

JUBILEE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January 2025



ST. MARK'S
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4780 E. 126th St., Carmel, IN 46033
317.846.4912 stmarkscarmel.org



Because you
give,
St. Mark's
gives



Thank You!

Because of your generosity this Advent season, those receiving your gifts, both near and far, had a brighter Christmas.

SEE PAGE 23 FOR DETAILS

Featured News



Parent Connection Brunch

Sunday, January 12, 2025 | 10 AM
Cornerstone Commons

Parenting has changed a lot over the years, but one thing has stayed constant: Parents have always been stretched too thin on time. Our Family Ministry staff team certainly understands this predicament, as we are all parents ourselves. It is our desire to provide you--the parents, children, and youth we serve--with opportunities that fill your spiritual tanks while nurturing your needs for peer support, friendships, and community.

With this in mind, we are hosting a Parent Connection Brunch hour on Sunday, January 12, 10-11 AM. We want to meet parents where you are by finding a time when most families will not have something else planned on their calendar. Think about it... 10 AM on a Sunday is a great chance to connect with others while your kids and youth are engaging in their own peer groups. No babysitter necessary, no sports conflicts, no contract, no fees, and no commitment to another weeknight event!

The only thing we ask you to bring is your appetite and willingness to share your input for what we can offer you at 10 AM on Sunday mornings going forward. Would you like to have the option to attend a discussion group with other parents at this hour? A speaker series? Perhaps you simply just want a space to JUST BE, where you can sit and read, listen to a podcast on your headphones, or catch up with friends.

Let Sundays at 10 become an hour that feeds your soul with spiritual insight, social interaction, or quiet reflection time. Leaders will be there to get the ball rolling with questions, but ultimately, we want to hear from you. Fresh-brewed coffee, yogurt parfaits, pastries, and quiche are waiting!

Your partners in family ministry,

Jackie Rowell, Jen Cawthorne, & Joyce Click - Children's Ministries

Scott Melvin & Jenny Miller - Youth Leaders

Jennifer Cloud-Buckner - Adult Discipleship

Pastor Karla Elliott - Executive Pastor

Upcoming Events

Take a look ahead at St. Mark's upcoming events. Please visit stmarkscarmel.org/events for all event details.



QPR SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

Question, Persuade, Refer.

Three steps anyone can learn to help prevent suicide. See page 12 to read more about this evidence-based training offered at St. Mark's on January 26.

[REGISTER](#)

COMING SOON



- Happy New Year!
- Office Reopens after Holidays - Jan. 2
- UMM Breakfast - Jan. 11
- Parent Connection Brunch - Jan. 12
- St. Mark's Presents - Jan. 12
- Dine to Donate at Verde - Jan. 14
- UWF Gathering - Jan. 14
- Food Florist Fundraiser - Jan. 19
- Human Relations Day - Jan. 19
- Club 56: Adrenaline Park - Jan. 19
- Fletcher Place Breakfast - Jan. 24
- Junior High Bowling and Laser Tag - Jan. 25
- Blood Drive - Jan. 26
- QPR Suicide Prevention Training - Jan. 26



- Chili Cook-Off - Feb. 2
- Sr. High Winter Jam Concert - Feb. 7
- UMM Breakfast - Feb. 8
- Infant Recognition - Feb. 9
- UWF Gathering - Feb. 11
- Summer Camp Registrations Begin - Feb. 14
- St. Mark's Talent Show - Feb. 16

Pastor's Place

Dear Co-workers in Christ,

What makes a new year new? Does the mere turning of a page on a calendar mean that anything has really changed? We live in distressing times and we may sometimes wonder if another calendar year will bring any lasting difference in our world. Another year begins and what has really changed?

The answer to that question is largely up to you and me. We can approach the year 2025 in a business as usual way or we can give ourselves to the transforming power of God's Spirit. Stephen Covey puts it like this: "Memory is built into your past responses to the same or similar stimuli. Memory ties you to your past. Imagination points you to your future."



Rev. Dr. Brian K. White
Lead Pastor

Your potential is unlimited, but to potentiate is to actualize your capabilities no matter what the conditions." (*Principle-Centered Leadership*, 43) When we live out of our imaginations we are able to shape a new future that is not wholly dependent on our past. This is a particularly important concept when the past is less than pleasant but applies to anyone trying to remold their lives.

The Book of Acts is the story of a dynamic ever-changing group of Christians who spread the gospel, sometimes because they intended to and sometimes because of the circumstances around them and the leading of the Holy Spirit. But primarily Acts is the story of Paul. Paul is a man who experiences a great transformation through Christ's presence in his life. He then sets about to witness to that transformation in a way that changes the world. Paul is often presented with hardships because what he preached was new and required people to change their way of thinking.

How will the New Year be different? Left to our own devices I suspect that not much will change. If we give ourselves to God everything will change. Paul said, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NRSV)

Happy New Year!

In Christ's service,
Brian

Pastor's Place

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Happy New Year!

2025 is here, and with it comes the promise of new opportunities, fresh beginnings, and moments to grow together as a community of faith. There's something about turning the page on a calendar that stirs both excitement and reflection. The New Year invites us to pause, take stock of where we've been, and imagine what's ahead. In a world that feels busier than ever, I find this season to be a gift—a chance to reset, renew our commitments, and focus on what truly matters.



Rev. Karla Elliott
Executive Pastor

This year will bring changes for us, but I believe those changes are filled with possibility. Change, after all, is often how God opens new doors and calls us forward into growth, trust, and deeper connection. As we step into 2025 together, I feel both gratitude for the journey behind us and genuine excitement for the road ahead. I believe this will be a year where we rediscover what it means to live in meaningful relationship—with God, with each other, and with the world we are called to serve.

On January 19th, I'll be launching a new sermon series in The Current titled "Created for Connection." If you've ever felt the ache of disconnection, you are not alone. Studies are now confirming what many of us already feel in our hearts: loneliness and isolation are taking a toll on our well-being. Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General, has even named loneliness as a significant threat to public health.

Yet, as people of faith, we know that God created us for connection. From the very beginning, we were designed to live in relationship—with God, with one another, and with the world. In this series, we'll look at the experiences of the early church in Scripture and discover how their commitment to connection transformed lives. Together, we'll explore what it means to cultivate meaningful relationships and build the kind of community God envisions for us today. If you have a friend, a colleague, a neighbor who might be craving meaningful, community connection, it is the perfect time to invite them to join us!

So as we step into this new year, I invite you to lean into this journey with me. Let's embrace the changes, celebrate the opportunities, and commit ourselves to the work of connection—something we all need and long for. I am excited for what God will do in and through us in 2025, and I am grateful to be on this path with each of you.

