



St Mark Lutheran Church June 2026 Meeting Agenda and Annual Reports



Vision (What we desire)- *To embrace all in response to God.*

Mission (Why we exist) – *Uniting in worship, growing in wisdom, serving in love.*

Great Commission: Jesus said, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Table of Contents

Meeting Agenda

February 2026 Congregational Business Meeting Minutes

Reports:

Staff

Pastor Joel's Report

Minister of Music's Report

Parish Administrator's Report

Boards

Christian Education

Facilities

Sine Nomine Presents...

Tech Team

Activities/Missions

Adopt a Child-Ecuador Committee

Battery Recycling

Challenger Little League

Grounds Committee (Garden Stewards)

PORT

Preschool

SMLC Spirit Walkers

Stitching with Friends

Tables of Eight

**St Mark Lutheran Church
Annual Congregation Meeting Agenda
June 28th, 2026**

- Opening Worship
- Call to Order
- Appointment of Parliamentarian
- Establish a Quorum
- Approval of January 2026 Congregational Business Meeting Minutes
- Election of Council Members
- Ministry Updates
 - Ecuador, Scouting, Family Focus Preschool, Challenger League, PORT, Music Ministry
- Ministry Budget Status Update
- Congregational Ministry Status Update
- Open Discussion
- Introduce 2026-2027 Council Members and Leadership
- Thank you to Outgoing Council Members
- Closing Comments and Prayer
- Adjournment

St Mark Lutheran Church
Congregational Business Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2026

- A. OPENING DEVOTION.** Pastor Joel Neubauer opened the meeting with a worship service at 10:00 a.m.
- B. CALL TO ORDER.** President Jason Livingston called the meeting's business portion to order at 11:21 a.m.

NOTE: At the next and future meetings, the Pastor will call the meeting to order before the Prelude. The worship service is the opening devotion. That time and the beginning of the business portion time will be recorded.

- C. APPOINTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARIAN.** Phil Hopkins was appointed parliamentarian.

D. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

1. Establishing a Quorum:

Present:	Total Persons:	<u>73</u>	Number needed for Quorum:	<u>48</u>
	Voting Members:	<u>73</u>	(Re: Constitution – C10.04 -10% of	
	voting members			
			and C8.2c – definition of a	
	voting member)			

Voting members as of 2/8/26 = 484

- 2. Approval of June Congregational Minutes** – Jason Livingston
The 2025 June Congregational Meeting Minutes were approved as written.
- 3. Installation and Affirmation of Council Members and Minister of Music** – Joel Neubauer
Pastor stated that it was a seamless transition for our music ministry going from Greta to Seung-Hye last summer. We will be installing her and installing and confirming our Council members: Omar Alomar, Matthew Auth, Gary Brocksmith, Martha Butcher, Mary Howell, Jason Livingston, Trish Marickovich, Dick Rohla, and Cody Watson. We recognize the responsibility of positions of leadership and rejoice that our Council will lead us. Pastor read a passage from Corinthians about using our gifts for the common good. He commissioned them to lead and support St Mark, the wider church, our community, and our world. The Installation Ceremony was affirmed by the congregation.
- 4. 2026 Budget** – Cody Watson

Jason invited questions about the presented budget. Phil noted that it shows a \$48,000 deficit. He said that last year, we said we needed to conduct a serious Stewardship Campaign. Why did that not happen? Pastor Joel said we began the campaign with a visit to Council from John Wertz from the VA Synod. Then the government shut down and it seemed tone deaf to continue at that time. Then it was time to put the budget together. The congregation responded generously last year when we presented a deficit budget, and we ended up with a ~\$27,000 surplus instead of a deficit. We are so grateful for that. This year, even without the Stewardship Drive, we had a strong response when our pledge cards went out. We have a generous congregation and one of the larger gatherings on Sunday mornings across the Synod and in the community in general. In addition, our building is busy all week with other groups. The brewery next door is opening, and we will be a physical testament to everyone who goes there. Phil asked why we have the deficit with all this positivity. Jason said we are giving an honest assessment based on pledges received and our expenses. We have a payroll to keep up, but we are always frugal in our spending, and it is usually less than what is budgeted. Pastor said the "Other Envelope" amount is what we realistically expect but hopefully it will be more.

Phil asked for an explanation of line item 1589. It is the percent of our income that goes to the churchwide mission. He also asked why line item 1761 is so large. Jason said this is mostly fees for Simply Giving and Vanco. Pastor Joel said we started that line item about a decade ago after he went to Ecuador. There was money in the budget to help people visit the Refugio but, as that became rarer, there were more wire transfers. The Ecuador budget itself is over \$100,000.

A question was also posed about line item 1593. Caroline Furnace is a place for summer camps and retreats. Pastor noted that it has become a pipeline from youth events to future pastors. They are asking for churches to partner with them instead of getting their funds from the Synod.

Anne Baumgardner noted a mistake in line item 1590. It should be \$2508, increasing line item 1500 to \$479,640.

Carlton Hardy made a **MOTION** "that the Congregation of St Mark Lutheran Church approve the 2026 Income and Expense Budget as presented by Council." The **MOTION** was **APPROVED**.

5. Reaffirmation of Trustees – Jason Livingston

The Council made a **MOTION** "that our current Trustees, Phil Hopkins, Rob Kutz, and Lem Meetze, continue serving." The **MOTION** was **APPROVED**.

6. Reaffirmation of Vision/Mission Statements – Jason Livingston

Vision: To embrace all in response to God.

Mission: Uniting in Worship; Growing in Wisdom; Serving in Love and The Great Commission

The Council made a **MOTION** that "the Vision/Mission Statements be approved." The **MOTION** was **APPROVED**.

7. Greetings from the Refugio

Cristian Rosero was planning to be at our meeting but due to all the snow delays, he is not. There was a Zoom meeting with him on January 25th for anyone who wanted to hear him talk about his experiences. Anne sponsored him at the Refugio, and he is a success story. He and his wife and children now live in New Zealand where he works at an airport and hopes to become a pilot.

E. CLOSING COMMENTS AND PRAYER – Pastor Joel Neubauer

Pastor Joel said Cristian's story is a great example of the many things St Mark does that are not even in the budget. The budget is how we take care of the groundwork so we can do all the other ministries. We are currently looking into battery storage as a source of income. We have roofs and organs to take care of. Pastor Joel continues to be honored to be the pastor here.

Jason added that we are looking for volunteers to serve on Council.

F. ADJOURNMENT. Cody Watson made a **MOTION** "to adjourn the meeting." The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Matt Auth and **APPROVED** unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Pastor Joel's Report

I URGE YOU, KINDRED, BY GOD'S MERCIES:

**BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS AGE,
BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF THE MIND,
SO THAT YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD—
WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT.**

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KINDRED, BY GOD'S MERCIES

This past April, our congregation bore witness with three couples as they each vowed to form a new family unit through promises to share holy love, trustworthy faithfulness and respectful mutuality. In each case, people who were once strangers forged new bonds of kinship — never on a condition of faultlessness, but always with a commitment to gracious mercy. Our liturgical tradition within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provides counsel for such a kinship as marriage creates, noting that “because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of intimate community in marriage can be overcast and the gift of family can become a burden. But because the Lord, who demonstrates the perfection of community in the marriage of God and the children of Israel, and in the wedding feast of Christ and his Church, continues still to bless it with heaven’s abundant and ever-present support, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored.” To receive heaven’s loving, faithful and respectful support is to be sustained as kindred by God’s mercies: and, dear St Mark, that is exactly who we are together.

