

The Messenger

July 2024

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





Dear Children of God gathered as St. Mark's,

Grace and peace to you.

As we enter the summer season, many of us will be traveling and enjoying well-deserved vacations. While we embrace this time of rest and renewal, I encourage you to remember the ongoing needs of our church and its ministries. Your faithful offerings are crucial for us to continue serving the Lord Jesus and our community.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Even while you are away, your contributions help us maintain our programs, support our missions, and provide for those in need.

Consider setting up automatic giving or sending your offerings through our online platform, or mail it to ensure that our work for God's kingdom remains uninterrupted. Proverbs 3:9 tells us, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." By continuing to give, we honor God and support the vital work of our church.

Thank you for your steadfast generosity and commitment. Together, we can continue to make a difference and share God's love with all. Let us remember Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Sarras



A Few Thank Yous

Thank you so much for letting St. Gabriel Parish use your lawn and parking lot as a stopping point on our procession. It was a beautiful day and event and it was a perfect spot.

Blessings!

Sara Van Frachen

Dear St. Mark's,

Thank you for generously allowing us to use your Library room each week.

Sincerely,

The Thursday 6:00 pm SLAA Group



Hope everyone is having a great summer. Enjoying the weather!! Just a note to remind you to sign up for Vacation Bible School on August 5th thru 8th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Commercial Street just across from the "Y" in Neenah.

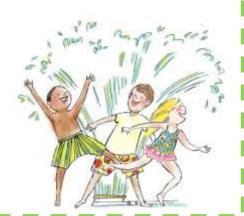
If there are kids in Grade 7 and up, we are in need of shepherds for the kids to various activities during VBS. Call the church office if you are willing to help out for those four days or even if only one or a couple. Enjoy your summer and be safe!!!



BIRTHDAYS

Mason Biese 7-4 Happy Birthday!!!

With God's Blessings Gwen Hoehne



Adult Forum Summer Schedule

Dear Beloved Children of God,

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

I am pleased to announce the commencement of a 3-week Bible study on the Book of Amos, starting this Sunday at 9:00 am.

During these sessions, we will delve into the profound messages of biblical economic and social justice found within this prophetic book.



Let us come together as we seek to understand God's heart for justice and endeavor to live out these principles in our daily lives. I eagerly anticipate your participation.

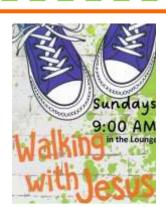


St. Mark's is the *volunteer sponsor*of this event!
Held on Saturday, July 13
O'Hauser Park, Neenah
7:00 am—Noon

Great Opportunity to be of service to the Neenah Community and to HAVE FUN!

15 Volunteers Needed

Needed for registration, parking, obstacle course stations, etc. All volunteers receive a t-shirt!





The Food Pantry has had another busy month. In June, we had 54 families shopping to feed 155 family members. We have a good supply of canned goods, but as always is the case, we try to figure out what to get for the perishable foods. We try to get the best value for the money. I guess you could say we are bargain hunters. As is always the case, we need jam and cereal, as well as laundry, dish and bar soap. Thank you for your paper bag and egg carton donations—we have plenty of those for the time being. Your donations are always appreciated. Thanks for all your help.—*Karen Jordan*

Too Much Bingo! Are You Kidding?!?

You can never have too much BINGO! St. Mark's Connections Ministry Team will host another afternoon of Bingo on July 15 from 1:00—3:00 pm! There will be prizes and snacks. Come have some fun and bring a friend to enjoy the fellowship of your church family! See you then!



College Send-off for Mykayla Tharp

Mykayla Tharp will be starting college this year at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and St. Mark's would like to help her get the supplies she needs to furnish her dorm room and be ready for classes in the fall. She has created an Amazon Wish List that can be found at:



https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/2NNN5B0MOXOPS.

There is a also copy of the list on the table in the narthex, along with donation envelopes with pictures of the items on Mykayla's wish list. Choose the envelope with the item you wish to purchase, and follow the directions on the envelope to make your donation.

