



# The Messenger

December 2021

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

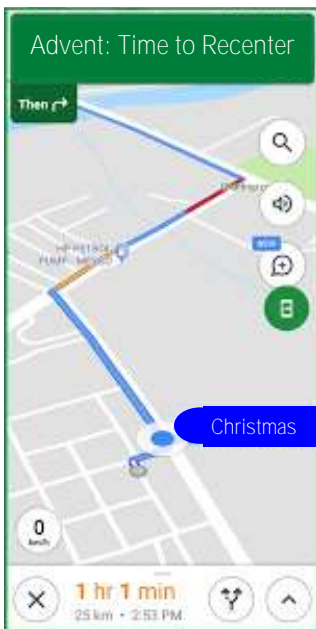
A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



*"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. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near."* (James 5:7-8 NRSV)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Just as the church season of Lent takes us on a journey to the cross of Calvary and then to the empty tomb of Easter morning, the church season of Advent takes us on a journey that ends at a manger in Bethlehem and the birth of the Christ child. The four Sundays of Advent not only prepare our hearts for the celebration of Jesus' birth, but more importantly, it is a time of preparation and expectant waiting for Christ's second coming.



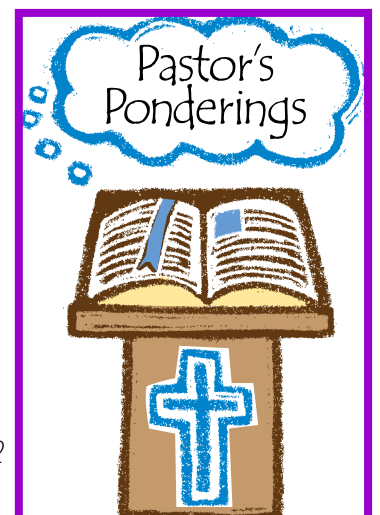
Whether it is Easter morning or Christmas Day, our experience of these Christian celebrations is significantly enhanced by tracking the journey that we take in getting there.

Sometimes my wife Laurie and I will travel to some place where we have never been before. If Laurie happens to be driving, I will enter our destination into my smart phone and watch for the road markers on the map as they come up. As you may know, you can expand the map on your phone, or move the map around, which enables you to get a wider view of the road ahead, even to the point of seeing your final destination on the map. However, when you do this, you can lose your perspective and lose track of where you are at that moment in time.

Fortunately, when you start to explore the map, a tab appears on the screen that says, "recenter." When you push "recenter" your screen goes back so that you can once more see exactly where you are on the map. This "recentering" feature reminds me of the church season of Advent.

As we live our lives, day to day and week to week, we can easily become distracted by the busyness of our lives and the chaos of the world around us. Many of the things that fill our days are good, healthy, life-giving things, such as school, church, and community events. We get caught up in the hustle and **bustle of work schedules, doctors' appointments, and running errands.** Often, we find ourselves looking ahead, planning, and frequently, worrying about the future.

Continued on page 2



## Pastor's Ponderings

Continued from Page 1

Even though this can be a busy time of year, the season of Advent reminds us repeatedly to recenter. Each Sunday of Advent reminds us to slow down and live in the moment, even as we wait and prepare for the Lord. Advent is a time to pause and reflect on those things that are most important in our lives, namely, our relationship with God and our relationships with family, friends, and neighbors.

**While life's concerns continually pull us forward to prepare for the next major event in our lives, Advent** reminds us to recenter, to live in the moment and prepare our hearts and minds so that God can enter in.

My prayer for each of you this Advent season is that you take the time to recenter and *strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

Thanking God for each of you as together we make our Advent journey to Christmas,

Pastor Bob

- Sunday School and Bible Class at 9:00 am on Sundays
- In-person worship at St. Mark's at 10:00 am on Sundays
- Online Worship: [www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah](https://www.facebook.com/stmarksneenah)
  - Worship Service every Sunday at 10:00 am
  - Devotional every Tuesday at 10:00 am
  - **Children's Message and Sunday School lesson every Sunday morning**
- Please call the church office at 920-725-2828 if you would like a DVD of any worship service.