Wishing you all a joyful and blessed New Year,
Pastor Karla



Jan. Mission Focus

The Brightwood Community Center, a nonprofit organization, has been compassionately dedicated to building stronger families and vibrant communities for 89 years. Despite the chaos in the economy and the world at-large, the Brightwood Community Center continues to be a hub for the Brightwood community, delivering excellent programming while also giving hope to families around Indianapolis. Their goals are to cultivate and expand opportunities, skills, resources, and connections to enrich lives. Programs include Healing Circles, where community members can find support in addressing trauma in the community; Youth Summer Camp, designed to increase reading, experiential learning, comprehension skills, build character and teamwork; Workforce Development, and Pro Se Legal Assistance programs and more.

Brightwood also offers a “Client Choice” food pantry twice a month, where clients are able to select foods that best meet their needs and all individuals are eligible. St. Mark’s volunteers help with stocking and assisting clients with shopping, on 2nd & 4th Tuesdays & Wednesdays. Contact Diane Newton for more information and to sign up: joediane244@att.net.

Financial donations for Brightwood Community Center can be made online at stmarkscarmel.org/give or by using the mission offering envelope in the blue attendance pads. Learn more at stmarkscarmel.org/Brightwood.



Jan. In-Kind Donations

During the month of January, we will be collecting specific cleaning products and hygiene items for Fishers Youth Assistance Program (FYAP). FYAP provides professional, family-centered casework and referral services to students (ages 3 to 17) and families who reside within the Hamilton Southeastern School District. Kids and families are often referred to FYAP services by the schools, police, court officials and parents with concerns about their child.

FYAP services include family education programs, summer meals, tutoring, mentoring, counseling & other mental health resources, food, clothing and financial assistance, and scholarships to camps and other recreational opportunities.

Your donation items may be dropped off at our donation bins inside door #2, Mon.-Fri., 9-4. Children of the church are encouraged to shop with their parents and to drop off their donations at check in for Kidz Church.

Cleaning products:

- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Kleenex
- Dish soap
- Cleaning spray – like Lysol or any general cleaner for counters/bathrooms

Hygiene items:

- Body wash/soap
- Deodorant
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Body lotion
- Toothbrush/toothpaste



Brightwood Food Pantry

“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.” Big thanks to the many St. Mark’s volunteers who have been helping with the monthly food pantry for Brightwood Community families! BCC Food Pantry is currently offering a “Client Choice” food pantry TWICE per month, on the 2nd & 4th

weeks of each month. Volunteers help with shelving food on racks and assisting clients with shopping. Clients select foods that best meet their needs.

2nd & 4th Tuesdays: 12:00 - 2:30 receiving food and shelving

2nd & 4th Wednesdays: 1:30 - 4:00 help patrons shop/restock shelves

If you are ready to be the difference in a community’s life, contact Diane Newton for more information and to sign up: joediane244@att.net.

United Methodist Human Relations Day

January 19

The United Methodist Human Relations Day is the first of 6 Special Offerings each year. Human Relations Day calls United Methodists to recognize the right of all God’s children to realize their full potential as human beings and in relationship with one another. This special offering benefits neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services and works with at-risk teens through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program. Donations may be given online at stmarkscarmel.org/give or by using the special offering envelope in your January 19 bulletin.

Fletcher Place Breakfast Serving

January 24

Help is needed to cook and serve a hot breakfast for the homeless and low-income population served



by Fletcher Place Community Center. Volunteers ride together to and from St. Mark’s, 7:15am-11:15am. SIGN UP ONLINE at stmarkscarmel.org/signups.

Blood Drive

January 26

There is no substitute for blood and the need for it remains critical.

YOUR donation

will ensure cancer, trauma, labor & delivery and all patients in need have life-saving blood. Please donate and impact a life! Sign up TODAY at stmarkscarmel.org/signups. Contact Terry Fourman at 4manternlyd@gmail.com or Amy Adams at aadams@stmarkscarmel.org with questions or for help signing up.



Kidz Church Sunday Programming



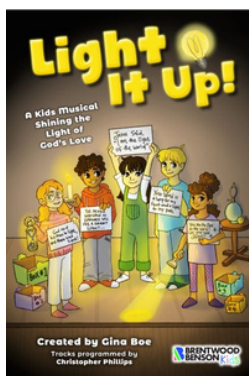
The check-in station and Kidz Church classes are located in the Children's Wing. Check-in for each hour begins 10 minutes prior to the start of class or service time. For 9 and 11 AM worship hours, children will proceed to the sanctuary with their families after check-in and be released to Kidz Church after the Kidz Chat. For the 10 AM education hour, children will proceed directly to class after check-in. A list of available classes and times can be found in the bulletin each Sunday or online at stmarkscarmel.org/kidzprogramming.

Kidz Monthly Mission



Each month, Children's Ministries invites kids to get involved in giving to the church's In-Kind Donations. During January, we will be collecting donations of household cleaning supplies and hygiene items for Fishers Youth Assistance Program. For more information about this program or how to give, see page 6 or visit stmarkscarmel.org/missions.

Kidz Music & Praise



St. Mark's Kidz Music & Praise will present their annual Lenten Musical on March 23 at 1:30 PM. **We will begin rehearsals on January 19th during 11:00 AM Kidz Church.** Our musical will be *Light It Up!* In this show, a bright group of students has just arrived for Bible class, but a couple of things are missing...their teacher and LIGHT! With a note and a few wrapped boxes in a dark room, the students begin a unique lesson to discover just how significant light is and has always been, with each box representing a new object and a new Bible verse about light—starting from the very beginning of creation and continuing into Christ passing on the task of spreading His light to the world.

Dine to Donate for St. Mark's Preschool



Verde Flavors of Mexico, 111 W. Main Street in Carmel
Tuesday, January 14, 11 AM - 9 PM

Dine in, call, or order online. Mention you are with St. Mark's Preschool before placing your order and 20% of orders will be donated back! Please RSVP prior to January 11 by using the link on the flyer located at stmarkscarmel.org/events.

PARENT CONNECTION BRUNCH



**Sunday, January 12
10-11 AM**

Cornerstone Commons

The 10 AM Education Hour between services is for the spiritual enrichment of all people and this means parents too! The St. Mark's Family Ministry staff team wants to help parents find a place of spiritual, social, or quiet time at the 10 AM hour while their children are engaged in attending their own peer groups. Come to brunch on January 12, connect with other parents and share your input with leaders about opportunities for this hour that speak to YOU. See page 2 for more details about this exciting event!

