



The Messenger

February 2021

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

I recently read a short devotional written by the late Rev. Donald L. Deffner. Rev. Deffner told of a great churchman who lay dying. It seems the man had been touring world missions when he had contracted a rare disease that left him almost totally paralyzed. He couldn't speak, but he could still hear, and in an attempt to track his mental clarity, each day his doctor would ask him to tap a finger 50 times. This he did each day, with precision.

Then one day he tapped only 46 times, and they thought, "he is starting to slip away." Then the next day he tapped exactly 46 taps again, and the next, and the next. Now, they wondered, "What is he trying to tell us?"

Finally, one person realized: "Forty-six, 46, 46! The 46th psalm!"

Rev. Deffner writes, "Here lay this great churchman, inert, powerless on his deathbed. But as he lay there facing heavenward, his finger was tapping out the faith-filled message: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble!"* (Psalm 46:1)

Psalm 46 shows up in our readings on the last Sunday of church year. This is a Sunday that emphasizes the end of days, and the Psalmist goes on to talk about earthquakes, storms, turbulent waves, and wars. And, although kingdoms fall and the very earth melts away, the Psalmist states that we will not be afraid, for our *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

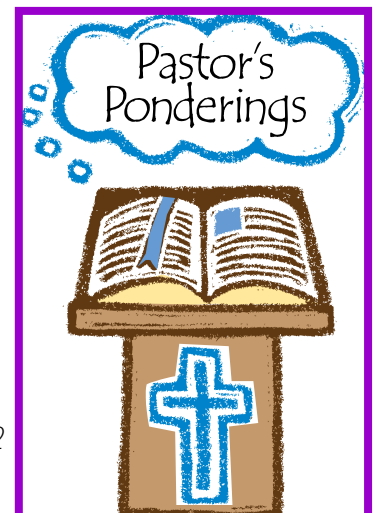
These past several months have been an especially difficult time for many of us, and for millions of people around the world, as we continue to battle the effects of COVID-19. Millions of people have lost loved ones to this virus. It has caused an untold amount of grief, not only from the loss of life, but also from the economic hardships and the day-to-day disruption of our lives.

Of course, even apart from the virus, everyone has their own share of troubles, perhaps it is the struggle of managing home schooling, a business, a household, or personal relationships. Even in the best of times, trouble seems to find us.

Still, God has blessed us with a beautiful world and each day brings new opportunities, hope, and promise.

When trouble comes, which it eventually does, hopefully you will reach out to your network of support, your family, your friends and neighbors, and your church, because God has placed these people in your life to love and encourage you.

Continued on page 2



Pastor's Ponderings continued from Page 1

And hopefully, like the great churchman in Rev. Deffner's story, your ultimate source of refuge and strength is your God. Even if everything around you were to give way to destruction, there is someone there for you whose love, mercy, and forgiveness is rock solid. So, when you feel overwhelmed and helpless, remember the number 46 and do not be afraid, because *God is your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble!*

God's blessing for the journey,
Pastor Bob



Electronic Worship Opportunities

- www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah
 - Worship Service every Sunday at 10:00 am
 - Devotional every Tuesday at 10:00 am
- DVDs of the worship service are available if you do not have Internet in your home. Please call the church office at 920-725-2828 to request copies.



MOSES MESSAGE

A Sunday School Update

Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent



Well it is February already. The year seems like it is going pretty fast. Hopefully, we will be out of this pandemic in the very near future. February is also when we think of Love because of Valentine's Day on February 14th. I want to remind you that God's love is unconditional and He always loves you. In 1 John 4:19, it says "We love because he first loved us." We need to keep our faith strong and remember God loves us. I wish you all a Happy Valentine's Day! Stay safe and healthy!!!

Sunday School is still on hold and probably will be for the rest of the school year. Will keep you informed of what is going on. Until then, I will still be giving the students lessons each month.