## MOSES MESSAGE

*A Sunday School Update*



Hi everyone!!! I look forward to seeing everyone on Sunday, December 5th, at 9:00 A.M. for Sunday School. It has been a while since we have met in person so this will be like just getting to know everyone again. We will be working on the Christmas Program that I brought to your homes around Thanksgiving time. Remember to bring that script to church with you on the 5th and the 12th. Also, remember also to wear your masks. We will meet on December 5th, 12th, and 19th, and there will be no Sunday School on December 26th or January 2nd. See everyone on December 5th.

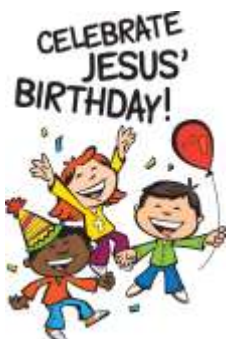
### BIRTHDAYS

Lily Anderson 12/27

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

With God's Blessings,

Gwen Hoehne, Sunday School Superintendent





## ST. MARK'S CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

October 21st, 2021



The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by

President Laurie Olson.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Pennie Linna, Phyllis Ziemke, Laurie Olson, Bruce Grundman, Jeff Tharp, Mary Jane Hartley, Sherri Denney, Pastor Bob and Judy Hellman.

Members Excused: Donna Joachim and Mykayla Tharp

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

Devotions: Phyllis Ziemke led us in devotions. Bruce Grundman volunteered for devotions next month.

Approval of Minutes for the September 16th, 2021 meeting.

MSC by Sherri Denney/Phyllis Ziemke.

Thank You Cards – None

Financial Report:

1. Current Budget balance is \$90,422.84.
2. Building Improvement is \$17,308.57.
3. September giving was \$14,684.91. Spending was \$11,520.47.
4. Giving needs to be around \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 per Sunday to meet spending.

MSC by Jeff Tharp/Pennie Linna.

### Pastor's Report:

1. I made several home communion visits, hospital visits, and nursing care visits.
  2. **I attended committee meetings at St. Mark's Church, as needed.**
  3. **I met with St. Mark's Mission and Action team.**
  4. I have been teaching confirmation classes on-line each Wednesday evening using Google Meet.
  5. I have met with the students and parents of those who will be getting confirmed on Reformation Sunday to review their course work and Statements of Faith. Those who will be affirming their baptism this year are Ryan Blank, Braeden Ross, and Jensen and Janae Rodriguez.
  6. **I met with St. Mark's In-person Task Force to review our Covid-19 practices and guidelines.**
  7. I met with Pat Westphal in preparation for the funeral worship service of Duane Westphal. And I subsequently, presided at Duane's funeral service and conducted a service of inurnment for Duane in Oshkosh.
  8. I recorded both Gwen Hoehne and Judy Hellman so that I might assemble and post Sunday school lessons to our St. Mark's Facebook page.
  9. **I recorded several members of St. Mark's Church for our fall stewardship campaign.** These videos have been viewed prior to our Sunday morning worship services.
  10. **I met briefly with St. Mark's Executive Council.**
  11. I attended the Appleton Conference Monthly Zoom Meeting.
- MSC by Jeff Tharp/Sherri Denney



## Committee Reports:

### Worship & Music Committee:

The Worship and Music Committee met on September 28th. Members attending were Ardys Seelow, Mary Ellen Tracey, Pastor Bob and Judy Hellman.

We all felt that the hymn sing went nicely. Members seem to appreciate the opportunity to choose their favorite hymns.

October 3rd is Rally Sunday. Sunday School will start virtually due to Covid.

**"Voices of Peace" will sing on October 11th. They will perform several pre-service selections and will lead all singing during the service.**

October 17th is Stewardship Sunday. All pledge cards and Time & Talent sheets will be due then.

October 31st is Confirmation Sunday. There will be four youth confirmed. They will choose their favorite hymn and Bible verse.

**We firefly discussed the Advent series, "Wait Upon the Lord." Most of the songs in this series are familiar.**

**Our meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.**

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, October 26th at 10:30 am.

### Connections Committee:

Our meeting started with a prayer.

Attended: Judy Hellman, Sharyn Gawlick, Linda A, Jane Arps, Mary Jane Hartley, Joy Case, Jenny Case, and Ellen LaMarche

### Old Business:

The Timber Rattlers Game Excursion on September 10, 2021 was a success. Forty-five St. Mark's members and friends attended. All enjoyed the event.

