



The Messenger

December 2020

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see." (Hebrews 11:1 New Living Translation)

I love the season of Advent in the Christian Church. I love the rich blue colors of the paraments, the lighting of the Advent wreath, the joy of seeing the Christmas tree all lit up, the Sunday School Christmas program, and the general excitement that builds each week and peaks on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The season of Advent is a time of excitement and preparation as we wait and look forward to celebrating the coming of the Christ child, but also, look forward—with some anxiousness—to Christ coming in glory.

The bible verse above from the New Testament book of Hebrews sums up, for me, not only the season of Advent but what it means to live life as a Christian.

Because of our faith in Christ, we have *"confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."* **As Christians we are stewards of hope, a hope that transcends faith and permeates our day to day lives.**

This past year has been a particularly difficult time as we have physically distanced ourselves from family and friends and our church community in an effort to protect ourselves and each other from the **coronavirus**. **The leadership team at St. Mark's Church continues to prepare for the time when we feel it is safe to gather for worship, with special safety protocols in place.** Much like the season of Advent, we prepare with a sense of hope and expectation, and still we wait, knowing the time has not yet come.

Just this past week we had some exciting news as two U.S. pharmaceutical companies announced the development of vaccines that have shown promising results for fighting the coronavirus. During this difficult time, this too gives us hope that eventually we will return to life as we once knew it. However, **now we wait for the vaccine's final approval for use and its eventual distribution.**

Truth be told, we are a people for who waiting does not come easy. This year has tested our patience and there are many activities and celebrations that we have delayed or cancelled entirely. And still some events come that must be recognized and celebrated, even if it must be in a creatively different way. The birth of our Lord is one such event.

So, once more we wait with great anticipation to celebrate the event that changed the world! The birth of our Lord Jesus, the light that shines in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome!

(Continued on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

As we journey together through this season of Advent, a season that teaches us the virtue of waiting in hopeful expectation, let us hold one another in prayer and resolve to keep each other and our community safe. And let us continue to buoy one another up with the *Good News* that Jesus Christ has come and will come again! As stewards of hope, a hope that does not disappoint, let us wait with confidence for the things we cannot yet see.

Servants together,
Pastor Bob



Church Council Request – The Church Council will be considering who are “Mission of the Month” recipients will be for 2021. If you have an idea for a worthy non-profit organization or individual effort that could use our support, please send your ideas to Laurie Olson, Council president, or phone or e-mail them to the church office for the Council’s consideration.



MOSES MESSAGE

A Sunday School Update

Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent

Hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. Hope you enjoyed your Thanksgiving trail mix. Also the Thanksgiving little booklet about the two different Thanksgivings. Now is the time to prepare for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Don't forget to do your Advent sheet. You should have put the first flame on. Don't forget to send your videos to Pastor Bob by December 6th. It is very important for him to get those. If you have problems, contact him at church. We want to have this video ready by December 24th for the church service.



I will be coming around about the 12th or 13th of December with your December bag. Enjoy it and have a wonderful, safe and healthy Christmas.

BIRTHDAYS

Lily Anderson – 12/27

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LILY

Have a safe and healthy MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

With God's Blessings,
Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent



Mission of the Month Spotlight

Mark “Missions” on your giving envelope and mail them to St. Mark’s at 140 S. Green Bay Road to donate to The Bunk Bed Project

From This . . .



To This!



The Bunk Bed Project® is an effort by El Amor de Patricia, an organization with the mission of *empowering Guatemalan children, families, and communities to reach their full potential.* . The project provides beds for families in need. Volunteers bring the beds, which are made in Guatemala, to the homes of identified families in need and remove what they were using as beds, such as twigs, cinder blocks, wood pallets or nothing and replace them with new bunk beds. One bunk bed costs \$220, which includes bed/mattresses, two comforters, two pillows, and delivery with a translator and/or guide. The project uses small metal beds that will not get moldy in the rainy season and are small enough to fit in small houses. They also use thin mattresses that can be hung to dry if necessary.

