



The Messenger

March 2021

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



“My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4 NRSV)

Dear friends in Christ,

One year ago, this month, St. Mark's Church like many others in our community, made the difficult decision to close our doors to in-person worship services because COVID-19 was beginning to spread in our area. We had just begun the church season of Lent, and we were unsure whether we would be able to safely worship together on Easter Sunday, or really, anytime soon.

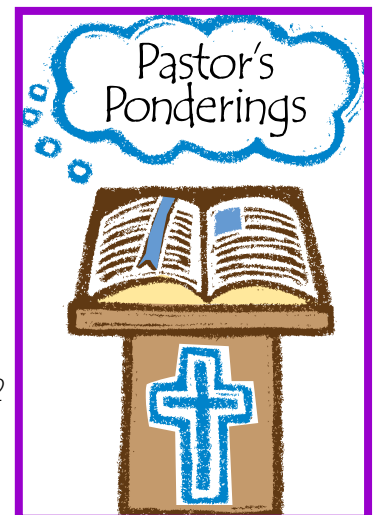
However, we quickly learned to adapt to our new reality, and soon we were worshipping together as a virtual faith community. Other St. Mark's members without access to the internet were soon receiving DVD recordings of the worship service. St. Mark's Education Committee began providing materials for parents to help their children learn about God's love for them safely from home. Parent teaching their children about Jesus in the home. Now, there is a great concept worth continuing in some manner!

Over the past year, some of our members have battled the coronavirus, and thankfully survived. Many others have managed to avoid the virus and are now receiving the vaccine which should provide some protection. However, because this virus continues to mutate into new strains, the experts tell us we will need to remain vigilant and continue to follow all the safety guidelines to keep ourselves and others safe, for the foreseeable future.

It is with the health expert's word of caution in mind, and with many safeguards in place that St. Mark's Church council has decided to return to in-person worship. Unfortunately, it will be some time before we return to worship and fellowship in the way that we were accustomed.

I want to thank everyone of you for your patience over these past many months. This has not been an easy time for any of us. Thankfully, this virus has not taken the lives of any of our members, and with sustained due diligence we will continue to keep ourselves, each other, and our community safe, even as we return to in-person worship.

Continued on page 2



Pastor's Ponderings

Continued from Page 1

Due to the virus, we have learned to adapt our worship and ministry and we have learned many new things about ourselves and our church community. When I reflect on the bible verse from the book of James at the beginning of this article, I cannot say that I experienced the trials of the virus as "*nothing but joy.*" I doubt that any of us would. However, there is no doubt that the past year has tested our faith, and with the help of God, we have endured.

Now, as James says, if we "*let endurance have its full effect,*" perhaps, we also will become "*mature and complete, lacking in nothing.*" Let this be our prayer as we continue through this church season of Lent to Easter morning and beyond, for if God grants it to be so, our future is brighter than ever!

Blessings on your journey,
Pastor Bob

Electronic Worship Opportunities

- www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah
 - Worship Service every Sunday at 10:00 am and Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm during Lent
 - 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

Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent

Hi everyone!! Hope everyone is staying safe and healthy! With March, hopefully will come some nice weather. We are in the season of Lent and are hopeful students are working on their Lenten mobiles. Nothing has changed for Sunday School. We will not be meeting probably until next September since it is already March. Take care and you will be seeing me sometime in March with a lesson and a special surprise.

With God's Blessings,

Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent





ST. MARK'S CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

January 21, 2020



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

Roll Call:

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

Members Excused: Eric Blank, Sharyn Gawlick, Mary Jane Hartley, 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 6 feet apart.

Devotions: **Phyllis Ziemke led us in devotions with a reading "To gather with Jesus."**

Judy Hellman volunteered for devotions next month.

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

Approval of Minutes for the December 17th, 2020 meeting. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman with the following two corrections. 1. Under the Finance/Stewardship report under #1 giving should read \$16,016.65. 2. Under #5 should read increase to \$6,604.

Thank You Cards – None this month.

Financial Report:

1. Current Budget balance is \$71,812.42
2. Building Improvement is \$6,783.54
3. **December's giving was \$20,899.18** – Spending was \$14,988.58.
4. Giving needs to be around \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 per Sunday to meet spending.

