

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Annual Report 2024



**424 Hyde Park Avenue
Waukesha, Wisconsin
Phone: (262) 547-8213**

Church Staff

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Interim Pastor | Sara Gillespie |
| Discipleship Coordinator | Marcia Marquardt |
| Music Director | Jennifer Manvilla |
| Custodian | John Gennerman |

Church Council

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| President | Susan Cyr |
| Vice President | Deb Gerner |
| Treasurer | Dave Groenewold |
| Secretary | Laura Goralski |
| Gather | Lou Hernandez and Mary Ann Sindelar |
| Grow | Tammi Boehm |
| Go | Gene Geiger |

Nominating Team

Frank Remfrey
Sandy Solberg
Chris Christensen

MET - Mission Exploration Team

Cathy Hernandez
Frank Remfrey
Brian Trautman
Kelly Colgrove
Mary Johnson
Karen Handford
Lisa Salb - Tower Hill Neighborhood
Association

Call Committee

Bill Wagner - Chairperson
Suzanne Remfrey
Cathy Hernandez
Betty Groenewold
Terry Inman
Jreme Bjerke
Laura Goralski

Church Ministries

Worship Team
Finance Team
Mutual Ministry
AV Team
Stewardship Team
Personnel Team
Property Team
Audit Team
SOPHIA
Sunday School
Bible Studies/Small Groups
Lookout Editor
Coffee Hour
Counter (Supervisor)
Card Ministry
Senior Connection
College Connection
Prayer Ministry
Prayer Shawl Ministry
Quilters
Ruth Circle
Scholarship Fund
Dartball
Funeral Meals

Leaders

Barb Helling
Frank Remfrey
Suzanne Remfrey
Larry Szwalkiewicz
Marcia Marquardt
Bill Wagner
Christine Fenner
TBD
Betty Groenewold
Suzanne Lorenz
Marcia Marquadt
Rene Bjerke
Glenda Rose, Donna Stearns
Jeff Bjerke
Debbie Wagner
Anne Link
Suzanne Lorenz
Lana DeCoto, Deb Gerner
Anna Miller, Mary Jo Christensen
Vickie Friedeck
Karen Handford, Mavis McGrath
Lynn Delzer
Bob Johnson
Barb Geiger

Agenda - 2024 Congregational Annual Meeting

- Welcome Remarks
- Opening Prayer
- Agenda Review
- Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes
- Review of Voting Procedures
- Congregational Constitution Changes
- Nominated 2025 Congregational Council Members
- Nominated 2025 Nominating Team Members
- Nominated Voting Members to 2025 Synod Assembly
- Vote on Elected Positions
- 2025 Budget Presentation and Approval of Budget
- Review and Acceptance of Annual Reports
- Projected Election Results
- Thank out-going Council and Nominating Members
- Closing Remarks
- Prayer
- Adjournment

2023 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

Sunday, December 3, 2023

(Hybrid meeting in person and on Facebook Live)

Opening Prayer

Pastor Sara

Opening Remarks and Voting Procedures

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 am by Church Council President Gene Geiger.

A quorum of voting members was established by counting in person attendees and members that signed in on the comments list on the Facebook feed. Totals show a quorum of members present. If you are signed in on Facebook a ballot will be emailed to you after the meeting and can be returned via email to welcome2stmarks@gmail.com by the Monday 5pm deadline. Facebook viewers must sign in on the Comment section to receive a ballot. Election ballots from Facebook viewers of today's meeting can also be dropped in a ballot box that will be located in the chapel. Entrance is through opening the Chapel door with the usual code. Ballots must be returned by 5pm on Monday, Dec.4th. If you need assistance with voting please call the church phone and leave a message.

Approval of Minutes from 2022 Annual Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting was moved by Jeff Bjerke and seconded by Bob Johnson. Motion passed.

Agenda Business Items

Election of New Council Members

Gene thanked Kristine Anderson, Frank Remfrey, Sandy Solberg and Cathy Hernandez for their dedicated service on the church council. Gene Geiger, Susan Cyr, Tammi Boehm and Dave Groenewold are still on the council. The constitution designates that there should be 7- 9 council positions. At this point 4 people are on the ballot. Gene opened the floor for additional people to place their name on the ballot. Hearing no nominations from the floor the ballot will stand. Lou Hernandez, Mary Ann Sindelar, Laura Goralski, and Deb Gerner are on the 2024 ballot.

Election of New Nominating Team Members

The Nominating Team serves for one year and their mission is to seek out members who are willing to have their names put on the ballot for the next election. Thank you to Mary Ann Sindelar, Lou Hernandez, Chris Christensen, and Tim Gregory for their service on this team. Frank Remfrey, and Sandy Solberg will move from their council position to the Nominating Team. They are on the 2024 ballot. Nominations were taken from the floor for additional members. Chris Christensen nominated himself from the floor and was added to the ballot. Hearing no more nominations the nominations were closed.