Visit the East-Central Wisconsin Synod’s Website at: <https://ecsw.org/> and Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/East-Central-Synod-of-Wisconsin-ELCA-139767989400097/



On November 2, Hurricane Eta, a powerful Category 4 storm, hit Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Throughout Central America, at least 171 people died. Winds as high as 150 mph caused power outages and structural damage while heavy rains caused catastrophic flooding and landslides, damaging homes, crops, roads and bridges. Just two weeks later, Hurricane Iota made landfall in Nicaragua, 15 miles from where Hurricane Eta had made landfall. Iota was the first Category 5 hurricane of the 2020 season, but it weakened to a Category 4 hurricane as it made landfall. It brought strong winds and rains to areas already devastated by Hurricane Eta, hampering any ongoing recovery. **Your gifts designated for “Hurricane Response” will be used entirely (100%) for direct response until it is complete.** Together, we can help provide immediate and long-lasting support for those whose lives have been impacted by hurricanes.

Food Pantry News

St. Mark's Food Pantry is doing well, with a few new people stopping by for help as well as the regular patrons.

Some very generous people have donated 240 handmade hats and 12 afghans to help our friends and neighbors keep warm during these cold winter months. In different times, they would have all been displayed in church to brighten the holidays. Thanks to all who crafted these beautiful gifts.



In October, 154 people benefitted from the food they received from us. We always need paper products, dish and laundry detergent, juice, spam and tuna and just regular everyday things to help feed our families. Cash always helps, too. We thank you for all the help given to us as we try to help others. God Bless You! - Karen Jordan, Food Pantry Volunteer



Facebook Video Services



- www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah
 - Every Sunday at 10:00 A.M.
 - Every Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 A.M. Devotional
- **DVD's are available** if you do not have Internet in your home. Please call the church office at 920-725-2828 to request copies.



Giving through the GivePlus Mobile app is an easy and convenient way to donate to St. Mark's. It only takes a moment to set up an account:

1. Download the free GivePlus app from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Find our church by ZIP code {54956} or by searching "St. Mark's".
3. Donate!

Thank you for your generosity!

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah

ST. MARK'S GIVING OPTIONS:

1. Mail in your giving envelopes to St. Mark's: 140 S. Green Bay Rd Neenah, WI 54956
2. Electronic Simply Giving/Vanco forms on our website or in church office. Call the office at 920-725-2828 to have this form mailed to you if you prefer not to leave your house.
3. Download the free GivePlus App from the App Store or Google Play. Find our church by zip code (54956) or by searching "St. Mark's."

God bless you and thank you for your faithful and generous support during these unprecedented times.



ST. MARK'S CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

October 15, 2020



Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by President Laurie Olson.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Eric Blank, Sharyn Gawlick, Bruce Grundman, Mary Jane Hartley, Judy Hellman, Donna Joachim, Pennie Linna, Laurie Olson, Phyllis Ziemke and Pastor Bob.

Members Excused: Nancy Rose, and Jeff Tharp.

Members Unexcused: None

Guest: None

In keeping with the COVID-19 guidelines members met in person at St. Mark's, wearing face masks and sitting six feet apart.

Devotions: **Sharyn Gawlick led us in devotions with a reading "When Fear Falls Away."**

Phyllis Ziemke volunteered for devotions next month.

The October Calendar was not passed around for any changes/additions due to the building being closed.

Approval of Minutes for the September 12, 2020 meeting. MSC by Judy Hellman/Phyllis Ziemke.

Thank You Cards - A Special Thank You card will be sent to Donald Peterson and Donald Peterson Jr. and Mike Peterson for all their help on the shed roof.

Financial Report:

1. Current Budget balance is \$47,966.56
2. Building Improvement is \$3,714.72
3. **September's giving was \$15,726.39** - Spending was \$19,466.31.
4. Giving needs to be around \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 per Sunday to meet spending.

MSC by Bruce Grundman/Phyllis Ziemke.

Pastor's Report

1. I have made some home communion visits, using the individual sealed communion sets and safely distancing.

All hospital visits still continue to be suspended due to the COVID-19.