MSC by Pastor Bob/Nancy Rose.



Pastor's Report

1. I have made numerous phone calls to members over the holidays, as home visits are limited due to Covid. 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 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 to DVD's, this includes special worship service videos for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.**
6. I presided at our January parking lot worship service with Holy Communion.

7. I participated in an online continuing education class on Anti-Racism offered by the East Central Synod of Wisconsin.
 8. **I met with our church musicians and others to record worship music for St. Mark's on-line worship video.**
 9. **I continue to meet with St. Mark's Committees as needed or by request.**
 10. **I met with St. Mark's Reopening Task Force to make plans for and assess the risk of reopening our building for in-person worship.**
 11. I had several on-line meeting with church members and church leaders in the community.
 12. Heather Konietzki has offered to help out with Confirmation Classes.
 13. I am planning on taking vacation January 25 – 31. Pastor Karen Ressel will be our guest preacher on Sunday, January 31st.
- MSC Judy Hellman/Phyllis Ziemke.

Committee Reports:

Christian Education:

1. Lessons for coming months:
 - January – Wise Men and Jonah
 - February – **Valentine's Day** – Love is Patient
 - Ash Wednesday – We are ordering some art activity for them to do for Lent.
 - 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.
4. Other Business
 - **Year**-end report for Christian Education has been delivered to the church office.
 - **Let Mary Jane know that we will keep our budget the same:** \$2,300.
 - **We have spent more this year, but I am spending more on** getting items for the kids and the cost of postage to send out material, plus what is needed for the Christmas bags and food activities.
 - **Donna spent \$1,025 for Good Gifts. We purchased chickens,** roosters, a fish farm, goats, piglets, honeybees, water filters, school supplies, solar-powered lanterns, seeds and gardening tools, fruit trees, stocked a health clinic for a week, got nutrition for 2 children for a month, vaccinations for 2 children, blankets, stocked a backpack for 2 children, and funded 20 people to eat at a soup kitchen. What a great way to show we can help other people.



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

Connection: No Meeting.

Endowment: No Meeting.

Finance/Stewardship:

1. Laurie reviewed the current giving amount which was \$20,899.18 and expenditures were \$14,988.58. Our spending was under our giving by \$5,910.60
2. Laurie had us review the reports and we observed from items that needed to be corrected or addressed. We have a negative amount in the Technology amount in Associated Bank. We also have \$2,231.38 in the savings account that could be moved over to the designated account in Associated Bank to bring that account to positive. We also have Technology costs with the new camera and components to make that functional that the committee might be something that Memorial money that is not designated could be used to cover the cost.
3. We also noted that one of the organizations that we were going to give \$200 dollars to was unavailable to receive the amount. The board agreed to have the money go to Ally Jansen to assist in helping her family cover the cost of her cancer treatment. That money should have been sent out but it is still showing up on the books.
4. We then reviewed the proposed budget for next year. We recommend a raise to for Pastor. In addition, to assist Pastor with utilizing tax benefits to Pastors, we moved some of his salary to be recorded under housing rather in just general salary. His insurance also went up this year.
5. We recommend our secretary get a raise as well. The current salary is \$12,485.00 and the increase would bring the salary to \$12,560.00. That is a \$75 increase for the year.
6. We also increased the general cost for Organist/Musicians from \$8,500 to \$8,700 for this year.
7. In reviewing the Benevolences it was noted that we had promised to pay the Synod \$8,750 last year however that never got added to the budget sheet and therefore Mary Jane only paid them \$7,150. We currently have not met our promise. We are short by \$1,600. We feel that we need to honor our **agreement and pay that amount out of last year's budget. The committee also would to recommend that this year's agreement with the Synod should be \$8,750.**

Memorial: No Meeting.

Partnership: No Meeting.

Property:

1. Snow plows — Jason will contact snow plow guy and talk to him about issues with plowing and blowing.
2. Cintas keeps delivering trifold paper towels, so Joe will call Cintas and put towels on hold for now.
3. Guide One Insurance — Why the increase, and try to reduce the premium. Jason will call.
4. Bruce will call Keyes Plumbing to check Cross Control Compliance. Ogdon Plumbing will take care of this.
5. Talked about custodian job. Joe and Sandy are doing okay with the job. No one interested as of tonight (1/4/21).
6. Joe and Sandy will take tree down and take angels and wreaths down.