Kindred is a familial word, but it clings differently than “family” in our ears. Kindred at once points to closeness, but also alliterates better with a committed community than with a dysfunctional family. We often take family for granted, lulling ourselves into systems where we pay only passing attention to love or trust or mutuality because we expect blood to be thicker than hurtful comments, poor manners, or unloving behaviors. As so many of the epistles of the New Testament reveal, there has always been a danger for Christian congregations to live as church families by dysfunction rather than to thrive as communities of Christ’s kindred by God’s mercies. But we are *not* called to be a fractured family; we — *as St Mark Lutheran Church in Yorktown, Virginia* — continue to strive through holy love, trustworthy faithfulness and respectful mutuality to be kindred by God’s mercies. And through these past dozen years as your pastor, I continually thank God for the privilege of this call to administer God’s mercies through Word and Sacrament within our congregational community in worship and preaching; in Christian education and spiritual formation; and in the pastoral care of our kindred souls.

Marriage provides a metaphor for our partnership — you as the body of Christ in the church and me as a servant of the gospel of Christ — committing to each other as kindred, extending God’s mercies to neighbors who, perhaps now strangers, are also promised to be loved as kin. And as kindred, we are commanded as the highest ideal to love one another as God has loved us in Christ. As this kind of Love (which the New Testament defines and identifies with God’s

own selfhood) becomes our moral ideal, it is by an ethics of God's mercies that our morality unites us as kindred, both here in this particular community of St Mark and with all the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" and even more with all creatures born of God's loving creativity. A key pastoral reflection from this past year (thanking God for life among you all) is how love focuses our moral clarity in all things, put to real practice in Christian spirituality by a missional ethics of welcoming-and-embracing mercy for these times in which we live together.

BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS AGE

Our age isn't necessarily easy on families. We know so many factors that work to pull our closest kin apart; even where we hold together, there is often stress on the systems of our homes and schools and workplaces and playgrounds. When we gather for worship, we bring the realities of our lives and times — but we do not conform our prayers to the polarizations or politicizations or other peculiar problems around us. We gather to worship in the embassy of another reality: we step into God's time — as kindred by God's mercies — to journey together along a way of baptismal confession and forgiveness, of song and scripture, of gospel's good news proclamation and mindful intercession; of shared peace and shared communion; of Jesus in our times and of Jesus for turning the times of our present age toward heaven's holy hope.

This past year we continued to enter into God's gates with thanksgiving, lifting joyful voices toward heaven and singing new songs as Dr Seung-Hye Kim began her ministry of music with us. We welcomed voices from synod partners as the Rev John Wertz, Director of Evangelical Mission, preached for us (and met with our council to acknowledge and encourage our vitality within Virginia) — and also from Tom Powell, executive director of Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp and Retreat Center. We were blessed (on an icy morning via video chat) to receive the thanks and testimony of Cristian Rosero, who had been sponsored in his education and social needs at the Refugio de Los Sueños in Quito, Ecuador, through its partnership with St Mark. Of personal note, I was honored to welcome my mother — the Rev Dr Beth Spitzner Neubauer — to preach for us on Pentecost this past May as she marked her fiftieth anniversary as one of the first women ordained as a Lutheran pastor in North America.

Gathering for weekly worship on Sundays in our sanctuary; gathering midweek for festival days or for our Evangelical Advent Angelus in our Chapel of All Saints; gathering in our narthex around the piano with sandwiches through Advent and soup through Lent to lift our Holden Evening Prayer; gathering in homes and hospital rooms and rehabilitation suites to bring Christ's body and blood where our kindred reside: I have been blessed with you to dis-conform with the fever of the world as we find worship and peace where God is Emmanuel, here with us in Jesus. It has been exciting to see our worshipping community grow as new visitors and old friends have found a safe and welcome place here — and, while affirming and celebrating our fullness in community as our spirituality is brought together, I also extend a tender invitation for all who are at home here to talk with me about formalizing our relationships to have voting privileges as stewards of God's grace in our congregational ministry!

Through the sacrament of baptism this past year, we welcomed Dakota Kohler, Jaxson Kohler and Finnegan Kodl as fellow members in the body of Christ. Children of all ages, but especially those who are younger leaders among us, have continued to take up Christ's baptismal call to let their light so shine before others in a literal way by stepping forward to brighten our candles for worship: this isn't the duty of anonymous acolytes, but the joy of the children of God as active participants in our worship. A new ministry offered to God's children in our most recent festival seasons of Christmas and Easter has been to ring bells at the altar during Jesus' words of institution of the Eucharist — a historic adornment of that sacred moment, calling attention to the mystery of Christ Jesus' real presence with us in communion, "in, with and under" simple gifts of bread and wine. Especially as our children become comfortable with this, I am excited to offer the younger members of our community a front-row, up-close perspective of the Lord's Table (helping our children stand at the altar in youth, I hope, might help attune them to, and help them visualize, future public ministry in the church if/as Christ calls them).

Affirming these same baptismal promises on the festival Sunday of the Holy Trinity, we beheld the confirmation of God's gracious love for MacKenzie Chapman, Oliver Koch and Noelle Lombardo. I have delighted to find that our newly confirmed members are often in a place to hold the chalice for us to receive Holy Communion, extending holy words to each of us that the blood of Christ is shed for you for the forgiveness of sin. Receiving into our congregation as members who formerly shared in Christ's communion, and held a congregational vote, at Third Lutheran Church in Rhinebeck, New York, it is our joy that Kathy and Tom Rector are now able to help us focus our ministry in Jesus' name for our neighborhoods across Hampton Roads.

In the past year we also bid farewell and Godspeed to several saints — both as members and neighbors — of our St Mark community, entrusting them to the promise of Jesus' resurrection: Jim Schroeder (member); Inge Lindemann Mault (Lutheran neighbor); Steven Spiers (inurned in our columbarium); Arloha Joyce Moen (Lutheran neighbor); James Darrow (neighbor); Teresa Haskin (member); Lou Gochenour (member). In addition to these saints whom we have commended to God's safekeeping at the end of our mortal pilgrimage, we were also honored to welcome our bishop (and longtime local friend) the Rev Dr Phyllis Blair Milton to ordain our lifetime St Mark member Andy Taminger to begin his faithful pilgrimage as a pastor in the ELCA, now serving Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach.

We do not stay as we were; we have not conformed our faith to this age. In baptismal life and in Christian witness, as members of a community that brings the justice and peace of heaven into our times of worship and prayer, united with the saints of the past and the service of the church into the future: I am excited and enthused (filled with a sense of the presence of God!) to report that our life of worship has continued to proclaim the relevant reality of the gospel!

BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF THE MIND SO THAT YOU MAY DISCERN

Faithful transformation is connected to a comprehensive refreshment in, and to a renewal, of our mindfulness: our thinking, perceiving, understanding, believing. Transformation is a form a repentance, as we are called by the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus for "metanoia" — a total

change from the mindset of our world's systems of sin, death and despair toward the reality of the kingdom of God in our midst where Jesus proclaims our safety through God's faithfulness to grace. Transformation and repentance are, therefore, connected to the teaching of grace.

Last summer I was honored and excited to spend two weeks continuing my pastoral education with our siblings in the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia. Under the gracious tutelage of the church in Bardejov — where Pastor Andy Taminger and I had been hosted during the 13th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in 2023, and from whom we received visitors at St Mark in 2024 — I was able to engage: 1. outdoor ministry with their summer camp week by the border with Ukraine; 2. youth ministry, as I spent days with their teens and church leaders to share Christian testimony and learn about the need of the gospel in young people's lives; 3. congregational ministry, preaching for and worshiping with congregations in and around the central Lutheran congregation of Bardejov, and also speaking at their summer regional gathering; 4. counseling ministry, meeting with the founders and therapists of eastern Slovakia's first and only pastoral counseling center in Prešov. The vibrant life of our Lutheran siblings in Slovakia pointed to the tangible blessing of the gospel, allowing Christians to engage our humanity (even where it hurts) through Jesus' grace and mercy *rather than* turning to harmful behaviors that silence humans through shame, addiction or isolation.

