



THE PARISH POST

DECEMBER 2009

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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The Rev. James E. Person, 717-695-7525

FROM THE PASTOR

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

This Christmas Eve, we will once again hear those familiar words from the prophet Isaiah. As we gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior we are reminded that his birth is not only a miracle that set in motion the means of our salvation, it is also a fulfillment of prophecy; another example of God keeping his promises.

It is amazing that people have shared this miraculous story of God's faithfulness for centuries, yet we still anxiously anticipate its re-telling every year. It is a story that is over 2000 years old, and yet it is as new as the gifts under the tree or the freshly fallen snow. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and God's story of love and mercy sent to us in the birth of his Son has brought hope to generations in the past, brings hope to us today, and will continue to bring hope to our children, grandchildren, and generations to come.

The fact that the story of Jesus' birth is still as exciting today as it was centuries ago is a testament to the living nature of God's word. The fact that the story will remain exciting until the story of Christ's second coming takes its place reveals the eternal character of God's love for us. We find hope in hearing the Christmas readings each year because from one Christmas to the next each of us inevitably spends some time walking in darkness; some even journeying into that land of deep darkness described by the prophet Isaiah. We find in the story of Jesus' birth the reassurance we so desperately seek; the light for which we long has, in fact, already come.

Something special happens in the hearts of Christians every Christmas Eve. We are drawn from far and wide, to take time out of busy schedules to spend time in the presence of God and to hear once again those reassuring words. Some may say it is merely tradition or the "warm, fuzzy feeling" we get from being in church that fills the pews on Christmas Eve, but I believe there is more to it than that. I believe it is the Holy Spirit, moving in us, around us, and through us, that draws us out of our brightly decorated homes and into the warm candlelight of the worship space. The Holy Spirit works in spite of modern-day commercialism. The Holy Spirit calls to us in the words of beloved

PURPOSE STATEMENT - St. Marks is a church that

Praises God

Relishes Relationships

Acts as God's Ambassadors

Yearns to Learn

Serves God and Our Neighbors

Worship

Fellowship

Evangelism

Discipleship

Ministry

Christmas carols. The Holy Spirit appears to us in the Crèches that dot the landscape. The same Holy Spirit that put words in the mouths of prophets like Isaiah draws us to the one place where we can immerse ourselves in the story of the Great Light that shines in our dark world.

The Advent and Christmas seasons are busy times in the Church just as they are “out there.” Still it is one of my favorite parts of the year. As the lights of Christmas begin to brighten the landscape it is a reminder to us that, even though we experience times of darkness in our lives, God continues to renew our world and our life. Hearing those words of scripture that are so familiar that many of us can recite them from memory makes us realize that God’s love for us never ends and that there is a cycle to our lives that sustains us and leads us from this life into the next.

As we keep our focus on that Great Light that shines on us, we will always see in our celebration of Christmas the celebration of hope, comfort, salvation, and eternal life. Rather than be lured by advertisers into thinking about how much we don’t have, we are reminded of what we do have. What we have is not of this world and can never be bought, paid for, exchanged or replaced. God’s only Son, born in the flesh for our salvation, is the priceless Great Light that shines on us now and forevermore. What an amazing gift!

We begin our Christmas Eve worship hearing the prophetic words of Isaiah; as we leave worship that night let us join the shepherds we hear about in the Gospel according to St. Luke; “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard, as it had been told them.”

Wishing you a blessed Advent and joyous Christmas,

Pr. Jim Person

PLEASE NOTE: We have been advised by our landscaping service that it is in our best interest to have one of the pin oak trees standing between our parking lot and Arlington Ave. removed. Due to age and disease, large branches are falling from the tree and it has become hazardous. Also, it is robbing valuable nutrients from the healthier trees on either side of it. We have made arrangements with a professional to remove the tree soon.



— Sat on the window sill in the room next to the church office one dreary November afternoon and watched Christmas Cards being stuffed, addressed, and stamped. Word has it that they will be available to anyone who would like to take part in the “Christmas Card in Every Home” Program beginning the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Many thanks to those who support this popular project both financially and with time.

— Enjoyed the congregational Thanksgiving potluck on November 22. Again the people of St. Mark’s demonstrated their willingness to share their gifts and cooking talents.

— Keeps visiting the choir room for some candy with the added benefit of hearing a dedicated group of men and women getting ready for their Advent/Christmas concert on the afternoon of December 13. Looks forward to being with his church friends as well as others in the community.

— Will be somewhere in the church all the time during the hustle and bustle that comes with getting ready for The birthday of Our Lord Jesus. But the church mouse says that the peace that is to come is well worth it.

Have a blessed and joyous Christmas!