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 International Children's Fund



International Children's Fund Is An Organization Like No Other. They channel the Christian concern of partners worldwide into street level impact in African villages and other locations, where logistics often frustrate traditional relief efforts. The secret ingredient to effective relief is a trustworthy network of local, native missionary partners who personally shepherd gifts of food, clothing, medicine, equipment, and funds to the places children need them most. Since 1978, ICF has come to the aid of children in need worldwide. The monetary and material gifts of our donors have helped us distribute life-saving food, clothing, medical clinics, animal husbandry, and medicine across the African continent. We have also supported the construction of orphanages, churches, schools and vocational training centers, drilled water wells to provide safe drinking water, and established agricultural projects. You won't find many organizations like International Children's Fund. We combine four unique elements to efficiently deliver vital aid to those in areas of greatest need.



Don't Forget!

February 21 – Annual Budget Review Meeting

February 28 – Annual Meeting

Safety protocols will be in place (see page 4) so that we can meet together safely to conduct the business of our church. Please plan to attend these important meetings.



Right now, our Food Pantry is doing well with lots of recent donations. Check for a complete report next month.

In-Person Worship Scheduled to Resume

St. Mark's Church Council has voted to return to in-person worship. The In-Person Worship Task Force has developed precautionary procedures, for the safety of our members and guests. There may be changes to the process, as we move forward. We ask for your prayers and patience.

First in-person worship service will be Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 PM – Ash Wednesday (A no contact alternative to placing ashes on the forehead will be practiced.) Wednesday worship services will continue through Lent.

First Sunday worship service will be February 21 at 10:00 AM.

There are no plans to have in-person Sunday school at this time.

Attendance Options- We will NOT have a reservation system. The below options will allow for all wishing to attend or participate in worship.

OPTION 1 & 2: Socially distanced seating will be available in the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall.

OPTION 3: Parking Lot {sit in your vehicle}- we will transmit the service {audio only} via the system used for the parking lot worship. Your radio can be tuned to FM 94.9.

OPTION 4: Worship will be live streamed on the St. Mark's Facebook page.

OPTION 5: DVD recordings (audio & visual) of worship services will be available for pick up and/or delivery. (We are currently working on the timeline for when the recordings will be available for pick up/delivery – more information to come.) Please notify the office if you are interested in this option. (Delivery is available for those not able to pick up, due to health or transportation issues.)

Safety Procedures

- Do not attend in-person worship if you are sick or have recently been sick.
- Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and are encouraged to consider attendance options 3, 4 or 5.
- You are required to wear face coverings over your nose and mouth at all times.
- Enter and exit through the main doors – under the carport. The side/back door will not be open.
- Restrooms WILL be open and available for use.
- Maintain social distancing between family groups (6 feet).
- Maximum of 3 individuals per pew or a family.
- No peace offering, such as hand shaking or hugging.
- Please exit the church building immediately after worship. There will be no fellowship time.
- Follow the directions of our greeters and ushers.
- Pre-packaged Communion elements will be used on Communion Sundays.





ST. MARK'S CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

December 17, 2020



Meeting was called to order at 6:32 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, Nancy Rose, Phyllis Ziemke and Pastor Bob.

Members Excused: Jeff Tharp

Members Unexcused: None

Guest: None

In keeping with the COVID-19 guidelines, everyone met in person at St. Mark's wearing our face masks and sitting 6 feet apart.

Devotions: Bruce Grundman led us in devotions with a reading by Robert Hastings.

Phyllis Ziemke volunteered for devotions next month.

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

Approval of Minutes for the November 19th, 2020 meeting. MSC by Bruce Grundman/Phyllis Ziemke.

Thank You Cards - A Special Thank You card will be sent to Joe and Sandy Decker for so graciously stepping in to fill the janitor vacancy until a replacement can be hired. Richie retired on December 1st.

Financial Report:

1. Current Budget balance is \$49,575.54
2. Building Improvement is \$5,285.54
3. **November's giving was \$16,016.65** - Spending was \$15,024.18.
4. Giving needs to be around \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 per Sunday to meet spending.

MSC by Judy Hellman/Pennie Linna.

