

JUBILEE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



ST. MARK'S
United Methodist Church

December / January



The Gift of Being Present

An Advent / Christmas Worship Series

Advent

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

- 10:30 AM - Combined Worship Service
- 5:00 PM - Family Worship Service
- 7:00 PM - Candlelight Contemporary Service
- 9:00 & 11:00 PM - Candlelight Traditional Service (with Communion served at 11:00)

Note: Nursery care for ages 5 & under will be available at the 7:00 service only

Advent Devotionals

For the Advent season of waiting and preparation, pick up devotionals for children and adults from the church entrance (Door #2) or from the Gathering Area. Enjoy spending a regular time through Advent in reflection and prayer to experience for yourself the gift of being present with God, with yourself, and with your family.



Sponsor a Poinsettia

Help decorate St. Mark's for the holidays with your purchase of a poinsettia for a special person in your life:

- In Honor of
- In Celebration of

A donation of \$8.00 per recognition is requested to cover the cost of the poinsettia and other greenery that make the Advent season so special at St. Mark's.



Please fill out the form online at stmarkscarmel.org/poinsettias no later than 12/15.

Churchwide Advent Study *Right Here Right Now*

This Advent season, as our worship services explore "The Gift of Being Present," we offer several opportunities to go more deeply into this theme by reading and discussing the book *Right Here, Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness* by Amy Oden. For more information on this study see page 15.

Blue Christmas Service

Thursday, 12/21 | 7:00 PM

During the Advent and Christmas season we are often told to turn our hearts to thoughts of peace, joy, love, and hope, but for many the holidays can be a source of stress and grief. The season can remind us of loved ones who are no longer with us, broken expectations, a sense of despair, and often leave us wondering if joy will ever return. And that's okay. It is okay to enter the season of Advent and Christmas with pain rather than joy in your heart. That's the whole point of having a Blue Christmas worship service, a time and space in worship where we can come together as a community and acknowledge each other's pain. This will be a time of prayer and reflection as we offer our fears and pain to God. *Child care will be provided for children ages 5 and under.*



Candles and Carols-A Christmas Celebration

Sunday, December 17 | 6:00 PM | St. Mark's Sanctuary

St. Peter's United Church of Christ would like to invite St. Mark's to join their congregation for an evening of music and fellowship. St. Peter's church building was damaged in July from a fire. They are out of their church for a year. We have offered our Sanctuary for them to come and celebrate with Christmas Carols and Fellowship. Enjoy cozy drinks, light snacks and a cookie buffet after the program.



Angel Tree

This holiday season please help us provide Christmas gifts for the children at E. 10th United Methodist Children & Youth Center.

Look for the Christmas tree in our narthex which will be decorated with Angels. Each Angel hung on the tree will be labeled with names of the children at the E. 10th UMC. St. Mark's provides gifts for each specific child, to open at their center's Christmas Party. You will select an angel and purchase a toy in the \$25-\$30 range, suitable for that designated child. Wrapped gifts can then be placed underneath the Angel Tree no later than Sunday, December 10. Contact Amy Adams for more information at aadams@stmarkscarmel.org.



Tree of Lights

Honor someone special with a mission offering gift in St. Marks' annual Tree of Lights campaign! This year's December mission focus is Greater Indy Habitat for Humanity. Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Honorees will receive a card acknowledging your gift and extending Christmas greetings (Tree of Lights forms received after Dec. 15 may be sent after Christmas). Visit stmarkscarmel.org/lights to complete the form online, with a minimum donation of \$5.00 per card. All money collected is given directly to Habitat for Humanity to help them in their effort to provide decent and affordable housing for everyone in the Indianapolis area.



Kidz Monthly Mission-December

Each month, Kidz Church introduces a new mission that children can relate to and get involved in supporting. December's mission is The Villages of Indiana, Inc. As one of the state's largest not-for-profit child and family services agency, The Villages serve more than 3,100 children and their families every single day. Their mission is to champion every child's right to a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.

Items needed at this time are new underwear and socks of all sizes. Children may bring donations to the check-in station for Kidz Church. Please let us know if your family would like to be part of delivering the items at the end of the month. Thank you for encouraging your child(ren) to be a part of giving!



Holy Walk through Bethlehem

Friday 12/1 & Saturday 12/2 | 6:00 PM—9:00 PM

The story of Jesus's life comes to life. Experience the choir of angels, shepherds, the village of Bethlehem, wisemen and the manger. Guests will be invited to join us for hot chocolate and cookies. Reservations required. Signup at stmarkscarmel.org/holy-walk.



Kids' Night Out (Parents' Night Off!)

Friday, 12/15 | 5:30—8:30 PM

Parents! It's a special night for you to enjoy some last minute Christmas shopping, have a date night, or even just some quiet time! Drop off your kids (ages 4-10) in Wesley Hall for a fun-filled night of games, activities, videos, and snacks with our fun student counselors (adult directors on-site). Contributions of \$15/child (\$30/family) will serve as a fundraiser for Cornerstone student trips and retreats. Advance registration required **by Tuesday, 12/5**. Questions? Contact Jackie or Jen at kidzchurch@stmarkscarmel.org. Signup at stmarkscarmel.org/kidzfellowship.