2. **I continued to post Tuesday morning devotional on St. Mark's Facebook page.**
3. I participated in several Zoom Meetings with the Synod Office and pastoral colleagues regarding best practices during the coronavirus.
4. **I have begun weekly confirmation classes on Wednesday evening for St. Mark's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students.**
5. I presided at the celebration of life worship service for James Brechlin at Riverside Park in Neenah.
6. **I met with St. Mark's Task Force which continues to examine the best practice for reopening the church in the time of Covid 19.**

**For the month of
OCTOBER 2020**

Given: \$17,043.00
Spent: \$12,423.67

7. I met with Chris Rose and Chelsea Mueller and sponsors in preparation for the Baptism of Zayden Mueller and Lyla Rose.
8. **I continue to record, along other members of St. Mark's Church, the** Sunday worship service, which is then posted to our Facebook page and linked to our website.
9. Laurie Olson and I participated in a zoom presentation by researcher, **Dr. Lisa Miller entitled "Creating Hope." The event was sponsored** by Samaritan Counseling & NAMI Fox Valley and Dr. Miller presented her findings on encouraging the spiritual development of children.
10. **I met with our church musicians and others to record worship music for St. Mark's on-line** worship video.
12. **I met with St. Mark's Committees as needed.**
13. I presided and recorded the Baptism of Zayden Mueller and Lyla Rose. The video will be inserted into our on-line worship video.
14. I met with Tom Goodsett, from TFG Audio Visual Solutions to trouble shoot our sound system. It was determined that our pulpit microphone needed to be replaced.
15. **St. Mark's members, Sharyn Gawlick, Jenny Case and I virtually** attended the East-Central Synod of Wisconsin Synod Assembly. At the assembly, Pastor Anne Edison-Albright was elected as the new bishop of our synod.
16. I met with Mykayla Tharp and her parents in preparation for her up-coming Confirmation on Reformation Sunday, October 25th.
17. **I met with a couple of St. Mark's members to film a video clip for** our up-coming Stewardship/intent Sunday on November 8th.
18. **Together with St. Mark's Stewardship and Finance Committee, I attended two Zoom Meetings on "Beginning Culture of Generosity."**
19. I participated in a zoom meeting with pastors of the Appleton Conference.



Doris & Victor Gilbert
 Pat Wenzel
 Judy Koerner
 Tracy Feldman
 Crystal Strnab
 Mike Marta

MSC Judy Hellman/Pennie Linna.

Committee Reports:

Christian Education:

1. Gwen Hoehne continues to distribute bags to the homes of the Sunday School children that contains a story/lesson to read, games to play, crafts to assemble, along with some type of a sweet treat to make. These can be made up by themselves or shared as a family togetherness time.

Connection: No Meeting.

Endowment: No Meeting.



Finance/Stewardship:

1. Mary Jane reviewed our current giving for September which was \$15,726.39 and expenditures were \$19,466.31. Our spending was over by \$3,739.92.
2. The Finance and Stewardship Committee started this journey of giving by selecting six different organizations and to give \$1,000 to each for a total of \$6,000. This committee had the opportunity to be generous to others when the inclination is to hold tight to our funds as we are in a world crisis. Thankfully, this congregation continues to be generous in your resources, so we could be generous with the church funds. The organizations given the \$1,000 dollar gifts were Esther, Disaster Relief, Food for the Poor, Pine Ridge, Fox Valley Lutheran Homes and Crossways.
3. Laurie Olson and Mary Jane Hartley have gathered the information needed to complete the PPE Justification paperwork. They are now waiting for the local bank to contact them with the information for logging on to the computer program so they can enter the information.
4. The checks for the gifts to the missions of the month from Keith Niemuth trust fund were sent out for a total of \$3,290.30. One of the missions that we were going to give \$200 {Haiti} is no longer an option. **One suggestion was to give to Ally Jansen's Go Fund Me Page. Ally is a 14 year old who is fighting cancer for the second time. Last time she was 4 years old. The family is asking for donations to pay medical needs, gas for travel to/from Madison and household bills. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Judy Hellman to give the money to Ally Jansen's go Fund Me.**
5. Stewardship Sunday will be November 8th. We reviewed the documents to be sent out for our Annual Stewardship Campaign. We watched two videos from the culture of generosity program.
6. **The committee reviewed Pastor's health insurance choices. His health insurance cost will increase by \$520.32 this year.**



Memorial: No Meeting.

Partnership: No Meeting.