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 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 pandemic.
4. **I continue to lead weekly confirmation classes on Wednesday evening for St. Mark's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students.**
5. I participated with other churches in the Appleton Conference in providing an on-line Thanksgiving Worship Service.
6. **I met with the family and presided at the funeral worship service at St. Mark's for Art Joachim.**
7. I met with Jim Moeller from P.C. Mechanic to resolve computer issues and for the subsequent purchase of a new/used church laptop for assembling worship videos.
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.**

OUR CHURCH'S
FINANCIAL HEALTH

**For the month of
December 2020**

Given: \$20,899.18
Spent: \$14,988.58

9. I met with the family and presided at a funeral worship service at Green Lawn Memorial Park for Lorna Piette.
10. **I met with our church musicians and others to record worship music for St. Mark's on-line worship video.**
11. **I continue to meet with St. Mark's Committees as needed or by request.**
12. I met with Tom Goodsett, who is installing a camera in the sanctuary so that we can live stream our worship service to Facebook.
13. I have been working with Gwen Hoehne in gathering videos of our Sunday School and Confirmation class youth to put together a Christmas Eve Christmas program worship service.
14. **I presided at St. Mark's December parking lot worship service.**
15. I participated in the Appleton Conference of the E.C.S.W. Zoom meeting. MSC Phyllis Ziemke/Nancy Rose.

Committee Reports:

Christian Education:

1. Gwen Hoehne continues to distribute bags to the homes of the Sunday School children that contain 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. Reviewed the end of the month current account balance. November giving was \$15,438.67 and expenses were \$15,024.18. Difference was +\$414.49. Year to date giving towards monthly expenses is +\$24,023.74.
2. Total Associated Bank checking has a balance of \$127,828.36. Additionally, there is \$106,531.38 in Thrivent money market account and \$100,574.65 in Mission Investment Fund.
3. Reviewed detailed financial reports. It was noted that the Benevolence Account total is not accurate. Mary Jane will look into this.
4. Reviewed the 2021 proposed budget process. Budget will be finalized in the next few weeks and brought to the January 2021 council meeting. Reviewed the Stewardship and Finance **Committee's 2021 budget request.** Stewardship and Finance purchased the giving envelopes and funds for a stewardship program. It was recommended to maintain the 2020 budget in the amount of \$900.
5. Mary Jane and Laurie informed the committee that the expected 2021 insurance premium for St. Mark's, provided by our carrier **Guideone Insurance, will have an increase of \$6,604.** It was recommended that the property committee review our policy for potential savings, perhaps increasing our deductible. If the committee desires, they can potentially look at other companies for better rates.
6. **Laurie informed the committee that the St. Mark's PPP loan, in the amount of \$15,815 has been forgiven and no further action is required.** Mary Jane Hartley will investigate moving those funds from the designated PPP line item against the actual expense it was approved for or into current.
7. Reviewed Benevolences and will remind the council to designate the agencies and amounts for 2021.



- Doris & Victor Gilbert
 - Pat Wenzel
 - Judy Koerner
 - Tracy Feldman
 - Brett Gawlick
 - Judy Fowler
 - LaVerne Arndt
 - Ron Forrest
 - Jane Arps

- {More under New Business}. A discussion took place on how the amount for Synod was determined. Mary Jane and Laurie will look into this further and report to council.
8. Laurie reported that the 2021 giving envelopes have been set up. Envelopes were distributed to those who attended the December 13 parking lot worship. Others are encouraged to pick up their boxes at the church, during office hours.
 9. Pastor Bob requested, after consulting with his tax preparer, that the church consider increasing his **housing allowance to reflect his actual allowance expenses. It was noted that Pastor's salary would** decrease by the increased housing amount, resulting in the overall compensation package remaining the same. The committee agreed to recommend this accounting change. {More under New Business}
 10. Discussed 2021 compensation for the church office administrator and the organists. It was agreed to recommend a .30 increase in the church office administrator hourly wages. This will result in an hourly wage rate of \$13.80. {More under New Business}. It was further recommended to increase the organist stipends by \$2.00, putting the rate at \$137. {More under New Business}.
 11. Pastor Bob was excused at this time.
 12. The committee discussed the 2021 Pastoral salary. Laurie explained that the ECSW provide salary compensation figures, based on years of experience. Laurie recommended, based on the ECSW **compensation figures, to increase Pastor Bob's salary from \$41,432 to \$42,213. The committee agreed** this 2021 increase to the council. {More under New Business}.

Memorial: No Meeting.

Partnership: No Meeting.

Property:

1. Discussed the application and job duties for the new custodian
2. Cintas is letting the church use a hand sanitizer and stand for 30 days. Will discuss at next meeting.
3. Washing of the east side of the church will be done in the spring.
4. Snow blower in the garage and ready to go.
5. Discussed the property budget and it is ready for Council approval with some changes.
6. Joe and Sandy Deckers have offered to step in and help out with janitor duties until we can fill this position.
7. Contract to come in for snow removal.