INFANT RECOGNITION SUNDAY

**Sunday, February 9,
Both 9 and 11 AM
Services**

Children's Ministries is excited to celebrate all infants of the church born in 2024! Parents and babies will receive a pastoral blessing and be presented with a *Frolic First* Bible board book. Please email a recent picture of your infant in a jpeg or png format to kidzchurch@stmarkscarmel.org on or before Wednesday, February 5 to be included in the worship service slideshow. Welcome little ones!



THE FOOD FLORIST TRUCK



**Sunday, January 19
8:30-11 AM**

An exciting new fundraiser for our church preschool is coming this winter! The Food Florist of Fishers features made-from-scratch meals using local, organic, and all-natural ingredients. One pan from freezer to oven and dinner is done! The Food Florist food truck will be parked at St. Mark's on this ONE special Sunday for all to purchase frozen meals to take home. Proceeds from this event will be used to purchase new furniture for the church and preschool toddler room.

CHILDREN SING IN THE CURRENT

**Sunday, January 26 & February 9
11 AM**

All children of the church are invited to sing in worship at the beginning of The Current service on these special dates. Rehearsals take place on Sunday mornings at 11 AM in the Kidz Music & Praise class.



CLUB 56: FEEL THE RUSH!



**Adrenaline Family
Adventure Park
Sunday, January 19
12-3:30 PM**

If your 5th and 6th graders have the winter blues, don't let them climb the walls at home when they can do it at Adrenaline Family Adventure Park! Let them climb, jump, dunk, and be a ninja warrior! Club 56ers will spend the day together attending Kidz Church at 10 AM, The Current at 11 AM, and carpooling to Adrenaline in Fishers at noon. It's going to be a fun-filled day! No need to purchase tickets, St. Mark's Children's Ministries is paying student entry fees. All kids MUST have a medical release on file for St. Mark's UMC AND a waiver completed for Adrenaline before participating. Links to both forms and a list of the day's logistics are at stmarkscarmel.org/events.



Save the Date for 2025 Summer Camps!

Registrations begin on Friday, February 14 at stmarkscarmel.org/summercamps.

It's already time to begin planning for summer camps! Don't forget to mark your calendar now to include Vacation Bible Camp, Sacred Drama & Puppet Camps, & Club 56 Mission Camp! These are the most exciting and enriching weeks of the summer...your kids will not want to miss out!

Camp Dates

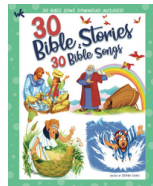
Club 56 Mission Camp:

June 9-12,
9 AM-1 PM



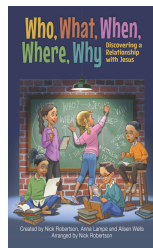
Sacred Puppet Camp:

June 16-20
9:30-11:30 AM



Sacred Drama Camp:

June 16-20
12-2:30 PM



Vacation Bible Camp (VBS):

July 7-11
9 AM-12 PM



Preschool Registration Begins!



Tuesday, January 7

St. Mark's Preschool will begin registration for the 2025-2026 school year on January 7th. If you or someone you know is looking for a preschool for next year, please contact Jen Weixler via email: preschool@stmarkscarmel.org or phone: 317-846-8941.

Sunday Mornings

10 AM: 7th - 12th grade, join Scott Melvin and Jenny Miller in Cornerstone Commons for a quick get-together.

10:15 AM: Junior and Senior high students break out for Bible study time. 7th & 8th graders meet with Aaron Koenig and Pete Elliott in the Middle School room while the 9-12 graders meet with Jenny Miller in the Senior High room.

Upcoming Events

Bowling & Laser Tag

Grab a friend and meet us at Royal Pin Woodland Bowl **Saturday January 25.**

Who: 7th and 8th graders

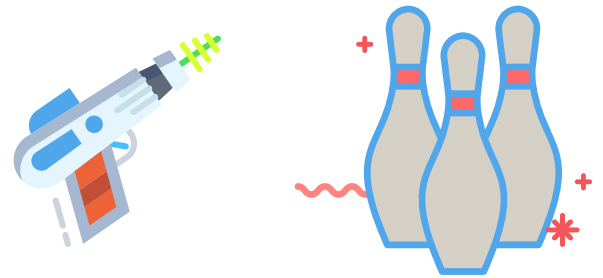
Where: 3421 E 96th St, Indianapolis, IN 46240

When: January 19 3-6pm. *Time is subject to change, check the website after January 1st to verify time*

Cost: \$25 (turned in by January 19)

All youth attending need a completed medical form on file and to have registered and paid by January 19.

Register : stmarkscarmel.org/youth-signup



Parent Connection Brunch

We hope to see you at the Parent Connection Brunch, **Sunday, January 12, 10-11am!** See full details on page 2. We'll talk about what St. Mark's has to offer kids, youth, and parents and get your feedback on new ideas for the Sunday 10AM hour.



Winter Jam 2025

Calling all 9th -12th graders! Love music, concerts and hanging out with your friends? Winter Jam 2025 is coming to Indianapolis Gainbridge Fieldhouse on **Friday February 7.** Christian music's biggest tour will provide a night of great music, dancing and inspirational speakers. We will meet at St. Mark's at 4:45PM to drive down together.

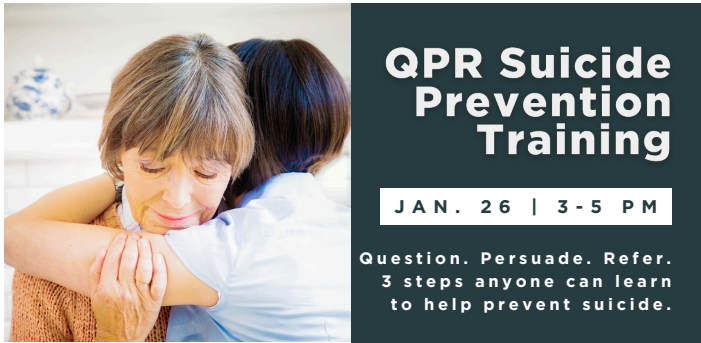


Sunday Night Youth Group Returns

Returning **January 12**, Sunday Night Youth Group! Food, Music, Games, and More! Youth Group will be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month from 5:30pm - 7:00pm. Make plans to join us as we learn about our faith and spend time together.



QPR Suicide Prevention Training



Sunday, January 26, 3:00-5:00 PM
Cornerstone Commons

Do you struggle with how to respond to a friend, colleague, or loved one who feels depressed, hopeless or overwhelmed and could be considering suicide? Register today at stmarkscarmel.org/workshops for our January 26 training – spots are limited!

