

ST MARK'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

December 2025

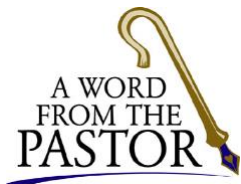
Valley, Nebraska

www.StMarksValleyNE.com

402.359.2315

from the Pastor...

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



It is Advent, during which we prepare our hearts to celebrate the arrival of this child—the one awaited for centuries, the baby Jesus. Who was loved by Mary and Joseph, laid in an animal feeding trough,

welcomed by angel choruses, worshiped by shepherds and wise men. The Messiah, Prince of Peace.

Advent in church history began as a season of penitence, to prepare for the coming season of Epiphany—which celebrated the appearance of Jesus as a human and the manifestation of his identity as Son of God. But soon Advent began to focus on the anticipation of another appearance of Jesus—the 2nd Coming of Christ.

Nowadays, Advent (which means ‘arrival’) includes the anticipation of the babe of Bethlehem but also reminds us that God sent a forerunner ahead of Jesus, John the Baptist, to encourage us to prepare our hearts for him, and indeed, for his return.

Many churches won’t sing any Christmas carols until Christmas actually arrives, choosing to focus instead on preparing their hearts for the coming Savior, but also for the one who will come again to judge all people at the end of time. And so, Advent can be a bit confusing, with a bit of a ‘split personality’ with both of these themes present and deserving of our thought. We do both here at St. Mark’s—we sing Advent hymns **and** extend Christmas a bit by singing some carols too.

Advent holds important truths for us and promises of a Savior through the prophets, **and** the fulfillment of those significant promises as well—especially, the incarnation of our Savior Jesus, foretold by prophets, and born of Mary. We bow in wonder before our Lord and King who chose to come to us humbly, and in poverty—choosing not to frighten us with his Almighty power, but to woo us with his gentle sweetness, choosing to

identify **with** us rather than to impose his rule and power on us. Jesus is **always** known by the choices he made in coming among us. I pray we always remember pay attention to those choices—they are important and yes, unusual.

The child we adore and welcome in the feeding trough of Bethlehem, is also the Mighty Lord who will usher in his reign of justice and mercy one day, and whose kingdom will never end. It is a ‘both/and’ kind of season. May our Lord God give us eyes to see him in his incarnation here; in the communion meal. May we have eyes to love and behold him with the humble shepherds, and hearts to follow the Light of the World, as we prepare to celebrate his Advent; here in the past, and to look for the Advent which is yet coming. May Emmanuel-*God with Us* help you to prepare your hearts to truly welcome him, not just at Christmas...but in the ups and downs of everyday life in this world.

Bob, Christopher, and I would like to wish you **all** a meaningful season of hope and joy!

May our Prince of peace shed his light and peace upon you and yours this season. May Jesus ground you in his love, presence, and his reconciliation, now and forever.

May God be with you in a meaningful Advent, and a Joyous Christmas,
+Pastor Barbara

from the PMA...

Prepared and Equipped

With the holiday season approaching, many of us are making lists and preparing for the activities and events to come. Hosting, entertaining, attending concerts and programs. When hosting I tend to look for new holiday recipes to make for the good old family feast. I can purchase the ingredients listed, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. It's also important to have the utensils and appliances that are required. Then there is the skill factor to consider.

What I have come to understand is that we can have the tangibles available to us to produce something, but without the skill or talent to do so we are simply not equipped. I believe this applies to our faith life. We can possess books, music, bibles, journals and all sorts of tangibles, but if our faith has not equipped us, we will probably not be productive. When you have a desire to produce something for the betterment of

God's Kingdom, but feel you are not capable, ask God to equip you. He can provide what we can not.

PMA Karen



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
Wednesday, December 24th
3:00 & 5:00 p.m.

Worship livestreamed on
stmarksvalleyne.com

 **www.facebook.com/stmarksvalley**



Welcome to St. Mark's Council

Welcome!

Matthew Allen, Sharon Elske and Kirsten Kurtz were elected to serve 3 year terms. Please keep them and the rest of our Council in your prayers as they seek to provide wise leadership for the congregation.

A PRAYER FOR ST MARK'S COUNCIL

Heavenly Lord, be present with our leaders in a special way.

They have been your gift to us this year.

Help us always see them in this way. Amen.

COPE

COPE is starting to update their list monthly.