Social Ministry:

1. The Food Pantry is still doing a brisk business every Wednesday morning. We keep getting a few new people every Wednesday, but most are our regulars. Some come every week, but most only come once or twice a month.
2. In December we had 22: people come in needing help, but last year, we were able to help almost 1,000 people. We wouldn't be able to help them without your support of money and goods. We are always in need of paper products, tuna, spam, juice, peanut butter and jam.



Worship and Music:

1. **The Christmas Eve Service was well received. The children's program and family Christmas greetings** were lovely. About 46 participated in the drive-thru communion between 3:00-4:00 pm on Christmas Eve.
2. Another parking lot service will be on January 16 at 9:00 am.
3. Several series for Lent were discussed. Pastor Bob will make the final choice on which series to use. Ash Wednesday is on February 17, which starts the Lenten season.
4. It was decided to keep the same budget for the upcoming year.

Youth: No Meeting

Committee Reports: MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Judy Hellman.

Unfinished Business:

- Council Retreat is on hold till further notice.
- 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 February. MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/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 see how the in-service re-opening goes.}**
 - * 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. Pastor Bob and Laurie Olson gave an update on the camera system: Our installer is waiting for a couple of components to come in and the hope is to have the job completed soon. Once the camera is operating, we will be able to livestream the service on Facebook, burn DVDs to distribute the service using a USB port project service on screen in fellowship hall, and allow worshipers to sit in their cars and listen to the service (similar to the parking lot worship using the transmitter). Jason and Bruce ran the cables from office to sacristy and sacristy to fellowship hall. With that system, a reservation sign-up will not be necessary. Three of the Neenah ELCA churches are back to in-person worship services.
4. Council decided to consider in-person worship, once the camera is installed. Tentatively looking at re-turning to in-person in early February.
5. There will be no singing during worship or fellowship after church.
6. The back door will remain locked. A sign at the end of the bathroom hallway will be placed asking people not to enter the area.
7. Suggested that special music be played, using prerecorded singing (similar to what is used on the Facebook recorded services). There will be no hymnals in the pews and the words will not be on the screen or in bulletin.

8. After discussion, the task force decided to keep the Pray Ground open, along with leaving the toys and books out. This will be monitored and adjusted as needed.
9. COVID-19 GREETER DUTIES: After discussion, the following greeter duties were established:
 - A. Greeters should wear name tags (If you need a new name tag, leave a note for the administrator).
 - B. To avoid congestion just beyond the vestibule inside the church, one greeter should be stationed outside the front doors to open the door for worshipers and one just inside the lobby.
 - C. Welcome worshipers. No hugging or hand shaking. Maintain a 6 foot distance.
 - D. Ensure masks are worn. Thank them for wearing their mask. If someone shows up without a mask, please direct them to the table where masks are available for them.
 - E. Inform them that hand sanitizer is available for their use before and after worship.
 - F. Inform them that coats should be taken with them into the sanctuary.
 - G. Please direct them to the ushers who will assist them in finding a seat.
10. USHERS: Reviewed the usher duties and made COVID-19 safety additions and changes. The ushers will help the people find a place to sit. They can ask where they would like to sit because people feel **more comfortable sitting on a certain side. Pews that can't be used are roped off. The number of** people per pew is one or two on each end and possibly one in the middle, or a family in one pew. The Fellowship Hall will be used as an overflow or if people prefer to sit in there. Ushers need to ensure the fishbowl is on a table in the back of the sanctuary for the offering collection (no passing of the collection plates). Ushers will hand out bulletins (wearing gloves) and the prepackaged communion elements on Communion Sunday.
People will be dismissed back to front, once the service is over. People will be instructed to put coats on and exit the church immediately.
11. COMMUNION: There will be communion with the individual pre-packaged elements (same as used in the parking lot service). Some discussion as to what to do with the empty cups. It was decided to purchase small waste baskets from the Dollar store and put in each open pew. The task force volunteered to take on the ushering and greeters duties, for the first few back to in-person worship services.
12. It was decided that three mics will be set up in the front of the church for the reader, Assisting Minister and Pastor. Pastor will use the pulpit, and the reader and Assisting Minister will use the lectern and a music stand station.
13. CLEANING – A sanitizer mist system will be used to clean the church after the service.
We now have the capability to mainstream the service into the Fellowship Hall and not have to limit the numbers at our worship service, Covid numbers are way down and after discussing the above Task Force Report, the council has decided to move forward to in-service worship, effective Ash Wednesday, February 17th, Covid guidelines are to be followed {wearing mask and social distancing} at all times. Council reserves the right to make any necessary changes.
MSC by Bruce Grundman/Phyllis Ziemke.
14. Notice will be put in the newsletter anyone interested in running for council. There are two positions open and one Youth Representative.
15. Committee reports need to be submitted to the office so Jean can start to work on them for our Annual Meeting.
16. **Two additional “Mission of the Month” choices have been brought to our attention. Under World** we will add Food for the Poor and Haiti Produce Good Fruit. We will vote on these at the Annual Meeting. MSC by Judy Hellman/Bruce Grundman.
17. Annual Meeting has been set for February 28th, with a Budget Hearing set for February 21st.
MSC by Judy Hellman/Pennie Linna. Format for the Agenda will be discussed later.