In addition to these visits, I was also deeply informed by a return pilgrimage to Auschwitz-Birkenau, contemplating more deeply the direct connections between Martin Luther's anti-Jewish teachings and the antisemitism that overflowed in the twentieth century both against Jewish people and against millions similarly excluded and/or extinguished for their criminal background, mental health, nationality, politics, physical health, race, religion or sexuality. It is impossible for me as a pastor to ignore these old sins of our Lutheran heritage; it is equally impossible for me to ignore the humility and perseverance of our Lutheran siblings who are working today for the louder voice of Jesus' gospel to prevail and to heal our world. A special opportunity was to visit and worship with our English-language ELCA mission in Bratislava, led in ministry by Pastor Aaron Fuller (who previously served Saint Andrew Lutheran Church in Portsmouth, Virginia, now led by our former vicar at St Mark, the Rev Suzanne Stierwalt). The history and witness of minority Lutherans in Slovakia highlighted for me the impact we are able to share in Hampton Roads as a small, strong voice for the gospel.

Returning from that time of personal learning, I was invited to extend our ministry from St Mark to our neighbors living at Williamsburg Landing for their senior summer program, leading them through a devotional exploration of Psalm 121. The psalms remain a cogent focus for pastoral teaching; in addition to my day at Williamsburg Landing, I have continued to explore the psalter with you through my weekly *Speaking in Psalms* series that offers a verse from the week's upcoming psalm, coupled with a brief devotion, prayer and recorded original song. In our liturgy, as we sing or speak the psalm together, it is often the one portion of the Bible that Christians regularly read aloud. I am grateful for the foundation Greta Melson formerly laid for our singing of psalms in worship; I am grateful for Seung-Hye's current ministry to continue our dedication to the psalms, especially as she encourages new voices to serve as leaders in these holy verses. This summer, because we are following an option for semicontinuous readings of

the Old Testament as our first lesson in worship, we will have the opportunity to explore a set of psalms otherwise absent in recent liturgical years. I look forward to *Speaking in Psalms* in new ways with you for a deeper understanding of our biblical faith as these weeks progress!

Bible study is a major component of a pastor's teaching ministry. Alongside the psalms, I am consistently pleased to study our appointed weekly *Gospel Portion for Sunday* (GPS) on Monday afternoons at 1:00pm; our second reading of *Epistles & Ethics* on Sunday mornings at 10:15am; and our walks through whole books of the Bible on Wednesday mornings at 11:00am. Our Wednesday study recently finished an eighteen-month delve into Revelation, gathering in person or via Zoom to examine a paragraph or two each week. On pause for the summer, our Wednesday group will reconvene to study Esther in the autumn: all are welcome to join us!

Also reading from the Old Testament, our *Confirming Connections* group will continue our three-year rotation of New Testament, Small Catechism and Old Testament with a year that engages the books of Ruth and Jonah to help prepare for Confirmation. We don't learn in a vacuum, and I am deeply grateful for the insightful support of Amy Barbour, Jakie Jefferis and Cody Watson as partners and mentors for students in our Confirmation instruction program!

Preaching is my most direct contact as a teacher with you — and please know that I speak to you publicly in worship while holding my private prayer with Jesus to be faithful as I proclaim God's Word in law and gospel. The opportunity to study the gospel with GPS each week helps me begin my sermon preparation with academic, exegetical analysis — yet God's Word is not a hard science. Each week I also continue a personal discipline to reflect on the gospel poetically, helping me consider not only the letter of the Word, but also the incontrollable Spirit of God. I was able again to share these reflections with our wider commonwealth as two devotional poems were recognized by the Poetry Society of Virginia through its annual competition this year: a villanelle considering Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (first place) and a sonnet considering the heroism of the mother hen who dies to protect her vulnerable chicks (honorable mention). This allowed me to extend a piece of teaching with a broader audience and to record our faith from St Mark in a small corner of our statewide literary community.

Not all Christian learning and growth happens in large groups. As families prepare for baptism, first tastes of holy communion, marriage — and also for death, grief or funeral experiences — it is often easier to tailor conversations to specific circumstances. One of the most fruitful contexts for spiritual formation and growth this past year has been the invitation by our bishop for me to stay connected with Pastor Andy Taminger within a small group of local clergy (some newer, some older) to discuss congregational life and ministry in terms of family systems theory. Please know that I am here to engage these conversations as it is right and good for you or for your loved ones: call, text or email and we can find time to talk. St Mark remains an active partner congregation of the Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center; I attend a free monthly continuing education session with PPCC and I am confident to recommend their trained counselors within our community. It is always okay for us to reach out, to learn, to grow and to go forward with God's grace!

WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD

The New Testament consistently and explicitly identifies God's will: no one is to be lost, all are to be held faithfully together in Christ. And in the words of Christ Jesus, this becomes our prayer, that's God's will be done on earth as intended in heaven. We pray our Lord's Prayer as often as we share our Lord's communion — and in this, our Good Shepherd cares for our souls.

Pastoral care is likewise bound to care for the souls of God's people according to God's will. It is not my right or privilege to judge, but my call to love and to serve God's people — especially where their need calls for healing in body, mind or spirit. Pastoral care has the intention of fulfilling our prayer by acknowledging God with us in all things. **I am not a perfect pastor: your Good Shepherd is God in Christ alone.** Even still, my intent is to serve you with Jesus' perfect love, ever aware I fail to live up to love's perfect behavior (so Christ is truly my beloved savior)!

Pastoral care for bodies includes baptism and visitation to homes and hospitals and rehab centers; it includes anointing people who are sick, communing people who are homebound, commending people who are dying, burying the remains of saints who anticipate Christ's resurrection. Sometimes pastoral care for bodies gets our hearts racing: last June it was a joy to jog with our team of *Peninsula LuthRuns* as we raised money for St Jude Children's Research Hospital and PPCC through the "Lost in the Woods 5k" at Peninsula Catholic High School, coordinated by our friend Mike Pilola. We look forward to running again, but on a cooler day this coming December 19!

A tension for pastoral care is connecting people with appropriate support: please reach out to schedule pastoral visitation! I cannot personally schedule visits to everyone in our community, but I am committed to visiting everyone who schedules with me for pastoral care.

Pastoral care for the mind includes clerical listening and counseling — as a general rule, I am honored to explore questions in private conversation with you, understanding that questions requiring more than a few dedicated conversations are likely candidates for more deeply trained counselors (at which point I often refer to PPCC or elsewhere). In the best scenarios, I may be able to listen to questions and offer responses, but not answers.

Pastoral care for the spirit often includes confession and forgiveness, offering human voices for the grace God showers on us directly. People struggling with faith — either with biblical teaching or religious tradition or personal piety — are invited to share their stories: in my vows as your pastor, I am committed to teaching the perspective of our faith, while also respecting the nuances of piety and spiritual understandings of your individual lives.

Bridging care for minds and spirits, I shared several days last summer — and will return next month — in service as chaplain for staff and campers with our summer outdoor ministry at Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp (where I also conclude my seventh and final year on its board this autumn). In wider circles of pastoral care, I continue as dean of our synod's local Peninsulas Conference; as a member of our synod's partnership team with the Evangelical Lutheran

Church – Papua New Guinea Islands District; as a member of our synod’s discipline committee; and as a local member of the York County Ministers fellowship.