Our Sunday Servants

Date	Assisting Minister	Reader	Greeters	Ushers	Counters	Acolyte
July 7 Hymn Sing Sunday	Pennie Linna	LaVerne Arndt	Pennie Linna Betty Linna	Joy Case Jenny Case	Jeff Tharp Kim Wallmuller Fern Fuhrmann	Usher
July 14	Pennie Linna	Jenny Case	Nancy Maslow Evie Peterson	The Blank Family	Jane Arps Ellen LaMarche Emil Leppiaho Pat Westphal	Usher
July 21	Tom Wenzel	Dom Christofilis	John & Laurie Olson	Emil Leppiaho Phyllis Ziemke	Gwen Hoehne Doug Sebstead Renie Sebstead	Usher
July 28	Pat Westphal	Sherri Denney	Joe & Linda Rehorst Samantha Rose	Judy Fowler Ginny Schieck	Lois Kemp Judy Olson Linda Anderson	Usher

Communion Assistants:

July 7 — Dom & Emily Christofolis, and Sherri Denney

June 14 — Sharyn Gawlick, Mary Jane Hartley, and Gwen Hoehne

Altar Guild: Ginny Schieck

ST. MARK'S

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES June 20, 2024

Members Present: Pennie Linna, Jason Blank, Jenny Case, Laurie Olson, Emily Christofilis, and Pastor Niveen

Members Absent: Dawn Jones, Ryan Blank, and Kim Wallmuller.

Call to Order: Pennie called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.

Devotions: Pastor Niveen. July Devotions: Jason Blank.

Approval Of Minutes: MSC to approve the minutes of May 16, 2024, by Laurie Olson/Emily Christofilis.

Thank Yous: Pennie will thank Pat Westphal for assisting in the office while Jean was on vacation. Laurie will thank Food Pantry volunteers for their continued service to those in need: Pat Thompson, Karen Jordan, and Nancy Bricco. Pastor Niveen will thank Chuck Baumgartner for his time helping in Food Pantry.

Financial Reports: Reviewed current account balances through end of May 2024. May's giving was \$13,931.55 as compared with May expenses which were \$15,626.53. The difference was -\$1,694.98. Year to date (through end of May) giving was \$72,233.65 and expenses were \$69,586.71 with a difference (giving minus spending) of \$2,646.94. Laurie noted that the quarterly City of Neenah Utilities (stormwater, Transportation Assessment Fee, and Water Bill) were paid in May, along with an annual software membership fee.

Total Associated Bank checking has a balance of \$184,590.64 which includes \$70,261.51 allocated to designated accounts and \$114,329.13 for current operating. Additionally, \$162,426.68 in the Thrivent money market and \$1,035.98 in Thrivent TIPS account and \$55,544.29 in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund.

Jason asked about our invested money. Laurie explained these are funds received (some designated and some not) that are invested to gain better returns rather than sitting in a checking or savings account. ELCA Mission Investments are invested on a two-year basis and funds in Thrivent are accessible. MSC to accept the Financial Report by Jason Blank/Emily Christofilis.

Pastor's Report—Pastor Niveen Sarras

May 17-18: Synod Assembly at Oshkosh Convention Center

I had the privilege of attending the Synod Assembly along with Pat Westphal and Adam Clifford, who represented our church. Mary Jane Hartley and Jenny Case also attended but did not vote, as we were allotted only two voting members. I was honored to preach for the Synod Assembly worship service. The assembly was a powerful reminder of our unity and mission as a wider church community.

May 20 and June 17: Worship and Music Ministry Team Meetings
I attended meetings with our Worship and Music Ministry team on both May 20 and June 17. During these sessions, we discussed plans and ideas to enhance our worship experiences. These meetings were fruitful times of collaboration and visioning as we worked together to create meaningful and spiritually uplifting services.

June 8: Memorial Service for Sara Forrest

On Saturday, June 8th, I officiated the memorial service for Sara Forrest, the mother of Sherri Denny. The following Monday, I led the burial service. These services were solemn, yet filled with the hope of resurrection, showcasing the comforting presence of God among us during times of grief.

