



The Messenger

April 2021

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



"Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near." (James 5:7-8 NRSV)

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the verses above from the book of James, the writer encourages the church to be patient in waiting for **the Lord's return**. It is likely that the church is suffering persecution and James does not want them to give up hope.

Because of the coronavirus, this past year has been a particularly difficult, not only for our church community, but for people around the world. In no way do I want to equate the persecution of the early church to our situation, but still, when times are rough and we are waiting on the situation to improve, being patient is not easy.

Last year, St. Mark's Church Council felt it was in the best interest of the health of our faith community to not celebrate the Lord's resurrection with in-person worship. Now, this year, many of us will gather in-person on Easter Sunday, but still it will not be as it was in the past. Everyone will be wearing a mask, there will be physical distancing, and no Easter breakfast or fellowship after the worship service.

We continue to "wait on the Lord" to make things as they were before. And, for those who still feel vulnerable about meeting in-person for health reasons, I would encourage you to continue to gather in community and worship on our St. Mark's Facebook page.

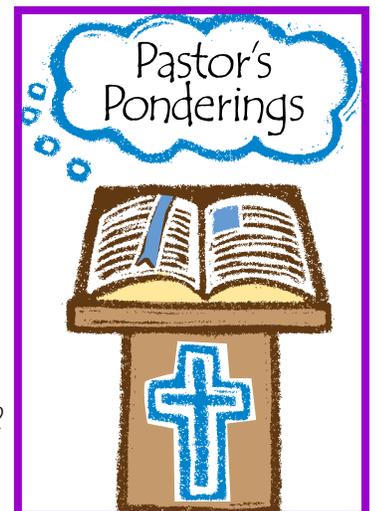
Like the farmer in James' analogy, we must be patient for both the early and the late rains will come.

Having grown up on a farm, the one thing I do know, is that a farmer does not sit around and wait for the crops to grow. There are always other chores to keep you busy. Perhaps, there are livestock to feed, buildings and fences to repair, or other crops to fertilize, cultivate, and, if possible, to water.

Waiting on the Lord does not mean that we stop doing what we can.

The story is told of a of a long-time church member who would interject the same advice into every problem. At some point in the discussion, he would stand up and say, "Let's pray about it and turn it over to God to take care of." Praying for God's guidance is always wise no matter the circumstance, however, we ought to remember that God is at work, not only through our prayers, but through our actions.

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Pastor's Ponderings

Continued from Page 1

Perhaps, no New Testament writer knows this better than James, who says, "But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (James 1:22). James was a doer, but he also believed in the power of prayer, as he encouraged the community to continually and confidently pray for healing, forgiveness, and restoration of the Christian community.

This year, as we celebrate our Lord's resurrection and move forward confidently in ministry, let us pray for healing, forgiveness, the restoration of the Christian community, and a renewed vision for our church and our own faith life. And let us continue to do ministry where and when we can, as we wait on the Lord for the early and late rains.

God's continued blessings during this season of Easter!

Pastor Bob

Electronic Worship Opportunities

- www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah
 - Worship Service every Sunday at 10:00 am
 - Devotional every Tuesday at 10:00 am
 - **Children's Message every Sunday morning**
- 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

Happy Easter to everyone!! We are still staying safe and healthy. Hope everyone enjoyed their Easter Cards that the students colored for you. This is their way of reaching out to the members in our congregation and wishing you a Happy Easter. Easter is a time to remember why Jesus died on the cross for us, and to remember that it is also a time of new life. Spring is a sign of new life with flowers, butterflies, and all other living things. Be thankful every day for your life and the beautiful things around you. HAPPY EASTER!!!



BIRTHDAYS

J.T. Rose—4/9

Tyler Joachim—4/27

With God's Blessings,
Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent





ST. MARK'S CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

February 18, 2021



Meeting was called to order at 6:30 P. M. by President Laurie Olson.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Bruce Grundman, Mary Jane Hartley, Judy Hellman, Donna Joachim, Pennie Linna, Laurie Olson, Nancy Rose, Phyllis Ziemke, and Pastor Bob.

Members Excused: Eric Blank, Sharyn Gawlick, and 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 six feet apart.

Devotions: **Judy Hellman led us in devotions with a reading by Peter Marshall entitled, "Lord Teach us to Pray." Phyllis Ziemke volunteered for devotions next month.**

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

Approval of Minutes for the January 21st, 2021 meeting. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman

Thank You Cards - None this month.

Financial Report:

1. Current Budget balance is \$70,388.14
2. Building Improvement is \$7,281.54
3. **January's giving was \$14,788.69** - Spending was \$14,356.72.
4. Giving needs to be around \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 per Sunday to meet spending.

MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna.

Pastor's Report

1. I have made several phone calls to members, as home visits are limited due to the continued threat of Covid. All hospital visits still continue to be suspended due to the COVID-19.
2. **I continued to post a Tuesday morning devotional on St. Mark's Facebook page.**
3. In preparation for our mid-week Lenten Worship services, I recorded several dialogues from **our "Overheard" Lenten Worship series with various members of St. Mark's Church.**
4. **I continue to offer weekly confirmation classes on Wednesday evening for St. Mark's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students on line.**
5. **I continue to work with my wife, Laurie, in assembling worship videos to upload to St. Mark's Facebook page and to record onto DVD's.**
6. I continue to meet with our church musicians and a few others to record worship music for our worship services.
7. **I continue to meet with St. Mark's Committees as needed.**
8. **I met with St. Mark's Reopening Task Force to discuss best practices for returning to in-person worship service.**



9. I had several on-line meetings with church members and church leaders in our community, and also attended the monthly meeting of the pastors of the Appleton Conference.
 10. **Along with Laurie Olson from St. Mark's church, I attended the Appleton Conference Annual Meeting**, which was held virtually on Saturday, February 6th, 2021.
 11. **I presided at St. Mark's Ash Wednesday worship service, as we return to in-person worship and live streaming our worship service to Facebook.**
- MSC Judy Hellman/Pennie Linna.

Committee Reports:

Christian Education:

1. Lessons for coming months:
 - March—Easter Cards to color — Easter Story— Make an Easter Cross
 - April—Easter is April 4.
2. Lenten Material -A mobile to put together that Pastor will order from Creative Communications.
3. Returning to Sunday School — We will not be returning until there is no social distancing and no mask mandate. The kids have enough while in school. Would rather have them come to church with the parents. Sunday School might not start up again until Fall. We will just wait and see what happens.



Connection: No Meeting.

Endowment: No Meeting.

Finance/Stewardship:

1. Mary Jane reviewed the current giving for January, which was \$14,788.69 and expenditures were \$14,356.72. Our spending was under by \$431.97.
2. We have a negative amount in the Technology account. The Memorial Committee met and have arranged for dollars from some of the memorial funds be used to cover the expense of the new sanctuary camera system. Additional funds, needed to cover the balance of the technology expenses, will be moved out of the Thrivent Mutual Fund.
3. An additional \$200 remains in the Keith Niemuth Estate Fund, which was part of the dollars initially moved out of the Thrivent account for the extra mission support. Pastor Bob has recently **become aware of a member of a St. Mark's family in need of** assistance. He will suggest to the council to send the \$200 amount to this family. {More under New Business}.
4. The Property Committee brought a request to the council to consider transferring the funds that would be used to pay a custodian into the Building Fund. Our current custodians have requested this be done. The Council had previously presented an accounting option to the custodian volunteers, but due to tax preparation issues, this will not work for them. The Finance Committee discussed various options and has recommended that the Council approve moving \$200 per month {during the months volunteers are doing the custodial duties} from the regular giving into the Building Fund. This would be done as a journal entry. It was noted that some type of paper voucher/invoice needs to be filed, to

- Doris & Victor Gilbert
 - Pat Wenzel
 - Judy Koerner
 - Tracy Feldman
 - Brett Gawlick
 - Ron Forrest
 - Jane Arps
- Sandy Deckers
 - Dawn Jones
 - Judy Fowler
 - Laurie Olson

have a paper trail. {This now needs to be revisited as our current custodial volunteers are not able to continue at this time}.

5. Laurie is going to gather the information from the Stewardship Campaign and the committee will look at the results.

Memorial Committee

1. Went over the existing memorial accounts and transferred several of the balances over to cover the **cost of the new sanctuary camera. Thank You's have been sent out to the families.**

Partnership: No Meeting.

Property: No Report.

Social Ministry: No Report.

Worship and Music:

1. January services were discussed. A parking Lot Service with Communion was held on January 10th. Pastor Karen Ressel will preach on January 31st. Pastor Bob will be on vacation that week.
2. Another Parking Lot Service with communion will take place on February 14th, weather permitting. Ash Wednesday is on February 17th. Depending on the Covid-19 situation, we are planning an in-person worship service on Ash Wednesday.

Youth: No Meeting

Committee Reports: MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Nancy Rose.

Unfinished Business:

Contracted Services – Organists from now on moving forward will continue to get paid for their recorded music until such time they will be back playing in person at the church services. MSC by Pennie Linna/Nancy Rose.