QPR is an evidence-based program teaching how to recognize and respond to warning signs, clues and communications of suicidal people and how to get help for the person who has suicidal thoughts. It is not a form of counseling, but rather a way to act vigorously – to Question, Persuade, and Refer—to prevent a possible tragedy. QPR is for adults of all ages, regardless of life stage. Students in grade 9-12 are welcome to attend with an accompanying parent.

Workbooks will be provided; donations of \$5 are welcomed for the materials but not required. Those who attend this two-hour session will leave with:

- Information that is easy to understand and reinforced by a QPR booklet
- A card complete with warning signs
- Methods to encourage a person to get help
- List of resources available in the community

All are welcome to attend this training, so please feel free to share the info with your friends, family, and colleagues. Questions? Contact Jennifer Cloud-Buckner, grow@stmarkscarmel.org.

Website Directory for Adult Discipleship groups, signups, and resources

Sunday 10AM – Current Classes and New Groups

Forming: See

<https://stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups/#sundayam> for full descriptions about Sunday classes and to express your interest in new 10AM hour options.

Study Groups and Short-Term Events:

All descriptions and signups are at stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups.

Grow Groups, Encouragement Groups, and Support Groups:

Visit stmarkscarmel.org/grow-groups to find ways to connect with others in our groups that support one another through shared seasons and challenges in life.

Discipleship Pathway and Personal Growth

resources: Find resources for prayer, meditation, spiritual practices, rest, reflection, and growth at stmarkscarmel.org/discipleship.

Workshops: Register for special events like our upcoming 2025 QPR Suicide Prevention training at stmarkscarmel.org/workshops.

Breakthrough Prayer: We share our breakthrough prayer in worship and in many of our small groups and meetings, but this is also a valuable personal and family prayer practice in your busy schedule. Set a timer for 8:00pm to pray the prayer you can find at stmarkscarmel.org/breakthrough.

How to Pay for Books

Pick up your study books from the church entrance (door #2) shelves or from the connection tables in the Gathering Area. The book cost is listed on stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups and on the paper syllabus included with each book. Make checks to St. Mark's UMC with "study books" in the memo line. To pay online, go to stmarkscarmel.org/give and on the top question asking "How would you like to allocate your donation," select Study Books from the dropdown menu.

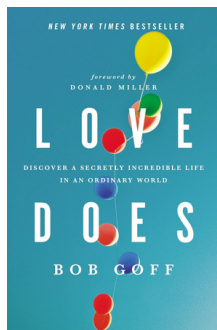
New Studies & Personal Resources

Sign up at stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups. Books and paper signups are on the connection tables in the Gathering Area.

Love Does

Thursdays, 1/9-2/6 | 10-11AM | Led by Judy Woempner | Room B/C & Zoom | Books \$6, optional study guide for \$7

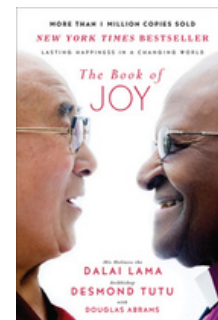
During January's gray days, author Bob Goff's joy is contagious. This inspiring bestseller calls people to show love and grace to their neighbors through real action—to simply DO love—instead of having the “right answers” or checking the “right boxes.” Bob shares examples of folks in many life stages who live a fully engaged life, who stop delaying, and who find a new place of imagination, whimsy, and wonder as they answer God's call to love their neighbor.



The Book of Joy

Sundays beginning in January | 10-11am | Room J/K - Foundations & Friendships Class

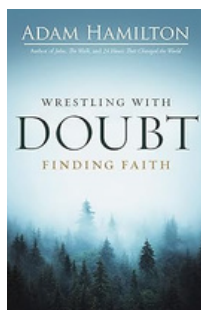
Two of the most important spiritual figures of our time, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, share their wisdom on finding joy in the face of suffering, no matter our life's circumstances. Despite enduring exile, violence, and oppression, they radiate compassion, humor, love, warmth and hope. This book documents a special seven-day discussion, providing timeless insights and inspiration that cross religious boundaries to our shared humanity. No sign-up needed, just show up! Books available on Connection Tables & Door #2 entrance shelves for \$15.



Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith

Wednesdays, 1/8-2/12 | 9:30-11AM Led by Lydia Fourman | Cornerstone Commons or Room J/K in various weeks | Books \$12

Doubt is a natural part of faith. Making room for questions in our faith deepens our spiritual journey and provides richer encounters with God. In this book, Pastor Adam Hamilton explores common doubts with honesty and biblical wisdom, offering guidance for lifelong Christians and those who are brand new to the faith alike. By wrestling with uncertainty, we can discover a faith—a belief and trust, not certainty—that transcends simple answers.



Sacred Pathways

Fridays, 1/10-2/7 | 9:30-11AM Led by Jennifer Cloud-Buckner and Annessa Miller Room B-C and Zoom Book Cost: Full book \$12, optional study guide \$10

Ever notice that several different routes take you to the same destination? That's also true in spirituality. In his updated and expanded book, *Sacred Pathways: Nine Ways to Connect with God*, Thomas discusses nine temperaments—each with its own strengths, pitfalls, and particular traits---and the ways they naturally relate to God. In this 5-session study, you'll discover your own combinations of strengths and traits that best describe your personality's approach to God and spirituality. Sign up for Childcare at least 48 hours ahead at stmarkscarmel.org/signups.



Breakthrough Prayer & Personal Resources

Our breakthrough prayer helps us develop the practice of an “up and out” prayer posture, with a sense of expectancy and noticing where

God is moving in our lives in new ways. Set an alarm for 8pm to join with others in this prayer practice, and learn more at stmarkscarmel.org/breakthrough. For other personal prayer, meditation, and study resources, visit stmarkscarmel.org/discipleship.



Group Spotlights

Connection is a vital aspect of our faith and well-being. Not only are we “created for connection,” as we’ll be discussing in January-February in The Current, we are not meant to go it alone. Research consistently shows that strong social connections contribute to longer, healthier lives. To foster these connections, consider participating in a new group or activity for the new year. Whether it’s a Bible study, a community service project, or simply gathering for coffee, these opportunities allow us to build meaningful relationships with one another and extend our reach beyond the church walls. Let’s break down the barriers of isolation and embrace the power of community. Email grow@stmarkscarmel.org to get help connecting to a group, and watch this space next month for insights on connection & community from our Dream Day results.

Parent Connection Brunch



On January 12, 10-11AM, plan on bringing your appetite and willingness to share your input – see page 2 for the full description. The new 10AM hour on Sunday is a great chance to connect with others and relax while your kids and youth are engaging in their own peer groups. No babysitter necessary, no sports conflicts, no contract, no fees, and no commitment to another weeknight event! Leaders will get the ball rolling with questions about some possibilities for the 10AM hour, but ultimately, we want to hear from you.