18. Time and Talent sheets were handed out to each committee. As we go back into in-service church PLEASE include these people into your committees.
19. After looking back over reports it was noted that we did not send in our pledged amount to the Synod. After discussing this, MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Judy Hellman to correct this and send the additional \$1,600.
20. At this time we discussed the Proposed 2021 Budget.

2021 PROPOSED BUDGET

ADMINISTRATION:

- Computer – No Change
- Machine Contracts - No Change
- Office – No Change
- Postage – No Change
- Telephone/Internet – No Change

BENEVOLENCE:

- Appleton Conference Dues - No Change
- Leaven - No Change
- Crossways - No Change
- Synod/ELCA – Up 18.3% {Keeping in line with our pledged amount}

COMMITTEES:

- Council – No Change
- Connections – No Change
- Social Ministry – No Change
- Stewardship – No Change
- Synod Assembly – No Change
- Youth Ministry – No Change

EDUCATION:

- Adult Education – No Change
- Confirmation – No Change
- Sunday School & VBS – No Change

PASTORAL: {Change in Bookkeeping, move some from Salary to Housing}

Compensation:

- Base Salary – Increase \$1,562 per Synod Guidelines
- Housing Allowance – {47.1 % increase}
- FICA Contribution – (10.1 % decrease, Actual Cost)

Pension and Benefits:

- Health/Disability/Pension Coverage – Up \$669 {Increase 1.9 %, higher health cost}

Expense Accounts:

- Auto/Travel – No Change
- Theological Conferences – No Change
- Continuing Education – No Change
- Books & Publications – No Change
- Moving Cost – \$5,000 Removed



PROPERTY:

Bldg. Improvement/Repairs/Supplies – No Change
Parking Lot Improvements- No Change
Electricity – No Change
Fire Protection Tax – No Change
Fuel- No Change
Insurance- \$6,200
Snow Removal – No Change
Cleaning Service Contractor – No Change
Storm Water Tax – No Change
Water/Sewer – No Change
Transportation Assess Fee – No Change
Dumpster Fee – Up 10.8% {Reflects actual cost}

STAFF:

Secretary - Up \$75 {0.6%} {30 cents per hour increase}
Secretary/Fill in – No Change
Church FICA & Medicare – No Change

WORSHIP & MUSIC:

Altar Supplies – No Change
Bulletins & Devotional Supplies – No Change
Choir Supplies- No Change
Organist/Musician Contractor – Up \$200 {2.3%} {\$2 increase per Service}
Pulpit Supplies – No Change
Worship Music – No Change
Special Projects – No Change

Total Proposed Budget for 2021 is \$191,529

MSC by Judy Hellman/Nancy Rose to present this 2021 Proposed Budget to the Congregation with the correct insurance amount put in.

MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Nancy Rose to adjourn at 7:55 P.M

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is February 18th, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.