### New Business:

We planned a trip to Navarino Nature Center; cost was \$10 per person. We had eight members attend. A very nice place to visit and we all enjoyed the day.

Get well cards were sent to Judy Fowler, Jeri Travis, And Donna Joachim.

On September 18, 2021, the ELCA Women's Retreat was held at Imago Dei campgrounds near Clintonville. The Bag Lady retreat was attended by 10 members of St. Mark's. **It was a wonderful program.**



- Doris & Victor Gilbert
  - Pat Wenzel
  - Judy Koerner
- Tracy Feldman
- Brett Gawlick
- Ron Forrest
- Judy Fowler
- Tom Hoehne
- Donna Joachim
- Otto Arndt
- Ellen LaMarche





Connections voted to send information to members by mail to see what interest there is in getting a subscription to the magazine "*Gather*" published for Women of the ELCA. If there is any interest, we will write a grant to the Endowment Committee to help cover the subscription which is \$20 a year. And all members will receive a subscription free if they are interested.

We are thankful for a successful surgery that Jeri Travis. Thank you to all who have taken her to her many appointments.

Craft fair is October 23, 2021. Set up will be Thursday, marking off places for tables and setting them up. On Friday between 7:00-9:00 pm, vendors will set up or they can set up early Saturday from 6:00-9:00 am, and then the craft fair opens. No food for sale that day. All will wear masks at the event. We need people to bake for the event. Baked goods can be dropped Thursday thru Saturday. There will be a sign-up sheet on the table at church. We need many member to help with set up. Judy and Jane will help with bake sale Saturday. Hopefully, member will help some time during the craft sale if needed.

Thanks to Joe Deckers who will help with the set up and take down. Take down will begin at 2:15 pm when the sale is over. Any help would be welcome.



We closed with Lord's Prayer.

Finance/Stewardship Committee:

Attendance: Pastor Bob, Laurie Olson, Fern Fuhrman, Mary Jane Hartley, and Pennie Linna.

Mary Jane reviewed the current giving for September which was \$14,684.91 and expenditures were \$11,520.47. Our spending was under our giving by \$3,164.44.

The committee reviewed the Helping Hands (formerly Needy Families) account. Pastor suggested that Social Ministry take over disbursement of funds when needed. The committee agreed with this suggestion. Social Ministry will now be responsible to disburse these funds to those individuals in need.

Pastor while visiting with a member received a check for \$500. He recommended that those funds go into the Helping Hands account and the committee agreed.

Missions Committee joined the stewardship meeting to discuss how we can work together to meet one of our goals of Connecting passions to ministry. The committees worked together to create some ideas and develop an action plan. As the projects go from ideas to actions the congregation will be given more information.

**Pastor closed the meeting with the Lord's prayer.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Property Committee:

In attendance: Bruce Grundman, Ginny Schieck, Phyllis Ziemke, Sandy Deckers, Joe Deckers, Don Peterson, Jason Blank, and Terry Stillman

1. Cintas: Joe will call in December to hold off on supplies.
2. Chair gliders have been put on chairs in Mary Room and Fellowship Hall.

3. Door handles need attention on some doors. Bruce will call to get someone in to check on these.
4. **Snow plowing: We will cancel last year's vendor and sign on to Pahlow Farms for snow plowing.**
5. Boilers: Jason will start them up when it gets cold enough.
6. Tree will be cut down this winter.
7. Wood Chippers need to clean up better and a countertop seems to have scratches on it.
8. **Light switches were replaced in men's bathroom.**
9. A ballast in a light in the Mary Room need to be replaced. Joe will get a replacement.

#### Mission and Vision Team:

Members Present: Dawn Jones, Nancy Maslow, Pennie Linna, Ellen LaMarche, Tara Dieck, Mary Jane Hartley, Pastor Bob, and Laurie Olson.

Others Present: Fern Fuhrmann

The meeting opened with a prayer by Pastor Bob.

The Mission and Vision Team met with the Stewardship and Finance Committee, to begin working on the first Ministry Result Area, *Connecting Passions to Ministry*.