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Because it doesn’t fit neatly elsewhere, yet deserves mention in our annual report of gospel ministry, I also want to highlight the shared care our congregation provides to neighbors so liberally. Each month we designate a special offering — *Joyfuy Generosity* (pink envelopes) — for the wellbeing of our surrounding community: locally, regionally, nationally or globally. Since our meeting last June, through our Joyful Generosity we have gathered more than \$10,000 in support of Church Family Support & Community Outreach; Christ for the City International medical mission; Little League Challenger (baseball for all ability needs); Local school lunch debt relief; Lutheran Disaster Response; Lutheran Family Services of Virginia (enCircle); Lutheran World Federation Augusta Viktoria Hospital in Jerusalem; the Natasha House (women and children’s refuge); PORT; PPCC; Preschool enrichment and scholarship; Youth ministry and Zera Pastoral Counseling for the Lutheran church in eastern Slovakia.

From our congregation, more than an additional \$4000 was shared in our immediate community through our non-budgeted funds for church family support and community outreach. This is all alongside the tens of thousands of dollars we have gathered through St Mark in support of our beloved neighbors at the *Refugio de Los Sueños* and elsewhere. We received personal thanks from Lutheran Pastor Nahuma Ambole in Windhoek, Namibia (who has twice visited and blessed us at St Mark) for our financial support of his ministerial education: Pastor Nahuma graduated this past March and plans to open the first church camp in majority-Lutheran Namibia later this year, based in part on the model of Caroline Furnace.

While we budget for ministry beyond our immediate life at St Mark (a few thousand dollars in support of PPCC and Caroline Furnace, and 7¢ of every dollar to be shared as benevolence between our Virginia Synod, ELCA and Lutheran World Federation), the generosity listed here is all well above and beyond our annual fiscal plans to fund ministry. Last fall our council had intended to highlight a stewardship drive for the financial needs of our St Mark general fund, but sensitivity to the government shutdown prevented us from engaging that conversation — nevertheless, our congregation pledged to support a robust ministry plan and we passed a budget for this year that felt reachable, responsible and faithful (even with a projected deficit).

As we deal with inflation and economic shifts, we are responding to the needs of our world with a continued passion for ministry. We have noticed that, yes, we are showing a less than comforting deficit in our budget plans for this year — but we also note the immense and generous and joy-filled outflowing of funds for the sake of our neighbors’ needs. Pastorally I am confident in our ability to meet the ministry needs we have set in our budget. I am grateful for your partnership in valuing the world around us in which, by God’s mercies, all are kindred! And I thank you in advance for continuing in your commitments to support St Mark as a center of worship, learning and service for the sake of the gospel!

WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT

Friends, saints of Christ in this community of St Mark, when I consider what kindred we are by God's mercies— when I consider our call to be not conformed to world, but to be transformed through the Holy Spirit's renewal of our minds— when I consider our discernment of, and prayer for, God's healing will to be done for all— I am led to consider you. I am regularly gifted with the responsibility to remind you of what is true in Christ, when — as a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ and by his authority — I declare to you that you are good and acceptable and perfect. What can it mean to be forgiven of all our sin and brokenness, but to be good and acceptable and perfect? Christ sees us as beloved and calls us to share God's view — so let me state it plainly: I do love you! And there is so much to love!

When our goodness is perfected by God's love, it is no longer based on our ups and downs. Of course we know that our behaviors aren't without spot or blemish, but our faith points us to a love in Christ Jesus that overcomes everything else. Because we share this life and community in Christ, it is easy for me to love you ... and from loving you, to add my thanks. You bless me thoroughly as your pastor, allowing me to walk with you and trusting me to share your spiritual pilgrimage. You have raised up leaders and committed to ministries that give us a real sense of why it is important to be St Mark Lutheran Church, embracing all people in response to God.

I thank you for raising council leaders who look inward and outward to forward our faith. And I thank you for offering your time and skills as workers and gardeners and artists and worship leaders and record keepers and teachers and musicians and disciples. I thank you for money that you entrust to the economy of the gospel, knowing it could be easily enjoyed elsewhere. I thank Seung-Hye Kim, Amanda Kral and Micheal Stabler as a stellar professional ministry team in support of the private, interpersonal mission outreach done by all our kindred in this place! I thank Danielle and Galilee for their love and commitment to me in my dual calls as a pastor and within our family household — and I thank you, people of St Mark, for your love and prayers and support for Galilee, Danielle and me! I pray for you. I love you. And I rededicate my pastoral commitment to serve you as best as I faithfully can, kindred, by God's mercies.

With Jesus' peace, Pastor Joel

Minister of Music's Report

Dear St Mark family and friends,

My first church job was an organist for family service at the Church of Our Savior Episcopal Church, Charlottesville, back in 2014. Every single time I sit on the organ bench to this day, I reminisce about my time in that church: long hours of practice, mistakes and learning, and the absolute trust and support from the people. Since then, I continued to serve as an organist and music director at various Episcopal churches. Making music at the organ and with people especially the choir to the glory of God our Father has been my Polaris as my life took me through many events and challenges.

August 2026 will mark my first complete year as director of music at St. Mark. I have thoroughly enjoyed beautiful Lutheran hymns, that are up to date with our time, and the vibrant singing of the people of St Mark. I'm grateful for the creative collaboration with Pastor Joel, and the choir members who supported me with love and patience through the year. I also deeply appreciate Katie Draney, Gail Teigeler, the handbell choir, Matthew Butcher and many others for their contributions to lifting worship experience throughout the year.

Working as director of music has instilled in me a desire to connect to and lift the community through music. One of my aspirations is to provide an educational opportunity for students of St Mark and the broader community, where they can grow their creative and independent mind in music, hone their musical skills through various applications, and experience the joy of music making, which they may not have had the privilege to access, etc. I initiated an intern/apprentice program through Lent and Easter season. The first recipient was Matthew Ryan, a dedicated vocal performance major at CNU. I have worked with Matthew both in and outside of classes in the past. He has shown a keen interest and passion in both opera and choral singing as well as piano skills. Through his intern/apprentice period, we focused on areas of singing, accompanying, composing, arranging, transcribing, engraving, etc. He livened up the choral singing greatly, spent many hours improving his piano and engraving skills while also achieving academic success as a full-time student. I'm happy to share Matthew's reflection of his experience below.

"Musical education in my youth was something I had always dreamed of, however, many people like me grew up without the luxury or ability to afford it. Attempting to catch up to my peers that have had weekly lessons since they were children is a struggle, and becomes even more so when having to balance financial, familial, and social obligations. When I was offered this internship opportunity of which would progress my musical abilities with hands on experience amongst one of the most incredibly welcoming and supportive communities, I knew I had found my place here. The past few months since my internship began under the direction of our Music Director Seung-Hye Kim has given me a wealth of knowledge in how to be a better pianist, choir accompanist, vocalist, and a transcriber for all things music. Most importantly, today I have the confidence to believe in my abilities, and the future of my musical career. St Mark has given this to me, and I couldn't imagine my place anywhere else but here."

I'm thankful for the meaningful first year I had at St. Mark and hope my endeavor has been adequate for St. Mark as well. I look forward to many more fulfilling years.

Seung-Hye Kim, Director of Music

Parish Administrator's Report

What a wonderful and busy year it has been in the office! It's been a year filled with hard work, growth, and many blessings.

A heartfelt thank-you to my amazing coworkers. Your teamwork, dedication, and support have made all the difference, and I truly appreciate each of you.