CHRISTMAS CAROLING AT COLONIAL PARK MALL

This will held on Monday, December 14, 2009 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Candy Canes and an Invite Card will be given to shoppers. St. Mark’s members will be singing Christmas Carols. We will meet next to Santa in center court. Dress brightly for the season. Sign-up sheets available at both entrances. Your voices are needed. We also have a wonderful time. Come join us. All congregation members and friends are invited.

THANK YOU NOTES

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Thank you so much for your cards, thoughts, prayers, and calls during my recent illness and hospital stay. It has been a long, painful ordeal but I am seeing the end. I feel much better each day thanks to folks like you. I felt each prayer from God's angels on earth. Thanks again. All was greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Gretchen Nettling-Patti

To our St. Mark's family,

Thank you for your outpouring of caring and support during my father's illness and then his sudden passing. Your prayers, thoughts and cards propped us up during a very sorrowful time. They were much needed and we could not possibly express our gratitude enough. This is a great church family to be part of. We are very blessed.

Sincerely,
Melissa McLaughlin & Family

Thanks to the Good Samaritans!

Thanksgiving and Christmas are times when we become more aware of the gifts we receive as well as give. Without the help of so many, it would have been difficult to provide meals for the families that were in need of help. Some of the meals were homemade, some were convenience meals and others were "carry-out". We did not receive any calls for emergency plumbing, electrical help or storm damage emergency clean up. However, we are thankful for the volunteers on our list and hope you'll consider giving your gifts of time and talent and becoming a volunteer as well. Please give Roy and Judee Leister a call at 545-4418 so that your name may be added to the list and the Good Samaritan Club can continue to give these wonderful gifts of love.

Dear Jesse, Youth and Supporters,

I was so pleased on October 25th to see such wonderful support of the new confirmands, Kailyn Edwards and

Beth Evans. For those of you who were not able to be with them, the SMYG surprised the girls with a beautiful coffee hour breakfast. As it was a surprise for the girls, the congregation was also surprised. A great amount of work by Jesse, parents, youth and other supporters helped make a special day one to remember. It is so great to see the love and friendship the group shares not only with each other, but with us, the congregation. Thank you for all your gifts.

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Thank you every much for every card, prayer, flower and visit. Thanks to Pastor Person for his numerous visits, they were very much appreciated. It all helped with dealing with rehab.

Sincerely,
Ken Forney

St. Mark's has wonderful youth! What a shocking surprise to see every leaf gone off our lawn! I can't begin to thank you enough! God Bless each and every-one of you.

Mildred Forney

Dear St. Mark's Family,

I wish to thank the church for the cards, phone calls, flowers and visits during my recent illness. It is nice to be a member of St. Mark's, the church of caring people.

Sincerely,
Gary Graham

Dear St. Mark's Youth Group,

Thank you so much for the super job of leaf disposal around our home on Saturday. What a joy to see car loads of your group and leaders arrive with rakes to help us "older" members.

Thank you all and the anonymous members who put us on your request list. We really do appreciate your help and everything you do at St. Mark's.

Sincerely,
Gary & Norma Graham

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the Christ Church Family we are grateful for the gift of \$500.00 being receipts from the Apple Festival, and \$898.00 donations from the members. Your gifts mean a lot to us and to the people we serve.

With your help, advocacy and compassion, the Health Ministries continues to provide medical, dental and nursing care; health education classes for women in area shelters; social service and advocacy interventions and referrals; a food voucher program; the provision of things like hygiene products, blankets, medicines and the like. All services are free, and screening is done on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you for your steadfast support. I pledge that the gifts you collect and send are met with careful stewardship and swift re-distribution among those who need them most. With your help, we are an oasis of kindness and very practical assistance in an area that needs us.

In Gratitude & Peace,
The Rev. Jody Silliker

To Our Youth, Advisors and Jesse,

At this season of Thanksgiving, I want to acknowledge your kind deeds and community service. Please accept my grateful thanks for helping with the raking of my leaves and yard work. It was a pleasant surprise and I truly appreciate your hard work.

As a member of the "older generation" at St. Mark's, let me assure you all, that your presence, high spirit, and good works do not go unnoticed.

With heartfelt thanks!
Julie Rowe

ELECTION DAY BAKERS & SERVERS

A Big Thank You for your support of time & cookies for this yearly event. It was a wonderful opportunity to reach out to our neighbors with love and an invite to come worship at St. Mark's.

St. Mark's Evangelism Ministry

ST. MARK'S BOOK CLUB

<u>Date</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Author</u>
Jan. 28	Mr. America	Mark Adams
Feb. 25	The Secret Life of Bees	Sue Monk Kidd
Mar. 25	The Last Lecture	Randy Pausch
Apr. 22	The Lucky One	Nicholas Sparks
May 27	Velva Jean Learns to Drive -	Jennifer Niven
June 24	Joshua: A Parable for Today -	Joseph F. Girzone
July 22	The Devil in the White City -	Erik Larson
Aug. 26	Amish Grace	Donald Kraybill

We meet in the parlor at 10 a.m. on the dates listed. Everyone is welcome to join us for our discussions.