FINANCIAL HEALTH For the month of May 2024 Given: \$13,931.55 Spent: \$15,626.53

June 11: Synod-Sponsored Bible Study

On Tuesday, June 11, I led a virtual Bible study sponsored by our synod on the forms of government in the Scriptures. This study was an enriching experience, providing deep insights and sparking meaningful discussions on biblical governance and its implications for our church today.

June 12: Meeting with Food Pantry Leaders

On Wednesday, June 12, I met with the leaders of our food pantry to discuss their operations. It was inspiring to see their dedication and commitment to serving those in need. We will be meeting again next Wednesday to discuss their five-year plan, focusing on how we can further God's work through this vital ministry.

June 16: Welcoming New Members

During our worship service on Sunday, June 16, we joyfully welcomed new members Shaun Johnson, and Tom and Jane Frantz, into our congregation. This was a wonderful celebration of growth and community, reflecting God's ongoing work among us.

Throughout these events, I have witnessed God's hand at work in our congregation, bringing comfort, unity, growth, and inspiration. Let us continue to seek His guidance and blessings in all our endeavors.

Yours in Christ, Rev. Sarras

Pastor Niveen added that a Memorial Service for Pastor Chuck Flugel, per his wishes, will be planned sometime in the coming weeks and held at St. Mark's. MSC to accept the Pastor's report by Jason Blank/Jenny Case.

Ministry Team Reports:

Property Ministry Team—June 3, 2024 ~ Submitted by Jason Blank

Present: Bruce Grundman, Jeff Tharp, Ginny Schieck, Phyllis Ziemke, and Jason Blank

- 1. The leaking section of the roof has been repaired.
- 2. We continue to get estimates for parking lot replacement. We have three, but are waiting on one more.
- 3. Ginny continues to spray for insects.
- 4. Extensive discussion about funding for the parking lot.

Jason reviewed budget estimates from three companies for the reconstruction of the parking lot, which included looking at concrete as an option. The Property Ministry Team will be moving forward with asphalt with a budgeting estimate of \$120,000. Jason will prepare a newsletter article reviewing the project and asking for individuals who would be willing to help with a fundraising program – the Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team will be working with Property on the fundraising, as well.

Connections Ministry Team—May 27, 2024 ~ Submitted by Mary Jane Hartley

- 1. Talked about Equal Exchange Store (fair trade products) that we will offer for sale the first Sunday of each month. All money that we collect will be used to keep buying Equal Exchange items to support keeping farmers on the land providing food for their families.
 - We will be supporting small farmers from Palestinian in the West Bank.
 - By choosing the fair trade coffee, you are supporting a whole separate supply chain --not huge corporations. Attached is the items we will have for sale the FIRST SUNDAY EACH MONTH:
- 2. We will be having our Bingo again on the third Monday of the month from 1:00—3:00 pm on July 15, 2024. Come and join us for fun and laughs.
- 3. Fellowship is enjoyed by many. Thanks for coming. It is a way to keep in touch with our Church Family through good talk, laughs, and some tears. Thank you to all who sign up and help with clean up.
- 4. We will be doing a pie and ice cream for the fellowship on June 30, 2024. Come and join us.
- 5. Basement clean-up needed: Focus will be on the organization of flower items and containers. We will organize this at our meeting on June 24, 2024 at 1:00 pm.





Pat Wenzel
Ellen LaMarche
Sarah L.
Richie Sczerzen
Walt Ziemke
Paul Girod
Doug Bedor
Odeh Sarras
Mary & Ron Zalewski



Worship & Music Ministry Team—May 20, 2024 ~ Submitted by Judy Hellman

The worship and music ministry team met on Monday, May 20th.

Members attending were Ardys Seelow, Joy and Jenny Case, Mary Ellen Tracey, Mary Jane Hartley, Pat Westphal, Pastor Niveen and Judy Hellman.

Devotions were given by Jenny Case based on Psalm 100. Pat Westphal volunteered for devotions in June.

Pastor Niveen presented the themes for future services. May 26th will be Memorial Day and Holy Trinity Sunday. June 16th will be Father's Day and New Member Sunday. We are tentatively planning a hymn-sing on July 7th. On August 4th, we will have a baptism. On September 1st, there will be a joint service at Riverside Park at 9:30 am.