Social Ministry:

1. The Food Pantry is very busy every Wednesday morning. We have been getting a few new customers every week and some are in dire straits. We are very thankful for all the donations given to us. We **wouldn't be able to continue without your help. We are in need of paper products, laundry and dish soap.** Canned fruit, peanut butter, jam, hamburger helper and sides. Thank You very much.

Worship and Music:

1. **The Advent series for worship, "Hark, the Glad Sound" starts on November 29th.**
2. Decorations for the Christmas season were discussed. There will be the traditional tree, advent candles and poinsettias by the altar area. Wreathes will be put on the doors of the main entrance. Several large wreathes and the lighted angels will be outside the church.
3. **The Children's Christmas Program will be part of the Christmas Eve Service. There will be a Christmas Day Service at 10:00 A.M.**

Youth: No Meeting

Committee Reports: MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna.

Unfinished Business:

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

New Business:

1. Any building use is on hold until further notice. The Covid numbers need to go way down. Maybe once the camera is installed and we can mainstream into the Fellowship Hall, we will re-examine this.
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 January. MSC by Pennie Linna/Nancy Rose. {Judy Hellman Abstaining.}
 - * Janitors position has been posted. Notice is posted on Facebook and in the Newsletter.
 - * **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 are available on Facebook Live.
 - * Church office at the present will remain open in the mornings.
 - * 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. PPP loan has been forgiven and does not need to be repaid.
4. Council member terms that are up in February are Donna Joachim, Pennie Linna, Sharyn Gawlick and Nancy Rose. Youth Rep. Eric Blank term is also up. Pennie, Sharyn, Nancy and Eric are eligible to rerun for another term. Pennie and Sharyn are interested in re-running. Eric and Nancy are going to think about it first. This will be put in the Newsletter as well for anyone that is interested.
5. All committees need to submit their budget request in for 2021. Mary Jane needs these to put together a rough draft for Council to look at our January meeting.
6. Committee reports need to be submitted to the office so Jean can start to work on them for our Annual Meeting.
7. **Went over "The Mission of the Month" choices that we vote on at the Annual Meeting. Under World, Haiti has been removed and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has been added.** MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna
8. Annual Meeting has been set for February 28th, with a Budget Hearing set for February 21st. MSC by Judy Hellman/Pennie Linna.
9. Money that came in for the Thanksgiving Eve Service will be donated to Leaven. We will add to it to bring it up to \$100. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Sharyn Gawlick.
10. **Further discussion from Finance Report #7. Benevolences that St. Mark's will support in 2021 are,** Synod, Leaven, and Crossways. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman.
11. Further from Finance Report #9. Adjusting Pastor Package from salary to housing. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman providing this will not affect his retirement amount.
12. Further discussion from Financial #10. Increase office administrator wages by .30. This would bring her up to \$13.80 an hour. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna.
13. Further discussion from Finance #10. Increase the organist pay an additional \$2.00 a time. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna.
14. **Further discussion from Finance #12. Pastor's salary increase. Based on Synod recommendation Guidelines. MSC by Pennie Linna/Phyllis Ziemke to increase Pastor's salary from \$41,432 to \$42,213.**

MSC by Mary Jane Hartley/Phyllis Ziemke to adjourn at 8:20 pm.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is January 21st, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

Submitted by Donna Joachim

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Direct Choice Dollars Online

1. Visit thrivent.com/thriventchoice.
2. Click Direct Choice Dollars.
3. Log in by entering your User ID and password. (If you haven't yet registered on thrivent.com, click Register for account access.)
4. Choose the organization to which you want to direct Choice Dollars (St. Mark's is an enrolled organization)
 - a. To direct to a previous organization:
 - Click Direct Now next to the organization's name, or
 - Click on the View activity history link, scroll down and click on the name of the desired organization.
 - b. To direct to a new organization, enter keyword(s) like organization name, ZIP code, cause, etc. Click Search.
5. Choose Direct All or enter a specific number and click Direct Now. Follow the prompts on the confirmation page to direct Choice Dollars.