Election of Representatives to 2024 Synod Assembly

Two representatives will be elected to the Synod Assembly, May 17 and 18, 2024. The synod requests one female and one male representative but it is not required. Cathy Hernandez is on the ballot. Nominations were taken from the floor for one more person. Susan Cyr nominated herself from the floor. The name was added to the ballot.

Gene asked all members who are on the ballots at the present time to stand so members can see who we are voting for.

Budget Discussion

Frank Remfrey, our Financial Secretary, thanked all who have helped to put the budget together for St. Mark's. It was noted that we had fewer expenses this year. Pastor Sara arrived in March, so she did not receive a full year's salary. Our insurance is now being paid monthly instead of yearly. There are several November donations that came in after the budget was developed. In November \$23,000+ was received in envelopes and QCD's. Last November (2022) we received \$28,000 in envelopes and QCD's. Our giving is down by \$38,000 this year. It's possible that money to make up the deficit will be received in December. The finance team proposes lowering the goal of donations in 2024 to \$270,000 vs. \$280,000 in 2022. Most ministries are staying at the same amount that was budgeted from 2023. We have a new ministry in the budget this year, SOPHIA. That is a new line item. We added a new line item for a salary for an Administrative Assistant so that a new pastor would be able to count on part time office support. Pastor Sara remarked that the new pastor would probably want to be involved in hiring the person who would be working in the office. Balance of our mortgage is \$156,539. Our church has been very generous to charities in Waukesha this year. Those items are listed under the \$20,000 Benevolence donation. That does not include the Fall Giving Campaign. The line item for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund has been renamed the Helping Hands Fund. There has been a \$150 donation to that fund and hopefully next year it will be funded through the budgetary process. We are projecting a deficit of \$22,000 for 2024.

Approval of the 2023 Budget

A motion to approve the budget was made by Jeff Bjerke and seconded by Sandy Solberg. Motion approved.

Frank thanked the Finance Team: Dave Groenewold, Lynn Delzer, Marilyn Timper, Tom Bluma, Pastor Sara and Gene Geiger.

Receive the Annual Reports

Gene thanked everyone who contributed to the 2023 Annual Report. This report shares the activities of the "Gather, Grow and Go" groups and those who provide support and service to our church and our neighbors. It's amazing what we have accomplished together! The 2022 Annual Report was approved by general consent.

Pastor Sara commented that this report is submitted to the synod. Any pastor who is involved in the call process can see this is a very strong document that represents St. Mark's. Mary Jonson thanked everyone who developed a contact list of all the ministries. She also thanked Pastor Sara for all of her accomplishments and thanked her for attending group meetings and showing interest in the activities of the church.

Closing Remarks

Gene thanked everyone. He stated that we are all the church, not just the building. He invited outgoing and new council members to the December council meeting at Susan Cyr's home. The new council officers will be elected at that time.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Sara

Gene moved to adjourn the meeting by general consent. Motion approved. Meeting Adjourned 11:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathleen Hernandez
Council Secretary

Pastor's Report for Annual Meeting - 2024

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Well, it has been quite a year, hasn't it!?!

A year ago, we had just formed our Mission Exploration Team, which took point on putting our Ministry Site Profile together.

We installed this team as part of the worship service, and after an initial November meeting, we moved the rest off to 2024. We got off to a roaring start in January of 2024, and never slowed down. This was the initiative of the team, and I came along for the ride. As a congregation, you participated with enthusiasm and encouragement. You attended Listening Sessions, shared your viewpoints, held us in prayer, and finally gave us a round of applause when we presented the MSP to the congregation. The following week we had a representative from our synod office and she gave us a green light on the document.

This was a highlight for the year, but the highlights kept coming. We confirmed 4 young women into the church. Our Summer Sermon Series was an amazing success, and I can claim only the smallest credit for this. Marcia gets credit for much of the summer sermon series, highlighting our mission statement, with the 3 words every St. Markian knows by heart "Gather, Grow, Go!". With someone recruited and filmed for a video each week, we learned about another ministry in our congregation. What a great way for everyone to hear from each other.

Finally, a highlight that is not widely broadcast, has been the ability to take the time to attend many of the groups of St. Mark's, to spend time in casual fellowship, and to be able to minister to those in need. Sometimes it is just plain not possible to get to everyone with every need, but somehow the time and expectations shifted, and Marcia and I have been able to reach out to families and individuals in difficult times.

Another highlight is the way St. Mark's is being discovered, especially through the "Strong People, Strong Bodies" program you graciously agreed to host.

A huge, huge thank you to so many of you who volunteer in unseen ways, and whose work we often take for granted. I am grateful.