Encouragement Groups for Caregiving

No matter how you are dealing with the care of your aging loved one—whether your loved one is near or far; if they are your parent, sibling, or spouse; whether you care for them in your home or you are navigating care facilities for their needs—you have a spot in one of our Encouragement Groups. Chances are that whatever challenges and decisions you’re facing, you will find others who have faced the same. Our Sunday AM and weekday evening Encouragement Groups generally meet at least monthly. To connect, email grow@stmarkscarmel.org or fill out the form at stmarkscarmel.org/grow-groups.

LIFT Widows Encouragement Group

Living
Intentionally
Forward
Together

a Widows Encouragement Group

more at stmarkscarmel.org/growgroups



Those who have been widowed know that it can be a confusing time of new responsibilities, adjustments to life, and loneliness, all while finding hope and purpose in new activities and connections. Our LIFT – Living Intentionally Forward Together – group combines a social connection with encouragement and experience for those who have been widowed. To connect with LIFT, contact grow@stmarkscarmel.org or see Mary Etta Yoho. LIFT Members are taking turns selecting, hosting, and/or planning upcoming events:

Thurs., Jan. 30, 12:00pm, offsite: Lunch and games at the home of Hallie Meyer.

Thurs., Feb. 27, 9:15am Carpool from church for 10:00am Tour of President Benjamin Harrison Home, 1230 N. Delaware St., Indianapolis, followed by lunch at Aristocrat Pub, 5212 N. College Ave.

March: Brunch out, date TBD.

Sun. April 6, 1:00pm, Westfield Playhouse followed by dinner at Grindstone on the Monon, Westfield.

MEN - Do you want an encouragement group for widowers? All the original members of LIFT in 2022 were women, so it became a Widows Encouragement Group. Men who have lost your spouses, would you like to form a similar kind of encouragement group for men who are going through some of the same struggles and adjustments to life? If you feel called to take part in this kind of group, email grow@stmarkscarmel.org or watch for invitations from Jennifer Cloud-Buckner in January-February.

Need a Group?

If you’re not already connected, watch your email throughout January-February for contact from Jennifer Cloud-Buckner to help you connect with others in a spot that works in your life right now. If you’re not available for a Sunday or weekday Bible study, our Grow Groups and Encouragement Groups connect people in shared life stages to encourage one another and grow in their faith as they do life together. We are especially looking at forming a new group for parents of young children to meet once a month on Sunday evenings at the church. To express your interest in any of our groups—including for folks dealing with the care of aging relatives, for those who have been widowed, for empty nesters, for spiritual walk alumni share groups, or for just general connection with others, sign up at stmarkscarmel.org/grow-groups or email grow@stmarkscarmel.org.

Dream Day: Newcomer Hospitality Highlights

One of the 17 Dream Day questions asked, **“When someone visits our church for the first time, what are some of the most important things for that person to experience and feel?”** Common themes and example responses are below.

Hospitality with a Warm, Welcoming Atmosphere

Key insights: Many respondents highlighted the importance of welcoming practices, including gestures like providing homemade cookies, personal greetings, and ensuring visitors feel at home. Acts of hospitality, particularly personalized gestures, appear to strengthen communal bonds and leave a lasting impression on visitors.

Example responses: “Have someone greet the visitor and ask them to come sit with them and introduce them to people nearby in pew” “Being welcomed by others than the greeter”

Follow-Up and Effective Communication

Key insights: Follow-up practices such as visitation, obtaining visitor contact information, and sending thank-you notes were frequently mentioned. Clear communication about church activities and connection opportunities reduces confusion and anxiety. Consistent follow-up communications after initial contact is perceived as an effective way to integrate newcomers into the community.

Example responses: “Need to have a follow-up maybe with a team of people. Be approached by more than one person.” “Spontaneous conversation with others outside of worship” “Being quickly connected to church emails and newsletters after opting in”

Connection-Building and Support

Key insights: Facilitating connections between visitors and established members fosters a sense of belonging and encourages participation. Intentional networking within the community is seen as critical for long-term engagement. Building relationships and personal connection with newcomers through intentional interactions. Providing ongoing support and encouragement to new members to help them integrate into church community.

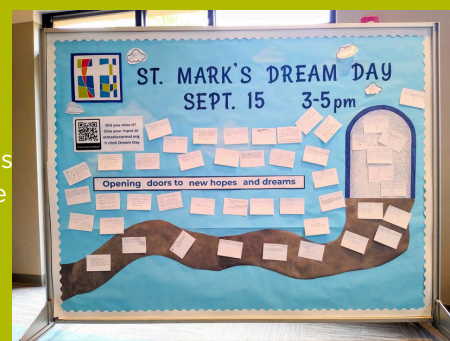
Example responses: “Connect them to someone with similar interests.” “Invitation to event or group” “I would like to be able to meet new people from church” “I enjoyed the 6 plus two dinners we had. I made a lot of church friends through the dinners.”

Greeting Practices

Key insights: Initial interactions, including warm greetings and introductions, are seen as essential to creating a welcoming atmosphere. First impressions significantly

What Was Dream Day?

Dream Day was a congregation-wide event in September 2024 with guided brainstorming sessions to gather ideas for the future of St. Mark’s, a continuation of our openness for God to reveal new hopes and



dreams in our breakthrough prayer initiative. See the full brainstorming topics at stmarkscarmel.org/dream. All 1300+ data points from the event are being analyzed, aided by AI machine learning tools, for common themes, behavioral insights, example responses, and potential strategies. Results are going to the Leadership Board, staff, and applicable ministry teams and will continue to be highlighted in coming issues of the Jubilee.

impact how welcomed newcomers feel, and assigning specific greeters is a popular approach.

Example responses: “(Newcomers need) to be greeted, asked their names, where they’re from and if they’d like to sit with the person who’s speaking to them. Then have that same member introduced them to others before during and after church.” “Smile and engage conversation and tell them that I am so glad to see them here.” “Smiles, not an inquisition.”

All-Church Engagement

Key insights: Events like tent services or communal gatherings were highlighted as moments that bring the entire community together. Large, inclusive events provide an opportunity for visitors to see the broader scope of the community and engage with multiple members.

Example responses: (Newcomers need to be) “Welcomed by at least 1 - 3 people, besides the person at the door. It is powerful to then be invited to an event.” “To be greeted, ask their names, where they’re from and if they’d like to sit with the person who’s speaking to them. then have that St. Mark’s member introduce them to others before during and after church.”