YOUR 2010 GIVING ENVELOPES are available in the Narthex.. Please make sure to stop and pick yours up!

THE CRAFT ARTISIANS will be meeting on the following dates:

Thursday, December 3
Thursday, December 10

All items we asked for in the November Parish Post have been received.

We are looking for a free-standing bookcase.

NEW ADDRESSES:

JEANNE ROWAND

Eddy Village Green
421 W. Columbia Street, Room 16
Cohoes, NY 12047

JESSICA RAE DULLEN

7739 Farmdale Ave
Harrisburg, PA 17112-3875

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

DECEMBER 24, 2009

NOON, 6:00 PM & 8:30 PM

SOCIAL SERVICES MINISTRY has decided to help 2 large families for Christmas. We are asking for any help that you can give us. We will be providing each family with a meal and hopefully clothing for all and some toys. All items collected can be put in the wooden boxes at either entrance to the church. We know that things are tight everywhere in this economic upheaval. But we would like to try and help these families as much as we can. If you buy something for any of them please mark which family it goes to and put the age on the tag. We thank you in advance for any and all help that you can give us.

We will be collecting items till December 21st.

FAMILY # 1

DAD size 36 pants, XL shirts

MOM size 4X or 26/28

DAUGHTER 9 years old size 8 slim bottom,
8-10 top

SON 8 years old size 8 slim bottom,
8-10 top

DAUGHTER 6 years old size 6 or 7 slim bottom,
7 or 8 top

DAUGHTER 5 years old size 6 bottom, 7 top

DAUGHTER 5 years old size 5 top and bottom

SECOND FAMILY

MOTHER

DAUGHTER 21 years old

DAUGHTER 19 years old (mother of baby)

DAUGHTER 12 years old size 8

BABY 5 months old size 9 months,
size 3 Huggies
Needs baby bottles

I would suggest gift cards from Wal-Mart or Target for most of this family.

W/ELCA Activities for December 2009

12/1 - 9:30 am Sewing & Project Day

12/6 - Angel Tree for gifts for Christ Lutheran Church and Hats & Mittens for Pinnacle Health and Rocky Point Indian Reservation

12/8 - 9:30 am Esther Circle

12/12 - 9:00 am Fill fruit baskets for shut-ins

12/12 - 12/13 Deliver fruit baskets to shut-ins

OUT OF MY MIND.... random thoughts from my overactive brain

STUFF.

I have too much of it!

It's all over my house, inside and out. My car has stuff, too. My garage. My yard. My life..... I'm sure you have stuff, too.

Too much stuff.

Honestly, I try to keep it organized, but it gets away from me in the blink of an eye. It piles up so fast - and it keeps coming! Some of it is uninvited (like junk mail), but I have to admit that a lot of it comes home voluntarily with me. Why do I keep buying or collecting STUFF that I don't need and don't have room for? The time I spend cleaning/cleaning out/organizing all this stuff takes time away from other, more important, life tasks. Plus, it's poor Christian stewardship, wasting the resources that God has so generously provided me. I could have done much more with the money I spent - or others in the world could have put it to better use. I have so much, and they have so little.

The Seekers Sunday School class is finishing our study of "Earthbound: Created and Called to Care for Creation." The video series has taught us that it is our Christian vocation (calling) to care for the earth, since this is where God dwells with us. It has been thought-provoking and has inspired some interesting discussion. However, the series has not given us any concrete suggestions as to HOW we are supposed to do this - and we want ideas! So next we're going to move on to some discussion of ways we can change our lives in order to live out our calling to care for this paradise we've been given. I like to call it "Living simply, so that others can simply live."

At this time of the year when "Christian stewardship" is on our minds, I'm making a conscious decision to take control over my stuff rather than let it control me. Wanna join me?

April Trout

DID YOU KNOW? . . .

That you can help families that need to take advantage of Ronald McDonald House in Hershey. Ronald McDonald House receives funds from the tabs off soda cans. There are containers at both entrances and by the soda machine where these tabs can be deposited. Less well known, are the funds they receive from any 2-sided shiny paper whether it is a small insert in a bill, a pamphlet, newspaper insert, or a whole magazine. There is a collection truck behind McDonalds opposite Colonial Park Shopping Center for all these shiny papers — even though it says “magazines only”. The House is a great service to families in need. I hope you’ll consider helping these families. Thanks.

