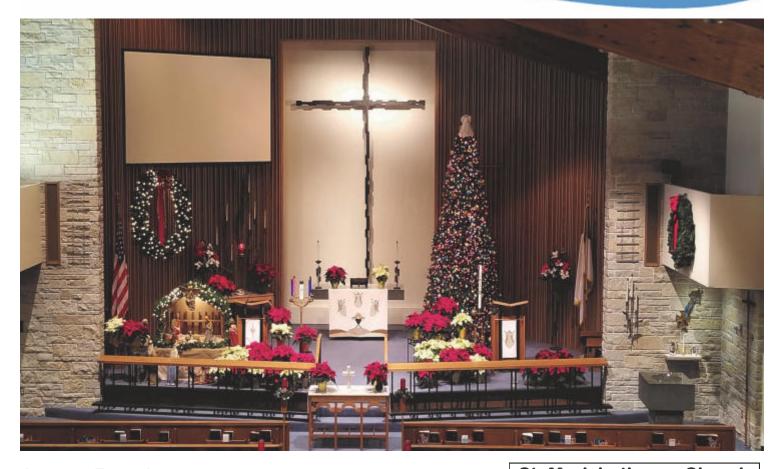


DECEMBER 2020



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For unto us a child is born...Isaiah 9:6

St. Mark Lutheran Church

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The FORWARD of St. Mark Monthly Newsletter December 2020, Volume 14 Issue 12

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

Like most of my *Forward* articles, the one you are currently reading was written back in October. October 23rd to be more precise. I figure why put off till tomorrow what you can get done today. Hey, I should trademark that saying...it sounds like solid advice. Ops...sorry for my momentary digression...time to get back to purpose of this month's article. Like I wrote, it's October as I'm putting my thoughts to words. And while Christmas may still be two months away I've already begun putting together services and sermons for Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Like I said, why put off till tomorrow what you can get done today.

But honestly, there's another reason I do this. When Christmas comes around, I want to enjoy it. I don't want to be overwhelmed with having put together services and writing sermons. I want to be able to sit back and enjoy all that Christmas brings with it: the sights, the sounds, the smells and yes, the services.

What I'm about to write isn't earth shattering news. These last few months have been difficult to say the least. But do you know what Christmas does? It reminds us that even when things look there darkest. When all hope seems to be slowly vanishing. It's in these moments the Savior of the world reminds us, "I came to bring you out of the darkness you are experiencing in your life. I came to bring you an everlasting hope." That my brothers and sisters is the Joy of Christmas.

I know for some of you this Christmas may not be what you had wished for. And between the time of this writing and when Christmas actually arrives, I wish things will get better too. But even if they don't, one thing of Christmas' past will always stay the same:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "'Glory to God in the highest.

and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:11-14)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, may the peace of God be with you this Christmas season and all the days of your life.

In His service, Pastor Brett



ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH: CONNECTING-SHARING-EQUIPPING-REFLECTING

Connecting by building bridges with our neighbor Sharing the Good News of Jesus for a changed community Equipping each other for opportunities to serve Reflecting God's love through acts of kindness



When you are hospitalized or in need of Pastoral care, especially in these trying times of Covid-19 and isolation, please contact either Pastor Matz or the church office at 920-458-4343.

ADVENT SCHEDULE 2020

Come worship with us during Advent!

There is great interest in genealogies today. In the past, such interest was usually confined to one dutiful family member who would gather all the information together and begin reconstructing the family tree. Today, however, websites including those like Ancestory.com and MyHeritage.com, make this task much easier. In the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, we are introduced to the lineage of Jesus.

In these weeks of Advent, the sermons will help us unpack the significance of Jesus' genealogy and how God was at work weaving his plan of salvation throughout the history of his chosen people—as he reveals in the Old Testament all the way through Joseph and Mary.

The Mid-Week Advent Services will be on **Wednesday's at 4:00pm**. You are encouraged to be part of these worship services.

December 2 COME, LORD JESUS to Him Who Has Come to Defeat the Devil COME, LORD JESUS to Him Who Comes to Lead Us in Daily Life COME, LORD JESUS to Him Who Will Come Again to Bring Final Victory

"Prepare Ye" is a series for Advent to help us contemplate the many ways we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas, taking cues from the psalms of old and from those whom God chose to play a part in the story of our Lord's birth. As we draw near to the manger bed of our Savior from sin and death, our hearts prepare him room for his everlasting love.