During our sharing of peace, we will return to hand shaking or attendees may still give the sign of peace.

The establishment of an emergency contact file was discussed. This would include name, phone number, and preferred medical facility. This will be presented to the council for approval.

Flowers for Mother's Day cost \$69.30 for 6 dozen. Five dozen will be ordered for next year. Candy bars will be given to all the father's on Father's Day. They will be handed out by Mary Ellen Tracey, and Joy and Jenny Case.

Our next meeting will be Monday, June 17th.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Jenny also reported that the Worship & Music Ministry Team will be gathering information, for those willing, on listing emergency contact information for members. Council members discussed the planning of where the list will be located and ensuring it is not located behind a locked door, such as the office, but also not located in a public area where others would have access to potential confidential information. The council asked that this issue be discussed further at a Worship & Music Ministry meeting.

Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team—June 18, 2024 ~ Submitted by Laurie Olson

Members Present: Treasurer Laurie Olson, Financial Secretary Pat Westphal, Fern Furhmann, Pastor Niveen, and

Mary Jane Hartley

Members Absent: Evie Peterson and Pennie Linna

Opened with a Prayer by Pastor Niveen.

Reviewed current account balances through end of May 2024. May's giving to current monthly expenses was \$13,931.55 and expenses were \$15,626.53. The difference was -\$1,694.98. Year to date (through end of May) giving was \$72,233.65 and expenses were \$69,586.71 with a difference (giving minus spending) of \$2,646.94. Laurie noted that the quarterly City of Neenah Utilities (stormwater, Transportation Assessment Fee and Water Bill) were paid in May, along with an annual software membership fee.

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It was reported that Pat and Laurie attended a virtual VANCO webinar today at noon. The webinar gave an overview on our online giving program updates, which focused on "Connected Giving". New module options were also presented. Pat and Laurie plan to schedule a meeting with Jean to discuss the information and look if any of the updates would be beneficial to St. Mark's.

The ministry team discussed a plan to contact our inactive members. The team reviewed the letters that were sent out in 2022, which was when inactive members were last contacted. Pastor Niveen will review and revise the letters and the response postcards. Pastor will also develop an online Google doc and QR code as an additional option for inactive members to respond. Pastor will email the letters and response postcards to the team, prior to our next meeting, for review. Laurie will talk with Jean to get a list of members who have not received communion in the past two years and Pat will develop a list of those who have not financially given in two years. A list of names of those who have not received communion and/or given in two years will be reviewed at our next meeting.

The team also discussed getting started on the narrative budgeting process and our annual stewardship drive. Members were asked to research ideas for stewardship drive ideas. We will begin discussing narrative budgeting and stewardship drive at the July meeting.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer at 7:25 pm.

MSC by Emily Christofilis/Jason Blank to approve Ministry Team Reports.

Unfinished Business:

National Youth Gathering Update: Laurie shared the group of youth and adults from the four churches continue to work on logistics for the trip. Next Meeting: June 23 at 6:30 pm with adults and youth.

Communication Audit update: A meeting will be scheduled to review options for updated signage inside the church and on the front door of the church.

Church Directory Update: Team working on this project will have a meeting in July. In the meantime, they have begun the process of updating the names and contact information for members.

Report of the 2024 Synod Assembly: Council was asked to review the report provided by our synod assembly representative, Pat Westphal. The report includes the five resolutions that passed.

New Business Items:

Moving Forward Kits (Supplies) for College Bound Students-new program. Pastor Niveen reviewed her idea to begin a new program to assist our college students who will be leaving, for their first year, for away from home education. It was agreed to proceed with this new program. Pastor Niveen will work with getting Amazon gift registry set up and a form for members to sign up for purchasing those supply items. This will be a program St. Mark's will continue each year.

Account for Money from Sale of Light Controllers: Laurie shared that the light controllers that were used for the light shows were sold to Fox Cities Festival of Lights for \$200. MSC by Jason Blank/Pennie Linna to deposit the money in the Spruce Up fund.

Adjourn: MSC to adjourn and share the Lord's Prayer at 7:48 pm by Jason Blank/Emily Christofilis.

Next meeting: July 18, 2024, at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Jones, Secretary

Meet Our New Members!