Chunky Soup

Dry Pasta

Pasta Sauce

Canned Fruit

Toilet Paper

Diapers (size 5 and 6) and pull-ups

Canned Meat



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

This is a synopsis of the Council meeting held on
November 18, 2025

November 18, 2025 Council Highlights

- 3 Trees were removed. Thanks to Dean Harrifeld, Phil Page, Bob Jepsen, Elton Peterson and Jeff Richmond for removing the tress.
- A Red Maple tree will be planted from Marilyn Ramsey.
- Thanks to the following for doing the mowing this past summer: Dean Harrifeld, Bob Jepsen, Mick Nielsen, Phil Page, Chris Bonacci, Cal Peacock, Jeff Richmond and Jake Richmond.
- When \$5,000 or more is in the Worship Enhancement fund, \$5,000 will go towards the Principle.
- Worship at Valhaven will begin again in December.
- The Sunday School Christmas program will be held during Worship on December 14, 2025.
- As of November 18, 2025, 21 Commitment Cards have been turned in. Pledges are as follows: General Fund - \$69,299; Worship Enhancement \$6,540; Church Maintenance \$1,550; Furnace Fund \$300; for a total of \$77,590. 28 Time and Talent Sheets were also turned in.
- **REMINDER:** It's not too late to bring your Commitment Cards and Time and Talent Sheets to worship. Please sign up for how you wish to serve. Your service is **no longer** assumed year to year!
- December 7 at 4:00 pm there be caroling at the Care Centers. At 5:00 pm there will be Fire Pit Caroling in the parking lot at church.

- Christmas Eve Services will be at 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm.
- There will be NO December Council Meeting unless something comes up that needs attention.
- Our Furnace Fund will be retired with thanks – as all 10 furnaces have now been replaced. Thank you!!
- New fund – Special Capitol Improvement for updating building

FLOWER CHART



This sign-up sheet is provided for those people who wish to provide altar flowers for our sanctuary during the year. The chart is located in the Fellowship Hall. There are lines provided for every Sunday for all twelve months of the year. Just sign up for the appropriate Sunday to provide two small bouquets for the plant stands on both sides of the altar. You may wish to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries or honor loved ones as a memorial. Jan Reis, our secretary, can assist you to sign up if you have questions.



For Sunday morning closures,
please check our website,
facebook, TV or radio.

www.StMarksValleyNE.com
www.facebook.com/stmarksvalley



From Laughing with Lutherans

Grace had a new baby sister and had learned some details about the birth experience. In Sunday school the teacher—looking for “wrapped him in swaddling clothes”—asked the 3 year olds. “What did Mary do when Jesus was born?” But the class was stumped and silent. Finally, Grace blurted out, “Mary had to push real hard!”

**D
R
F**

DISCIPLESHIP RECOGNITION FUND

Have you ever thought someone in our church family has stepped up and done something that's worth saying thank you for? Well, we have a great way to do just that. It is called the Discipleship Recognition Fund and here is how it works.

- *Pick up an envelope in the Narthex with the nomination form inside and fill it out about the person you would like to thank for working so hard for the benefit of St Mark's.

- *Drop it in the box in the Narthex and the Committee will take it from there.

The fund has been donated and set aside, only to be used for this type of gift, and does not affect the general fund of the church.

BLOOD DRIVE

Valley Community
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
115 West Meigs Street



Saturday, December 13, 2025
7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: VALLEY to schedule an appointment



PROJECT WARMTH

You can help!!!! As you are cleaning closets and adjusting wardrobes for the changing seasons, please consider donating for those less fortunate. Donations of winter clothing, outerwear and accessories help individuals and families keep warm during the months when temperatures are

dipping. Suggested donation items:

- . Jackets and Sweatshirts
- . Sweaters and Scarves
- . Mittens and Hats

New or clean gently-used outerwear or accessories welcome.
Please no underwear or socks.

Please leave the items in the Fellowship Hall in the receptacle provided.