Nov 29 "Ponder" Dec 6 "Pray" Dec 13 "Praise" Dec 20 "Proclaim"

Dec 24 "Prepare a Place" 4:00pm only Dec 25 "Prepare for Paradise" 10:00am

Dec 27 9:00am Dec 31 4:00pm









Membership Statistics

As of November 13, 2020

Confirmed: 222 Unconfirmed: 14 Baptized: 236

Christmas Tree Decorating Monday, December 7 6:00 p.m.

Team work makes the dream work!

The 2021 offering envelopes have arrived. Please pick yours up in the Narthex.



2020 YEAR END COMMITTEE REPORTS

BOARD OF DEACONS: We continue serving communion with masks and gloves following Covid-19 guide-lines. All communion is now on a continuous basis, with doing one side, and then the other so you don't have two rows of people down the middle aisle, and so members can maintain the recommended six feet apart distance. We are not able to do hospital visits because of the pandemic.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP:

- Preparing monthly articles for the FORWARD newsletter. (We subscribe to a service that provides this information.)
- Tracking statistics and preparing a monthly and weekly chart or table for FORWARD illustrating giving trends.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

- The downstairs women's bathroom had repairs done to corroded plumbing and tile work.
- Pew polishing was done in the spring before reopening the Church to Sunday services. We are planning another pew polishing Saturday Dec. 5.
- The landscaping around the parking lot was completed.
- To better support presenting Services on Facebook Live, internet service was upgraded, and hardware added. This enabled coupling the existing HD camera and projector content.
- Fall cleanup was completed Saturday Nov. 7.
- Christmas decorating planning is underway and will proceed as we have traditionally done in the past.
- We are working on more robust spot lighting in the Nave and pursuing a conversion to LED lights.
- The Board of Trustees would like to show our appreciation and extend a huge THANK YOU to Tom Kroll for years of tirelessly working on behalf of the Board and St Mark Church. Best wishes to Tom!

CONGREGATIONAL FUND



Because of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Committee met eight times in 2020. The Pandemic also caused an up and down stock market. However, our investments are gradually returning to pre-pandemic times. So far this year, \$13,000.00 have been requested from The Fund. All requests for funds should be made to The Board of Directors by December 15, 2020.

PARISH NURSE: Due to the details provided and length of the Parish Nurse Year End Report, it will appear in the January issue of The FORWARD.



foy to the World!

I enjoy the Christmas season. I like the cheerful decorations, spending time with family and friends, and eating Christmas goodies. My favorite part of Christmas, by far though, is singing carols—and, above all, "Joy to the World!"

Joy to the World! The Lord is come," God's people announce at Christmastime. Based on Psalm 98, Isaac Watts's 18th-century carol celebrates the coming of Jesus. The joy of the Savior's coming resounds throughout all of creation. Even the fields and rocks and hills and plains "repeat the sounding joy." This is good news for all of God's world.

What's so good about this news announced each Christmas? Why do we sing this carol with such exuberance? Watts answers that question in the third stanza, where he declares that Jesus has come to deal with the curse of human sin and rebellion. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus brings the blessing as "far as the curse is found." This phrase repeats itself several times-and for good reason. Released from bondage to sin and the power of death over us, we are not freed to live with joy, to love God and our neighbor, and to cultivate the earth God has given us. So let's sing with joy that good news: "Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!"

Jesus, you have come and released us from the power of sin and death. Help us to live in ways that proclaim the wonders of your love. AMEN.

GIVING and WORSHIP ATTENDANCE COMPARISON 2020 through October 2020 Compared to 2019

	2019	2020
Average Operating Fund Offerings per week (see Note 1)	\$3,640	\$3,810
Average In-person Attendance per week at Services (see Note 2)	\$ 106	\$ 47
Weekly Budget (see Note 3)	\$4,510	\$4,540

Note 1: 2020 Giving includes offerings during Worship and payments received in Church Office through the end of October. Values do not include special fund donations to ministries such as We Care, the Food Pantry, the Vineyard Fund, the Youth Group, and building projects. These donations were approximately \$405 per week through October 2020. Other sources of funds, such as outside contributions, Memorials, refunds, rebates, and transfers from the Congregational Fund, are also not included in the amounts.