Cantata

Sunday, December 10 | 8:15 & 11:00 AM
LOVE (A Gospel Christmas Celebration)

Love, by Joel Raney will be presented by the St. Mark's Chancel Choir, Orchestra, and Praise Band. This gospel-flavored musical reflects on the promise of peace delivered by the angels on the night of Jesus' birth. An original composition, *Love is Born*, is used as musical bookends; its theme is briefly stated in the second movement and returns in full-blown gospel style at the end to provide an emotion-filled climax. In between, the Christmas story is told through scriptural narration and familiar carols set in a variety of styles ranging from jazz to gospel to calypso.

Kidz Music & Praise Advent Musical

The Good News Goes Viral

Sunday, 12/10 | 1:30 PM

The "Good News Goes Viral" will be presented in the Sanctuary, followed by a cookie reception in the Café. Twenty plus children have been rehearsing for this musical and the Harmonic Voices will sing a prelude.



The Pastor's Place

Dr. Brian K. White, Lead Pastor

bwhite@stmarkscarmel.org



Dear Co-workers in Christ:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14)

One of the things that I enjoy most about the Christmas season is the singing. It all started with a group of angels singing God’s message to an unsuspecting group of shepherds. Each year many of us look forward to the opportunity to sing our favorite Christmas songs once again.

The words to one of my favorite Christmas songs were written by Henry W. Longfellow. In the third stanza of “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” Longfellow writes:

And in despair I bowed my head:

“There is no peace on earth,” I said,

“For hate is strong, and mocks the song

Of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

As we examine our world this year it is easy to see ways in which hatred reigns. There are still countries at war with each other. People are still dying from hunger not because there isn’t enough food in the world to feed all of us but because we can’t seem to get it to the right place at the right time. It is still frightening to walk at night in almost any city.

Luckily, neither the Gospel story nor Longfellow’s poem ends here. Longfellow continues:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men:

Christmas is a time to remember that God sent Christ to bring peace. It is a reminder that even when things seem out of hand God will ultimately prevail. It is a reminder that we are participants in the greatest struggle and the greatest celebration in all humankind. This Christmas season let us continue to sing the Angel’s song: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men . . .”

In Christ’s service,

Brian

The Pastor's Place

Karla Elliott, Associate Pastor
kelliott@stmarkscarmel.org

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

I'm betting I might be the very first (or at least *among* the very first) to be able to issue this warm holiday greeting to you all this year. It's such a wonderful time of the year - full of peace, hope, joy, and love. I have to admit that it's pretty easy to get caught up in all the hustle and bustle that leads us to a very special day.



As December unfolds, our lives become infused with a special kind of anticipation. Streets and houses light up, festive melodies fill the air, and the scent of holiday treats lingers warmly. Yet, amidst all this excitement, I want to invite us all to embrace something vital yet often overlooked: the simple art of being present.

This season, while we joyfully await the birth of our Savior, let's remember not to get swept away in the hustle of preparations. The true spirit of Advent lies not only in the destination but in each step of the journey. Every day brings its own joy, a unique opportunity to feel God's presence in our lives. Whether it's a shared laugh, an act of kindness, or a moment of quiet reflection, these are the instances where the true essence of Christmas reveals itself.

Then, of course, comes January, a month of fresh starts and new beginnings. As the festive decorations come down and life's regular rhythm resumes, let's hold onto this practice of presence. This lesson extends beyond December; it's a year-round commitment. Our journey with God doesn't pause after the holidays; it's an enduring dialogue, a continuous exchange of moments and experiences.

Remember, the birth of our Savior isn't just a historical event, but also a reminder of the constant and consistent love and grace that surrounds us. In every kind smile, in each thoughtful deed, and through every heartfelt prayer, we experience the joy of Christ's presence.

So, as we journey through the end of 2023 into the beginning of 2024, let's make a concerted effort to slow down, cherish every moment, and be truly present. By doing so, we honor not just the sacred season but also deepen our connection with each other and with God.

Wishing you a season brimming with presence, peace, and joy,

Pastor Karla

December Mission Focus

Amy Adams, Missions Coordinator
aadams@stmarkscarmel.org



Did You Know?

- In Indiana, the average hourly wage necessary to afford a two-bedroom unit is \$19.00; more than half of Hoosier renters cannot afford the fair market rate.
- Greater Indy Habitat for Humanity offers homeownership opportunities to low-income individuals and families who are unable to obtain conventional home financing.
- Research shows that Habitat for Humanity's homeownership program leads to benefits beyond housing, including improved mental health, a decreased reliance on social services, and improved academic achievement of children.
- In 2022, Greater Indy Habitat launched a strategic plan for growth, setting a historic goal to provide 300 housing solutions to people in the Indianapolis region by the end of 2024. This plan was launched to address the expanding gap in racial inequalities and increasing construction and land costs, among other issues.
- St. Mark's continues to partner with Habitat on build sites and through volunteers who are involved in their mentorship program.

For more information, visit stmarkscarmel.org/missions.

How Can I Help?