Most importantly, as we navigate this transitional period after Missi Koenig’s departure (see page 18), we rely on the collective effort of our congregation to extend a warm welcome to all who visit. By simply smiling, introducing ourselves, and taking the initiative to connect with others, we all can be part of St. Mark’s welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Let’s work together to ensure that everyone feels valued and part of our St. Mark’s family!

Open Groups

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Next Meeting is January 11 | 7:30 AM

UMM provides a supportive fellowship of men who seek to know Jesus Christ, to grow spiritually, and to seek daily God's will. UMM has donated to many Missions. Some of the groups we donate to are: Family Promise, East 10th Methodist Youth Center, Fletcher Place, Habitat for Humanity, Wheeler Mission, Second Helpings and SAW.

Tom Fagan, development director for the Indiana United Methodist Children's Home, will be our speaker. While located in Lebanon, the Home dates back to 1915. The Home is supported by St. Marks and helps prepare youth for eventual independence. Tom will explain the history, mission, successes, and future challenges of this organization. Come hear how the facility and staff are impacting Indiana youth.

All United Methodist Men are invited to attend the breakfast on January at 7:30 am. Find out more at <https://stmarkscarmel.org/umm/>.



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Next Meeting is January 14 | 9:30 AM & 7:00 PM

The next monthly United Women in Faith meeting in 2025 will be January 14 at 9:30 am and 7 pm. Interest groups will meet. Childcare is available for AM meetings. Please register by the Thursday prior to the meeting to allow time to obtain staffing. Register for childcare at stmarkscarmel.org/signups. Visit stmarkscarmel.org/uwf for more information.

United Women in Faith's Reading Program.

This program is designed to help women of faith to achieve five key goals: lean into our spiritual growth, strengthen our leadership skills, equip ourselves for local and global mission, take faithful action for the common good, and build community in ways large and small. The books are current and cover a wide variety of topics. Participating in the program can help you grow. And anyone, anywhere, can participate — you do not have to attend the book discussions but we love it when you do. The first 2025 book discussion is Monday, January 27. The group meets in the church library. For information on the Reading Program do not hesitate to contact Kathy at KathyLentz@gmail.com



United
Women
in Faith

Fellowship Groups

Learn more at:
<https://stmarkscarmel.org/groups>

JULIETS

Just Us Ladies Interested In Eating Together will not be meeting in January.

ROMEOS

**Retired Old Men Eating Out
Wednesdays | 11:00 AM
Le Peep | 86th & Keystone**

All men are invited to meet weekly at LePeep's. Contact Don Mehl for more information at djmehl2004@aol.com.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Tuesdays | 7:00 PM

Join us every Tuesday for Open Gym at 7 PM Basketball for ages 16 and above. Contact Mark Moore, mvm2920@aol.com for more information.



MARKSMEN

Select Thursdays at Starbucks at 116th and Keystone

The MarksMen is a community of career and family focused men seeking to develop authentic and intentional relationships while we unplug from the daily stress and craziness that life can bring. Email marksmen@stmarkscarmel.org for more info.

PICKLEBALL

Thursdays | 7-9 PM

Looking for a fun weekday evening activity this winter?

Join us in Wesley Hall on Thursday evenings from 7-9 PM for fun and fellowship as we play pickleball! Participants of all skill levels are invited and should be 16 years or older. Contact Janet Brown (jgrandeyb@gmail.com) or Doug Brown (dthbrown@gmail.com) for more information.



PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Select Fridays

Join us as we prayerfully knit and crochet prayer shawls used to provide comfort and solace to people in need. Supplies are available. Men are welcome too! Contact Judy Bonnet, bonnetjm@icloud.com for more information.



COFFEE 'N CAMERAS

Select Mondays

Coffee - yes,
Cameras - whatever you have. Our members use both types of cameras (traditional and phone). We would love to have you join us on **January 6 at 9 AM**. We encourage each other's creativity, demonstrate techniques, share our photos and help each other grow in our knowledge and skill of photography. Bring your camera, questions, and be ready to tackle a monthly assignment presented by rotating group leaders.



METHODISTS ON BIKES

Methodists On Bikes (MOB) is looking for a **Ride Coordinator**, responsible for assuring Ride Leaders are in place for each ride by consulting the Sign-Up Genius. In cases when weather is threatening, the Ride Coordinator may cancel a scheduled ride. Communication is via an e-mail list.

MOB rides are held the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month May through October. Rides generally start from the church parking lot and are 8-10 miles long in nearby neighborhoods. A leisurely pace allows for good fellowship along the route. Interested? Contact John Flora at johnflora2710@hotmail.com or 317-800-5371 for further details

CRAFT GROUP

Select Thursdays

January 30 | 6:30-8:30 PM

The Craft & Hobby group will meet on Jan. 30. RSVP to Kathy Bartel at 317-294-4908 or krbartel@gmail.com by 5 PM Jan. 29.

PAGE TURNERS

Book Club

Third Tuesdays at 7 PM

January 21 Join us on January 21 for *The Racketeer* by John Grisham. Hope to see you there! Meets in Room G/H.



Committee News

SPRC Staff Spotlight: Missi Koenig



For many of us, Missi Koenig was the first person we met at St. Mark's. She greeted us warmly, made sure we felt at home and knew where to go, where to take the kids, where to find Sunday School, and so on. And then, over time, following up with us to make sure our needs as well as our gifts were being interwoven into the fabric of our St. Mark's community. For 10 years, Missi has been our Welcome and Connections Coordinator and has honed the role to maximize her caring ministry. We have been truly blessed by her extraordinary gifts and grace.

At the end of December, Missi is leaving this role in order to take the next major step in following her calling to become a Full-Time Chaplain. Since she felt the calling in 2017, she has been pursuing this career transition and is now one class away from completing her Master of Divinity at United Theological Seminary in Dayton Ohio. In January, she'll begin working more chaplain hours to prepare for her residency, having already completed her internship, at Ascension. This involves full-time work as well as educational programming and review, very similar to becoming a doctor but this is focused on spiritual and emotional caring and ministry.

In May, she will graduate and then the next day she will leave on a pilgrimage in Spain—walking the Camino. This pilgrimage is a serious physical and spiritual journey as she transitions into her Chaplaincy. Vaya con Dios, Missi! (Go with God!)

Missi's last official day as Welcome and Connections Coordinator was Christmas Eve. However, she'll return to preach at both services on January 26. You won't want to miss this opportunity to participate in these services and celebrate her pursuit of her calling and dream.

Missi says that while of course she will miss us tremendously and the incredible relationships cultivated here, she is thrilled to be living into her calling and following the path to ministry and caring in a greater role—living out St. Mark's mission.