Custodial Update – No one has applied for the position at this time. Joe, Sandy and Richie continue to clean the building as needed. Will check with outside cleaning services to get a cost idea.

New Business:

1. In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the following decisions have been put in place for St. Mark's church. This will be revisited on an as needed basis.
 - * **All outside groups that meet at St. Mark's remain cancelled till further notice.** {Will re-examine this when we see how the in-service re-opening goes.}
 - * **Regular Church services for St. Mark's has re-opened** and is on available on Facebook Live. Now that the camera is up and able to mainstream into the Fellowship Hall we do not need to limit our church worship service attendance.
 - * Church office is presently open in the mornings. {Tuesday, Thursday and Friday}
 - * 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** 2. **St. Mark's Family in need** – discussed this from {Finance/Stewardship Committee Report #3} MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Judy Hellman to approve this request.

3. **We received information on a program called "Living Into a Culture of Mission and Action."** It would give our church an opportunity to examine what is our mission and vision for the future. An ELCA

Pastor would be heading this up. It would consist of 4-7 congregations meeting monthly from March through July. There would be members from St. Mark's meeting on our own to establish what our needs and wants are. The Council did have some questions of which Laurie will check into. The cost for this program is \$1,800 and would be requested from Endowment. MSC by Pennie Linna/Judy Hellman to proceed forward with this program after Laurie gets some answers.

4. Budget review has been set for February 21st in the church following worship.

5. The Annual Meeting set for February 28th in the church following worship.

6. The following assignments/placements are in place for both meetings.

*Laurie Olson will be at one of the podiums running the meeting, Pastor Bob at the other podium.

* Jason/Bruce will set up a table and chairs for Donna Joachim and Mary Jane Hartley in front.

* Phyllis Ziemke/Mary Jane Hartley will hand out Budget review sheets on the 21st.

* Judy Hellman will man the microphone in the church for any questions/comments.

* Pennie Linna will man a microphone in the Fellowship Hall for questions/comments.

* Bruce Grundman will man a microphone out in the parking lot for any questions/comments.

On the 28th the same as above except:

* Phyllis Ziemke/Mary Jane Hartley will hand out Mission of the Month Ballots/Pencils as well.

* Council has two {3} year positions to fill. Pennie Linna and Sharyn Gawlick are rerunning. It will be open to the floor for other names. Ballots will be handed out if needed.

* Our Youth Representative is for a one-year term. Mykayla Tharp has put her name on the ballot. This will be open to the floor for other names. Ballots will be handed out if needed.

* Pastor, Phyllis Ziemke and Mary Jane to count ballots as needed and Mission of the Month Ballots.

MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Pennie Linna to adjourn at 7:55 P.M

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is March 18th, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

Submitted by Donna Joachim

Tying together the Testaments

In most non-English-speaking nations, the holy day of Easter is known by a word derived from the Hebrew word for Passover: *Pesach*. **In Greek, it's *Pasch***; in Latin, *Pascha*; in Spanish, *Pascua*; and in French, *Paques*.

Each spring, Jewish people observe the Passover festival to commemorate how **God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. The Christian observance of the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist, Holy Communion or the Lord's Table) originated with Jesus sharing the Passover Seder meal with his disciples the night Judas betrayed him. Jesus connected the exodus story with his own mission: becoming a "Paschal Lamb" to save his people from the slavery of sin and its consequences.**





Food Pantry News

The Food Pantry has been very busy, as usual. Every week we have new people sign up to get some help and we also have many of the same people coming regularly. In February we

provided food to help 204 people with some of their nutrition. They are very grateful for the help they receive and we are also happy to be a help.. We are always in need of paper products and laundry and dish soap. We also need spam, tuna, jam, juice and Hamburger Helper. We appreciate all your wonderful donations and also the cash so we can purchase what we need that week. Thank you. — Karen Jordan



Join us in person or online for worship this week.

Holy Week Worship Schedule
Maundy Thursday — Worship will begin at 6:30 pm and some of our members will celebrate their First Communion. All are welcome to celebrate the **Lord's Supper**.

Good Friday — Worship will begin at 6:30 pm and will include the Tenebrae (Service of Darkness).

Easter Sunday — Worship at 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Both services will include Holy Communion. Join us as we celebrate our **victory over death through Christ's resurrection**.

All services will be both in-person and on Facebook (with the Easter service available online starting at 10:00 am Easter morning). DVDs will also be available.

SUMMER CONFIRMATION RETREAT

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE!

Open to Neenah ELCA Church Youth & their friends who completed 6, 7 or 8th grade.