- Financial donations to Greater Indy Habitat for Humanity can be made online at stmarkscarmel.org/give or by using the offering envelope in the blue attendance pads.
- Honor someone special with a mission offering gift in St. Mark's annual *Tree of Lights* campaign. 100% of donations go directly to Greater Indy Habitat.
- Sign up to help on the next "build" (details coming soon).
- Pray for the Habitat mentors, build volunteers, organizers, and families who are in need of affordable housing.
- Donate new and used items in working condition to the Habitat ReStore. Visit indyre-store.com/checklist for a complete list of acceptable donations and to find a store nearest to you.

January Mission Focus



Did You Know?

- Human trafficking of minors occurs in every county in Indiana, in every state in the U.S., and in every country of the world.
- In 2021, human trafficking cases in Indiana involved 176 known victims. Trafficking was categorized into three types: sex, labor, and a combination of both.
- Recruitment can and does occur everywhere—in school, at home, malls, sporting events, and parties; and in shelters and detention facilities—and is conducted both in person and online, where traffickers lure young people with the offer of friendship, romance, or jobs.

What is Ascent 121?

- Ascent 121 is a non-profit organization committed to helping survivors of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Their mission is to empower young people and their families through long-term recovery services to position them for their next chapter in life.
- Built on a foundation of faith, Ascent 121 provides a continuum of care for survivors of human trafficking.

How Can I Help?

- Financial donations to Ascent 121 can be made online at stmarkscarmel.org/give or by using the offering envelope in the blue attendance pads.
- Pray for the victims of human trafficking around the world and for those who are offering them hope, support, recovery and care.
- Go on a Prayer Journey with your family or small group. Visit <https://ascent121.org/prayer-journey/> for more information and to register.

Trafficking of Minors in Indiana: Myths, Facts, and our Community's Response

Sunday, January 11 | 7:00 PM | Sanctuary

Join us for a 40-minute presentation by a representative from Ascent 121 detailing human trafficking in Indiana, the scope & vulnerability factors for victims, indicators of possible trafficking, services available, and how to identify and report trafficking.

Donation & Service Opportunities

Human Relations Day

Sunday, 1/14

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 14, 2024 bulletin.

Brightwood Community Center 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! Starting in January 2024, BCC Food Pantry will be 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 Tuesdays—11:30 receiving food and shelving
- 2nd Wednesday - 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, joediane244@att.net for more information and to sign up.

Fishers Youth Assistance Program

In-Kind donations for Snack Attack!

During the month of January (2024), we will be collecting snacks for the Snack Attack Program, one of the services provided by the 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. Casework services to our families are completely confidential. Kids and families are often referred to our services by the schools, police, court officials and parents with concerns about their child. Your donation items may be dropped off at our donation bins inside door #2, Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM



Requested donations (Individual Bags) Pretzels, chips, mini bags of cookies, trail mix, small (individual) boxes of cereal.

Blood Drive

Sunday, 1/28 | 8:00 AM—1:00 PM

Blood donors are an essential part of hospitals saving patients' lives. There is no substitute for blood and the need for it is vital. Amid the shortages we've all experienced, post-pandemic, a decline in blood donations continues and the emergency need rises. The continued plea indicates the emergency need has not slowed down.



Life-saving blood is a daily need. Thanks to the 153 willing blood donors from St. Mark's, we donated 103 units of whole blood and 26 units of double red cells in 2023. Rolling up your sleeve is truly appreciated! Sign up TODAY for the next St. Mark's Blood Drive on January 28, 2024 at stmarkscarmel.org/signups.

A Note of Appreciation and Welcome to the New Blood Drive Coordinator. We would like to give a special "thank you" to Mindy Davis who has served as the Blood Drive Coordinator for 5 years. Not only has she been the warm and welcoming face that donors see as they come into Wesley Hall to sign in, but she has assisted in the set up and tear down before and after the blood drives. Thank you, Mindy, for your hard work and dedication!

We would also like to welcome our new Blood Drive Coordinator, Terry Fourman! Terry has volunteered to step into this position in 2024 and will be the smiling face greeting you at the next Blood Drive in January. Thank you, Terry, for offering your time and service to this vital ministry.

Because You Give, St. Mark's Gives!

Thank you for your generous support of the missions of St. Mark's. Since the November newsletter we have given to:

- **Brightwood Community Center:** 4 bags of food, 1 bag of household goods
- **Family Promise of Greater Indy:** 10 meals for families in the Apartment Shelter Program, 51 household supply items
- **Fletcher Place Community Center:** 188 packets of oatmeal, 87 hot breakfasts served
- **Good Samaritan Network:** 8 families adopted for Christmas
- **Lucille Raines Residence:** \$3,463.82
- **Red Bird Mission:** \$1,000.00
- **Travel Size Toiletries:** 4 bags
- **Versiti Blood Center of Indiana:** 31 units of blood donated

Fletcher Place Breakfast

Friday, January 26

Can you help St. Mark's provide a monthly breakfast for the Fletcher Place Community Center? More help is



needed to cook and serve a hot breakfast for their homeless and low-income population, one Friday per month, 7:15-11:15 AM. Volunteers prepare a greatly appreciated meal while enjoying the reward of fellowship and service. Please sign up at least one month ahead. Learn more and SIGN UP TODAY at

stmarkscarmel.org/signups or contact Amy Adams at aadams@stmarkscarmel.org.

