encourage you to join us in worship during this Advent journey as we sing familiar hymns, hear encouraging messages, and proclaim the light through the longest nights of the year. Consider this a season of routine maintenance for your spirit. There are times in life when we must wait, but I give thanks we never wait alone. There is good news in new beginnings and long-awaited ends.

"Christ *has* come, Christ *is* risen, Christ *will* come again."

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Dave

SESSION SNIPPETS

November 17 Session Meeting:

The Session approved the final lighting proposal for the Sanctuary and Narthex. Phil Laux shared that installation should begin after Easter. Loren Polak reported that the Red Cross Blood Drive has occurred for the last several years, but the Red Cross has discontinued weekend drives that result in fewer than 40 units collected (we only had 27 units last month). Blood drives will no longer be held at St. Mark, but members will be encouraged to donate at other locations in West County. St. Mark will join the West County Chamber of Commerce (at their rate for nonprofit organizations). This is an affordable way to provide exposure for St. Mark to external businesses and groups.

NOVEMBER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Sunday In Person	Sunday Online	Total Attendance
November 2	160	114	274
November 9	134	103	237
November 16	150	82	232
November 23	180	64	244
November 30	96	135	231



CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Prepare the way (Isaiah 40)

The prophet Isaiah gave those listening to him a very particular task to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, the person we know as Jesus, the perfect gift. Isaiah proclaims that to prepare the way is to make highways easily navigable, fill in valleys, flatten hills, level the ground, make the earth smooth. Then, and only then, will God's glory be revealed, and will cause all humanity to see that God has spoken to us.

Our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering combine with those from thousands of congregations throughout PCUSA to do our part to repair the world: to ensure our retired pastors, church workers and their families have the tools they need to flourish, and to 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.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ST. MARK



SUNDAYS AT 8:50 AM



FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Join us for a study of the books called "Angels" by Vinita Hampton Wright.

"What - or who - are angels? Where did they come from, and what is their purpose? What is their relationship to us as human beings? This study will explore numerous Bible passages that reveal the services these heavenly beings perform, the part they play in spirituality, and how they differ from other beings in God's created order."

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Men's Tuesday Bible Study is reading Max Lucado's book, "You Are Never Alone". It uses the Gospel of John as a source of God's active presence in our lives. All men are welcome to join us for Bible study every Tuesday morning at 7:30 am! If you have questions call or email Bruce Cranston.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH



Youth 6th– 12th grade. Join us for food, fun, faith, and fellowship! If you have any questions, call the church office.



The Zoo Lights are open from 5 – 8:30 pm. Families are encouraged to meet at the entrance at 6 pm for a group photo. The cost is \$8 per participant. Ticket requests must be received by December 1. You may sign up at the youth table or contact Jen Melter or Liz Oglesby.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

CHILDREN'S SUNDAYSCHOOL

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



Return once again to Candy Cane Lane and join the Merry Music Makers at St. Mark for breakfast with Santa on December 13, 9:30 – 11:30 am.

Festivities include music from the St. Mark Youth Ensemble, Jingle Bell Sing along, crafts, cake walk, photo opportunities, & storytime with Santa at 10:30 am. The breakfast menu includes scrambled eggs, biscuits and gravy, sausage, pancakes, fruit, coffee, and hot chocolate. All are welcome!

MISSION AT ST. MARK DECEMBER FOOD PANTRY CRITICAL NEEDS

- Baking basics and mixes
- Canned and dry beans
- Canned tomatoes (15 oz & larger)
- Dinner Helpers
- Personal Care Items



We collect food and hygiene items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58 Ministries. Please place your donations on the mission table outside the church office. *Non-food products cannot be purchased with food stamps.

EQUAL EXCHANGE

In the Narthex on
December 7, 14, & 21

St. Mark supports this mission

to build long-term trade
partnerships that are

economically just,

environmentally sustainable, and to foster mutually
beneficial relationships between small farmers and
consumers.