**Three objectives were discussed and established, which will assist in identifying individuals' passions, volunteer opportunities and processes of informing members of ways to connect at St. Mark's** and/or the community. Outcomes, how to achieve the objectives, who will be the champions of each of the objectives, potential costs, funding sources for the costs, and timelines were developed. The three objectives include: Annual Meeting Volunteer Opportunities, Calendar of Volunteer Opportunities and Table Talks (committee and missions of the month and exercises on identifying passions are possible topic areas).

It was also noted that an event be set to announce the new mission statement and core values. The development of a strategic plan brochure will be designed and made available, similar to the piece presented during our GSB cohort meeting.

**The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.**

#### Returning to In-Person Worship Task Force:

PRESENT: Dawn Jones, Bruce Grundman, Pennie Linna, Laurie Olson, Pastor Bob, and Gwen Hoehne

Pastor Bob opened with a prayer.

Reviewed and discussed the current Winnebago County COVID-19 case numbers. Laurie informed the **task force that each weeks' report show an increase in the percentage of Winnebago County residents** who have received the vaccination. As of October 14, 56% have been vaccinated. It was noted that COVID-19 case numbers are consistently trending down. It was decided to resume Fellowship Hour beginning October 24.

It was decided to continue with masks and social distancing safety precautions.

Task Force agreed to meet soon to review COVID-19 status/data statistics and make further procedure changes, as needed.

**Closed with the Lord's Prayer.**

Committee Reports: MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Jeff Tharp



Unfinished Business:

The Task Force felt it was safe to resume Fellowship on Sunday, October 24th.

Mission & Vision Update:

1. Set up a complete list of duties and positions to be filled.
2. Table talks involving people with various talents.
3. There will be an official announcement of the mission statement and values.

New Business:

1. ESTHER Donation and Ad Sponsorship

- Motion was made for a donation of \$280 and an Ad sponsorship of \$120 to the ESTHER organization.

MSC by Sherri Denney/Phyllis Ziemke

2. **Christmas Table's Christmas Giving Request for December 11th.**

- Motion made to donate 60 pairs of white socks, eight dozen cookies, lap blankets twin blankets or comforters and some volunteers to work at the event.

MSC by Phyllis Ziemke/Bruce Grundman

3. Helping Hands Account:

- There is \$221.68 in this account. A motion was made to make this money available to the social ministry committee to use as needed.

4. Executive Committee Report:

- Pastor Bob will be retiring at the end of 2021.
- A motion was made to accept his resignation with regret.

MSC by Jeff Tharp/Bruce Grundman

5. Linwood Place:

- A basket will be made up for their on-line silent auction.
- Donations will be taken on Sunday, October 24th for the basket.

6. **Pastor's Farewell:**

- A retirement party will be held after the worship service on December 26th.
- A letter will be sent out requesting donations for a gift.

MSC by Pennie Linna/Jeff Tharp to adjourn at 7:35 pm.

**We closed with the Lord's Prayer.**

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

Submitted by Judy Hellman, Secretary

## Farewell to Pastor Bob and Laurie

Pastor Bob has announced his retirement, effective at the end of the year.

**We will have a special service on December 26th to honor Pastor Bob's and Laurie's ministry here at St. Mark's, followed by a meal and program in the Fellowship Hall. If you would like to attend, please RSVP (call or e-mail) to the church office by December 14th.**





From This . . .

. . . To This!

### Children and Youth

Currently, the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center hosts Kids on weekday after school offering a safe place to come and play and build relationships with the



Reconciliation Center and Kids

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. If **you are interested in contributing to this much needed mission, please mark "Mission of the Month" on your giving envelope.**



On December 5 all the beautiful handiwork created by our members will be part of our offering. All the hats, mittens, scarves and afghans displayed on the altar rail will have a blessing and a prayer, and will be donated to various agencies to help keep our neighbors warm during these coming months. Thank you very much for all your help to others.

The Food Pantry has been very busy with quite a few new patrons, as well as our regulars. During the month of October we served 42 families with 133 people getting food supplies. We are always in need of laundry and dish soap, jam, sugar and Spam. Thanks for all your support. — by Karen Jordan



## Movie Night at St. Mark's

Looking for a fun way to spend a Friday night? Come to St. Mark's on Friday, December 17 for a "Christmas Movie Night" with your St. Mark's family. Check for updates on St. Mark's Facebook page and in the Sunday bulletins. But get it on your calendar and get ready to enjoy a night out at the movies!