Sunday Programming

Nursery & Toddler Care

8:15, 9:40, & 11:00 AM

Staffed by trained & experienced leaders, our nursery & toddler areas are here to care for our littlest members.

current kidz | 9:40 AM

Age 4-4th Grade Lower Level Classrooms

This program opens with worship arts, followed by age-appropriate classes with bible stories, games, and engaging activities.

Club 56 | 9:40 AM

Grade 5 & 6 Lower Level Den

Club 56 is a class that celebrates the evolving young minds of tweens by weaving together biblical exploration, some theology, and relationship building through activities, games, and lively discussions. Social gatherings for Club 56 take place throughout the year.

Harmonic Voices | 10:30 10:50 AM

Grades 4-8 Upper Level Room 10

This music ensemble sings, plays handbells, and learns to create harmony. They share in worship and perform as part of special music events.

Kidz Learn & Grow | 11:00 AM

Age 4-Grade 3 Upper Level Classroom

Grades 4-8 Lower Level Den

Bible stories come to life through music, crafts, games, and video in this engaging hour of fellowship and learning.

Kidz Music & Praise | 11:00 AM

Ages 4-Grade 4, Upper Level

Begins in Room 6, Pick up in Room 10

This high energy class teaches the weekly scripture through singing, movement, instruments, drama, puppets, games,

and crafts. Kidz Music & Praise shares their talents in worship services, programs, and special events.

11/19 | 11:00 AM -Kidz Music & Praise and Harmonic Voices sing in worship.

12/10 | 1:30 PM -Advent Musical! "The Good News Goes Viral"

Presented in the sanctuary, followed by a cookie reception in the café.

12/24 | 5:00 PM

Kidz Music groups participate in the Family Christmas Eve Service through music and readings. See details below.

1/7 | 10:30 AM & 11:00 AM

Join us as we ring in the new year! Kidz Music at 11 AM has acquired new handbells for all to try and Harmonic Voices at 10:30 AM is now open to grades 3-6. Come join us as we learn to sing in harmony!

1/21 | 11:00 AM

Rehearsals begin for the Children's Lenten Musical which takes place on Sunday, March 24 at 1:30 PM.

Kidz Church Family Sunday

Sunday, 12/31 | 9:40 AM & 11:00 AM

Kidz Church will start in the sanctuary for worship songs and Kidz Chat with the pastor. Children will then be dismissed to an all-age combined class in the lower level with games, music, and crafts.

St. Mark's Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

12/14—Christmas Party

1/11—Preschool Panel

1/25—"Say Yes to Finding Your Village"

Time Out for Moms! Come join with a group of women who just "get it" (and have a cup of coffee while it's still warm!). Our MOPS group meets two Thursdays a month for fellowship and learning with children's programming available for infants (6+ mo.) and preschoolers. There are also monthly MOPS Moms' Night Out events, family play dates, and child-free monthly coffee/brunch dates. Learn more at mopsatst.marks@gmail.com.



Christmas Eve Sunday Morning Combined Service

Sunday, 12/24 | 10:30 AM

There will ONE worship service on Christmas Eve morning and all ages are welcome! Come as you are (jammies encouraged!) to this all-church family Sunday as we welcome the birth of Jesus. There will not be Kidz Church classes or nursery care, but there will be plenty of Kidz Kits available in the sanctuary to keep little hands busy!

Christmas Eve Family Worship Service

Sunday, December 24 | 5:00 PM

The 5:00 PM Family Christmas Eve service is a special worship service that is almost entirely student led and there are many ways to serve. Please note that there is a short dress rehearsal for this service scheduled on 12/17 at 12:15 PM in the sanctuary. Please check your schedules and do your best to attend if you sign up for a role in the service. In addition to Christmas Eve, consider choosing from the several Sunday mornings in Advent when your family can lead the lighting of the Advent Wreath together. Visit the sign-up link, stmarkscarmel.org/advent, and choose the way(s) your family and children wish to serve.

Kidz Monthly Mission-December

Each month, Kidz Church introduces a new mission that children can relate to and get involved in supporting. December's mission is The Villages of Indiana, Inc. As one of the state's largest not-for-profit child and family services agency, The Villages serve more than 3,100 children and their families every single day. Their mission is to champion every child's right to a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.



Items needed at this time are new underwear and socks of all sizes. Children may bring donations to the check-in station for Kidz Church. Please let us know if your family would like to be part of delivering the items at the end of the month. Thank you for encouraging your child(ren) to be a part of giving!

Look for details on January Mission Focus in weekly emails.

Cornerstone Programming

SUNDAY MORNING

Cornerstone AM | 9:40 AM | Room M

Middle School (Grades 7-8)

Led by Aaron Koenig and Dean Solesky. This class meets every week during the school year to share some fellowship, talk about our faith, and of course, eat donuts. On Communion Sundays, the class attends worship together.

Cornerstone Sunday Worship-Any Service High School (Grades 9-12)

High School students are encouraged on Sunday mornings to attend worship with their family and/or friends.

