



# The Parish Post

JANUARY 2024

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
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The Rev. James E. Person, 717-712-8191



Lately, we have been hearing a lot of voices making a lot of noise all around us, and many of those voices have not been pleasant. The voices of doctors talking about the resurgence of Coronavirus even after widespread vaccinations. Added to that we now hear voices warning us about flu, RSV, pneumonia, and various and sundry other respiratory illnesses. The voices of our national leaders ring out recalling the chaos and pandemonium surrounding the results of our last presidential election and the preparation for the next possible transfer of power at the most powerful level of world leadership.

We hear the voices of churches and businesses calling out for help to recover from the restrictions placed on them in hopes of curbing the spread of COVID-19. Health care workers and other medical personnel speak voices of comfort and reassurance to patients while they are themselves experiencing stress beyond anything they ever imagined. We share concerns about how best to help our children and grandchildren understand and interpret the many voices they are inundated with, no matter how much we try to protect their innocent understanding of the world.

Voices; conflicting voices, comforting voices; loud voices, whispering voices; strange voices, familiar voices. To which voices do we listen, which voices do we ignore? When do we react and when do we keep silent? How might we add the voice of the Christian church to the mix in a way that helps and does not harm?

The first thing we need to do is listen to the one voice that is too often ignored, the one voice that can make a real difference in our lives and in the world: the voice of the Lord!

**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.

Palm 29 tells us, "The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice, the voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees, the voice of the Lord bursts forth in lightning flashes, the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness". Yet for all its power, the voice of the Lord is not heard unless we listen *for* it and listen *to* it.

The psalmist tells us that the Lord sits enthroned as king forevermore, the king to whom we owe our ultimate allegiance, the king to whom we owe our very lives, the king whose voice tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves! Is that what we see happening around us right now? Are we listening to the voice of our king? As people attack one another verbally and physically, literally, and figuratively, are we obeying the voice that tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves? It seems to me that the voice of the Lord has been tuned out and the chaos and pandemonium we are suffering is the result!

We hear the voice of the Lord again in Mark's Gospel, at the Baptism of Jesus, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

One of the most important aspects of Jesus' baptism is that it sets the pattern for our own. Jesus certainly did not need to be baptized to "wash away his sins", which is one of the benefits of Holy Baptism for us, but the resulting announcement that Jesus is God's beloved child is the same for us as it was for Jesus.

The word of God, the sayings of Jesus, the voice of the Lord works by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us God's children, God's beloved, with whom God is well pleased, not because of any merit on our part but out of the radical abundance of God's own divine mercy.

When the voices of the doctors are telling us that thousands are being infected with a virus that is still in many ways beyond our control, the voice of the Lord offers hope and healing for his beloved children. When the voices on the news are reporting hundreds of people dying as the result of war and violence every day, the voice of the Lord promises that, "just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too, may live a new life."

When the voices of the world seem overwhelming, put down the newspaper, turn off the TV, radio, and podcasts, tune in the receiver in your heart, and hear the voice of the Lord "YOU are my child, my beloved; with you I am well pleased." Thanks be to God.

Your partner in ministry and mission,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Jim".

Pr. Jim Person

# Council President

Winter has settled around us with cold and winds, reminding me that Lent is just around the corner.

Do we give up something for this special part of our Church Year or do we instead get something from Lent? I, being a “glass is half full” type of Christian, find that I always get more from Lent than I give up.

This is the time when Jesus reminds us to recharge our faith. Through his example of suffering and sacrifice He says quite clearly God’s love is worth dying for.

That is the most powerful message we can learn from the season of Lent. The 40 days give us the chance to reflect on our faith, reconsider our lives and then go forward renewed and rewarded. Reflection, reconsideration, renewal and reward.

The message of Lent in 4 words. The Reward may not be immediate but it will come.

See you in Church

Jay

## St. Mark’s Book Club

Date	Book	Author
2024		
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**

**BULLETIN BOARD HAS BEEN MOVED FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OFFICE DOOR TO THE HALL NEXT TO THE MUSIC BULLETIN BOARD.**





*Happy and Blessed New Year to my St. Mark's Church Family,*

Here we are, already almost half way through the first month of 2024. It was such a pleasure to see so many of my beloved church family members and their family members at the Christmas Eve services, whether it was the traditional advent service, the family service, or the traditional candlelight service.

All the services were so well attended and as I watched from my spot on the beautiful Christmas tree, I sent hopes and prayers that it would continue during the year. I also want to send a special thank you to Charlie Roberts and the LYF. They made the family service at noon very special. I look forward to that every year. And at the evening candlelight service, the music was so very nice. My special thanks to Ms. Faith and Ms. Jenny, the choir and the bell choir. You all were outstanding.

I want to again take the opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very happy, healthy and blessed 2024. Can we keep the Christmas Eve momentum going? I have faith we can. Let's do it!