I am also deeply grateful for our church members, whose encouragement, faithfulness, patience and prayers have been such a blessing throughout the year.

Together, we have accomplished so much, and I am thankful for everything we have achieved. Here's to another successful year ahead—filled with new opportunities, continued growth, and many more accomplishments as we work together. Wishing everyone a joyful, blessed, and prosperous year! Below you will see a few highlights of things I accomplished in the past year (June 2025-June-2026).

July & August Office Busyness

- Phew! It was a busy summer! While Pastor Joel was away, I manned the office alone with help from some volunteers. I continue to give immense thanks to those who have helped out in the office! The tasks may be simple but they are so important.

Fire Panel

- We had issues with the fire panel with all of the HVAC work going on. I worked with AC Masters and our fire panel technicians to get it back up and running properly.

HVAC

- We had multiple HVAC issues this summer. I worked with the Property Committee and AC Masters and everything is up and running as normal. We have a whole new system for the Family Focus, Sunday School, and Music Room wing. The Narthex unit had a coil replaced. The sanctuary had a new thermostat installed.

Telling

- With Monte recovering from a fall and surgery, he was out for the latter part of June and most of July. I took over counting and reporting our giving while he was recovering.

Inspections

- We had multiple inspections/cleanings this summer. I oversaw the fire alarm and panel testing, the hood vent cleaning in the kitchen, the termite inspection, sprinkler system inspection and inspection/replacement of all of our fire extinguishers. We are up to date and the next inspection that I am expecting is the back flow testing of our water system.

Onboarding Seung-Hye

- This summer I successfully onboarded Seung-Hye. She is set up with all of her tax information, payroll information, background check, and I just ordered her a company credit card. I was available to her for questions (that I may have had to reach out to Greta for) and support as she transitioned seamlessly into our St Mark family.

Stewardship/Budget Planning

- I will work on sending out budget calls when I get Wil's budget spreadsheet soon. We discussed this on Thursday of this week. I already placed our envelope order for 2026. We have a total of 30 families requesting giving envelopes.

Advent Planning

- We are coming up on the Advent season! We are planning on starting to decorate the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 30th. Keep an eye out for more details soon!

Funeral Planning

A funeral service for Betty Neher's son is scheduled for this coming Wednesday. Although the planning period has been brief, our office staff and volunteers have demonstrated exceptional teamwork and flexibility in ensuring that all arrangements are handled smoothly. Special appreciation is extended to Trish Marickovich for her leadership and coordination of the reception following the service. The collaborative effort among all involved has been a meaningful reflection of our congregation's care and support during this time.

Budget Calls

- I put out budget calls to committees.

Bazaar Assistance

- I took many phone calls, kept in contact with the Ecuador committee, helped with planning (building wise) for their bazaar.

Seasonal Newsletter

- I compiled information, pictures and content to build our seasonal newsletter within the past month. Our next newsletter will probably come out in December with Advent and Christmas information.

Red Cross Blood Drive

- Our next blood drive is this week! Thursday, November 20th from 1-5pm.

Giving Envelopes

- Giving envelopes arrived this week. I will put them out next Sunday for those who ordered them.

Poinsettias

- Poinsettias for Christmas were ordered in October and will be delivered on Christmas Eve, lunch time. Don't forget to order yours!
-

Estimates of Giving

- So far as of this week, we have received 26 Estimates of Giving so far totaling \$157,483. Last week I mailed out the envelopes that weren't picked up at church so we should see more coming through soon.
-

2025 Giving Statements

- 2025 Giving Statements were sent out mid-January. If for some reason you did not receive yours, just let me know.

Online Giving

- We had at least 8 family giving increases, resulting in some work to change those families who give online. Everyone's online giving is up to date!

Winter Weather Navigating

- The past two months have kept us on our toes with unpredictable weather. Thank you for your patience as we worked through winter conditions and adapted our congregation meeting plans.

Congregation Meeting Prep

- I compiled our meeting packet and had them available for those who wanted to pick them up early.

Giving Collaboration

- I worked with Monte to record our returned giving statements.

Republic Trash Savings

- For being loyal customers, I was able to save us \$100-\$150 a month on our trash collection!

Ecuador Wire Transfer

- I assisted the Ecuador Committee with completing their quarterly wire transfer to Ecuador.

Building Usage

- Our building is buzzing with activity! We have many upcoming events, including military balls, Scout events, piano recitals, weddings, and private gatherings. We are thankful to share our building with so many groups in our community.

Palms Ordered

- Palms for Palm Sunday are on their way!

Easter Lilies Ordered

- Easter Lilies are scheduled to be delivered during Holy Week. This coming week I will advertise the opportunity to purchase lilies for Easter.

“Bulletin Bonanza”

- In the office, we call it “bulletin bonanza” where we have many bulletins to prepare and print. Holy Week and Easter brings upon a bulletin bonanza. I really appreciate patience and any help offered as we enter another season of bulletin bonanza!

Fire Panel New Batteries

- Our building lost power two weeks in a row, due to car accidents and other unforeseen situations which caused our fire panel to drain its battery life. (Which is technically only a 3-year life span, and we were basically there.) The company we use to take care of our panel came out and replaced the batteries so we are up and running as normal and hopefully for at least 3 years.

Funeral and Wedding Plans

- March is going to be a busy month with two weddings and two funerals already on the schedule.

Other Building Sharing

- Alongside congregational events, we have multiple events taking place at St Mark. Including piano recitals and military balls for schools in our community.

PORT Success

- PORT was a super success as we fed over 130 neighbors. Big thanks to all who contributed, volunteered and made this event successful. Shout out to Gary Brocksmith for being our volunteer coordinator for PORT and putting heart and soul into making sure we share our love and support for neighbors in need.

Lent Wednesday Evenings

- Wednesday evening gatherings have been going very well. We have had success with volunteers bringing bread and soup as we share prayer and a simple yet meaningful meal together during Lent. There is a sign-up sheet on the kiosk for upcoming Wednesday's in Lent for those who would like to contribute a crock of soup or loaf of bread.

Blood Drive Success

- Our recent blood drive was a huge success! We collected 30 units of blood, filled 29 appointments. A huge thank you to Tom Teigeler as the volunteer coordinator. Our next blood drive will be held on August 4th.

Annual Report Call

- Annual report calls were sent out and I have received a few back already! I will send a reminder in early to mid-June to those who I haven't received yet.

Annual Synod Congregation Report

- Thank you to Pastor Joel and Wil Nelson for their assistance completing our annual congregation report the VA Synod.

Ecuador Committee and Preschool Assistance

- The past month and a half has been busy with the Ecuador committee, assisting their annual campaign. Also, with preschool and their end of the year activities, and registration/phone inquiries.

Wedding Coordination

- We had two wonderful weddings in April!

Piano Recital Coordination

- We have had a lot of piano recitals recently. The clients renting the space have been very impressed with the seamless process for renting the facility and the cleanliness and friendliness of all staff and volunteers present!

Summer Database Work

- Pastor Joel and I are taking on a summer project of going through our congregation database (Servant Keeper) to ensure all records are up to date, and even starting a paper record of these items. We want to ensure accuracy, reliability and easy access of records of the congregation and those who may need these records in years to come.

Computer Issues

- I have been working closely with Seung-Hye and Pastor Joel to address our office technology needs. We were able to have Seung-Hye's computer repaired by Computer Concepts at a very reasonable cost, which was a great outcome. Pastor Joel's computer will also need repairs in the near future.
- Looking ahead, I believe we will need to begin planning for the purchase of new laptops, as our current devices are nearing the end of their expected lifespan.
- A special thank-you to Gary for helping me navigate our Tech Team needs. Your knowledge, guidance, and willingness to help are truly appreciated!