Submitted by Donna Joachim



Special Dates in March

- World Day of Prayer, *March 5, 2021*
- Daylight-Saving Time begins, *March 14, 2021*
- First day of spring, *March 20, 2021*
- Holy Week, *March 28 – April 4, 2021*
- Palm/Passion Sunday, *March 28, 2021*



Lenten Worship Continues

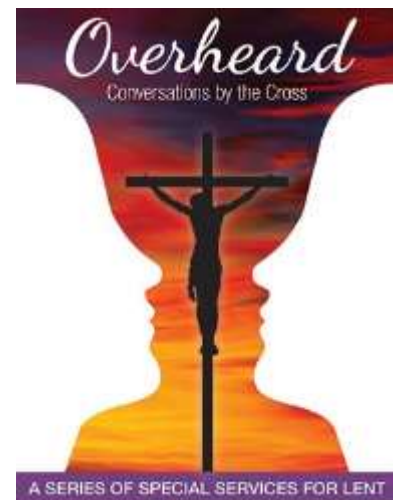
Our Lenten Worship theme, “Overheard: Conversations by the Cross,” has provided a wonderful way to reflect on Christ’s suffering and death during this season of Lent, and to prepare for our Holy Week worship. Through drama and visuals, we have been able to listen in on conversations of those who were there when Jesus was arrested, condemned, tortured and crucified. We have also gained an appreciation of the dramatic talents of our own members! If you have not had an opportunity to attend one of these midweek services, please consider making some time to do so. In-person worship services will continue **here at St. Mark’s every Wednesday at 6:30 pm. You can also watch these services on Facebook, starting at 6:30 pm on Wednesdays. DVDs of the services are also available. Here’s the remaining schedule:**

March 3 — Pontius Pilate and His Wife, Procula

March 10 — Simon of Cyrene and the Centurion

March 17 — The Two Thieves

March 24 — Mary and John



Children's Message



Since our Sunday School cannot be session, Pastor Bob has recorded a special **children’s message that is posted to Facebook every Sunday morning. Kids (and parents and grandparents), be sure to check it out!**



The Food Pantry is still doing a brisk business every Wednesday morning. We keep getting a few new people every Wednesday, but most are our regulars. Some come every week, but most only come once or twice a month. In December of 2020, we had 223 people come in needing help. Compare that to our 2019 total of almost 1,000 for the whole year! We wouldn't be able to help them without your support of money and goods. We are always in need of paper products, tuna, spam, juice, peanut butter and jam. — Karen Jordan

Because of our delayed Annual Meeting this year, we don’t have a “Mission of the Month” to report on for March. But we will have a March Mission of the Month following our Annual Meeting on Sunday. Be watching the worship folder for announcements about our mission support for March and subsequent months. Our regular “Mission of the Month” article will return in April.





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.



Potted Flowers for Easter

The Worship and Music Committee is requesting potted Easter flowers to decorate the sanctuary for Easter Sunday. If you wish to donate flowers, please bring to the church sometime during Holy Week. The church office is open on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. If you need to drop the flowers off at another time, please call first to make sure someone is there (920-725-2828).

Paying it Back — and Forward

During the pandemic, acts of kindness seemed especially meaningful. Last spring, as Covid-19 hit Native American communities particularly hard, an interesting transatlantic outreach occurred. Donations from Ireland began appearing in a relief fund for Navajo and Hopi families, leading administrators to suspect the account had been hacked. Then they realized a cross-generational payback was underway.

In 1847, Choctaw Tribe members sent \$170 overseas to Ireland to help with Potato Famine relief. That generosity was never forgotten, and by May 2020, people in Ireland had contributed more than \$4 million toward pandemic assistance for relatives of people who'd helped their ancestors. Many donors included an Irish proverb meaning "In each other's shadows the people live."

The concept of paying it forward dates back to a 1784 letter by Benjamin Franklin. It also echoes Jesus' Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). How might you live out this practice today?





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.



That's the point!

If prayer stands as the place where God and human beings meet, then I must learn about prayer. Most of my struggles in the Christian life circle around the same two themes: why God doesn't act the way we want God to, and why I don't act the way God wants me to. Prayer is the precise point where those themes converge.

--Philip Yancey



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