SUNDAY EVENING PROGRAMMING

Cornerstone Fellowship | 6:01-8:01 PM

High School & Middle School (Grades 7-12)

Led by DKB, a team of adult volunteers, and Keystone (our team of student leaders). Cornerstone Fellowship is a time of games, snacks, devotions, discussions, fellowship, and surprises. You won't want to miss a week! Friends are always welcome to join us as well!

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Middle School & High School | 5:00-5:30 PM

Led by DKB and other adult volunteers. Join us on Instagram Live. In person option starting in January.

THURSDAY

Starbucks | 5:00 PM—7:00 PM

Led by DKB. Grab a cup of coffee, discuss whatever is on your mind, get questions answered, or just simply hang out.

Kids' Night Out

(Parents' Night Off!)

Friday, 12/15 | 5:30 PM- 8:30 PM

A chance for Cornerstone students in grades 5 and 6 to help serve as counselors for younger kids so their parents can have a night off. Cornerstone students earn money for their Cornerstone account that can be used for Summer Camps, Workcamp, Retreats, or other events. Signup at stmarkscarmel.org/kidzfellowship.

Upcoming December Events

Club 56 Christmas Party

Sunday, 12/17 | 1:00- 2:30 PM

- White Elephant gift exchange-\$10 maximum
- Gingerbread house Decorating
- Impossible Movie Quiz- with prizes!

Cornerstone Christmas Party

Sunday, 12/17 | 6:01 PM—8:01 PM

Club 56 Snow Tubing

Saturday, 1/20 | 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM

This is a chance to get together and have some fun on the slopes at Koteewi Run!

Adult Discipleship

Dr. Jennifer Cloud-Buckner, Adult Discipleship Coordinator
grow@stmarkscarmel.org

Followers Made: an intensive 6-month spiritual experience

Beginning 2024

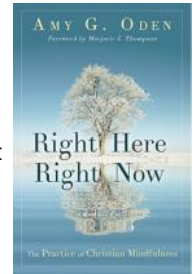
Have you been feeling God calling you to make some kind of spiritual change in your life? Perhaps in your breakthrough prayer time, you've been feeling nudged to change your habits, to nurture the fruit of the spirit in your life, to find some spiritual accountability, to answer a new calling, or to build your character to love all others the way Jesus did. If so, Pastor Karla has been praying for you! If this message speaks to you, may it serve to plant a seed in your heart and mind in the coming months before the invitations begin for the 2024 Followers Made course—a digital discipleship experience. If you'd like to learn more, please reach out to Pastor Karla (kelliott@stmarkscarmel.org).

What are your God sightings?

If you've not tried it yet, I hope you'll set a daily reminder for 8:00pm to join in the St. Mark's breakthrough prayer. Whatever you call them—God sightings, God moments, God stories, breakthroughs, goosebumps moments, or Holy Spirit power—this daily short prayer keeps us in a spirit of *openness* to seeing the ways God moves in our lives and calls us to act in new ways. See the fall 2023 breakthrough prayer on page 24 and celebrate your God moments and breakthroughs at stmarkscarmel.org/breakthrough. — JCB

Churchwide Advent Study *Right Here Right Now*

Does life sometimes feel like a constant treadmill of to-do's, appointments, and activities? As our Advent worship services explore "The Gift of Being Present," take a few moments to rest in God's presence through our resources for *Right*



Here Right Now. You can experience step-by-step mindfulness practices for today and learn how Christian mindfulness has developed in the centuries since Jesus's teachings. When we understand how radical it is to live in God's presence—right here, right now—we deepen our life of faith. Books are \$12.

How can you get involved? Sign up at stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups for:

- Wednesdays, 11/29-12/20 | 9:30-11am
- Thursdays, 11/30-12/21 | 10-11:am
- Fridays, 11/17 and 12/1-12/15 (no meeting 11/26) | 9:30-11am
- Sundays in Foundations & Friendships class, 9:40-10:40am, 11/19, and 12/3-12/17.

Individual study and reflection resources:

- Email Jennifer (grow@stmarkscarmel.org) to receive a personal study guide PDF.
- Watch our [St. Mark's Carmel Facebook](#) page in December for videos and articles.
- Pick up a "The Gift of Being Present" devotional from the Gathering Area.

Interpretation Bible

Studies: Job

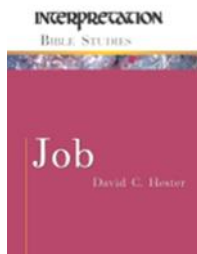
WEDNESDAYS, 1/3-3/20, NO MTG 1/24-1/31

EARLY AM MEN'S STUDY, 6:30 AM-7:30 AM

PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY, 9:30 AM-10:30 AM

Led by Pastor Brian White | Hybrid Room B-C and Zoom | Books \$13

In this study, noted Old Testament scholar and Christian educator David Hester focuses on the difficult questions raised in Job: where is God in the worst moments of our emptiness? What are we to do when experience casts doubt on what we have always believed? Where in the world is justice? In his honest, touching writing of his own suffering, the author provides a moving connection between the ancient text and the world of today as we search for hope and meaning.