As we close another wonderful year, I want to express my sincere gratitude to my coworkers and to our congregation. Thank you to my coworkers for your dedication, teamwork, and constant support—it is truly a blessing to work alongside each of you. I am also deeply thankful for our church family, whose encouragement, kindness, and faithfulness make our ministry so meaningful.

Together, we have accomplished so much this year, and I am grateful for all that we have shared. I look forward to another year successful year! As always, my door is open, so please don't hesitate to call, make an appointment, send me an email with any questions, concerns, or ideas. Thank you all for making this such a rewarding year! (757) 898-4395 // akral@smlconline.org ☺

Respectfully Submitted & With Love,

Amanda Kral
Parish Administrator

Christian Education

Students, both young and young at heart, have been learning, growing and exploring the gift of faith this year. As we discuss and make connections, as we have moments of realization - it is with a grateful heart that I say Christian education is alive and thriving at St Mark! We continue to explore the theme of God's love - that God loves the whole world and that Jesus's love is with us always!

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the volunteers that have made this year's journey together in faithful growing possible. The pre-K and elementary children's class was a collaborative effort with wonderful volunteers! Thank you to Sarah Miksa, Lisa and Chris Aeillo, and Allison Koch and Keith Nordquest who were supportive and kind, helping our students feel welcome and safe to grow and explore their faith! Jackie Jefferis and Steve Dartt led the combined middle and high school classes – thank you for your flexibility and enthusiasm! Amy Barbour and Cody Watson were much-appreciated substitutes when needed. Pastor Joel led discussions with the adult class.

I also want to share my thanks for the families of the children and youth that have participated in Sunday School this year, for their support and for the trust they extend to our teachers to share God's love with their children!

Highlights of the 2025-2026 year:

- Rally Day kicked off our Sunday School year in September. Throughout the year we kept the theme of "God loves us always, no matter what!" in our minds and hearts. This became a unifying theme throughout our exploration of the lectionary lessons.
- The adult Sunday School class was active and learning! Pastor Joel led classes for the adults, and members of the class facilitated discussion and faithful conversations as well!
- The children and youth Sunday School classes opened each week with a combined chapel time and then transitioned to their age-based classes using the Whirl Lectionary (Augsburg Fortress) curriculum based on the readings from worship or the Faith Lens Curriculum (from the ELCA).
- In October there was an intergenerational Reformation Day celebration with crafts and snacks on Reformation Sunday.

- There was an intergenerational Advent kickoff celebration between services at 10:00am in which everyone was invited to create Advent-related crafts and snacks that were provided.
- During the season of Advent, pre-K through 12th grade students painted wooden Love cutouts to share with the congregation, with a special note, delivered to pews on Sunday mornings.
- Easter Sunday brought an egg hunt, crafts, activities, and yummy snacks. Easter Sunday usually brings new and visiting faces to St Mark and this year was no exception – all were welcome and fun was had by the young and young at heart!
- The Sunday School year wrapped up on June 7th, with a time of celebration and reflection for the children and youth classes. Individuals were able to make suncatchers, play giant jenga, paint bird houses, and enjoy temporary tattoos reminding us to love another! There was also a coffee hour with snacks contributed by Sunday School and a photography station for anyone wanting to take a picture!

Synod Involvement:

- St Mark had one student attend Lost and Found this year from November 21 - 23, 2025 at Eagle Eyrie. Lost and Found is the Virginia Synod's annual faith-sharing retreat for 7th and 8th graders and their adult advisors. The weekend event featured large-group worship, small group discussions, a talent show and games.
- St Mark also had one student attend the Virginia Synod Youth Ministry Summit on April 24 - 25, 2026 at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Richmond. The event was an opportunity for the synod to gather input from the Synod's youth in shaping ministry together.
- If you are a youth or know a youth who might be interested in participating in a synod gathering, please let me know!

Looking ahead to the 2026-2027 School Year:

The Christian Education teachers and students are taking a pause this Summer and classes will resume in September. As we look to the fall, there are upcoming opportunities to volunteer, assist, contribute and support! If any of the upcoming events sounds interesting and you would like more information, or if you have ideas to share, please be in touch, I would love to hear from you!

- We will kick off the new Sunday School year in September with a "God's Work Our Hands" focus that day. "God's Work Our Hands" is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. If you have ideas for service projects, let's talk!
<https://www.elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/gods-work-our-hands-sunday>
- Intergenerational "Christian Friend Pen Pals" - Would you enjoy on-going correspondence with our pre-k/elementary Sunday School students? Our pre-k/elementary class loves making cards, notes and crafts to share! Throughout the year there will be various times that students will share kind and encouraging messages and crafts, as well as invite participants to share time and conversation with us (perhaps at a tea, a sing-a-long, or in helping create a craft together). If you are interested in becoming a Christian Friend Pen Pal or would like more information, please contact me.

- ELCA Youth Gathering - Minneapolis, Minnesota. The next ELCA Youth Gathering will take place June 28 - July 2, 2027 in Minneapolis. St Mark youth that will be entering 8th grade through 11th grade next year (2026 - 2027 school year) are eligible to attend. We will be collaborating with the congregations in our conference to prepare and plan for this gathering. If you are a youth or if you know a youth who is interested in learning more about this faith building opportunity, please contact me!
(<https://www.elca.org/gathering>)

Opportunities for Members to Volunteer:

St Mark Sunday School is actively looking for volunteers! If you are interested in volunteering in Sunday School, there are very flexible opportunities and various time commitments. Volunteering in Sunday School is fun and rewarding and does not have to be a large time commitment. We just ask that you welcome all children with a smile that reflects God's love and peace and share in our faith journey as we learn and grow together! Here are a few opportunities to volunteer:

- Sunday School teacher: we would love to add Sunday School teachers to participate in the schedule. Teachers do not need to be available every week – we work together collaboratively to create a schedule that works for volunteers – you can teach once a month, every other week, or every Sunday – we are flexible!
- Sunday School substitute teacher: There are times when our regularly scheduled teaching volunteers are absent. Volunteering to be a substitute gives us a list of individuals to contact if we need help on a particular Sunday. Often substitute Sunday School teachers are not responsible for preparing or delivering the lesson for the day, they are most frequently the 2nd adult in the room to provide assistance and support for the primary teacher that morning.
- Event Volunteer: Throughout the year there are times when the children and youth classes combine for celebrations and observances. We welcome volunteers to help plan and/or implement these events and help students navigate the activities that occur. Examples of such events from the past include Rally Day, Reformation Sunday, Advent Kick-Off, Easter Sunday activities and the end-of-the-year celebration.

If you are interested in volunteering or if you have an inspiration or idea that you would like to share, please contact me and I would love to connect with you! Thank you for your prayer and support of Christian Education at St Mark!