## WELCA Convention Held at St. Mark's

On a beautiful Saturday morning in November, 65 women gathered here at St. Mark's for the WELCA Triennial Convention. The Local Planning Committee, Dawn Jones, Laurie Olson, and Jean Memken, had the Fellowship Hall ready to the event. With the theme, "Generations of Sisters in Christ" they decorated the tables with fall foliage and vintage pictures of women doing various church activities from times past. The morning started with a breakfast prepared by WELCA members from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Green Bay, that consisted of pastries, "Cuties" oranges, and yogurt, along with coffee, tea and juice. Then all attending went into the sanctuary where Pastor Bob led us in worship. Giving the sermon that morning was the Reverend Dr. Niveen Ibrahim Sarras. Her text was Micah 6:8 and she emphasized the problem in our country where so-called Christians do not do justice, show mercy, or walk humbly with God.

Following the worship service, we gathered in the Fellowship Hall and heard the keynote address delivered by Pastor Jenn Pockat who spoke about the ELCA efforts to bring people, especially young people, back to the church after the pandemic. She cited some very interesting studies related to characteristics of churches that successfully keep young people active in their congregations.

Following the keynote was a breakout session. One of the speakers, Paul Edison-Swift, talked about AMPARRO which is the ELCA's effort to help immigrant families. The other session was related to human trafficking and was led by Lisa McCormick.

Lunch was prepared by our own St. Mark's members. They served several different soups, white and wheat rolls, and, in keeping with the theme, an array of vintage church potluck salads, including a Jell-O mold with shredded carrots and pineapple, Watergate Salad, 7-Layer Salad, Cranberry Fluff, and Tuna Noodle Salad. That brought back a lot of great memories for those in attendance.

The afternoon program included another breakout session, which featured a presentation from Thrivent Community Engagement Leader Laura Gruender on their Action Funds program. There was also the WELCA Synod business meeting. The local arrangements committee received many compliments, and it turned out to be an enlightening, inspiring day. Thirteen of our own St. Mark's members in were in attendance which was a great turnout for our church. Check out the pictures below!



*Sherri Denney at the registration table with Wanda Fischer, our Conference rep.*



*We gather for worship with Pastor Bob presiding and Judy Hellman providing music.*



*Above: The Synod WELCA banner.  
Below: In keeping with the theme, we had a display of vintage cookbooks, thanks to Karen Jordan and others.*



*Bring a book, take a book display. There are still books available. Help yourself!*



*Laurie Olson and Dawn Jones serve Pastor Sarras some soup and bread for lunch.*



## Our Sunday Servants

Date	Assisting Minister	Reader	Greeters	Ushers	Counters	Altar Guild
December 5	Jean Memken	Sherri Denney	Pat Thompson Phyllis Ziemke	Team 4	Jeff Tharp Kim Wallmuller	Jean Memken
December 12	Bruce Grundman	Tara Dieck	Jeff Tharp Wanda Webster	Team 7	Jane Arps Ellen LaMarche Emil Leppiaho	Jean Memken
December 19	Sherri Denney	Jeri Travis	The Blank Family	Team 8	Gwen Hoehne Doug Sebstead Renie Sebstead	Gwen Hoehne Jean Memken
December 26	Jeff Tharp	Gwen Hoehne	Doug & Renie Sebstead	Team 1	Bruce Grundman Lois Kemp Judy Olson	Gwen Hoehne Jean Memken



### ANNUAL MEETING

Get These Important  
Dates on Your Calendar!

Budget Review—February 6, 2022

Annual Meeting—February 13, 2022

## Voices of Peace Provide Powerful Testimony

The Voices of Peace Gospel finally made it to St. Mark's on November 13, a snowy Sunday morning. They sang many old gospel favorites like "Bringing in the Sheaves" and "Little Brown Church in the Vale," along with other more contemporary songs that provided an uplifting testimony to their faith in our Savior Jesus. They joined us for Fellowship Hour after the service and it was great to have them with us!