Living in Christ's Grace and Mercy,
Pastor Sara Gillespie

Pastoral Acts for 2024

Funerals:

Bob Solberg 2/14/24

Timothy Gregory 2/21/24

Frank Lockerby 4/16/24

Mike McGrath 7/6/24

Minda Portz 7/6/24

Nancy Weisenburger 8/31/24 (Nancy was a member, archived in 7/2020)

New Members/Transfers:

Judy Henri 1/4/24

Dan Nimmo 1/4/24

David Stearns 10/20/2024

Rose Marie Monahan 10/20/24

Lacey Cook 10/20/24

Baptisms:

Hudson Carmichael 5/31/24

Nolan Schwendimann 6/30/24

Liam Hahn 6/30/24

Discipleship Coordinator's Report - 2024

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” Zechariah 4:6

I feel blessed to be called to serve with you at St. Mark's. I am serving to help you follow Jesus as you help others follow him.

Here are some highlights of this past year:

A Time of Transition: I'm grateful for all the hard work of so many as they lead and help us through this time of transition. Thank you to each one of you who serves in some way here at St. Mark's.

Some of you have stepped up to carry a bigger load during this time of transition. I appreciate your gift of time and skill to the mission that God has laid out before us. I'm confident that God is guiding us. Let's keep praying for God to fill, prepare, and equip our new pastor, and for God to do the same in us as we grow through the waiting.

A Summer to Reflect on How We Gather, Grow, and Go: Pastor Sara and I worked together to create the weekly themes for this summer sermon series. She selected most of the Scriptures, and I worked with the Stewardship team to recruit people to create Mission Moment videos that highlighted ministries. We encouraged each person to reflect on what God was doing through their ministry and to thank the congregation for their investment and support that makes that ministry happen. What a beautiful summer full of rich stories of God at work in and through St. Mark's! It was a wonderful preparation for our Stewardship appeal this Fall.

The Stewardship Team will continue these Mission Moment videos highlighting different ministries about once a month in the coming year. Thanks again for your investment and support that makes these ministries possible.

Discovering Opportunities to Serve: It's a pleasure to support, help, and equip people to use their gifts to lead and serve in different ministries and roles at St. Mark's. Do you sense God stirring you to help at St. Mark's? I'd love to help you find a spot to serve that will bring blessings all around.

Teaching Bible Study: One of my favorite parts of the week is leading Bible Study. It continues to be a ministry for spiritual growth and connection. The Holy Spirit gives insight and guidance through direct conversation around the Word. Each week I see people getting to know God better and following him. This is a wonderful disciple-making ministry. Please feel free to try it out soon!

My hope for 2025: I want to help the new pastor to get settled here at St. Mark's, and to help the people of St. Mark's to welcome and accept the new pastor. I want to continue to disciple people to follow Jesus and help others follow Jesus.

Respectfully submitted, Deacon Marcia Marquardt

Congregational Council President's Report - 2024

St. Mark's Lutheran Church is a great place to be! I just have to say that first. Our fellow members are genuinely kind, friendly, and compassionate. We are a generous church. We care about our surrounding community. I am proud and honored to be a member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

Almost 2 years in, we are still with our interim pastor. Transition is hard. Being patient is hard. Waiting is hard. That said, as a congregation, we are doing just fine. We are not waiting around for a new pastor to "do" ministry. When you look at all of the different ministries within our church, we are truly blessed. And we are blessed to be a blessing for many. So, have faith and continue to pray. Our Mission Profile is reflective of who we are. God will provide exactly the right person in due time.

I want to thank Pastor Sara for the leadership she provided during the MET process and her continued support during the call process. We appreciate her encouragement and faithfulness.

It's been an honor to serve as your President this past year. I have worked with the most amazing people. I wish to thank our council members and other ministry leaders for their honesty, steadfastness, and fidelity. I am looking forward to the future of St. Mark's Lutheran Church. It is bright.

Susan Cyr

Council Secretary's Report - 2024

The Congregational Council meets on the second Thursday of the month at 6:30pm, in person.

All Council meetings are open to members of St. Mark's.

Council action highlights for 2024.

- New Council members elected to the Council at the 2023 Annual Meeting met with the outgoing members at the December 2023 meeting. New officers were elected:

President, Susan Cyr, Vice President, Deb Gerner, Secretary, Laura Goralski, Treasurer, Dave Groenewold.
- Approved facility use for hosting "Strong People, Strong Bodies" sessions provided by UW-Extension.
- To facilitate easier updating, our Gather, Grow, Go Life Together Chart was converted to excel format and has been updated throughout the year.
- Council members attended "Together in Mission" Leadership Assembly.
- Approved the final Mission Site Profile
- Stewardship is leading Council members in the book "Ask, Thank, Tell" by Chuck Lane.
- Our updated Constitution was reviewed and will be on the Annual Meeting Agenda.
- Voted on the Call Committee members.
- Exploring future flag placement with the Property Team.
- Approved facility use for Teen Moms group.
- St. Mark's directory completed by office volunteers.
- Collaborating with Property to update our Building Use Policy.
- New Audit Team members sought out and elected. Council member assisting with obtaining Synod guidelines for auditing.
- Approved Personnel to move forward with hiring office staff.
- Completed Synod Congregational Listening session. Synod is doing listening sessions with Church Council groups.
- Designated a team to work on developing our gift policy. ELCA Foundation available to assist with this process/document.
- Exploring future presentation of our budget using a narrative model.
- Working on having additional volunteers to be part of our Counting Team.
- Approved special Thanksgiving offering for a church in Tanzania.