(Gloria Dei, Our Saviors, St. Mark's, & St. Paul's)

Save the Dates



Watch for upcoming details, including how to register!

Wednesday, June 9 from 5-8pm &
Thursday June 10 from 5-8pm
(With optional service projects on Thursday afternoon.)

Held at Memorial Park Shelter, Neenah



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



**CALLING ALL
ST. MARK
CAMPERS**

It's time to sign up for
camp!

Don't miss out on this - if you are a member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, you are eligible to get a full scholarship to go to camp! Check out the many opportunities at www.crosswayscamps.org. Any questions, please call the church office at 920-725-2828 or send an email to:

office@stmarksneenah.org.

Enrollment fills very quickly, so if you are interested, act soon!

Parents/Grandparents/Caregivers - check out this research at <https://sacredplaygrounds.com/parents/> that shows just how life changing/faith raising a Christian camp experience can be! Encourage your child to sign up today!



Sunday, May 2nd will be **New Member Sunday** at St. Mark's Church. If you know of anyone who maybe interested in joining our church, tell them to contact Pastor Bob, or leave a message with Jean in our church office.

Help Our Community Plan for Seniors

Do you have a few minutes to take a survey? AARP Wisconsin, the City of Oshkosh, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Winnebago County are conducting a survey of older residents in this area. They are trying to discover how to develop a more Age Friendly community.

Here is the survey link: bit.ly/AgeFriendlyWinnebago.

The responses from this survey will be used to craft an Age friendly Comprehensive Community Action Plan. With your help, they hope to achieve 1,000+ completed surveys.

The survey is available now and will be open through April 14th; longer if additional completed surveys are needed. The survey demographic targeted are those 45 years and older.





MISSION & VISION

St. Mark's has entered into a mission and visioning process, financially supported by St. Mark's Endowment Fund. The purpose of *Living Into a Culture of Mission and Action* is to guide us through developing a mission and vision that is current, relevant for future ministry in an evolving culture and in partnership with God's work in the world.

Outcomes will include understanding the value and theological foundation of mission and vision planning, listening to scripture, the congregation and the community for how God is shaping us for future ministry, developing (or affirming) our congregation's identity and mission, creating a 12-36 month mission and vision plan with a detailed action plan, training for incorporating the plan successfully, and preparation and presentation of the mission and action plan to the congregation.

A congregational survey will be one of the first steps in this process. This is a prime vehicle for receiving input from a wide range of people in our community of faith, providing the mission and action team with feedback that will be critical in clarifying our identity and action. The more people that take the survey, the better the results will be. Please watch for the survey in the coming weeks. This entire process is prepared and grounded in prayer and scripture. We have been provided with weekly devotional materials that will be shared with you, introducing a biblical story of a time when someone (or a group) listened to God in some way. We thank you for prayerfully listening to God's call for our congregation.

The next team meeting is Monday, April 5 at 6:30 PM.

St. Mark's Mission and Vision Team: Tara Dieck, Mary Jane Hartley, Sara Hopkins, Dawn Jones, Pennie Linna, Ellen LaMarche, Nancy Maslow, Laurie Olson, Jeff Tharp, Tom Wenzel, and Pastor Bob Wilkinson.



SOUTH AFRICA PARTNERS

The Mission of the Month for April is the South African Partnership. Mark "missions" on your giving envelope and bring or mail it to St. Mark's at 140 S. Green Bay Road to support this Mission of the Month.

South African Partnership
Bethlehem Lutheran
Rustenburg, South Africa

The money contributed to the South African Partnership will be used to host a delegation from Bethlehem Lutheran, our partner church in South Africa, when they come to visit us here in Neenah. As you may remember, we sent a delegation to visit them in July 2018 and they were amazing hosts. We would like to be able to take good care of them when they come to see us once it is safe to travel.

Our relationship with Bethlehem Lutheran is spearheaded by the our Partnership Committee. They work to deepen relationships with church bodies around the world, to enlarge our world view, to see the world's challenges in a new way, to examine our own problems and joys through new eyes, and to strengthen God's mission in the world.

Wise Wisconsin Spring Series

Here are some community Cooperative Extension Programs you might be interested in attending. All programs are available at 9:00 am through Zoom!.

April 7 – Compassion – Learn some skills related to being compassionate, to others as well as to yourself.

April 14– Decluttering: What do I do with all my stuff? – How to get started with the process, what to keep and what to shred, and how to distribute non-titled property.

