



The Parish Post

DECEMBER 2023

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church
4200 Londonderry Road, Harrisburg, PA 17109
(717) 652-6700

www.stmarksharrisburg.org

e-mail: stmarksharrisburg@gmail.com

The Rev. James E. Person, 717-712-8191



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:1-5

However you think of the devil, Satan, evil, or whatever it is that stands in opposition to God for first place in our lives, it is represented by the “darkness” that John names in the opening verses of his Gospel. John gives us the assurance that the darkness has not, cannot, and will not, overcome the light of Christ, the light that shines the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit into our lives and on our world.

As I look around during this season of Advent though, it seems to me that darkness is not the problem. The bigger issue these days is all the competing lights that can blind us to the presence of Christ even as we prepare to celebrate his birth and stay awake for his coming again. Amusement parks, businesses, yards, stores, and more public places than ever before are so brightly lit that one almost needs sunglasses to navigate at night these days. And as I look at the vast majority of those blindingly bright displays the question I must ask is, “Where is Jesus?” The darkness might not be able to overcome the light, but all the competing shiny things the world puts before our eyes can blind us to its presence if we’re not careful.

MISSION STATEMENT: Nourished by Word and Sacrament, the mission of the members of St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to spread God's Word in Jesus Christ through our thoughts, words, and actions, proclaiming God's good news for all to hear and live.

In John's Gospel he interrupts his grand and poetic description of "The Beginning" by introducing John the Baptist:

"There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

In this world of overwhelming, blindingly bright distractions, the Church must take on the role of John the Baptist as a witness to testify to **the true light, which enlightens everyone**. Like John, we are not here to draw attention to ourselves or boast about all the wonderful things we do, but we do many wonderful things. We do them, as John did, to point to the One who is greater than us, and Christmas time is the perfect opportunity as more people are focused on one event at this time of year than any other. Everyone may not be mindful of the significance of that event, but it is a good time to open conversation about "the reason for the season."

We have a long-standing tradition at St. Mark's of providing food, gifts, and a caring connection to families that might otherwise miss out on much of the joy of Christmas. So many of us have been richly blessed materially and otherwise and it is gratifying to see how generously our members share their blessings with others. In his Gospel, John talks about the "signs" that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Our generous sharing is certainly a sign of the difference faith in the Son makes not just for us but for those around us as well.

The numbers of people who attend church services on Christmas Eve is another sign of the profound effect that the birth of Jesus has had on our world. Around the world, millions of people take time out from whatever distractions the world puts in front of us to come and worship the Savior born in a manger 2000 years ago. We come amid the flash and fanfare of LEDs, inflatable everything's, and every imaginable character except Jesus, to a place where we celebrate that silent, holy night with simple candlelight. Whether due to faith, tradition, or just because it's "the thing to do" Christians share the light of Christ in worship and praise that costs us nothing and gives us strength, comfort, and hope in return.

This year is one of those unique years when December 24th is both the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. In keeping with the spirit of the liturgical season of Advent, our 8:15AM service that day will be an Advent celebration as we hear the story of the angel's visit to Mary announcing that she will give birth to the

Son of God. At Noon we will then have a dramatic retelling of the Christmas story and at 6:00PM a traditional candlelight celebration. All of these opportunities to worship are especially meaningful as we take time to celebrate the birth of Christ with family and friends, apart and away from the blinding lights that try to obstruct our view of the presence of Jesus in our world.

If you find yourself looking at all the bright lights and wondering, "Where is Jesus?", remember, the invitation is always open to meet him at his house!

Your partner in ministry and mission,



Pr. Jim Person

Council President

Before we were even ready, Advent arrived. That means the holiday season, for real. just look around. Halloween disappeared and before we had time to recognize Thanksgiving all the blow up Christmas figures started covering yards along with strings of lights. I can't pretend I'm ready for Christmas, presents to buy, etc,etc.

But I do feel more ready spiritually. This is the season when our Lord was born. Our church year ends at the beginning.

I hope you join me in welcoming the perfect birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ Child. Of course Jesus is part of our lives here at St Marks year-round, but now we truly welcome him into our lives again and renew our faith as we hear the fascinating Christmas Story. The shepherds in the fields, the journey from the manger in Bethlehem to Jerusalem. The adoration by the Magi and the appearance of the Angels. It all comes together on that Holy Night! The turmoil in the Middle East can not tarnish the message or the Joy we feel at this time of year.

Yes, I pray for peace in Gaza and Israel, I also pray for the safety of our sisters and brothers in Ukraine. Our world is troubled; but for a brief time on Christmas Eve, all is well. I pray that you can also feel peace and joy and hope for our future as we share the magic of our Saviors birth.

Wishing you a joyous holiday season, a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2024.

Yours in Christ

Jay Snyder



Hello St. Mark's!

Hello all my wonderful St. Mark's friends!

Well, here we are again coming in to my favorite time of the year. Advent and Christmas. My little mouse heart gets so full of anticipation, joy and love.

There has been a lot going on around my St. Mark's the last several months. Abraham's table, in the back of the church, is a wonderful spot for everyone to gather on Sunday mornings, before, between and after church services. If you haven't tried it yet, please do. There have been some very good goodies there.

We had our Halloween Trunk or Treat and it was a huge success. I really enjoyed all the kids and the costumes. Thank you to those that participated. We couldn't do it without all of you.