Thank you, Faith Circle

Worship Schedule

All services are livestreamed on stmarksvallayne.com or on Facebook at [stmarksvallayne](https://www.facebook.com/stmarksvallayne)

<p>December 7 Second Sunday in Advent 9:30 a.m. Worship with Communion 4:00 p.m. Caroling at Valley Lakes & Valhaven 5:00 p.m. Fire Pit Caroling</p>	<p>December 14 Third Sunday in Advent 9:30 a.m. Worship with Communion Sunday School Christmas program during Worship</p>
<p>December 21 Fourth Sunday in Advent 9:30 a.m. Worship with Communion</p>	<p>December 24 Christmas Eve 3:00 & 5:00p.m. Worship with Communion</p>
<p>December 25 Christmas Day No Worship Church Office Closed</p>	<p>December 28 First Sunday of Christmas 9:30 a.m. Worship with Communion</p>

AdvoCare Nugget

Every dollar spent on drug treatment in the community is estimated to return \$18.52 in benefits to society in terms of reduced incarceration rates and associated crime costs to taxpayers. If these figures alarm you, learn how you can make a difference. Reach out to our congregation's

AdvoCare Team



Thank you to every one who generously donated cash, gifts, and their time for Operation Christmas Child. With the help of Girl Scout Troop #48853 purchasing gifts and packing shoe boxes, we completed 119 boxes. These gifts will be sent all over the world.

DECEMBER NEWS FOR WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S

FAITH CIRCLE NEWS

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE NEWS

JOY/PEACE CIRCLE NEWS

Four members were present. We discussed the great success of the Soup & Pie Supper. We packed shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child on Saturday, November 8. The Girl Scouts assisted us. Drop off dates will be between November 17-24. The closest sites are First Lutheran in Fremont or Three Timbers Church in Bennington. Five roses were handed out during All Saint's Sunday. JoAnn led our discussion on Chapters 3 & 4. Our next meeting will be on December 7. We will discuss Chapters 5 & 6. Joyce will be our leader.

OCTOBER MONTHLY AS OF 10/31/2025

October Budget - \$23,763

October as of 10/31/2025 Expenses - \$19,777

October as of 10/31/2025 Giving - \$33,917

YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL AS OF 10/31/2025

January – December Budget - \$291,174

January – December as of 10/31/2025 Expenses - \$231,368

January – December as of 10/31/2025 Giving - \$274,225

A NEW ADDITION!

- To our newsletter
- To your families!



Congratulations to Braden and Maddie Johnson on the birth of their daughter, Lila Lynn, on September 27, 2025.

Congratulations to Eric and Blaire Dreessen on the birth of their daughter, Maeta Ruby on November 17, 2025, Maeta is the granddaughter of Harlan and Teri Dreessen.

(If you would like to announce a birth, please get us the pertinent info!)

REMINDER: It's not too late to bring your Commitment Cards and Time and Talent Sheets to worship. Please sign up for how you wish to serve. Your service is **not** assumed.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Bill & Louise	D.J.Smith	Charlotte
Gwen Rittgarn	Royce	Mitzi
Ruth	Leslie	Madison Laughlin
Cindy	Lawrence Bonacci	Eryn Hamke
Lois Schaefer	Kari	Steve Hirsh
Travis Hayes	Donovan	Sandy Trofholz
Sandy Gunnerson	Jake	Pastor Harold Schmidt
Stan Klimek	Care Center Residents	Caregivers Among Us
Care Center Staff	All Those Grieving	

ALL OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Donna Fintel	Jean Krahmer
Joan Kahlandt	MaryLou Finn
Annie Hurt	Larry Laughlin
Millie Richards	Donna Hovendick
Julie Dunn	Vernabelle Adams

For all military serving at home and around the world. We include prayers for their families as they hold things together in their absence.

**All our homebound are hungry for a call, card or visit! God bless you,
as you bless them!**

PRAYER BOX REQUEST

- For the homebound, for whom self-care is an ongoing challenge.
- For those separated from family during the holidays.

SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER, 2025

December 7

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading	Isaiah 11:1-10
Responsive Reading	72:1-7, 18-19
Second Reading	Romans 15:4-13
Gospel Reading	Matthew 3:1-12

December 14

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading	Isaiah 35:1-10
Responsive Reading	Psalms 146:5-10
Second Reading	James 5:7-10
Gospel Reading	Matthew 11:2-11

December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent

First Reading	Isaiah 7:10-16
Responsive Reading	Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19
Second Reading	Romans 1:1-7
Gospel Reading	Matthew 1:18-25

December 24

Christmas Eve

First Reading	Isaiah 9:2-7
Responsive Reading	Psalms 96
Second Reading	Titus 2:11-14
Gospel Reading	Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