Continue to "Let Your Light Shine".

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Goralski, Council Secretary

2024 Finance Team Report

The Finance Team consists of 6 members: the financial secretary Frank Remfrey, Treasurer - Dave Groenewold, Pastor Sara, Tom Bluma, Lynn Delzer and Marilyn Timper. The group meets monthly to discuss the finances of the congregation. Each meeting usually begins with an analysis of the monthly financial reports received from St. Mark's accounting firm. In addition, they forward recommendations to the Council regarding the annual budget preparations and other events. The Finance Team posts several of the monthly financial reports on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

Frank Remfrey - Financial Secretary

2024 Counting Team Report

The Counting Team is responsible for counting all monies received from offering, memorials, gifts, activities, and fees. The counting is performed twice a month by two team members and takes about 2 hours or until finished. The counting teams are scheduled to provide coverage for 24 Sundays per year. St. Mark's Counting Team consists of Lead Counters and Assistant Counters.

Lead Counters responsibilities on their scheduled Sundays are:

- Work with one or more assistant counters.
- Count and record (offering envelopes, loose offering, gifts, memorials, and fees).
- Take the deposit to the bank.

Assistant Counters responsibilities on their scheduled Sundays are:

- Work with the lead counter.
- Verify and balance the content of the offering envelopes with what is written on the envelope.

Contact me if you are interested in serving on the Counting Team.

Thank you counting team members for providing this service to St. Marks.

Jeff Bjerke bjjerkejeff@gmail.com

2024 Audit Committee Report

Our Audit Team members are elected by the Congregation Council for a term of 3 years. The responsibility of our audit team is to ensure compliance with regard to our Constitution and other operational procedures. Our Synod will be providing resources that will help guide and direct this team. New team members, Don Neitzel and Brian Trautman, were elected recently and will begin developing areas to audit in 2025.

2024 Stewardship Report

“You are the light of the world....Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” Matthew 5:14-16

The Stewardship Team helps the congregation learn about and grow in generosity of giving. The team selected and promoted two special offerings. Our Lenten special offering contributed \$3,810 to ELCA World Hunger toward the purchase of farms in impoverished parts of the world. In November, we will collect a special Thanksgiving offering to help a church in Tanzania put a new roof on their building.

The team led our annual Fall appeal with the theme of “Let Your Light Shine.” Through mailings and Mission Moment faith stories, we were invited to celebrate all that God has been doing in and through St. Mark’s this past year, and to invest in God’s bright vision for the year ahead. We celebrated our Commitment Sunday with a special time to gather as a church family around a potluck lunch.

Respectfully Submitted, The Stewardship Team
Mary Foley, Laura Goralski, Lou Hernandez, Pastor Sara Gillespie, Deacon Marcia Marquardt

2024 Mutual Ministry Annual Report

Mutual Ministry’s purpose is to listen to St. Mark’s members regarding the needs, concerns, and desires of the congregation, pastor and staff. We meet monthly to share and discuss issues that may arise. Our goal is to foster open communication.

We invite anyone who wishes to discuss a concern to contact the following members of the Mutual Ministry Team for 2023-2024: Suzanne (Sue) Remfrey, Deb Gerner, Jean Stickles, and Kevin Goralski.

GATHER

2024 Worship Team Report

The Worship Team coordinates the different pieces of our worship services so that everything flows smoothly. This includes our 6 Welcome Teams, Assisting Ministers and Communion Helpers. We would like to thank Lana DeCoto for all the years of organizing the Assisting Ministers. Brian Trautman has agreed to take over this responsibility.

This team coordinates the altar flowers and adds plants and flowers throughout the church. They also decorate the church for liturgical holidays. A huge thank you to our many generous members for their gifts of altar flowers, irises on Palm Sunday, our Easter Garden and our Christmas wreaths and poinsettias.

Behind the scenes, the Sacristy team takes care of the altar, communion preparation, baptism preparation and care of the Chapel. This year the Sacristy was cleaned out and painted.