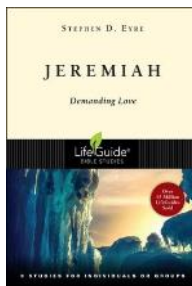


Jeremiah: Demanding Love (LifeGuide Bible Studies)

Wednesdays, beginning 1/10 | 9:30-11AM |

Led by Lydia Fourman & Joan Dunn | Room J/K & Cornerstone Commons | Books \$9

God gave Jeremiah a difficult task: call Israel to repentance and recommitment. In this study on the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, Stephen D. Eyre focuses on twelve symbols that God offers Jeremiah, Israel--and you--to help describe his demanding love.

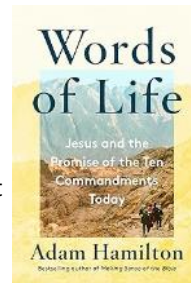


Words of Life

Thursdays , beginning 1/11 | 10-11AM

Led by Judy Woempner | Room B/C and Zoom | Books \$17

Nearly everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments, the list of “thou-shalt-nots” found in the Bible. Jesus saw these commandments not as onerous burdens, but as guideposts to help us experience a good and beautiful life. In *Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments*, pastor and author Adam Hamilton teaches us how these ten ancient “words” were given to us by a loving God who longed to set safe boundaries, create order out of chaos, help communities live peacefully, and protect us—often from ourselves.

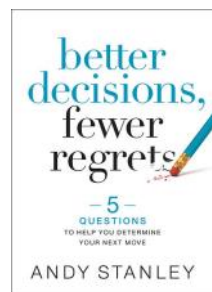


Andy Stanley's Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets

Fridays, beginning 1/12 | 9:30-11AM |

Led by Robin Spyker and class members | Room B/C and Zoom | Books \$15

Good questions lead to better decisions. In this study, Andy Stanley gives us five key questions—about honesty, storytelling, tension, wisdom, and love—to ask every time we make a decision. Your decisions can determine the direction and quality of your life, and these questions can help. Optional study guide available (\$10).



Sign up and see more info at stmarkscarmel.org/studygroups

Questions? Email Jennifer Cloud-Buckner (grow@stmarkscarmel.org).

Open Groups

United Women in Faith

The St. Mark's UWF theme for this year is Love in Action. There are so many ways that we can all put love into action. How are you going to put Love in Action?



Next meeting December 12 at 6 PM

"May your days be merry and bright and may all your Christmases be white!"
"A White Christmas Presence" will be the theme for the annual United Women in Faith Christmas December Gathering. The gathering will be filled with wonderful fellowship, a delicious carry-in meal, singing of carols, learning more about our St. Mark's MOPS group, plus lots of Christmas Joy! You are invited to come and bring a friend at 6 PM for gathering with dinner promptly beginning at 6:30 PM. Bring your favorite carry-in dish to share as we celebrate Jesus!...the best present ever!

Join us on **January 9** at 9:30 AM and 7 PM for our regular gathering. Childcare is provided 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.

Read the latest monthly update, find out about fundraising and more on the St. Mark's United Women in Faith page stmarkscarmel.org/uwf. For more information Email uwf@stmarkscarmel.org.

Interest Groups Information

INTEREST GROUP MEETINGS WILL RESUME IN JANUARY.

Find out about all of the Interest Groups at stmarkscarmel.org/uwf.

VOLUNTEER

There are always volunteers need for monthly meetings, by helping with hospital-ity, providing a devotional, helping with an interest group or helping with fundraisers. Contact any board member to find out how you can help. There are also many mission opportunities. Donna Shwartz is looking for volunteers to act as contact points for each ministry the UWF is connected with.

UWF READING PROGRAM

United Women in Faith National Reading Program consists of reading selected books organized into five categories. Faith Talks is also part of the program. For more information contact Kathy Lentz, kathy-lentz@gmail.com or (317) 652-0487.

FUNDRAISING

Our **November Arts & Crafts Marketplace** was a great success! Thank you to all who helped in the Candy Cane Café, the UWFaith table and set up and tear down!

Dessert Extravaganza

Sunday, 2/12

Up next is the **Dessert Extravaganza** on February 12! All bakers and candy makers get ready to bake! We will need dessert donations as well as help with set up and selling on that day. Look for a sign up at the January gathering on January 9.

UMM Meeting

Saturday, 12/9 | 7:30 AM

Saturday, 1/13 | 7:30 AM

They are coming. Gasoline-engine cars are gradually losing out to electric vehicles. What should we know about this new technology and how will it affect our lives? Kevin Whited, an engineer with the City of Carmel will help educate us about electric vehicles and what Carmel is doing to prepare for their arrival in larger numbers.

Join us on Saturday, December 9, at 7:30 am in Wesley Hall to learn about this increasingly important technology.

In January, the torch will be passed to the new United Methodist Men's board headed by new president Hal Espey.

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 money and time to many Missions. For more information, visit stmarkscarmel.org/umm. For more information about UMM or to be added to the email list, contact Roger Schmenner, umm@stmarkscarmel.org.