On June 16th, we welcomed three new members to our St. Mark's Family! Get to know our newest members!

Tom & Jane Frantz—Tom and Jane live in Neenah and come to us from Faith Lutheran in Appleton. Tom is retired from the UW system. Jane recently left her position at Samaritan where she worked in Development. She is also a student of Healing Touch and will be carrying out a Healing Ministry here at St. Mark's (See page 9 for details). They have four adult children: Emily, Alex, Ethan and Phoebe. You might have seen both Tom and Jane serve as readers and greeters during our Sunday morning worship services.

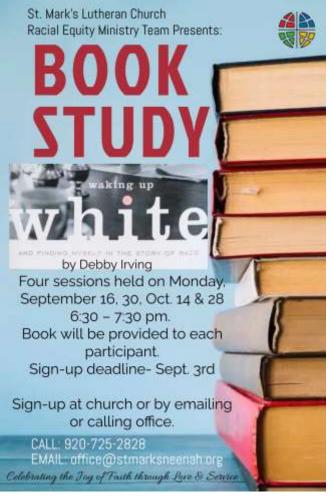
Shaun Johnson— Shaun comes from Norway, Michigan and grew up in the Upper Peninsula. He currently lives in Neenah. He is a good friend of St. Mark's member Pastor Barb Girod. Shaun was adopted by Pastor Jennifer Johnson when he was 8 years old. He has a brother Josh, and a stepbrother Michael, and a stepsister, Michelle. He likes to read, watch movies, play video games, walk, and shop.





Our newest members: (From left: Tom Frantz, Jane Frantz, and Shaun Johnson.





Scenes from St. Mark's



Pat Westphal and Dawn Jones hold up a check for \$605 for Hope Clinic, our "Mission of the Month" for May. Thanks to all who donated to this very valuable clinic that offers free health care to residents of the Fox Valley.



Hurrah! We have a chime choir who added so beautifully to our June 23 worship service. They have been practicing this summer on Thursday evenings. May thanks to Judy Hellman for serving as the director of this group!

Linwood Summer Concert Series

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Linwood House Summer Concert Series. Concert dates are times are listed below.

Linwood Summer Concert Series

Sunday, July 21—2:00 pm—Talk of the Town, New Orleans Jazz

Sunday, August 11—2:00 pm—Elvis John

Sunday, September 15—2:00 pm—Voices of Peace, Gospel Group





Healing Touch—A New Ministry at St. Mark's

We are launching a Healing Ministry to support our congregation's spiritual well-being through prayer led by Jane Frantz. Starting in mid-August, Jane will be available after Holy Communion in the choir room to offer personalized healing prayers.

Healing Touch ministry is an art. Jane is a Level III Healing Touch student, advancing to Level IV soon, and focuses on addiction, sexual trauma, and mental illness. Her practice involves energy medicine guided by the Holy Spirit. Her spiritual journey is detailed in her book, "What Love Looks Like," available for free from Pastor Niveen.

This ministry is open to all seeking healing or reflection through prayer.

Here is statement from Jane about her healing ministry—I am a Level III student of Healing Touch (HealingTouchProgram.com). After being part of a couple miracles and believing I was called to be a healer, I began studying part-time in 2019 while working full-time in fundraising at a nonprofit behavioral health agency.

The miracles I was part of included a woman who had edema and filled up with water like a water balloon. She was a friend of my mother's and my mom asked me if I would take her to visit her friend in the hospital. My mother was told they didn't expect her to live long. I asked her friend if there was anyone we could call. She said her husband was deceased and she had no other family. I asked if she had any children. She said, "No, but I had five miscarriages." Before we left, I asked if the three of us could pray. She said she wasn't really a "praying person," but we held hands and prayed anyway. That night I planted five glass hearts in a pot and transplanted an ivy plant and wrote her a message about her five angels. I took it to her the next day and she read it and wept. Again, I asked if we could pray, and permission to return the following day. The following day I went to visit again only to find she had miraculously dropped nearly 75 pounds of water overnight and went home!