Thank you to all who helped out this year so that we could all enjoy our wonderful times in worship. Respectfully submitted, Barb Helling

2024 Music Ministry Report

Music continues to be an important part of each worship service! As music director, I choose liturgy and special music, according to the needs of that liturgical season, as well as hymns for all worship services. I play the music, as well as assist Pastor Sara in leading worship services. I contact and organize special guests as the budget allows. We have also had a women's choir sing seasonally for worship.

Additionally, I create the worship portion of the bulletin for each week's worship, changing out prayers, weekly.

My hope for St. Mark's is that we keep growing in our music ministry through special guests. I also pray that through music, we are able to give glory and praise to God.

Jennifer Manvilla - Music Director

2024 Card Ministry Report

The card ministry consists of 3 members, Char Brandenburg, Kim Weber, and myself. We send a variety of handmade cards, mostly revolving around senior birthdays, sympathy cards, thinking of you, holidays, baptism, etc. Roughly, it was about 300 cards. My favorite cards are for the Special Circumstance members. Those that can't get to church, or are in difficult situations and need to know they are definitely part of the St. Mark's family. Marcia monitors the names on that list with me. We know the cards are so appreciated. Some people even write a thank you card for a card! How kind.

Debbie Wagner

2024 Property Team Report

St. Mark's property is in great condition and continues to be maintained with the help and support of all our members. Thank you to the following members who have given of their time and talents to be part of the Property team: Mike Collins, Terry Inman, Bob Johnson, Frank Remfrey, and Larry Szwalkiewicz. Also, thanks to the volunteer gardeners: Mary Jo Christensen, Sharon Collins, Mary Johnson, and Angela Zamzow.

HVAC - Our newest boiler is in its fourth heating season and is operating well. Our oldest boiler is now 41 years old.

Spectrum – installed a new modem and a new router in March to correct several WIFI and internet issues.

The brick around the outdoor sign was power-washed and a modified hours sign was added.

In August the Sacristy room was totally emptied, organized and painted. This was done by the team of Anna M., Mary Jo C., Barb H. and Chris F.

Old metal and brass items were taken to recycling and \$50.00 was received to return to St. Mark's.

Furniture was donated for two lounges by Linda & Tom Schmidt. They generously donated the following items for use in two St. Mark's lounges: a sofa & lamp; loveseat, coffee table, 2 wing back chairs, small chairs, 2 rocking chairs and a silk floor plant!

A moving team of: Bob & Mary J., Chris F., Lynn D., and Darlene M., picked up the furniture and brought it back to St. Mark's and put it in the lounges.

Old furniture - was donated to Lake Country Caring for them to offer free to their clients, and to Habitat Restore.

A Snow Plowing contract for 2023-24 has been signed with DeMark's – Mammoth Snow & Ice Control.

Garbage – Many thanks to John G. for continuing to dispose of all garbage and recycling.

Other projects that have been completed this past year include:

- All scheduled maintenance and inspections were completed as contracted.
- The parking lot and hill were cleaned up, and weed killer was applied by Team members.
- The gardeners tended plantings, trimmed bushes, added mulch, and donated the planter flowers at the front entrance.
- Four Team members volunteered to rotate mowing 'the hill' on the west side of church from May to October.
- A lighted exit sign was installed over the Sanctuary exit door per the City Fire Inspector.
- The Little Library was given a fresh coat of paint.
- The front door lock was replaced and the handicap door switch was repaired.
- The front doorbell needed a new battery, and the upper side lights on the south end of the Sanctuary needed repair because of a loose connection.
- Unused Faith Fermenters equipment has been sold with proceeds of \$740 returned to St. Mark's.
- The Nursery/Family Lounge, and the lower-level back hall, were both cleaned and organized.
- The lawnmower was serviced and repaired this year. The two snowblowers have been tuned-up and a third snowblower has been donated. All services were donated by a team member – many thanks!

Respectfully submitted, Christine Fenner, Property Chair

2024 Senior Connection Report

Senior Connection gatherings are a wonderful time of fellowship. We pray, sing, laugh and learn more about each other. Of course, we also eat. Our attendance averages between 30-35 people. Guests are always welcome.

Our 2024 gatherings were:

February - Pancake lunch and Bingo.

March - After our lunch we learned about and built rock cairns to take home for Lent. We also had a bit of St. Patrick's Day fun.

April - We enjoyed our famous soup buffet lunch. Lisa Salb was invited to tell us about the Tower Hill neighborhood, which St. Mark's is a part of.

May - Picnic lunch and fun sing-along.

October - "You are Special" was our theme. After lunch we learned a lot about each other through trivia questions.

November - Taco bar lunch. Volunteers from the Plowshare Fair Trade shop in Waukesha, will tell us about the store, what is "fair trade" and bring items to sell.

Our committee members are: Anne Link, Mary Johnson, MaryJo Christensen, Mary Ann Sindelar, Deb Gerner and Marilyn Timper.

Thank you, St. Mark's, for your continued support of this group.