Property:

1. Run wires for video and virtual services when wire arrives.
2. Wash the east side of the church either this fall or spring.
3. Jason will turn on the boilers and will be in touch with Pastor for operation.
4. Wipes from Cintas is a possible purchase- No vote.
5. Discussed ordering sanitizer for the church – Sprayer has been purchased for about \$680.
6. **Church's new snow removal gentleman will be contacted by Bruce or Jason.**
7. Candle Base for Baptism Candles needed. Bruce will cut and Donnie will router, drill holes and finish.
8. Clean up around the shed needs to be done. Bruce to get rid of extra buildup of Christmas poles, etc.
9. Need to flip the church sign. Brackets and electrical lines need to be adjusted for this to take place. This will need to be done next spring.
10. **A huge THANK YOU to the following guys for reroofing the church's shed. It was a project we put off for some time but we finally got plenty of help and the weather was great. So many thanks to Donnie Peterson {Supervisor}, Don Jr. and Mike Peterson, Joe Deckers, John Olson, Richie Sczerzen, Jeff Tharp and Jason Blanks air nailer and stapler.**

Social Ministry:

1. Thank You note was received for donation to Haiti Food Pantry.
2. Discussed Food Pantry account and how many people are helped each month.
3. Karen discussed our budget account- will get more gift cards for the up-coming holidays.
4. Hats are given to people coming to the food pantry. Have 240 hats. Some will go to Brigade Christmas giving and the Christine Anne Center.
5. Budget to remain at \$750 for next year.

Worship and Music:

1. Our next parking lot services will be October 11th and November 8th – weather permitting.
2. On October 18th, **the baptism of Chris & Chelsea Rose's children will be part of the service.**
3. On October 25th, the Confirmation of Mykayla Tharp will be part of the service.
4. November 1st- All Saints Sunday. Names of the deceased will be read, candles will be lit, and a bell will rung for each deceased person.
5. Stewardship Sunday is November 8th. We plan to record individuals talking about Stewardship.

Youth: No Meeting

Committee Reports: MSC by Mary Jane Hartley/Pennie Linna.

Unfinished Business:

1. Council Retreat is on hold until further notice.
2. The Basket Raffle is on hold until further notice.

New Business:

- 1 Any building use is on hold until further notice. The Covid numbers need to go way down.
2. In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic the following decisions have been put in place for the paid staff **and St. Mark's church. This will be revisited monthly or sooner if needed.**

* Judy, Delores and LuAnn our Organists will continue to be paid thru the end of November

MSC by Pastor Bob/Phyllis Ziemke {Judy Hellman Abstaining}

* Rich, our janitor will remain at the 10 hours per week. Property will oversee this and Richie will continue to work with Pastor as to what days and hours this will be.

MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman.

* **All outside groups that meet at St. Mark's remain cancelled till further notice. {Will re-examine this when we move into Phase 2 of re-opening Guidelines.}**

* Regular Church services for St. Marks is available on Facebook Live.

* Church office at the present will remain open in the morning.

* Food Pantry program to continue, following safety guidelines.

All of the above decisions will continue to be monitored on a regular basis as we continue to work our way thru this health crisis facing our country.



3. Community Christmas Giving WILL NOT be serving a sit-down meal at St. Paul's Lutheran Church as they have in the past due to Covid. They will be doing an event called "The 12 days of Christmas" gift bags. They will distribute certain items throughout the month of November and December. Laurie will do a write up as to the items they are looking for and put it on Facebook. We will also put a bucket out at the parking lot service on November 8th and at church for drop offs.
4. Esther Banquet this year will be done online. St. Mark's has been asked to donate a basket for the raffle. Laurie will work with Sharyn on this.
5. St. Mark's has been asked if they are interested in sponsoring an ad for their Banquet. Will check into the cost for this.



MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Judy Hellman to adjourn at 7:55 pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is November 19th, 2020 at 6:30 pm.

Submitted by Donna Joachim

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT ST. MARK'S



St. Mark's Sunday School Christmas program/Christmas Eve Worship Service will premiere on Facebook at 5:00 pm on Christmas Eve. We also have an online worship service on Facebook at 10:00 am on Christmas Day. Please join from home us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus through the voices of our children on Christmas Eve and with readings, prayers and hymns of joy on Christmas Day.