Cash, Credit, Debit, Digital Wallet Payments
Accepted

Equal Exchange Small Farmers Fund lost its USAID
funding, so are seeking funding alternatives that are
reliable and consistent. 100% of your donation
goes to co-op development projects that offer
much needed help support to our farmer partners
as they face unprecedented market and climate
challenges. Tariffs are also having a significant
impact on Equal Exchange. For more info, see
<https://shop.equalexchange.coop/products/donate>



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

THANK YOU, ST. MARK!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this
year's PW Christmas Boutique a resounding
success. Whether you provided food items for the
café or bakery, worked a shift, assisted with setup
or cleanup, placed signs in your yard, or
remembered us in your prayers, your support is
truly appreciated.

Thanks to your generosity, we netted
approximately \$10,000 after expenses, which will
be distributed to our mission partners early next
year.

Once again, thank you to all — we couldn't have
done it without you.

St. Mark Presbyterian Women

HONORING FAMILY AND FRIENDS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE GIVING

Finding the perfect,
meaningful gift for someone who has many
wonderful possessions is a difficult task! With this
in mind, the newly formed Mission Committee at
St. Mark created "Christmas Alternatives" in 2001.

Purchasing a gift through Christmas Alternatives
honors the recipient and will help lift a family out
of poverty. That family will in turn help another
community member. Every gift is another word in
an ongoing story of hope that will help create a
cycle of change for generations to come.

The "shopping list" will be available in December's
Messenger and bulletins and on the welcome desk.
Displays will be in the Narthex on December 7, 14,
& 21st.



On Christmas Day at half past three

Brew yourself a cup of tea.

I'll think of you, you'll think of me

As we enjoy our Christmas tea!

Enjoy a cookie too!

Then on Wednesday, January 28,

please join us for the

PW Mid Winter Gathering!

BOOKCLUB

The Presbyterian Women's Book Club will meet December 10 to discuss the book, *Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers* by Jesse Sutanto. There is a virtual option for meeting as well. Please contact Judy Richardson for more information.



Start your holiday season with a little "Jingle Mingle"! The Fellowship Committee invites you to join us right after the Children's holiday program on Sunday, December 7, at 5:00 p.m. in the Narthex. Bring an appetizer or dessert to share as we take some time in a festive, yet relaxed atmosphere to enjoy fellowship with one another before the hustle and bustle of the holidays kicks into high gear. We're sure to have a "jolly" good time!



The holidays are fast approaching and the hustle and bustle of this happy season will soon begin. For some people, however, this time of year is anything but happy. The holidays have a completely different feeling when you have lost a loved one. Going out to parties, being with people is not what you want to do. Join us for Surviving the Holidays. It is a one-time two-hour session, Tuesday December 2, that will try to help you find the tools to get through the holidays. Please join us. For more information contact Debbie Hames.



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. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the church office.



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. Be with people who are experiencing similar feelings. Let us help you. GriefShare meets weekly for 13 weeks. It is very helpful, but not required to attend all the sessions. Our next session starts Tuesday January 13, 6:00 – 8:00 pm. For information, contact Debbie Hames.



**CHURCH-WIDE
“PAJAMA
SUNDAY”
WORSHIP
SERVICE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER
28, 10:00 AM**
“The Heart that Grew
Three Sizes-Finding Faith in
the Story of the Grinch”

Rediscover the gift of Christmas that comes without packages, ribbons, and bows. Our worship experience will explore the faith themes found in the Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

- How did the Grinch's heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning?
- How did Christmas save the Grinch?
- Could it be that the very thing we thing we dislike the most around the holidays is the one thing that changes our lives?

If we're being honest, there will probably be things in our Christmas celebrations this year that will awaken a Grinch within all of us. Maybe the gift we unwrap will be all wrong, or the joyful memories we hope to make won't turn out so joyful. With so many of us dwelling on everything that seems wrong in our world today, the bright and joyful upcoming celebrations may seem much too bright and loud!

If you would like to wear your pajamas, and bring your favorite stuffy or blankie to church on this “in-between” Christmas and New Year Sunday, please do so! This way we can get comfortable while we spend time taking a look at the familiar classic through the lens of faith and see how Christ speaks to us through this story today.

As in year's past, this is also a great opportunity to bring your snack and cookie leftovers and plan to stay a bit after the service and enjoy a time of refreshments and fellowship activities in the Narthex. If you have any questions, please speak to Donna Schiro.



For more information and to register, please go to our registration website <https://go.rallyup.com/christmascamp2025> or email Sarah Ripka-Towe at slyn18@yahoo.com.