Any final words, Missi?

"Go IU! (football and basketball)"

Stewardship Committee Update

It starts with a feeling in your heart and ends with commitment and involvement. In between are all the mission's, teachings, sounds, ideas, outreach, gatherings, and laughter, in what we know as St. Marks UMC. That feeling is God's way of pulling you to be "All In". Stewardship is the management of one's life in response to God's love, per the New Testament. Throughout our sermon series of "All In" we learned that the responsibilities of stewardship are not always easy or there won't be challenges but with God's assistance and having each other we will make that commitment. And so, to those who have returned their pledge cards - a generous thank you. You are among those who have pledged, counted on the bulletin board and we are grateful to have you. To those who have not made a commitment, please prayerfully consider so your pledge can be added and counted. It is very easy; return the pledge card to the office, use the return envelope, go online at stmarkscarmel.org/pledge. We need you!! Our mission and out-reach recipients need you. Join the St. Mark's family to be "All In" for 2025 as we fulfill God's will to Welcome-Grow-Serve. From the Stewardship Committee we hope everyone has a safe wonderful new year. We thank all who give with their time, talent, hard work and resources to fulfill God's mission for St. Mark's. May God Bless. As is written in Hebrews 13-16, "Don't forget to do good and share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God."



Finance Committee Update

As a Finance Committee, we want to thank you for your generosity in supporting the work that we do in the name of Jesus Christ! Through your prayers, your service and your gifts, you have helped St. Mark's as we strive to live out our motto: Where Mission is a Way of Life.

As you may recall, we had significant concerns in the first half of 2024 with respect to our expected expenditures compared to pledged and unpledged giving for the year and as a result launched our 2024 July Close the Gap campaign. We set out to raise an additional \$96,000 to close the gap and by year's end the total additional contribution was over \$127,000 allowing us to finish the year in the black while maintaining our current programming and missionary support. Because you give, St. Mark's gives. We are truly thankful for our loving and supportive congregation who always step up when there is a need. Please look forward to 2025 budget information in the next couple of months.

Thank you again for your continued love and support of St. Mark's. Together, let's go change the world!

Trustees Committee Update

With the conclusion of 2024, it is worth reflecting on the major projects completed by the Board of Trustees. Those projects include the replacement of the overhead speakers and the associated supporting cables, Columbarium improvements, Playground renovation, Parking Lot seal and stripe project, the air quality testing performed by Aegis Environmental and the ceiling cleaning project. A major project for the trustees was the capping of the gas line in the kitchen and removal of the gas oven. This was replaced by two electric ovens, which solved the gas line problem and still provides for an effective cooking process. Another project for the trustees was the installation of signs within the Church and the two monument signs outside of the Church. While each project had unique challenges, the trustees always focused on being good stewards of the congregation's charitable donations, while keeping safety at the forefront of all decisions. Thanks to all of the trustees for their time and efforts that resulted in a very productive year. Special thanks to the trustees who just completed their three-year term.

Are you on a Ministry Team, or Lead a Small Group or Fellowship Group? This Information is for you!

Download your toolkit for getting things done - It's Committee Member 101 found at <https://stmarkscarmel.org/CommitteeMemberToolkit.pdf>. Check out this document for an overview of How To:

- Schedule a room at St. Mark's
- Request A/V support for an event
- Request publicity in any church publication or communication method
- Use the connection tables, kitchen, or office equipment
- Request office supplies, announcements, event childcare
- ...and more!

Do you have a question not covered in this document or need more details? Contact the church office at 317-846-4912.

Check out <https://stmarkscarmel.org/committeeinfo/> for more information on Committees at St. Mark's.

Exciting Changes to Our Church Leadership Structure

As we continue to seek ways to serve God and our community more effectively, we're excited to announce an important update to our church's leadership structure. Beginning in 2025, we will transition to a Simplified Accountable Structure. This change is designed to streamline our administrative processes, allowing us to focus more fully on our mission and ministry.

What does this mean? Our administrative leadership will be consolidated under a new Leadership Board, which will take on the responsibilities previously handled by the Church Council, Trustees, Finance, and Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRC). By combining these functions, we aim to reduce duplication of effort and create a more efficient structure that frees us to devote even more energy to our shared ministry goals.

While this represents a shift in governance, there are still many ways for everyone to participate in the life of the church. Our Ministry Teams – including Missions, Fellowship, Worship, Stewardship, and Education & Discipleship – remain essential to our work as a congregation. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how you might use your gifts and talents to serve on one of these teams.

We are deeply grateful for those who have faithfully served on our various committees over the years. Your leadership and dedication have been a blessing, and this transition builds on the strong foundation you've helped create.

Please keep these leaders and our entire church in your prayers as we step into this new season of ministry together. Let's continue to welcome all with open hearts, grow together in knowledge and grace, and serve our neighbors with joy!

We are pleased to introduce the members of our 2025 Leadership Board

- **Holly Moore (Class of 2027, Leadership Board Chair, SPRC Lead)**
- **David Adams (Class of 2027, Finance Lead)**
- **Scott Richards (Class of 2027)**
- **John Fama (Class of 2026, Youth Representative)**
- **Ky Ragsdale (Class of 2026, Trustee Lead)**
- **Lori Roberts (Class of 2026)**
- **Katie Kelly (Class of 2025)**
- **Kim Moe (Class of 2025)**
- **Phil Wehman (Class of 2025)**

Also serving on the Leadership Board by virtue of the roles they represent for St. Mark's are:

- **Mike Bultemeier, Lay Leader**
- **Jack Benson, Lay Member to Annual Conference**
- **Donna Schwartz, Lay Member to Annual Conference**

Community Outreach & Upcoming Events

St. Mark's Presents - The Indy Winds Flute Choir | January 12 | 2 PM

Please join us at 2:00pm on Jan. 12, 2025 for the first St. Mark's Presents of 2025! The Indy Winds Flute Choir will present a classical program which includes Swan Lake, Leopold Mozart's The Sleigh Ride, Bach's



Sinfonia from Cantata BWV 209, Bach Sinfonia and Chorale BWV 142, Vivaldi's Concerto in A Minor RV 522 for two flutes, and Vivaldi's Gloria-Gloria In Excelsis Deo and Cum Santo Spirito. This concert is FREE and open to the public. Please contact Eric DeForest at edeforest@stmarkscarmel.org with any questions.

Chili Cookoff | February 2 | 5 PM

On Sunday, February 2 at 5:00, dinner is served! Are you famous for your secret chili recipe? Bring it to share and be judged OR just bring the family and invite your friends to enjoy the best chili in the land at this family-friendly event!