Note 2: 2020 attendance per week includes only in-person attendance. Comparable online attendance figures are not available for live streamed services. Online attendance since live streaming began on 3/29 ranged from approximately 14 to 53. 'Views' of recorded services ranged from 88 to 627.

<u>Note 3</u>: Budget figures are included as a comparison because the budget was the estimated amount voted on by the Congregation Membership to meet the Congregation's financial requirements during the year. Actual expenditures are available in the monthly accounting report distributed by the Treasurer.

<u>Note 4</u>: Thee amounts are presented for comparison purposes only. Our individual giving amount should be based on being faithful to the Lord so that we return a generous amount of the gifts He gave us.

Stewardship and Jesus, God's Gift to Us Humans

We all like to hear spoken to us the words, "I love you." It is good to feel loved. But we humans also know that there is more o love than just three little words. We appreciate it more if there is also a demonstration of said love.

That is why we humans have also come up with the concept of giving each other gifts. Perhaps a husband will by his wife a beautiful piece of jewelry. Perhaps the wife will buy her husband a new golf putter. Parents buy their children a new toy or a new electronic gadget. Grandparents would buy their grandchildren everything if they were allowed to do so. Whenever a person sees the gift, that person will be reminded that he or she is loved by someone else.

Christmas is a great gift-giving season. But we Christians know that the greatest gift that anyone could receive is Jesus. Jesus is God's visible gift to us humans. God did not simply remain in Heaven and tell us humans that he loves us. God knows that we humans appreciate gifts as a visible demonstration of ones love for another. Therefore, God took on flesh so that the world could see that God loves us humans.

Jesus came into our world at a time when he would be able to die on a cross. People who died on a cross died publicly on a cross for everyone to see. We Christians believe that the death of Jesus on the cross was God's ultimate gift to us humans. One the cross, Jesus took our sins upon himself and suffered our eternal death in Hell so that we would live eternally in the next world. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in him will not die, but will have eternal life."

We Christians are now God's servants and stewards so that we can share God's message of love in Jesus with others. God wants all people to know the good news that God loves them through Jesus. To help us to do this work, God has blessed us Christians with time, talent, and treasure. God wants us stewards of these blessings to use these blessings to love others. God wants us to get their attention. We give away ourselves as a gift to others with the hope that those who are loved will also see that God loves them through Jesus.

Be a good steward. Be a gift-giver from the blessings that God has given to you. Help others to see that our God demonstrated his great love for us in Jesus.

December 2020

St. Mark Lutheran Church Monthly Calendar of services, meetings and events. Please see the weekly Messenger, available at each worship service, for important changes and updates.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 9:00am-12:30pm Parish Nurse in Office 4:00pm Worship Service	3 4:00pm Confirmation Class No Church Service	4 9:30am Food Pantry Drive-Thru	5 8:00am Pew Polishing
6 9:00am Worship (w/HC) Streamed online @ Facebook.com /stmarksheboygan 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am Set Up Tree	7 6:00pm Decorate Tree	∞	9 9:00am-12:30pm Parish Nurse in Office 4:00pm Worship Service	10 No Church Service	11	12
13 9:00am Worship Service Streamed online @ Facebook.com /stmarksheboygan 10:00am Bible Study	14 Poinsettia Orders Due	15	16 9:00am-12:30pm Parish Nurse in Office 4:00pm Worship Service	17 No Church Service	18 9:30am Food Pantry Drive-Thru	1.9 9:00am Poinsettia's Delivered
20 9:00am Worship (w/HC) Streamed online @ Facebook.com /stmarksheboygan 10:00am Bible Study 10:15am Congregational Fund Meeting	21 Winter Begins	22	23 9:00am-12:30pm Parish Nurse in Office	24 Christmas Eve 4:00pm Worship (w/HC)	25 Christmas Day 10:.00am Worship Service	26
9:00am Worship Service Streamed online @ Facebook.com /stmarksheboygan 10:00am Bible Study Food Pantry Sunday	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve 4:00pm Worship (w/HC)		

SUBJECT TO CHANGE



VOLUNTEERS SERVING IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER







Note: If you are unable to attend on your assigned day, please switch with someone else and notify the church office of the change, so bulletins can be corrected.

