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Issue: January 2026

A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

The Messenger



Comfort, Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude

The adult Sunday school class recently completed a four-month journey through the Presbyterian Church's Book of Confessions. We discussed the history, theology, and implication of every affirmation, confession, creed, and catechism. It is so important to understand these foundational documents and to seek to live out their truths in our daily walk. One of the most meaningful discussions centered on the Heidelberg Catechism. The document was published in 1563 and was soon accepted by Reformed churches throughout Europe. It is designed to provide instruction for young people, give a pastoral guide for preaching, and shape a faith that is lived, not just learned.

The questions and answers are divided into 52 Lord's Day sections, and we will be using them as our Affirmation of Faith throughout 2026. Over the course of this year, we will cover the essentials of the Christian faith and look at practical applications for our lives. Throughout my nearly 24 years of ministry, I recognize we all have questions we are afraid to ask. Everyone feels like there was one Sunday school class they missed that would have provided all the answers. Heidelberg provides a clear explanation of God's plan for salvation.

The catechism begins with a familiar question, "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" It then moves to discussions on Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude. I am excited to begin this yearlong journey with you all on January 4, 2026, and I encourage you to ponder the questions ahead of each service. This is the heart of the Reformed confessional tradition, and I look forward to learning/relearning it together.

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Dave

SESSION SNIPPETS

December 15 Session Meeting:

The Session and Deacons held their annual Joint Meeting on December 15. Newly elected officers were "examined", and the Session approved the slate of new officers. Ordination and installation will be during the January 11 Service.

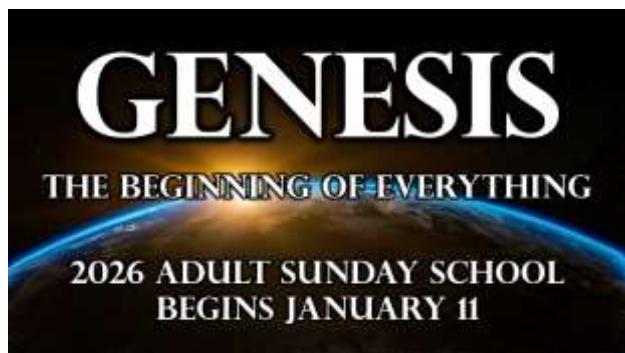
A request was approved for St. Mark to host a "hybrid" Presbytery meeting on February 26. Session approved a request from Presbyterian Women to hold an Adult Mission Retreat at Ferncliff Camp in October of 2026.

Changes in personnel at CPMS were discussed, the CPSM committee will work with staff and with the Personnel Committee to propose a path forward. The Session approved proposed Terms of Call for Pastor Dave, final approval will come at the January Congregational Meeting.

DECEMBER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Sunday In Person	Sunday Online	Total Attendance
December 7	142	127	269
December 14	207	174	381
December 21	164	118	282
December 24 Family	133	---	133
December 24 Candlelight	205	58	263
December 28	98	92	190

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.

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL SIGN IN!

Use this QR code to sign in for Sunday School. Scan the code to access the attendance form and enter the required information.

We ask that you have your student registered before Time With Children so that we can contact you via text in the event that you are needed.



MISSION AT ST. MARK

JANUARY FOOD PANTRY

CRITICAL NEEDS



- Beef stew & canned greens
- Coffee & hot chocolate
- Toilet paper
- Laundry Detergent (50 oz or smaller)

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 January 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.



Many people in our region lack enough warm clothing to stay protected throughout winter. New and gently used clean winter coats and clothing are needed, **adult sizes for men and women in particular**. Our mission partners will ensure someone in need receives your gift of warmth. Dog and cat coats are appreciated too!



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.

GO GETTER LUNCHEON

The January Go Getter luncheon will be held at The Corner Pub on January 13 at 12 pm.

Please let Judy Richardson know of your plans to attend. Invite a friend to join us for food, fun, and fellowship!



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

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.

ST. MARK PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S MID-WINTER GATHERING

Wednesday, January 28, 2026
1:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

ACCORDING TO TRADITION... WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE APOSTLES



"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **Acts 1:8**

No road trip would be complete
without lots of travel snacks.

A reminder: Not for women only!
Sign up for the Gathering
at the PW Table in the Narthex!

CALLING ALL CHEFS AND TASTERS!!

The Annual St. Mark Chili Cookoff will take place after the worship service on **Sunday, February**



I. For those who seek to win the treasured traveling trophy, a contestant sign-up sheet will be at the coffee center over the next few weeks. Of course, we need tasters to determine which chili will be the winner by voting with your dollars. All proceeds raised will go to Claymont Elementary to help with student lunch accounts and other needed supplies for the children throughout the year. Thanks to your generosity, last year we raised over \$950.00! Who will be the winner this year? The competition will be fierce!