Marksman

Starbucks-116th & Keystone

12/7, 12/21, 1/4 & 1/18 | 6:30 AM

A community of career-and family-focused men seeking to develop relationships while we unplug from the daily stress that life can bring. If you have any questions or would like to be put on our list, email marksmen@stmarkscarmel.org.

Open Gyms

Basketball | Tuesday

Pickleball | Thursday

Join our Open Gyms on Tuesday and Thursday. No Registration required. Just show up. (16 and older)



Open Group Schedule

Mondays

COFFEE 'N CAMERAS

12/4 & 12/18 | 9:00 AM

This self-help camera group meets for conversation about photographic art & technique. Bring your camera & your questions. Contact Ken Shultz, ken_shultz@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Tuesdays

PAGE TURNER BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, 1/16 | 7:00 PM-8:00 PM

There is no meeting in December. January's book has not been chosen.

Come and enjoy good books, discussions, and a shared evening with new/old friends. If you have any questions, contact Marcia Flora, mflora1950@yahoo.com.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Join us as we prayerfully knit and crochet prayer shawls that will be 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.

MENS BASKETBALL

7 PM

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

Wednesdays

ROMEOS (RETIRED OLD MEN EATING OUT)

Le Peep | 86th & Keystone | 11:00 AM

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

Thursdays

JULIETS

Thursday, 12/21 | 11:30 AM

Tilly's Tea Room | 8702 Keystone Crossing

Thursday, 1/18 | 11:30 AM

Cooper's Hawk | 3815 E. 96th St

Juliets (Just Us Ladies Interested In Eating Together) meet at 11:30. Please contact Sandi McCracken at 210-279-7878 or email smccracken75@yahoo.com by 12/17 and 1/15 so current reservations can be made or for more information. All women are invited!

CRAFT GROUP

Thursday, 12/7 & 1/25 | 6:00 PM—9:00 PM

The Craft group will meet Thursday, 12/7 & 1/25 from 6pm-9pm. RSVP by 5pm, 12/6 & 1/24. Contact Kathy Bartel, 317-294-4908 or krbartel@gmail.com for more information.

PICKLEBALL

7:00 PM

Join us Thursdays for Open Gym Pickleball. All welcome (16 and older). Contact Doug Brown, dthbrown@gmail.com, or Janet Brown, grandeyb@gmail.com for more information.

Committee News

As we head into the holiday time of the year, there are many ways that we can celebrate. We look forward to time with family and friends, or time to remember and honor those that have gone before us. Traveling or being out and about we are inundated with and reminded of opportunities to “celebrate” by buying, eating or indulging in something. As we continue on our stewardship path through the holidays an analogy we could use is one of Carmel’s numerous roundabouts. With their multiple options, and exits there are many paths to take before continuing on. Remember the Griswold’s in Christmas Vacation in London, from morning to dark they kept driving around trying to exit? In the first pass around, isn’t it fun and what a joyous feeling we get when we watch our kids and grandkids open that present they just had to have; so how about adding a present for a child, through Fletcher Place Christmas gift mission? The next time around check off the grocery items for the family’s Thanksgiving dinner but also add food to go to one of the St Mark’s food pantry’s that we support. A third go around , bringing the children, grandchildren, a neighbor or friend to our own Holy Walk will illustrate the true meaning of Christmas better than going to a toy store. When you look at our Savior lying in the manger, as there was no room at the inn, think also of the homeless people in Indianapolis and elsewhere that with our support they will get a warm meal. The point here being that there are multiple ways to look at and enjoy the



holidays. Don't let one way or path dominate. We are all traveling down the stewardship road, at different paces but one thing is common, doing the work that God wants us to do. Listen to his calling as that is the path that we want to be on. Each of us has a contribution to make. Help St Mark's continue the work that we are in and with your help and prayerfully consideration we can support our church's mission of Welcome-Grow-Serve. 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". Prayerfully consider your commitment and please return your pledge cards or go online. It is very easy. And finally, enjoy the holidays, be safe and open your hearts as we continue forward.



Trustees

The St. Mark's trustees would like to thank all members who have helped with installations and repairs to the property this past year. We would like to especially thank Peter Canning, Doug Brown and Scott Baker for installing a new railing for the chancel area, Mike Rundle for painting the Sunday school area, John Deedrick for working with trustee Melinda Deedrick to paint a downstairs classroom and Missi Koenig , Jennifer Cloud Buckner and Jackie Rowell for working with Melinda Deedrick on signs. Trustees Roger Schmenner and Mark Burnett have been developing plans for a storage facility.

Exciting Changes at St. Mark's Welcoming Pastor Karla Elliott as Executive Pastor

Dear St. Mark's Family,

As we step into the new year, we are thrilled to announce a significant shift in our pastoral leadership roles that promises to strengthen our church's ministry and mission. Beginning January 1, Pastor Karla Elliott will step into the role of Executive Pastor at St. Mark's United Methodist Church.

Pastor Karla, who has been an integral part of our community, will now bring her exceptional leadership skills to focus more deeply on the church's administrative needs. This includes overseeing staffing and administrative committees, ensuring that our church continues to operate smoothly and effectively. Her expertise and dedication are invaluable assets that will greatly contribute to the flourishing of our church community.