DECEMBER 2020 VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Day	Date	Time	Sound	Projection	Facebook Page	Ushers	Altar Guild	Deacon
December 2	Wed	4:00pm		Kathy Matz	Kathy Matz			Jim Leonhardt
December 6	Sun	9:00am	Tim Matz	Rob Sass	Dave Hilpertshauser		Needed	Todd Goebel
December 9	Wed	4:00pm		Kathy Matz	Kathy Matz			Needed
December 13	Sun	9:00am	Dave Hilpertshauser	Drew Thimmig	Rob Sass			Jim Leonhardt
December 16	Wed	4:00pm		Kathy Matz	Kathy Matz			Needed
December 20	Sun	9:00am	Tim Matz	Dave Hilpertshauser	Rob Sass		Needed	Jim Leonhardt
December 24	Thurs	4:00pm	Needed	Needed	Needed		Needed	Mary Rautmann
December 25	Fri	10:00am	Needed	Needed	Needed			Needed
December 27	Sun	9:00am	Jeff Evans	Drew Thimmig	Dave Hilpertshauser			Needed
December 31	Thurs	4:00pm	Needed	Needed	Needed		Needed	Needed



Hi from your Parish Nurse!



With the holidays upon us you may be trying to determine how to get some celebrating in, but without placing yourself in the path of the coronavirus. Older adults need to be especially careful, experts say. "Seniors are at greater risk for developing severe COVID-19 and even dying from it," says Albert Shaw, MD an infectious disease specialist at Yale medicine in New Haven, Coon. Also, older adults are more apt to be dealing with conditions that can increase the risk of severe COVID-19. These include high blood pressure; heart, lung, kidney or liver disease; type 2 diabetes; and cancer. I will be discussing how to decide if you should go virtual or in person for the holidays, how make virtual celebrations memorable, and how to be safe if you decide to celebrate face to face.

Virtual or In-Person? Many seniors may want to see family especially during the holidays. Your decision on whether to stay hone or see others face to face ought to be based on your own health and risk factors as well as how your community or the area you're considering visiting is faring. Preferably there should be a 2 week decline in COVID-19 cases, allow overall rate (less than 10 per 100,000 people over 14 days), and a positive rate of less than 5 percent indicating adequate testing capacity according to Shaw. You can obtain this information at the John Hopkins Corona-virus Resource Center (coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map) or at COVIDExitstrategy.org.

If you're in an area with high levels of COVID-19, it's wise to stay home even if you're otherwise in good health and have no pre-existing conditions as well as if visiting loved ones will entail extensive travel, such as long drives, airplane or train rides according to Dr. Ronan Factora a geriatrician of the Cleveland Clinic. Factora adds that you should consider staying home if you have risk factors such as type 2 diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Make Virtual Memorable. If you decide to celebrate away from your family, you can: 1) **Connect via a digital platform** such as zoom. You can do everything from singing Christmas carols together or watching the grandkids open presents. Obtain assistance from a family member who has quarantined for 14 days with the technology if you have difficulty with it. **2) Create new virtual traditions**. If you enjoy games, try playing your favorites at a site like Pogo or watch your best-loved movie simultaneously via an app like Netflix Party. **3) Volunteer from afar if you are feeling down**. You can find socially distance volunteer options in the Sheboygan Sun, church and Sharon Richardson Hospice Home.

Think about doing something entirely different but still safe. If you can't get together you can plan a party when it is safer such as next summer. You can find other ways to keep yourself occupied during key holidays such as going on some virtual museum tours, either alone or with friends via face time. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Institute have a plethora of options to choose from.