2024 St. Mark's Dartball Report

St. Mark's Dartball 2023 – 2024 season

We had a wonderful year with good fellowship at our games. There were ten teams in our Waukesha-Kettle Moraine league. We placed 9th with 20 wins and 34 losses. On March 19, 2024 we had our banquet at the Loft at Cedar Ridge. We are looking for a great season again this year with two new ladies joining our team.

Captain, Bob Johnson

2024 Prayer Ministry Report

The prayer chain ministry brings together people who will pray for others in their time of need. There are about 15 people who receive notice about prayers. A request is sent to Lana DeCoto and she passes it on to the members of the team. If you would like to be a member of the team contact Lana.

Blessing to all.

St. Marks is a caring community. Our prayer chain allows for members to reach out for support when life gets tough as well as when there is joy and thanksgiving. The Bible instructs us to pray in all circumstances.

1 Timothy 2:1

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.

Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

God hears all of our prayers. There is a special kind of support that comes when we allow others to pray for us. I invite you to contact Lana DeCoto at lrdecoto@gmail.com

2024 Sacristy Report

The Sacristy has been cleaned, purged, and painted this summer giving the room a fresh and brighter look. Thanks goes to Chris Fenner, Barb Helling, and Mary Jo Christensen for all their help. We are currently planning our Christmas decor and hope to have some new additions to uplift spirits and give glory to God. Anyone who is interested in helping with the decorating is invited to join us. Please see me at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Miller

GROW

2024 Ruth Circle Report

Our gatherings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 1:00 P.M. (September-May). The Circle members take turns hosting the group if they so choose.

Each meeting begins with dessert, then a short business meeting and devotions. We are currently reading and discussing a short section from the book, Understanding Your Blessings in Christ.

In December we have a Christmas potluck luncheon at Mavis McGrath's home. We purchase diapers and donate them to Juno House and the Women's Center in Waukesha. The ladies along with the Congregation donated 1,572 diapers. The items are always appreciated. We end the year with a Spring luncheon at Didi's Restaurant in the Ingleside Hotel.

The ladies of Ruth Circle are always excited to welcome new members. It gives us the opportunity to get better acquainted with the ladies of St. Mark's.

If you would like to know more about our Circle or would like to join our group, please feel free to call any Circle member. This group is a wonderful way to connect with other women in our church community.

Blessings,
Mavis McGrath and Karen Handford

2024 Sunday School Report

This year we are learning about Characters of the Bible. Then we will become Bible Detectives to learn more about the Bible. I have anywhere from 2-10 students. They are from 4 to 10 years old. There are 10 total children that have "signed up" for Sunday School. Carter Stearns is my helper. We discussed our Christmas Program and that will be on December 15th in place of the Children's message. Practice will be held on December 14th. Classes are on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. I donated the supplies that I use but the largest expense we have is the candy bags at Christmas after the program. I have previously purchased the curriculum. Class is from after the children's message to just before communion. We will do the coffee hour on December 15th.

Suzanne Lorenz

2024 Faith Formation/Confirmation Report

In the Fall of 2023 and continuing into the Spring of 2024, I held a traditional Confirmation program with two participants who were confirmed in the spring: Carson Casper and Mirabelle Rather.

We studied Martin Luther's Small Catechism and some of the Scripture that goes along with the explanations of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed.

In January of 2024 and Spring of 2024, I confirmed into membership Abby Cortichiato, Lillia Rather, Emily Rather, Emily Stern and Kaylee Stern. They had all successfully completed the three session Adult Formation class. We talked about the Sacraments and how the Lutheran view differs from both the Catholic understanding and how other Protestant denominations.

We talked about the Apostles' Creed and how Lutherans believe that faith comes to us through the Holy Spirit as a gift from God.

We were joined by several St. Mark's members, including Judi Henry who was new to St. Mark's.

Questions from long-time Lutherans (who MAY have not fully paid attention when they were in confirmation during their own 7th and 8th grade years) informed our discussion and shaped the planning of my lessons for the 2nd and 3rd week.

Truly a joy and a privilege to teach about our Lutheran faith.

In Christ's Service, Pastor Sara Gillespie

2024 Bible Study Report

Bible Study meets on Wednesday afternoons (Zoom) and Thursday mornings (Hybrid) to study the worship Scripture for the coming Sunday. About 5 people attend on Wednesdays and 15- 20 attend on Thursdays. These studies help participants apply God's Word to their lives.

Marcia Marquardt

2024 Women's Retreat Report

Women's Retreat was held on the first weekend in October with 12 women attending from St. Mark's and other congregations. The theme "The Secret Garden" explored our life journey with Jesus. This was a wonderful spiritual experience for all who were able to attend.