The youth held their dinner church in conjunction with their spaghetti dinner. Good food and good fellowship. Thank you to all of you that participated in every way.

Our two music leaders, Ms. Faith and Ms. Jennie got our choir and bell choir up and running. What a pure joy it was to hear those voices and bells once again fill our sanctuary. I just love my church on every level.

Now we're through the Thanksgiving celebration and have moved on to the anticipatory season of Advent. It is such a special time in the church as we await the birth of Jesus. Hope to see you all here on Sundays. I'll be where I'm supposed to be.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very blessed Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

*Peace be with you all,
The St. Mark's Church Mouse*





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November 14, 2023

St. Mark Lutheran Church

4200 Londonderry Rd

Harrisburg, PA 17109-4917

Dear St. Mark,

Thank you so very much for helping to make the 2023 Quilt and Craft Auction a great success!. One reason for the event's success was the many fine Quilts and Craft items donated to be purchased in the silent craft auction and in the live quilt auction. item(s) was greatly appreciated:

Donation From: St. Mark Lutheran Church, Harrisburg
- Quilt

This year's auction raised \$15,923.23 for the Endowment Fund (that's \$76.77 away from \$16,000!). Growing the Endowment Fund will help sustain the LCC's ministries so that many future campers can experience our joyful and faith-building outdoor ministry. Again, thank you for being part of the 2023 Quilt and Craft Auction and for your generous donation.

We've already begun planning the 20th Annual **Quilt and Craft Auction**, scheduled for November 3, 2024, at Nawakwa. With your help, **can** we raise **\$20,000** for the **20th Quilt & Craft Auction? YES!**

I hope that you will help make the 2024 Quilt Auction a **success** by again **providing** something to make the auction enjoyable and exciting. It's not too early to begin **thinking about or working** on what you may donate. I've **already** begun carving inspire generous bidding...

God's Peace,

Michael Youse

Executive Director

The LCC does not set a fair market value for the donated items. Donors of the items may determine fair market value if they wish to do so in order to claim any applicable tax deductions. Please consult your tax advisor for advice to determine if any portion of the donation is charitable deduction.

KIRCHENWALD: 1 Cut Off Road, Lebanon, PA 17042, 717-964-3121 © **NAWAKWA:** PO Box 459, Arendtsville, PA 17303-0459, 717-677-8211 **THE WITTEL FARM HOUSE OF PRAYER:** 1753 Mill Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022-9510, 717-367-2001

Preparations

Preparation. This season is full of joy as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. The house is cleaned. The decorations are set. Special food is planned. Families will prepare to visit. We remember to humble ourselves as the Lord came into this world in a cold stable, with no warm bed. We remember the strangers who traveled a long way just to witness the baby who would save the world. In our own lives, we remember to pray for those with no families or a place to call home. I have requests from strangers I visit asking me to help young children who have nothing. There are not enough foundations to serve all those in need, and no system to verify who needs help. This challenge is something I struggle with and pray constantly for the Holy Spirit to guide my actions. It is simple economics, not enough resources to meet the demands. As we continue our preparations, pray the Lord opens our hearts and minds to serve another in need in the name of Christ.

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)

Peace,
Ruth



December 24, 2023 - Worship Service

8:15 am 4th Sunday of Advent – Traditional Worship

Noon - Family Christmas Eve

6:00 pm – Traditional Candlelight Service



December 31, 2023

10:30 am – 1 service – Lessons & Carols

January 1, 2024 – 1:00 pm –

Traditional Pork & Sauerkraut Dinner

St. Mark's Book Club

Date	Book	Author	Facilitator
2024			
Jan. 25	The Ship Beneath The Ice	Mensun Bound	_____
Feb. 22	The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek	Kim Michele Richardson	_____
Mar. 28	The Giver of Stars	JoJo Moyes	_____

Book Club meets at 10:00 AM in the parlor



Birthdays for December

12/01 – Taylor Trout	12/16 – Brandon Dinger
12/02 – Jonnie Deibler	12/18 – Emma Betz
12/04 - Suzan Seitz	Sue Senft
12/06 – Dolores Magaro	12/19 – Clint Harr
Caroline Gill	- Linda Gingell
12/07 – Michael Nusz	James Miller
Barb Fraizer	12/20 - Mike Betz
12/09 – Ryan Shadle	Colin McClenahen
12/10 – Mary Ann Kane	12/22 - Austin Fleegal
12/11 - Adam Appleby	Bruce Senft
12/11 - Jacob McClenahen	12/25 - Christine Kroah
12/12 – Alexis Ulrich	12/27 – Liz Harris
12/13 - Vaughn Heym Sr.	12/30 – Frank Dillahey
12/14 – Pat Ashbrook	Madison Spencer
12/15 – Mercedes Bretz	

If your birthday is in December and we missed it, please let us know.
We hope you have a happy birthday anyway.

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
4200 Londonderry Road
Harrisburg, PA 17109

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THE PARISH POST



December 2023

St. Mark's Church Council

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	Chris Bair
	Deb Banks
	Paulette Beverly
	Emmor Boslet
	Jake Buss
	Maggie Perry
	Susan Shultz
	Dave Stanton
Co-Ministers of Music	Jenny Sustak & Faith Smeck
Administrative Assistant	Loraine Mariner
Youth/Family Ministry	Kellen Michalowski
Sexton	Donald Young
Nursery School Dir.	Jessica Broome



"At least they saved themselves a co-pay."