Either way - COME to this popular annual event! Sign up at stmarkscarmel.org/chili - or just show up!

This delicious shindig will include prizes, child-friendly fare, and fun activities for kids of all ages! See you there for food, fun and fellowship!

Help Honor First Responders

Bakers Needed: Each month a St. Mark's volunteer delivers baked goods to the police officers at their headquarters and to fire fighters at Station #44. The volunteer can choose the month that works best for them and can deliver them any time during that month. If you are interested, please contact Jan Walsh at jow3441@sbcglobal.net or at 317-908-9935.

St. Mark's Talent Show February 16 | 2 PM

The 2025 St. Mark's Talent Show will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2:00pm. Come and see members of your own St. Mark's family showcase their talents in this favorite of events. If you have interest in presenting something in the show or have any questions, please contact Eric DeForest at edeforest@stmarkscarmel.org.

Congregational Care & Connections

Photo Directory

The new St. Mark's photo directory is available online with the most up-to-date information. To access the online directory you can visit stmarkscarmel.org/directory. You will need the password, which can be obtained by calling the church office or picking up a business card on a connection table on Sunday morning. If you need a printed copy, it can be requested via a clipboard on the connection table in the gathering area. If you have questions, email the church office at staff@stmarkscarmel.org.

Tithe Time

Welcome to Tithe Time, a new monthly focus article about participation in the life of St. Mark's. The Tithe Time goes beyond monetary offerings and reaches toward the service component of the body of Christ.



“For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”
Romans 12:4-5

So, when we are All In, our service and our presence create a prosperous, thriving community. This month's TITHE TIME continues to focus on our need for Communion Stewards and servers. The Stewards/Servers play a vital role in the preparation for the Lord's supper. The time requirements are minimal and can be fulfilled in a single ½ hour before or after the service you normally attend. All elements (bread and juice) are provided.

Facilitating this need, even just one Sunday a year, a season, or a month, provides a foundational element to our worship services. For more information or to sign up, go to stmarkscarmel.org/signups.

Thank you for considering how to tithe your time.
All-In!

Sympathies

We extend our heartfelt sympathies to Matt Hook for the loss of his mother, Mary Helen Hook.

We also extend sympathies to Pastor Julia Pritchett-Gonzales on the loss of her father, Ronald Pritchett.

Our thoughts are with them during this time of sorrow.

Circle of Care

The Circle of Care list includes St. Mark's members and friends who are homebound or in a care facility. Your prayers for these loved ones mean so much to them and to their families.

Carole Anderson, Myrneath Anderson, Steve Baylor, John and Carole Browning, Trish Boger, Doris Carlow, Phyllis Delp, Carol Hollinger, Dorothy Mecca, Melvin & Marlene Myers, Jane Roberts, Jerry & Brenda Weikel, Bob Wiens

If you would like to be added to the Circle of Care or know of someone, please contact the church office.

Meal Train Ministry

St. Mark's UMC has long helped members in times of need with Meal Train meals. Meal Train is a blessing for those who need it and those who provide it. If you are in need of Meal Train, call or email Carol Smith, 406-546-7727, ctsmith106@gmail.com. If you are unable to reach Carol, call the Church Office, 317-846-4912.

Celebrations & Thank You

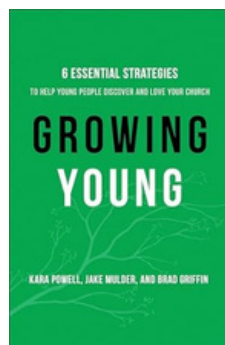


NEW SIGNS

Thank you to our Trustees for replacing the peeling, faded, outdated monument signs at our parking lot entrances on both Gray Rd and 126th Street. The new signs are not only visually appealing with a fresh, modern look, but also functional, with text lighting for visibility at night. The new interior and exterior signage throughout our church is already creating a welcoming environment for all who visit and making it easier for people to find where they need to go. Your contributions to the Trustees Building Fund make projects like this possible!

GROWING YOUNG

Congratulations to our Growing Young task force for receiving a grant to participate in a 2025 INUMC training cohort with Fuller Youth Institute. If you are interested in being part of this training and/or project efforts, e-mail grow@stmarkscarmel.org.



ADVENT SEASON GIVING

When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.”

– Maya Angelou

Thank you for your generosity and servant hearts this Advent season! Those receiving your gifts, both near and far, will have a brighter Christmas because of you.

- Use What You've Got Prison Ministry received 132 Christmas gifts to give to children of incarcerated individuals in central Indiana at their annual Christmas party for families.
- Fletcher Place Christmas Shopping Program was grateful to receive 152 boys t-shirts, children's toys and backpacks, as well as 7 gift cards to help fill their annual Holiday Shop, where qualified families come to “shop” at no cost for Christmas.
- St. Mark's individuals, families and small groups adopted 13 families this year (supporting 33 children and 24 adults) through the Holiday Sponsorship Program with Good Samaritan Network of Hamilton County. All children received at least 6 Christmas gifts, and each family received a grocery gift card to purchase a delicious holiday meal.
- Through your support of St. Mark's annual Angel Tree, 129 children and youth attending East 10th Street Preschool and after school program will be blessed with a Christmas gift to open at their annual Christmas Party, as well as cookies, lemonade, and a visit from Santa.
- Through your support of St. Mark's annual Tree of Lights campaign, as well as by giving to our December mission focus, we have already raised almost \$5000 for Mission Guatemala.

Because You Give

Brightwood Community Center: 89 boxes of food given out at food pantry, serving 304 individuals

E. 10th Children & Youth Center: 129 Christmas gifts for the kids

Fletcher Place Community Center: breakfast served to 125 individuals; 403 packets of oatmeal; 152 gifts & 7 gift cards for the Christmas Shop

Good Samaritan Network of Hamilton Co.: 13 families “adopted” for Christmas

Outreach IN: \$5000.00; 90 USB cellphone charging cords, 60 USB charging cubes

Travel-sized toiletries: 1 bag

United Methodist Student Day: \$150

CONTACT

4780 E. 126th Street
Carmel, IN 46033

stmarkscarmel.org

Office Phone: 317-846-4912
Preschool Phone: 317-846-8941

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JUBILEE PUBLICATION NOTE

The Jubilee newsletter is published monthly, and all articles are due by the 15th of the previous month. To submit information for the Jubilee, complete the form at stmarkscarmel.org/publicity. If you have questions regarding the form, please contact techsupport@stmarkscarmel.org.

SUBMIT CELEBRATIONS

If you have celebrations from your St. Mark's activities to put in the newsletter, submit them to stmarkscarmel.org/publicity.