Marcia Marquardt

2024 Discipleship Huddles Report

Discipleship Huddles meet to help people discover what it means to be a disciple of Jesus who makes other disciples. Huddles encourage an intimacy and comfort level for people to get to know each other and support each other's faith. We have two huddles this year. Marcia Marquardt leads one and Sue Remfrey and Deb Gerner lead another.

Marcia Marquardt

2024 Cup of Comfort Report

Cup of Comfort meets the second Thursday of each month. We have recently reached our 10th year of fellowship. Our gatherings are for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, experiencing a health issue of their own, or care giving for a loved one, or any other issue that is on their heart. Through scripture, prayer, music and sharing we support one another. Our group is open to all. We care about each other and welcome anyone who has a need.

GO

2024 Annual GO Report

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV Matthew 22: 37-40) Once again our devotion to caring for those neighbors in need and showing the love of Jesus is such a large part of our ministry that I can not emphasize enough how proud I am to be considered one of the flock here at St. Mark's. Thank you, everyone, for your contributions of time, talents and resources to make 2024 yet another year where St. Mark's makes a difference in so many lives. Literally thousands of lives are better because of our many ministries. God bless St. Mark's and all of its "Good and faithful servants."

Gene Geiger – your GO ministry council person

2024 Prayer Shawl Report

The Prayer Shawl members have been busy this year with their needles and hooks.

So far we have completed dozens of scarves, 21 needle worked shawls, along with 45 polar fleece shawls for the North Pole Project. We will also be providing fleece shawls to the graduating class at Healing Hearts this fall.

Mary Jo Christensen has introduced a knitted cuff project called "Fidget Cuffs". At this time we have completed about 45. These cuffs have things like buttons, ribbons, hair elastics and such secured to them. The purpose of these cuffs is to help calm patients in the memory care units who like to "fidget" with their fingers. IF you know someone who would benefit from one of these, please contact Mary Jo.

We Thank St. Mark's for your support over the years in using our talents to help others and Glorify God. Respectfully submitted, Anna Miller

2024 Visitation Ministry Report

Communion Visitors share Communion, devotions, and conversation with people who have difficulty leaving their homes. We also have a group that leads Communion and Devotions at Linden Heights Assisted Living once a month.

Communion Visitors: Nancy Alt, Mary Martinson, Sue Remfrey, Jennine Szwalkiewicz, Betty & John Thompson

Linden Heights Visitors: Nancy Alt, Lana DeCoto, Deb Gerner, Donna Inman, Mary Martinson, Sue Remfrey, Sandy Solberg.

2024 Neighborhood Block Party Report

Our second annual Neighborhood Block Party was held on Sept. 15th. Invitations to join us for some food and fun in the parking lot were shared with families in our church neighborhood. Forty St. Mark's members, family members and several neighborhood families enjoyed fellowship, food, games, making kindness rocks, prayer requests, quilt raffles and a bounce house. Special thanks to our Coffee Hour helpers (Glenda Rose, Donna Stearns and Linda Stark) for serving food and helping with set up and clean up.

Block Party Leadership Team: Cathy Hernandez, Marcia Marquardt, Sandy Solberg

2024 Food Pantry Donations Report

St Marks is certainly a generous church. Every month many of our members bring items for the Waukesha Food Pantry and Salvation Army. Barb Kehoss and Deb Gerner and her family have been delivering our donations. In the summer months we focused on collecting food for making lunches for kids. Currently we are focusing on Thanksgiving meal foods. In December, we will invite members to bring baby foods or diapers. When our bags of food are delivered, they are always met with gratitude and smiles. Thank you St. Mark's for dependably being a church that shares.

2024 St. Mark's Quilters Report

St. Mark's Quilters met thirty-eight times between October 30, 2023 and October 28, 2024. 402 twin-size and 166 child/lap size quilts were completed for a total of 568 quilts. In October twenty quilts were donated to Lutheran World Relief. During the year, and especially after Quilt Sunday, quilts were donated to more than 30 organizations in Waukesha and Milwaukee counties. This is a partial list of the 2024 recipients:

- ❖ Spring City Corner Clubhouse
- ❖ Milwaukee Rescue Mission - Joy House
- ❖ Chosen In Love (Foster Families)
- ❖ Zablocki Veterans Hospital - Fisher House
- ❖ Homeless Veterans Initiative
- ❖ Christmas Clearing Council
- ❖ Wisconsin Community Services
- ❖ Community Smiles Dental Clinic - Expectant Mothers Program and children at treatment sessions
- ❖ Bethany Recovery Center - Oconomowoc
- ❖ Local Shelters - Hebron Housing Services
- ❖ Housing Action Coalition
- ❖ White Stone Warriors
- ❖ Tricia's Troops - for Cancer patients
- ❖ Aspen Treatment Center (LSS)
- ❖ Celebrating Members of St. Mark's
- ❖ Hurting & Healing Families of St. Marks
- ❖ Hope Center
- ❖ St. Mark's Neighborhood Block Party & Blue Christmas

Quilts raised funds for Healing Hearts, Blessings in a Backpack, Zonta Foundation, Jackson Sparks Foundation, Good Friends, Hope Center and other events. Quilts were given to St. Mark's new members and to graduates, baptisms, and to comfort people experiencing serious illness or the loss of a loved one.