Be Safer face to face. No in person celebration is perfectly safe, but there are a few steps that can decrease risks considerably. Here's what the experts say: 1) Stay as local as possible. Go somewhere no further than a 2 hour drive away, which minimizes stopping along the way. 2) Be careful if traveling far. Consider a home rental, where you won't need to be in public elevators. The property should be cleaned, disinfected and empty for at least 24 hours beforehand. If flying is a must, use one of the airlines that leave middle seats empty during each flight. Several unpublished data proposes that this may decrease the risk of catching COVID-19 on a plane. 3) Plan for small and short. The less people you are with, the lower the overall risk states William Schaffner, MD, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. Keep indoor get-togethers under 10 people (ideally, less than 5) and limit the time to an hour. Schaffner says, "The longer you spend in an environment with an infected person, the more the viral load you breathe in." 4) Consider having an outdoor celebration. Weather permitting an outdoor celebration can go on indefinitely as long as people wear masks and practice social distancing per Dr. Schaffner. In colder climates you can look into renting a heated tent and leave flaps open for ventilation so it will be more bearable according to Barbara Resnick, PhD, RN at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. It would be prudent to schedule these gatherings in early to mid-afternoon when it is warmest. 5) Bring your own. Preferably everyone should have their own food and utensils according to Shaw. With takeout everyone's food can be packed in separate containers. 6) Limit alcohol. As drinking increases, the more difficult it is to stay masked and follow social distancing guidelines Shaw states. 7) Skip the singalong. Did you know that when people sing the small aerosol particles released when people sign can propel the virus into your 6-foot safety zone. A report published in May in the CDC's and Prevention's weekly Report determined that a 2 ½ hour choir practice in Washington State may have infected more than 86 % of choir members. A 2019 study published in the journal Scientific Reports revealed that the louder you talk, the more aerosol particles you produce and people infected with the virus can release it in those particles according to Shaffner. These smart safety steps can help shorten the pandemic.

From: Consumer Reports on Health, November 2020.

GriefShare is on hold until Spring, due to Covid-19.



Drive Through Food Pantry

Fridays, December 4 and 18 9:30 a.m.





We're always looking for new and detailed information to publish upcoming events. The deadline is the 15th of the month. When emailing to jleff@att.net, please use the words FORWARD (month) in the subject line (Word format—not PDF, please.) You can also call my phone number (920.458.0886) and either leave a detailed message or your return number. There is a drop box at church, but since I am worshipping online at the present time, I am not faithful with checking it. If you prefer a "real voice", please call after 2 PM. Thank you. Julie Leffin/FORWARD Editor





You may sponsor poinsettia plants in memory, honor, or celebration of someone special in your life this Christmas. The plants will adorn the Sanctuary and Narthex throughout the holiday season. You may also make a monetary donation to help offset the cost of the Christmas decorations that adorn the church.

Please fill out this form and return it along with your payment of \$10.00 for a single size poinsettia plant or \$19.00 for a double size poinsettia plant by **Monday, December 14**th.

Sponsored plants may be picked up after the se	rvice on December 25.
Your Name	
In honor / memory / celebration of	
Quantity of plant(s) size and color: (Single \$10 an	nd/or double \$19)
Red Single	White Single
Red Double	White Double
If you would like to make a monetary donation	to help offset the cost of the Christmas decorations,

Please return to the Church Office with payment by December 14th.

that adorn our church over the holidays, please indicate the amount here \$_____



Cindy Dortman Carolyn Eiden Mary Daehn Lorraine Holzem Mary Sass Jacob Schaller Tom Sohr Claudia Krepsky Cora Erickson Nicole Herrmann Mervin Kitzerow James Rank John Sundee Mike Schaller	December 2 December 6 December 6 December 6 December 7 December 10 December 11 December 15 December 15 December 22 December 24 December 26
John Sundee	December 24
Mike Schaller Lorena Tislau Michael Holzem Richard Martens Gloria Friedel	December 26 December 27 December 28 December 29 December 31

Birthday blessings to you!



Hank and Marilyn Kalkopf Christopher Keul and Claudia Krepsky December 5 Dec ember 30 23 years 9 years

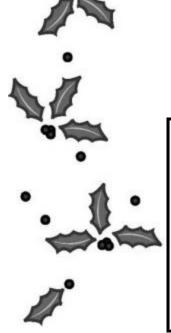
God bless your years together!

A word of gratitude . . .

St. Mark has been blessed through the generosity of many businesses who pay to advertise in The FORWARD. Please be kind and consider patronizing these monthly advertisers, as their ad donations keep the cost of The FORWARD to a monthly minimum, if any.

And when you do, feel free to mention your appreciation on behalf of St. Mark Lutheran Church.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!





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