FOX VALLEY COMMUNITY TABLE RECIEVES SUPPORT FROM ST. MARK'S

Along with our Stewardship Emphasis this year, we asked members of St. Mark's to donate to the Fox Valley Community Table's "12 Days of Christmas" gift bags and food baskets that will be given to those needing extra support during the holiday season. As you can see from the photo, our members came through with lots of health supplies, canned food, and beautiful homemade hats, scarves and mittens. Thank you donors!



Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow!



Even in the midst of continued uncertainty, we are making plans to open registration for Summer Camp 2021. It will look different than it has in the past. All of these plans are tentative and may change based on state/federal mandates, input from our health officials, and best practices emerging from the American Camp Association. We will communicate any updates as they happen.

Timeline

We are planning to open registration on Monday, January 4. This is quite a bit later than usual, which we hope gives us the time to get better information to you. We would rather delay registration than have to make mass changes or cancellations like last year.

Youth Camp

We are planning to open youth camp with a 50% capacity. If Covid conditions across the state warrant it, we may be able to raise that threshold. We are encouraged by the emerging reports from schools and summer camps that have been successful in mitigating the risk of the virus.

Family Camp

We will continue the practice of assigning housing by family. We may need to limit capacity based on the staffing we are able to provide.

Confirmation Camp

Confirmation Camp will open with a 50% capacity. We are meeting with individual Confirmation Leaders from across the Synod to help us think through the ways we can keep our campers safe.

Day Camp

In order to focus on health and safety during Covid, with new ways of doing programming at camp, we will NOT be scheduling Day Camp experiences for summer 2021.

St. Mark's Supports ESTHER Fundraiser

This year, Esther was not able to hold their annual banquet and auction fundraiser as usual, but they did have a fundraising event **online and St. Mark's contributed a basket brimming with hand-made items**, many of which were made by Sandra Mathenia.

Along with Sandra's handiwork of kitchen towels, facemasks, jar openers, and bowl cozies were homemade bar soaps and liquid soap. Laurie Olson and Sandra put the basket together and several members helped purchase items for the basket, including Dawn Jones, Mary Jane Hartley, Pastor Bob and Laurie Wilkinson, and Sharon Gawlick. The basket received several bids and eventually sold for \$32. Thank you all for supporting Esther!



The Finished Basket!

An Easy Way to Support Our Church – Shop on AmazonSmile!

When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate to St. Mark's Church. Support us every time you shop on Amazon. Use this link. <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-1413603>

This link identifies St. Mark's as your charity of choice and you can begin shopping.

If you just go to AmazonSmile.com, you will need to search for St. Mark's and designate it as your charity to support. You will be prompted to select a charitable organization from over one million eligible organizations. In order to browse or shop at

AmazonSmile, you must first select St. Mark's as your charitable organization. Make sure to search and select St. Mark's Lutheran, Neenah, WI. For eligible purchases at AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to St. Mark's.

*Support us when you
shop this holiday*

Amazon donates when you
shop at smile.amazon.com.

amazon smile



Weather Permitting

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah

Parking Lot Worship Service

Sunday, December 13 at 9:00 A.M.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

You are asked to stay in your vehicle at all times. (Must be in a vehicle. Setting up of lawn chairs will not be an option.) Pastor and worship assistants will be outside with volume transmitted through your car radio (station number will be posted on a sign when entering the lot & in your bulletin on the morning of the service). Follow directions of the parking lot ushers. A safe distribution of communion and an offertory will be a part of the worship. Check e-mail and Facebook for updates about this service.



Visit St. Mark's Website

www.stmarksneenah.org



Do we have your email address?

Please send an e-mail to office@stmarksneenah.org so we can update our church records.



PERFECT AS IS

Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that he gave his only Son. The only requirement is to believe in him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life. — Corrie ten Boom



St. Mark's Office & Leadership Email Addresses

St. Mark's office: office@stmarksneenah.org

Pastor Bob's e-mail is still: pastorbob@stmarksneenah.org

Mary Jane Hartley's e-mail is now: treasurer@stmarksneenah.org

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

140 S. Green Bay Road

Neenah, WI 54956



A big thank you to our newsletter editor, Judy Griswold-Fowler, for editing and proofreading this month's "Messenger!"