We meet on Mondays every week until Memorial Day and then every other week during the summer until October 1, when we start again every Monday. Several quilters cut squares, design, sew, and tie quilts at home.

The Quilters have been blessed to receive many donations of fabric for quilt tops, backing material, and batting. THANK YOU to the Quilters and to members and friends of St. Mark's for using their hands, hearts, and funds to continue this mission of giving warmth and hope to our community and beyond.

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors ..." 2 Corinthians 5:20

Respectfully submitted, Vickie Friedeck

2024 Inasmuch Day of Serving Report

Inasmuch Day of Serving was held on November 2nd. We offered 5 projects to help our community. Two projects made blankets for children in need. One project offered baked treats, support, and conversation with our Waukesha civil servants and our neighbors. A wreath laying ceremony was held to honor those who are buried in a historic cemetery on the Waukesha County grounds. Another project to help Family Promise to prepare new apartments for those in need of housing has been moved to a future date.

Inasmuch Day Leadership Team: Lana DeCoto, Marcia Marquardt, Anna Miller, Frank Remfrey, Betty and Dave Groenwold, Mary Jo Christensen, Carol Wolter, and Barb Geiger.

2024 SOPHIA Social Justice Ministry Report

St. Mark's Social Justice Ministry : SOPHIA

“ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4: 18-19)

St. Mark's Social Justice Ministry has established a core team and is part of SOPHIA, a county wide organization. As a core team we have been meeting monthly.

Jesus reminds us of the call to compassion and justice, showing special care and concern for those in his day who were considered “expendables.”

Justice is foundational to our faith. For those who have been excluded from the full promise of a society, justice involves that which would level the playing field and provide opportunities to access social, economic, and cultural benefits. To this group, equity is what they seek. While equality means “sameness,” equity means giving people what they need.

In 2024: Monthly meetings open with reflections and a study about social justice and community organizing, referencing the book *Doing Justice* by Reverend Dennis Jacobson. Starting our meetings in reflection, helps ground us in the ways in which God calls us to live in community and seek justice for those oppressed.

St. Mark's Social Justice Ministry team organized a booth for SOPHIA's Community Multicultural Fair held in August at Frame Park, in Waukesha. The booth featured information about St. Mark's Church and included engaging family activities. The event provided the opportunity for St. Mark's members to be present in the community and form relationships with people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds and different faith traditions. A prayer chain was constructed as an activity by community members that stretched more than 10 feet when completed.

Core team members invited St. Mark's members to attend a breakfast event and learned about the impact of SOPHIA'S work for 20 years around Housing Justice, Immigration Rights and Criminal Justice Reform. Two members of the core team have been working with the SOPHIA Housing Justice Taskforce and have reached out in the community to understand the systemic root causes of homelessness and housing instability. They recently helped organize a lunch forum about housing choice vouchers, attended by approximately 30 community members. In 2025, the core team plans to offer an adult forum about Homelessness and Housing Needs in Waukesha County.

Core team members: Tammi Boehm, Susan Cyr, Barb Geiger, Betty Groenewold, Dave Groenewold.

2024 Pastor James and Nadine Wilch Scholarship Fund Report

The Pastor James & Nadine Wilch Scholarship Fund was established in 1984 to award annual educational scholarships to honor the Wilchs' total 52 years of ministry and their caring concern for all people.

The Scholarship Fund is a separate entity from St. Mark's Lutheran Church and is managed by a five member Scholarship Board. This year, the Scholarship Board transferred the Scholarship Fund to the Waukesha County Community Foundation (WCCF) as an endowed fund of the Foundation. The Scholarship Board will continue to review all applications and make the final selections.

The scholarship is open to all members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Waukesha, WI., including: anyone with a high school degree, high school seniors, and all previous scholarship recipients. Each applicant is allowed to receive up to four separate scholarships. The scholarship may be for post-secondary school education (including college, technical school, or postgraduate), or for professional advancement and continuing education.

This year the Scholarship Board awarded a total of \$5,000.00 to the following recipients: Jeremy Bjerke, Melanie Bjerke Boulka, Abby Cortichiato, Emily Stern and Kaylie Stern. All the donations and interest which have been made to the Scholarship Fund over the past 40 years, are used to award scholarships. The current balance of the Scholarship Fund is \$78,441.10. Scholarship Board members include: Lynn Delzer, Kelly Colgrove, Sara Cortichiato, Tarah Gerner and Christine Fenner.

Questions? Contact the Scholarship Board at: wilchscholarshipfund@gmail.com