With Kind Regards,
Danielle Neubauer
Chair of the Christian Education
Phone: 804-929-3286
Email: dmengl@gmail.com

Facilities

Significant projects & maintenance activities:

- (Summer '25) we completed installation of 3 mini-split heat pump systems to replace existing equipment servicing the Family Focus Office and 2 classrooms
- (Summer '25) we replaced the Choir Room A/C and gas furnace with a heat pump
- (Summer '25) we replaced the fire alarm control panel's LCD screen
- (Summer '25) we replaced the thermostat serving the Sanctuary
- (Summer '25) we replaced the coil in the AC unit serving the Narthex, which had developed a leak
- (Fall '25) we replaced the duckbill valves in all toilets throughout the building
- (Winter '26) we replaced the chain holding up the Sanctuary Advent wreath, which broke, with a much stronger steel alternative
- (Winter '26) we created an inclement weather checklist and uploaded it to the SMLC box account. We are now better positioned to quickly respond to freezing weather, winter precipitation, and loss of power events
- (Winter '26) we refined and formalized our template for providing 5-year spend estimates to the Council on an annual basis
- (Winter '26) we patched holes in the wall of the large playroom
- (Spring '26) we replaced the roof of the trolley in the preschool's playground
- (Spring '26) we reattached the downspout by the chapel, after it became detached
- (Spring '26) we are working on replacing the water heater serving the hallway off of the Narthex
- (Spring '26) we are repairing small water leaks on faucets in both the women's and men's bathrooms in the hallway off of the Narthex

Upcoming projects:

- Remove items which have accumulated over time to the Leonard Shed. Those items will be made available in the Narthex for pickup, and then discarded or given to Goodwill
- More painting: there is always something to paint! Family Focus is likely next on the list
- Completion of asset tracking spreadsheet and tagging
- Update birds-eye building diagrams with overlays of critical utility shut-off locations (gas, water, electrical), and post throughout the building in case of leak or other emergency
- Bypass the hot water heater in the Family Focus area
- Complete roof replacement recommendation for Council's consideration
- Replace all of the old GFI outlets in the building
- Setup electronic reminders for several regular facilities actions (ex. Filter replacement, checking stock of certain items, winterizing outdoor faucets)

Our facility continues to require consistent preventative maintenance and upkeep, as should be expected of a building of its size and age.

Total facilities costs have risen in recent years and should be expected to stay relatively high; HVAC repair / replacement alone has cost us in the range of \$15-20k / year for the past several years, and we anticipate needing to perform over \$100k in roofing replacement / maintenance sometime in the next few years. We submit updated 5-year spending estimates to council on an annual basis and appreciate their support in proactive facility management and financial planning.

A small group of committed individuals is largely responsible for keeping things in good working order. We are always interested in talking to individuals who feel called to offer their time and talents to aid in this worthy cause! Reach out to any committee member if you are interested in getting involved, or if you have any questions.

Committee members: Tom Auth, Monte Correll, Jason Holden, Duane Melson, Kim & Al Schweizer, Fred Sommer

Sine Nomine Presents...

Submitted by: Carlton Hardy

HIGHLIGHTS

- Six concerts presented during the period Jul 2024- Jun 2025
 - Roberta Lea – Sep 28 - Singer/songwriter (country, pop, neo-soul, jazz)
 - King of Instruments – Nov 3 – Becky Davy, organist Bruton Parish Church
 - Virginia Handbell Consort – Dec 1 - holiday handbells
 - Williamsburg Choral Guild – Dec 15 – SATB chorus
 - Beckett Behel – Mar 1– pianist
 - Thomas Pandolfi – May 29 – pianist (in partnership with Senior Center York)

Who has been involved? Various performers ~ admin support from the office.

Carlton Hardy ~ sks55nnva@gmail.com ~ 757-599-3646

Tech Team

Stewardship in Stability: 2025–2026 Tech Update

This season, the Tech committee has prioritized responsible stewardship through maintenance. By focusing on the diligent care of our current resources and avoiding new hardware installations, we have focused on St Mark being financially grounded while keeping our essential systems running smoothly.

Modern Workplace & Infrastructure

Our robust infrastructure continues to support a hybrid working schedule, allowing staff to remain flexible and highly engaged. This foundation ensures our team can balance efficiency with a deep commitment to ministry.

Security & Access Control

Our technical security measures remain a reliable safeguard for our property. Our Access Control system is paying off tremendously, providing the ability to grant specific access to individuals when needed while maintaining overall security.

To ensure a welcoming environment, we utilize scheduled door openings for events, which has worked exceptionally well for worship and community activities. This system has required no significant expenses this year, validating our past investments.

Digital Presence & Outreach

We have streamlined our digital outreach using Meta Business Suite for better insights into our Facebook page <St. Mark Yorktown> new Instagram account <@stmarkyorktownva>. Additionally, smlconline.org now features a Posts section for VA Synod and ELCA news, alongside a Flickr feed for quick visual updates. In the future we hope to integrate our social media post into our homepage.

Reliability & Maintenance

By adopting a "maintenance-first" mindset, our systems have remained stable:

Upkeep: Proactive care has resulted in no major updates or hardware replacements being needed this year.

Protection: Ongoing backup practices keep our financial and parish records secure.

Support: We continue to provide documentation and support to ensure staff and volunteers are confident using our audio, video, and access tools.

Commitment to Resources

Every decision reflects our commitment to using your resources wisely. By maintaining our current infrastructure and optimizing digital tools, the committee honors our goals of safety, stewardship, and fiscal responsibility.

Thank you for your continued generosity, allowing St Mark to serve faithfully and responsibly.

Adopt-A-Child, Ecuador Committee

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

St. Mark Lutheran Church's Ecuador Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in sponsoring a child at the Refugio de Los Suenos in Quito, Ecuador. Your sponsorship provides these children with an education, food, medical and dental care, taught life skills and vocational skills and shown God's love. Because of your love, compassion and generosity, these children will be provided with a safer and brighter future filled with God's love and hope.

This year, 138 students between the ages of 4 and 17 were sponsored through this Ministry. In addition, 7 adolescents will have the opportunity to attend a University and continue building a better future for both themselves and their community. Many of these University graduates come back and volunteer at the Refugio.

We feel blessed to have 12 new Padrinos sponsoring 18 students. God continues to bless the students at the Refugio with the love and support of our St Mark members and friends.

If you wish to sponsor a child, please contact St Mark Lutheran Church at 757-898-4395 for more information.

Battery Recycling

In 2025, we recycled 124 pounds of alkaline batteries - nearly the same as in 2024. Thank you for your support of this small effort to reduce our waste and care for our planet!

-Jason Holden, chair

Challenger Little League

Home Run for Inclusivity: St Mark's 2026 Challenger Little League Sponsorship

The crack of the bat and the cheers of the crowd were louder than ever this spring! As part of our ongoing mission to serve and include all members of our community, **St Mark Lutheran Church** was once again a proud sponsor of the **Challenger Little League District 7** for the 2026 season.

A Season of Tremendous Growth

We are thrilled to report that 2026 saw a **significant increase in player participation**. More families than ever joined the league, providing more children with physical and intellectual

challenges the opportunity to experience the joy of teamwork, the thrill of hitting a home run, and the confidence that comes from playing organized sports.

The Challenger Division continues to be a vital space where the focus isn't on the score, but on the smiles. Our sponsorship helped ensure that every athlete received a jersey, equipment, and the support needed to succeed on the field.

Gratitude for Our Local Partners

Their success this year was amplified by the incredible facilities provided by York County. The **McReynolds Athletic Complex (MAC)** provided a safe, professional, and welcoming environment that allowed our athletes to truly shine. It is heartening to see our local government and our church working toward the same goal: ensuring that every child can experience the joy of baseball.

We are so grateful for the County's continued investment in these high-quality facilities. The MAC is a vital asset for our families and served as an inspiring home for the league this year.

How You Can Help

Community support is what keeps the Challenger program running strong. We encourage members to reach out to their own local Board of Supervisors to express appreciation for the county's support of inclusive programs like this. A quick note of thanks helps ensure that the importance of these facilities and programs remains a priority for our local leaders.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the 2026 season in this annual report, we are reminded of the power of community. Whether it was the "Buddies" assisting on the field or the congregation members cheering from the stands, your support made this growth possible.