“THEY’RE COMING, THEY’RE COMING!” — not the British but the cards for our “Christmas Card in every home” project. They will be ready the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Once again we ask for your help by picking up a packet of 5 pre-stamped and addressed Christmas cards. Then, jot a short message, sign your name, put on your return address and mail the cards.

COMMUNION CUPS SPONSOR
are given by Margaret & John Herigan in grateful appreciation for the love shared by our congregation.

PRAYER PARTNERS MINISTRY ENCOURAGING CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION

The Whittle Farm provided the ideal retreat setting for the Prayer Partners Ministry to receive some fresh insights and Biblical concepts concerning prayer.

Our hope is to involve the whole congregation into a deeper and more meaningful prayer life through education, actively meeting for group prayer sessions, welcoming input on personal and national concerns of individual members. Our goal is to keep everyone informed monthly through the Parish Post of our prayer focus as it unfolds.

With the love of Christ, we are genuinely concerned about each and every member of our church family. We feel at this time we can express this best by continuing to pray for each member of St. Mark’s not through a telephone call or a note but through naming a few members each month, along with a ministry or a certain group of people in the Parish Post. Individuals will appear in alphabetical order. The following are the individual members for this month. Please pray with us for:

Karin Adams	Anna Ahearn	Barbara Allen	Janice Alloway	John Amaike
Eniko Ambrus	Robert Anderson	Daphne Anderson	Summer Appleberry	Adam Appleby
Aaron Appleby	Ethan Appleby	Carrie Appleby	Patricia Ashbrook	Doris Atkinson

Our ministry for prayer this month is The Prayer Partners Ministry.

The blue prayer slips provided in the pew racks will continue to be available for your special prayer needs and concerns.

Our prayer is that each and every one of us will take advantage of one of the greatest privileges God has blessed us with - to communicate with Him through prayer. As a result we will be allowing the Holy Spirit to flow more freely through us, thus releasing His power to accomplish His will for St. Mark’s.

In Christian Love,
Prayer Partners Ministry
Jeanne Flickinger

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Taylor Trout
 2 Jonnie Deibler
 Gregory Bennick
 4 Suzan Seitz
 6 Dolores Magaro
 7 Irene Lutz
 10 Betty Regan
 Mary Ann Kane
 11 Clara Ruta
 Adam Appleby
 12 Alexis Ulrich
 13 David Gaddes
 David Wahl
 Vaughn Heym
 Anne Stetler
 14 Susan Snyder
 Patricia Ashbrook
 Daniel Flickinger
 15 Constance Wise
 16 Harold Sultzaberger
 18 Emma Betz
 19 Amber Minarich
 Alice Houck
 Clint Harr
 20 Michael Betz, Jr.
 Colleen Keith
 Justin Duman
 Colin McClenahen
 21 Judee Leister
 22 Shawn Smith
 Austin Fleegal
 24 Sarah Kirchdoerfer
 25 Christine Kroah
 Vivian Paumer
 30 Madison Spencer

SPECIAL DATES

- * Second Sunday of Advent, *December 6, 2009*
- * Third Sunday of Advent, *December 13, 2009*
- * Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 20, 2009*
- * First day of winter, *December 21, 2009*
- * Christmas Eve, *December 24, 2009*
- * Christmas Day, *December 25, 2009*
- * New Year's Eve, *December 31, 2009*

BABY BIBS - Attention St. Mark's members & friends. You are invited to give a gift from St. Mark's, You and Pastor Person to anyone with a newborn baby. They may be a friend, relative, co-worker, etc. The listing of births in the newspaper has been discontinued. Donna Lahr currently sends these bibs to families living near St. Mark's. Her source of names is limited and we have extra bibs. One of these bibs is also given to children when they are baptized by Pastor Person. Please find the packets in the hall near the choir room.

This is a great way to serve, reach out and invite people with new babies.

Thank You from St. Mark's Evangelism Ministry

MUSIC MINISTRY NOTES

The musicians of St. Mark's are preparing for an afternoon of carols, reflective readings and christmas anthems to be presented on **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13**, at **4:00 pm** in the **church sanctuary**.

Familiar and new sounds of the christmas season will be performed by the Mission Bells, Chancel Choir, Men's Ensemble, Advent Choir, flute and piano duo, and most importantly, by you, the audience. We would like this hour to be an opportunity for reflection on the real meaning of Christmas - The Birth of Jesus, our Savior. Come and share the joy and wonder of this holy season as we listen to meditative readings, "Nativity Carol" by John Rutter, "Lo, How a Rose" rung by the Mission Bells and many other carols.

Light refreshments will be served in the Parlor, gift of the Music Ministry to you, our audience.

No offering will be requested.

In His Service
Joyce

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

12/6 - 6:00 PM - Youth Group Meeting
 12/11 to 12/13 - Winter Retreat (The Loft, Carlisle)
 Meet at 5:30 PM

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