December 28

First Sunday of Christmas

First Reading	Isaiah 61:7-9
Responsive Psalm	Psalms 148
Second Reading	Hebrews 2:10-18
Gospel Reading	Matthew 2:13-23



The community is welcome to join us for Christmas caroling at 4:00 p.m. at Valhaven and Valley Lakes and return to the church parking lot for fire pit caroling on December 7. Come join us for the singing of beloved Christmas carols while staying warm by the fire and sipping cider plus enjoying treats, too! Bring chairs, warm blankets and your family and join in the fun yum on Sunday, December 7. Free cookies and hot drink available. Please bring a chair if you wish to be seated and warm blanket (if needed).

Thank You!

We sincerely appreciate all those who helped with the Soup & Pie Supper. So many contributed: people who provided food or volunteered to serve at the event, those who donated items for the raffle and silent auction, raffle and silent auction participants, those who supplied decorations, as well as those who were our dinner guests.

Over \$5,000 was raised from the meal, raffle and silent auction. Your generosity will go a long way to strengthen the mission and ministry here at St. Mark's. Please accept the thanks and appreciation from the Women of St. Mark's.

Birthdays in December



It has been requested to have personal birthdates put in the newsletter. If we are going to do this we need you to be sure that we have your birth date. Please let the church office know your date if you have not already done so. HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING"

1 – Jenna Glidden
2 – Kallie Hemphill
2 – Corissa Hays
3 – Mike Hamsa
4 – Paul Burkholder
5 – Elizabeth Mayer
8 – Jeff Allen
9 – Sharon Renshaaw
10 – Jocelyn Bakken
10 – Trevor Bills
11 – Clayton Kibbie
11 – Payton Saathoff
12 – Stan Benke, Jr.
12 – Cindy Petersen
12 – Joe Timm
12 – Alice Ann Johnson
13 – Zoella Bonacci
13 – Shane Kreager

14 – Madelyn Hinrichs
14 – Aaron Kreager
14 – Blazek Muhleka
16 – Judd Hayden
17 – Larry Bottger
18 – Liz Karloff
18 – Jan Reis
19 – Teri Dreessen
19 – Tami Floody
19 – Hannah Flynn
24 – Christine Janke
25 – Vernabelle Adams
26 – Kathryn Beers
26 – Joan Kahlandt
28 – Jason Arp
29 – Robert Mahaffey
30 – Kyle Sake

Merry Christmas





Alice: "I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt, and perhaps it says, 'Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.'"

- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (1872)

CHRISTMAS! WORD SEARCH

P S I V H C H R I S T M A S T R E E P
 E U A G W C O M L M I S T L E T O E H
 M S C N N W E R I N S D R E H P E H S
 P E O A T I E E I E B Y X G S T A R F
 I J C H R A D K P X F Z E N E H V A W
 A F J H U O C D A S Z T O A H T M V H
 F O O D I F L L U C S S Y A D I L O H
 E H A W G M T S A P S N W N L E L N H
 G T I T P O N Q I U S A E Y E L V E S
 O R V I A H S E T N S A M E Y K N M E
 O I H N P A R T Y L G R M T U R I E L
 R B N S G O L E L U Y I E T S Q B S B
 C R E E D N I E R V N E N K S I O I U
 S Q M L B U B X I X I B K G C I R W A
 K X U P B O X I N G D A Y R N A R H B
 M I N C E P I E S H P L O D U R R H C
 U R E P A P G N I P P A R W F T Q C C
 P R E S E N T S W T N E V D A G Y D R
 S N O W M A N M U L L E D W I N E N J

ADVENT	CHRISTMAS TREE	MISTLETOE	SCROOGE
ANGELS	CRACKERS	MULLED WINE	SHEPHERDS
BAUBLES	ELVES	PARTY	SNOWMAN
BELLS	FAMILY	PRESENTS	STAR
BIRTH OF JESUS	FOOD	QUEEN'S SPEECH	TINSEL
BOXING DAY	HOLIDAYS	REINDEER	TURKEY
CAROL SINGING	HOLLY	ROBIN	WISEMEN
CHIMNEY	IVY	RUDOLPH	WRAPPING
CHRISTMAS CAKE	Mince Pies	SANTA CLAUS	PAPER
CHRISTMAS			YULE LOG
PUDDING			