Additional information, including this year's ball game schedule, is available through smlconline.org/challenger. We invite you to visit the site to view highlights from this year and stay updated on the next session.

Thank you, St Mark, for making the 2026 season a true "grand slam" for our community!

Grounds Committee (Garden Stewards)

Genesis 1 : 11

And God said

"Let the Earth put forth grass and plants"

- Spring work is now complete. Fertilized the property times two in early April and May.. weeded all of the flowerbeds.
- Mulched the large front flower bed that faces the road and the corner flower bed with the small sign
- Early flowering bulbs and shrubs, peaked their bloom for the holy week and Easter celebration
- Flowering plants in the front bed have been improved with addition of red canna, daylilies, and dahlias
- Yellow and white Shasta daisies and purple asters are already in place
- All are perennial plants
- Prayer paths are a work in progress, needing some mulching and new borders
- The grounds are policed regularly for stray trash and garbage
- Seasonal annuals have been placed near the entrances to the Narthex and Church entrance also in planters that border the patio area
- Summer work includes keeping up with mowing the grass and keeping the shrubbery cut back
- Indoor plants are cared for by our plant specialists Kim and Al Schweitzer
- Other members of the garden stewards include Virgil King Steve Dart, Charlie Rossi, and Dick Rohla.

We welcome anyone wishing to participate garden stewards meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings 9 to 11 AM. Weather permitting.

Any donations of perennials are welcome, bulbs, roots, and mature plants we will make good use of any of them

Contact information: Dick Rohla, rohla5237@yahoo.com
Mobile phone 701-371-0520

PORT

Compassion in Action: St Mark's Support for PORT

The 2025-2026 season was a landmark year for the St Mark **PORT (People Offering Resources Together)** ministry. As regional housing instability continues to rise, our congregation and local partners stepped up with record levels of support for our unhoused neighbors.

Meeting an Urgent Need

Regional data from the **Greater Virginia Peninsula Homelessness Consortium** underscores why this mission is so vital. The number of people experiencing homelessness in our region recently rose to 456, an 11% increase from the prior year. This surge is reflected in our own service numbers:

- **Record-Breaking Support:** On November 30, we partnered with **St Andrews Episcopal Church in Hilton Village** to support **85 guests**, our highest November total on record.
- **Winter Sanctuary:** On February 13, alongside Chestnut Memorial UMC, we served **131 guests** with food and shelter.
- **Essential Sustenance:** Volunteers provided a record **216 dinner meals and breakfast bags** this season.
- **Rising Demand:** Across the peninsula, PORT saw a 17% surge in duplicated stays, reaching 13,660 as eviction rates and rental costs rise.

A Community Effort

This mission succeeded thanks to dedicated hands and hearts. A special thank you goes to the volunteers from **Langley Federal Credit Union** for their incredible support this season. We also celebrate **Cub Scout Pack 595** for their hard work in assembling breakfast bags.

Beyond food, our efforts ensured guests received winter clothing and facilitated medical care. Through PORT's partnership with Riverside Health System, 70% of guests received medical attention this season, including over 1,100 nursing visits.

Looking Toward 2026-2027

With the program serving over 28,250 meals this year and costs increasing to \$75.91 per person, your continued generosity is more critical than ever. Thank you, St Mark, for being the hands and feet of service for our community.

Visit smlconline.org/port/ to join us for the upcoming season.

Red Cross Blood Drives

- Three blood drives were conducted
 - Nov 20, 2025 produced 20 units of blood
 - Feb 26, 2026 produced 32 units
 - May 12, 2026 produced 30 units
 - Aug drive was cancelled by Red Cross
- Each unit has the possibility of saving 3 lives = **246 lives!**
- Next drives are Aug 4th and Nov 17th
- Need a 2nd volunteer in case of scheduling issues between Red Cross and Teigeler
- Thank you to Amanda Kral: while working as Parish Administrator and Parish Secretary she still helps setting-up and registering people
- TEAM: Tom Teigeler SMLC Red Cross Coordinator

St Mark Preschool (St Mark Foundation)

St. Mark Preschool is operated under St. Mark Foundation as a non-profit 501-C organization. We receive no money or funding from St. Mark Lutheran Church. The church supplies us with three classrooms, the sanctuary, and the playground. Our preschool board, who runs the Foundation, consists of Pastor Joel Neubauer - President, Karen Taminger – Secretary, Matt Auth - Council Representative, Gail Teigeler – Treasurer, Amanda Hunt – Preschool Director, and two preschool parent representatives. The Garden Stewards help us maintain the trails, flower gardens, and the playground. The Property Committee help us when facility issues arise. We have the support of Pastor Joel who shares his time with us two times a week to participate in chapel time, religious instruction, and music with our students. He also assists at graduation, open house, parent meetings and fun activities. Pastor Joel is available to our families and staff for guidance and counseling when needed. The church office supports us by assisting in answering the phones, receiving various registration materials, and answering the door. Our first day of school was Wednesday, September 3 and our last day was Thursday, May 14.

We have 38 children enrolled in our preschool. We offer classes for 2.5-year-olds, 3 year olds, 4 year old's and a STEM science and math class for our 3 and 4 year old's. Activities and special events include, Halloween, Parade, Fire Truck Visit, schoolwide Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Pageant with Pastor Joel, Bear Hunt, Easter Egg Hunt, Field Day, Mother's Day Tea and End of Year celebration.

Ms. June, the founder of our preschool, is retiring after 24 years of service as Director and teacher to our fours, threes, and two and half year-old classes. Ms. Marty is also retiring after 20 years of service teaching our fours and threes. We thank them for their love, time, and talents they shared with our little preschool.

St. Mark Preschool is looking forward to our upcoming school year when we welcome 38 of our littlest learners to our preschool family. We are also excited to welcome Charisse Beacroft to our teaching staff for our three and two and half year-old classes.

Mandy Hunt, Director, St. Mark Preschool
preschool@smlconline.org

SMLC Spirit Walkers

- The Spirit Walkers meet each Wednesday morning at 8:30 a.m. at the Yorktown Battlefield Visitor Center parking lot. We begin with a prayer or short devotion.
- We walk approximately three miles. We begin at the Visitor Center, walk across to Main Street, walk in and out of the streets in the village, past the Courthouse, down to Water Street, along the York River sidewalk, and up to the American Revolution Museum. We make a U turn and reverse our walk back to the Visitor Center.
- We welcome all to join us. When the weather gets to the 85-95+ degrees temperature, we begin our walk at 8 a.m.

Contact Sandy Hopkins, 757-869-3893

Stitching with Friends

- Stitching with Friends meets on Monday morning in the church Library at 10:30 a.m.
- The purpose of our group is for fellowship and to provide items to bring comfort to members or close friends of our church. Some examples of our works are prayer shawls, blankets for infants who are baptized at our church, small teddy bears, hats for chemo patients, fidget sleeves for Alzheimer's patients, caps for newborn babies at the local hospitals, and hat, scarves, and mittens for the Christmas Tree for Social Services recipients.
- Our plans for the future are to continue with our current projects and be ready to assist our church members with special requests.
- All members are invited to join us. If you do not knit or crochet, we can teach you.

Tables of Eight



Homes and restaurants are a wonderful setting for ***Tables of Eight***. Members come together four times between September and May in small, informal groups to share stories, and interests, and strengthen friendships. In the words of the hymn: "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above." Watch for the signup sheet in August and plan to make new friends.



**St Mark Lutheran Church
118 Old York Hampton Hwy.
Yorktown, VA 23692
757-898-4395**

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