Alongside these new responsibilities, Pastor Karla will continue to lead The Current, our vibrant contemporary worship service. Her passion and vision for contemporary worship have been a blessing to us all, and we look forward to seeing how she will continue to inspire and engage us in this role.

Meanwhile, Pastor Brian White, our Lead Pastor, will concentrate his energies on preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. His deep commitment to these areas is at the heart of his ministry, and this focus will allow him to dedicate even more time and energy to nurturing the spiritual growth of our congregation.

Pastor Brian will also continue to oversee our traditional worship experiences, ensuring that they remain a cornerstone of our worship life at St. Mark's. His guidance in this area has always been a source of comfort and inspiration to many.

This change is a testament to our dynamic church. It reflects our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our congregation while staying true to our core values and mission. We are confident that under the leadership of Pastor Brian and Pastor Karla, St. Mark's will continue to thrive and be a place where everyone feels welcomed, nurtured, and inspired.

Please join us in congratulating Pastor Karla on her new role and in supporting both Pastor Karla and Pastor Brian as they lead us forward in faith and fellowship.

Blessings,

St Mark's Staff-Parish Relations Committee

Upcoming Events

stmarkscarmel.org/events

St. Mark's Preschool Dine to Donate

Enjoy a night off from cooking and contribute to the church playground renovation at the same time! Flyers with details for both events can be found at stmarkscarmel.org/preschoolevents.

December Dine to Donate

Blaze Pizza—12697 N. Pennsylvania St. | Wednesday, 12/13, 12:00 PM-8:00 PM

Preschool receives 20% of the proceeds from every qualifying order (only at this location).



January Dine to Donate

Roots Burger Bar, 12552 Gray Rd | Monday, 1/22, All Day

The Preschool receives 10% of the proceeds from every qualifying order (only at this location).



St. Mark's Talent Show

Sunday, 2/4 | 2:00 PM

The St. Mark's Talent Show will be held on Sunday, February 4, 2024 at 2pm in the sanctuary! Anyone interested in sharing their talents in the show should contact Eric DeForest at edeforest@stmarkscarmel.org by January 21.

New Member Class – 2024 Save the Date

Sunday, February 18 | 12:15-3:00 p.m. (lunch included)

Sundays, February 25, March 3 | 1:00 PM-3:00 PM

Are you interested in exploring membership at St. Mark's? We invite you to join us for a three-week class to learn more about St. Mark's, get to know the pastors, and meet others investigating membership. We will discuss the mission and vision of St. Mark's and committing to a lifelong discipleship journey.

The new member class will meet in Room B/C just inside the main door of the church. Sign up at stmarkscarmel.org/nextsteps or contact **Missi Koenig** at mkoenig@stmarkscarmel.org. Childcare is available with 72-hour advance notice.

ST. MARK'S IS A
COMMUNITY OF
FOLLOWERS OF
JESUS CHRIST
THAT STRIVES TO
WELCOME
ALL PEOPLE,
GROW
IN KNOWLEDGE
AND GRACE, AND
SERVE
OUR NEIGHBORS,
LOCALLY AND
GLOBALLY.

Community News

Sympathies

To Nyla Johnson at the death of her sister, Nancy Burtch and her nephew, Gordon Grabill.

To the Byrd family at the death of their father and grandfather, Max Byrd.

To Molly Chenoweth at the death of her mother, Kristina Kay Kennedy.

To John & Mimi Stilwell at the death of their son-in-law, John Martinelli.

To Rollie Herzog at the death of his wife, Georgia.

Holiday Office Hours

The church office will be closed December 25 through January 1. We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.



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 brothers and sisters in Christ mean so much to them and to their families.

Myrneth Anderson

Jean Anderson

Dorothy Mecca

Doris Carlow

Phyllis Delp

Carol Hollinger

Phyllis Gidley

Jane Roberts

Marlene Myers

Melvin Myers

Brenda Weikel

Jerry Weikel

Library

The holidays are here and St. Mark's library has many books to help you prepare for Advent and Christmas. A complete listing of these is available through the online

catalog at www.stmarkscarmel.org by using the search term "Christmas". A printed list is available on the checkout counter in the library. Stop by soon to explore our outstanding Christmas collection for both children and adults. Choose titles to help you and your family enrich your holiday season. Many Christmas and Advent books are displayed under the courtyard window and also on the top shelf of the children's section.



Breakthrough Prayer

The Bible illustrates the power of God's new beginnings through people like Moses, Joseph, Jacob, Mary, and the ultimate new beginning with Christ. As we lean into mindfulness this Advent, may you find stillness and rest in God leading you to new beginnings. Join your St. Mark's family each day in prayer, praying with an open posture for God's power to break through and reveal next steps for each of us and for our church community. Whether you pray silently or aloud, we share in this breakthrough prayer individually at 8:00pm each day and anytime we gather together in groups:



You are invited to share prayer breakthroughs at stmarkscarmel.org/breakthrough.

CHILI COOK OFF

Food, fun, and fellowship
for all ages!

Sunday, Jan. 28
5:00 PM

stmarkscarmel.org/signups