## Lay School Continuing Education Classes Overview—Part 2

By Jenny Case

Engaging Biblical Texts—Course is designed to help students move beyond content to methods of reading biblical texts, so students may be guided by the Holy Spirit to new insights and not be dependent on commentaries/websites. These methods help students prepare to teach, preach, write devotions, and grow in their own faith journey in opening up texts. We will be looking at practicing these methods: Narrative Criticism, Structures and Color Coding, Word Study, Genre, and Multiple Intelligences. We will be focusing on texts from Jonah and Esther. We will also be able to create a Bible Study.

Christianity in Contemporary America—We will be looking at topics such as: Post-War Christianity—the Baby Boom and Growth, The Civil Rights Movement—Vatican II, Religion and the turbulent 1970s, Immigration—New Religious Movements, Rise of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, Christianity and Politics, New Patterns in Worship and Congregational Life, Shifting patterns of religiosity and adherence—the nones.

I look forward to sharing things we are discussing all of the Lay School Continuing Education classes.



## Christmas Week at St. Mark's

Please join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus at St. Mark's. We will have several worship opportunities during the week leading up to Christmas. Here is the schedule:

Friday, December 24th — **Christmas Eve Worship at St. Mark's, 5:00 pm**

- \* Join our St. Mark's family as we celebrate the night Jesus was born. The service will include a video presentation by our Sunday School children entitled, "Room at the Inn." There will also be the traditional candle lighting and the singing of carols.

Saturday, December 25th — **Christmas Day Worship at St Mark's, 10:00 am**

- \* We will have a traditional Christmas worship service on Christmas morning. Join in singing the joyous carols of Christmas as we continue the celebration of Jesus' birth.

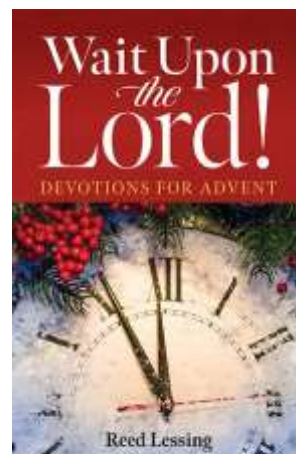
Sunday, December 26th — **Regular worship at St. Mark's** — Farewell Service for Pastor Bob and Laurie Wilkinson, 10:00 am

- \* Our Christmas celebration continues during our regular Sunday morning worship service. We will also honor Pastor Bob and Laurie at this service and at a special program following the service. If you would like to attend the farewell program, RSVP to the church office by December 14th. (There will be no Sunday School or Bible class on this Sunday.)



## Wait Upon the Lord!

We have Advent Devotionals available on the table in the church narthex. This devotional booklet relates to the theme of our worship services this Advent and are entitled, "Wait Upon the Lord!" Each devotion is about a half page long and includes a scripture verse from the book of Isaiah and short prayer. Here is a synopsis from the publisher: "In Isaiah we come upon promises that move us mightily toward the New Testament's proclamation that Jesus of Nazareth is Israel's Messiah and the Savior of the world. These devotions from Isaiah will renew and enliven our hearts as we countdown to Christ. 'Those who wait upon the Lord . . . Shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint' (40:31)." Pick up your copy and prepare to celebrate Jesus on Christmas Day!



## Poinsettias for the Advent/Christmas Season

Please consider donating a poinsettia to decorate our altar during the Advent/Christmas season. You can drop the poinsettia off at church and put in on the table in the narthex. Be sure to sign the sheet on the table if you want to donate it In honor/memory/celebration of someone/something. Thank you for beautifying our altar during the Advent and Christmas seasons!







# Visit St. Mark's Website

[www.stmarksneenah.org](http://www.stmarksneenah.org)

## The Greatest Gift-Giver

When we give each other Christmas presents in God's name, let us remember that he has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans — and all that lives and moves upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused. And to save us from our own foolishness, from all our sins, he came down to earth and gave us himself. — Sigrid Undset



Do we have your  
email address?

Please send an e-mail to  
[office@stmarksneenah.org](mailto: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](mailto:office@stmarksneenah.org)

Pastor Bob's e-mail is still: [pastorbob@stmarksneenah.org](mailto:pastorbob@stmarksneenah.org)

Mary Jane Hartley's e-mail is now: [treasurer@stmarksneenah.org](mailto:treasurer@stmarksneenah.org)

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church**

**140 S. Green Bay Road**

**Neenah, WI 54956**