Direct Choice Dollars by Phone

1. Call 800-847-4836 and when prompted, say Thrivent Choice.
2. Press 1 to direct Choice Dollars or 2 to hear Thrivent Choice Dollars program Terms and Conditions. (If prompted, say or enter your phone number and date of birth.)
3. A representative will work with you to direct Choice Dollars.

Loved and Known

"Jesus knows me, this I love," read the church sign. That twist on the classic children's song emphasizes the importance of being both loved and known. "It's not one or the other; it's hard truth and ridiculous grace," sings contemporary Christian artist Tauren Wells in "Known."

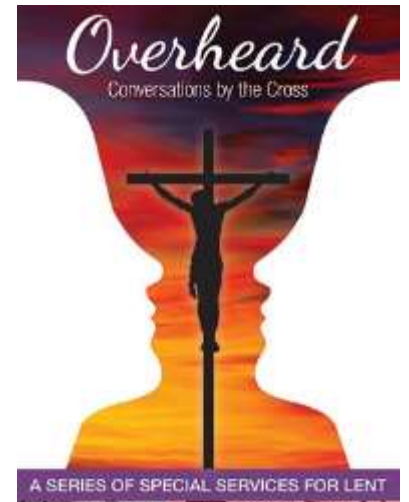
Timothy Keller, in *The Meaning of Marriage*, describes the duality this way: "To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us."

Lenten Worship Opportunities

St. Mark's will begin Lenten Worship Services on Ash Wednesday, which is on February 17. This will mark our first in-person worship opportunity since the pandemic started in March of last year. Please see page 4 of this newsletter for more information on how we plan to restart in-person worship services.

The theme for our Lenten worship is "Overheard: Conversations by the Cross." It will be an interesting and spiritual journey for all who attend as we consider the question: "Did various people who were involved in our Lord's Passion ever have an opportunity to talk with one another about it?" People such as Malchus and Mark, Barabbas and Caiaphas, Pilate and his wife, Simon of Cyrene and the centurion, Mary and John, and the two thieves. If you could have listened to their conversations, what might you have overheard?

Please join us as we consider our Lord's suffering and death from the perspective of those who witnessed it first hand. It will be a wonderful opportunity to gather together with repenting hearts and remember our Lord's passion. Please join us in person or online for worship during Lent.



A Singular Focus



When we try to focus on too many things at once, sometimes we end up doing nothing well. During a visit to their house (see Luke 10:38-42), Jesus tells Martha that only one thing is needed and that Mary has chosen rightly. Surely Jesus doesn't mean that quiet devotion is needed while serving others is not. But when we let ourselves get "worried and distracted by many things," we may lose sight of the one crucial thing: love.

St. Francis is credited with the following quote: "God came to my house and asked for charity. And I fell on my knees and cried, 'Beloved, what may

I give?' 'Just love,' God said. 'Just love.'"

And in Galatians 5:6 (NRSV), St. Paul writes, "For in Christ Jesus ... the only thing that counts is faith working through love." Amid all the worthy pursuits that fill your days, remember to choose rightly – by choosing love.

A Thought About Lent

Lent, the church-year season that begins on Ash Wednesday, is a time of penitence and spiritual renewal. Some people give up a luxury or vice during Lent as a form of self-denial; others undertake a project that benefits others.

The point isn't to denigrate ourselves or to see how much we can do without.

Instead, Lent helps us reflect on Jesus' death. As Timothy Keller writes in *The*

Reason for God: "The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die

for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself.

Instead, I think of myself less."





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



St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah

ST. MARK'S GIVING OPTIONS:

- * Mail in your giving envelopes to St. Mark's: 140 S. Green Bay Rd Neenah, WI 54956
- * 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.
- * 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.

Weather Permitting and In-Person Worship Pending

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah

Parking Lot Worship Service

Sunday, February 14 at 9:00 A.M.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

You are asked to stay in your vehicle at all times. 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. A 10:00 AM on-line service (FACEBOOK) will also be available .



Visit St. Mark's Website

www.stmarksneenah.org



Love-ly superlatives

To fall in love with God is the greatest of romances, to seek him the greatest adventure, to find him the greatest human achievement. — St. Augustine



Do we have your email address?

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



St. Mark's Office & Leadership Email Addresses

St. Mark's office (Jean): 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