The other healing miracle involved a former pastor I met at Gorham United Methodist Church in south Chicago. I was introduced to him and when I touched his shoulder he jumped. I apologized for startling him and he said, "You didn't startle me. I have chronic back pain and the pain is gone!" We chatted for a few minutes and exchanged contact information. A few days later he called to ask me who I was. I said, "Just plain Jane." He said, "Well, plain Jane, I'm a Baptist minister and I want you to know you have a gift. I had kidney cancer, but the scan I just had is clear!" He cautioned me to take very good care of my gift. At that point, I began to research healing from a biblical context, and praying about what God wanted me to do with it. I believe he led me to Healing Touch.

Since then, I have shared my gift with several individuals, all of whom report improvement in their health.

Humans are energy bodies and Healing Touch Healing Touch (HT) is an energy healing therapy in which practitioners consciously use their hands in a heart-centered and intentional way to enhance, support, and facilitate physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and self-healing. HT utilizes light or near-body touch to clear, balance, and energize the human energy system to promote health and healing for mind, body, and spirit. Practitioner and client come together in partnership energetically to facilitate the client's health and healing. The goal or intention in any HT session is to restore harmony and balance in the energy system, placing the client in a position to self-heal.

I have come to realize I have the gift of faith made manifest in a healing touch. I am guided by the Holy Spirit. The flow of energy in the seven chakras in a person's body often reveals where healing is needed. I do not diagnose illness. This modality complements other health protocols. It does not replace them. I am merely a vessel God uses to extend a healing touch. I will advance to Level IV in September, then complete 100 documented sessions under the supervision of a medical professional. After that, I will sit for a written exam before becoming a certified practitioner.

I am also a prayer warrior and was part of a healing/prayer ministry at our former congregation and look forward to continuing this ministry at St. Mark's. My areas of subject matter expertise include addiction, sexual trauma, and mental illness. I have chronicled my spiritual journey in a book called, *What Love Looks Like*, which is available for free from Pastor Niveen.

For more information, visit: HealingTouchResearch.com





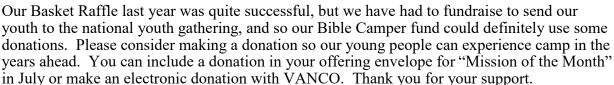


Bible Campers

The Mission of the Month for July is our own Bible Campers. Crossways Camping Ministries has three camps in Wisconsin: Pine Lake in Waupaca, Imago Dei Village in Clintonville, and Way Post in Hatley. Our youth usually attend Pine Lake in Waupaca. Crossways Mission Statement is: *Bringing People together in Christ so lives are changed and Communities enhanced*.



This year we were able to support several camping opportunities including winter camp, grandparent camp and Confirmation camp.





Sponsored by the Racial Equity Ministry Team

Watch for details, on how to participate, in future newsletters and on our Facebook page.

- *Neenah Pow Wow: Saturday, September 14 from 2-5 pm.
- *Fall Family Festival (traditions of the Oneida Nation), at Green Bay Botanical Gardens on Saturday, September 28 from 9 am-5 pm.
- *A cultural immersion event. Asian American session on the art of making Egg Rolls. This enriching experience will take place on a Saturday in the Fall.



Sunday, July 28th • Following Worship

St. Mark's will be having a church potluck/picnic following the worship service on July 28th. Brats, hamburgers, buns, condiments and drinks will be furnished.

Please bring one of the following dishes to share: Salad, Chips & Dip, Relish tray, Deviled Eggs, Hot casseroles (Baked Beans, German Potato Salad), or a Dessert. There's a food sign-up sheet in the church narthex.

Come celebrate summer with your St. Mark's family!

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

140 S. Green Bay Road, Neenah Email: office@stmarksneenah.org (920)725-2828



This year's VBS is going to be great! The folks at St. Paul, along with helpers from the other three ELCA Lutheran churches, have planned a great week of activities, crafts, fellowship, food, and worship! Check St. Mark's Facebook page if you want to register to attend or be a helper. Many volunteers are needed, so if you can spare a few hours, sign up today! You don't have to attend every day! It will be a fun week for all ages!

St. Mark's Lutheran Church 140 S. Green Bay Road Neenah, WI 54956