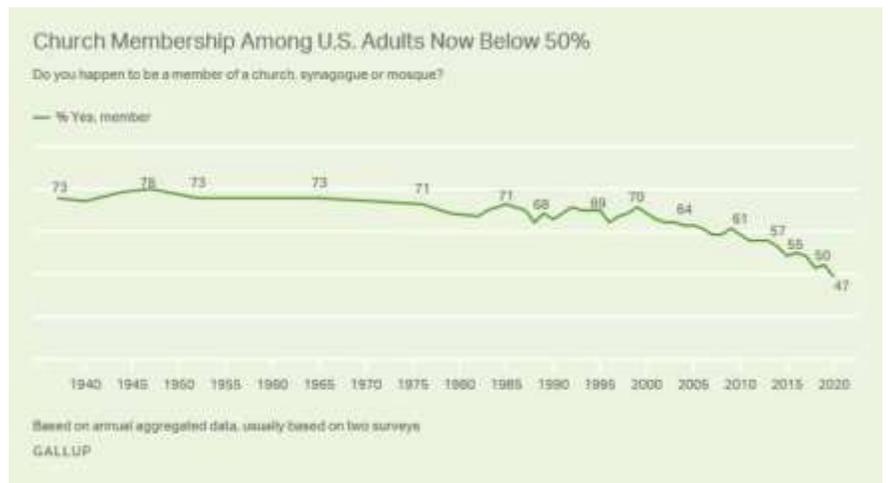
April 21 – Developing Connection and Belonging through Family History – Learn tips and tricks to uncover meaningful family stories that help connect you and your family to their roots.

April 28 – Gardening for Life – Tips and techniques for gardening with ease, protecting your joints, preventing injuries and enhancing your well being.

An Interesting Statistic

I came across this chart while scrolling through my Twitter feed last night. It is from a recent Gallup Poll related to life in the United States. As you can see, church membership has been in a decline since 2000, but it has now dipped to only 47% of our U.S. population. As amazing (and perhaps disappointing) as that is, I was floored by the comments from others who saw this chart. Many thought this was good news. They were happy that the majority of people in our country have rejected organized religion, and no longer considered church membership important. As we think about our future mission (see page 9), we will need to consider these numbers and how we can **reach out and spread the Gospel message to those who don't necessarily see it as important or valuable.**

— Jean Memken



A Modern-Day Parable

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables about the precious being lost and, at great lengths, found again. **The kingdom of heaven, he says, is like that. But most of us don't shepherd sheep and wouldn't fret over one lost coin. A child, on the other hand ...**

In fall 2019, as night fell in northern Minnesota, 6-year-old Ethan and his dog wandered off. Family and police grew frantic because the area consisted of fields, woods and swamps. Authorities requested assistance.

The kingdom of heaven, Jesus might say, is like *600 volunteers* searching diligently in the dark for a child they didn't know. It's like Steve Fines who, though also a stranger to the boy, grabbed his company's pricy heat-seeking drone and worked the camera for hours, until it detected Ethan huddling with his dog, safe but cold. Yes, the kingdom of heaven — indeed God — is like people giving their all and refusing to quit until the lost one is found.





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:

- * 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.

Given for You

When I first heard this hymn, I was touched by its message and it has become one of my favorites. It captures our Savior's feelings on that fateful Passover, and I am amazed at how it expresses the love and care He showed others as He himself was facing His crucifixion. It makes the Lord's Supper, especially on Maundy Thursday, all that more meaningful. When we gather at the Lord's table this Holy Week, I hope you remember what an amazing gift this holy meal is, and that it reminds you of Jesus' amazing love for you. Easter Blessings to all! — Jean Memken

When You woke that Thursday morning,
Savior, teacher, faithful friend,
Thoughts of self and safety scorning,
Knowing how the day would end;
Lamb of God, foretold for ages,
Now at last the hour had come
When but One could pay sin's wages;
You assumed their dreadful sum.

What was there that You could give them
That would never be outspent,
What great gift that would outlive them,
What last will and Testament?
"Show me and the world you love Me,
Know me as the Lamb of God:
Do this in remembrance of Me,
Eat this body, drink this blood."



Never so alone and lonely,
Longing with tormented heart
To be with Your dear and only
For a quiet hour apart;
Sinless Lamb and fallen creature,
One last paschal meal to eat,
One last lesson as their teacher,
Washing Your disciples feet.

One in faith, in love united,
All one body, You the head,
When we meet, by You invited,
You are with us as You said.
One with You and one another
In a unity sublime,
See in us Your sister, brother,
One in ev'ry place and time.





Visit St. Mark's Website

www.stmarksneenah.org



“Easter is the soul’s first taste of spring.”

— Richelle Goodrich



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

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