*Yours in Christian Love,  
The St. Mark's Church Mouse*

### **Mission Bells**

**The Mission Bells will be ringing at both services on Palm Sunday, Easter, and Music Sunday. Rehearsals will be held Thursday evenings, Feb. 22, 29, Mar. 7, 14, 21, and 27 at 6:00 PM in the Sanctuary.**

**Anyone 10 years or older who loves to ring is welcome to join the Mission Bells. If you have any questions or plan on participating, please contact Faith Smeck (717-673-0368) or come to a rehearsal and join us making a joyful noise unto the Lord.**

### **Festival Choir**

**The Festival Choir will be singing at both services on Palm Sunday and Easter, and Music Sunday and the evening Maundy Thursday service. Rehearsals will be held Thursday evenings, Feb. 22, 29, Mar. 7, 14, 21, and 27 at 7:15 PM in the Choir Room.**

**Anyone 10 years or older who loves to sing is welcome to join the Festival Choir. If you have any questions or plan on participating, please contact Faith Smeck (717-673-0368) or Jenny Sustak (717-580-4331) or come to a rehearsal and join us making a joyful noise unto the Lord.**



### **January/February Birthdays**

- |                        |                     |                      |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 01/21 Susanne Smithers | 02/01 Lori Ulrich   | 02/08 Zachary Dullen |
| 01/22 Teaghan Davis    | Carolyn Shadle      | 02/09 Xavier Webber  |
| 01/27 Rebekah Hengst   | 02/03 Jenna Spencer | 02/16 Cindy Lang     |
| 01/28 Bonita Lengel    | 02/04 Karen Smith   | Kenny Lang           |

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

# 2023 Christmas Caroling

Please consider coming out for Caroling in 2024

Not only did we put smiles on faces but so much fun too!!





**SPERANZA**  
**ANIMAL RESCUE**

November 27, 2023

St. Marks Lutheran Church Markettes

4200 Londonderry Rd. Harrisburg, PA 17109

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your donation of \$35 on 11/9/23! Gifts to Speranza Animal Rescue are tax deductible. Keep this letter as documentation of your donation and that you received no goods or services in exchange for your contribution.

Speranza Animal Rescue is funded entirely by donations from generous supporters like you, and is manned exclusively by volunteers. It takes a village to provide everything needed for the dogs at the rescue and in foster care, and all of the other animals on the farm. The Speranza mission to save the most abused and neglected animals would not be possible without the financial support of people like you.

On behalf of all of the animals- *thank you!*

Sincerely,

Janine

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Dept. of State by calling toll free within PA, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

1216 **Brandt Rd Mechanicsburg**, PA 17055

**[www.speranzarescue.org](http://www.speranzarescue.org)**

Want to save Speranza time and money and receive your donation acknowledgements via email?

Email our accountant at [eemccusker@gmail.com](mailto:eemccusker@gmail.com)

*Also donated was large amount of food and supplies.*

## New Start

Last month was about preparations. Preparing for the birth of Christ. Preparing for Christmas decorations, meals, gifts and visits. Preparing for the festivities to close. Now we switch gears for January. New hopes, new goals, new promises for a fresh start. Throughout life, I remember making new year resolutions, and foregoing them by February or March. Then our friend, Charlie Roberts gave a moving sermon (circa 2021?) where we picked stars from a hat. Each star had a word on it to reflect on as part of the bible lesson. My word was, "LOVE." It was easy to remember and take action in personal and professional settings. It was also easy to recall and reflect in challenging times. Later years produced words like, PEACE and GENEROUSITY.

This year my reflective word is, "RESTORATIVE." It can be thought of as a healing balm, something therapeutic, or corrective. And, quite frankly, an easier word to remember than "analeptic." I want to be mindful of how much money is feasible for me to spend while helping people in Romania. There is so much need, and not enough funds. We've been praying for a way to purchase a building adjacent to the church and create a youth community center. The asking price is high for this area (250 thousand euros), though quite reasonable in USA standards. The facility could be used for youth group functions, music rehearsals, serving meals, housing visiting missionaries, and a staging area for preparing and distributing packages for Christmas programs. In the meantime, my personal funds (and shipping and supplies donations from St. Mark's and Zion Harrisburg) are being used for children's programs, VBS, local mission trips, and food/clothing distribution. As you know, the need is greater than the funding, and it is difficult to "draw the line." Thus, the decision to focus on RESTORATIVE.

Please pray with me for discernment and consideration on how to best use my time (and money) in service to our Lord. He has the answers, but I'm not always adept at deciphering what path to take. My hope for you is that you remain faithful in the path God has chosen for you in 2024.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Peace,  
Ruth

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Harrisburg, PA 17109

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## THE PARISH POST

January 2024

### St. Mark's Church Council

<b>President</b>	Jay Snyder
<b>Vice President</b>	Dave Featherman
<b>Secretary</b>	Rebekah Varga
<b>Treasurer</b>	Calvin Smith
<b>Financial Secretary</b>	Mary Sultzaberger
<b>Council Members</b>	Pastor Jim Person
	Chris Bair
	Deb Banks
	Paulette Beverly
	Emmor Boslet
	Jake Buss
	Maggie Perry
	Susan Shultz
	Dave Stanton
<b>Co-Ministers of Music</b>	Jenny Sustak & Faith Smeck
<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	Loraine Mariner
<b>Youth/Family Ministry</b>	Kellen Michalowski
<b>Sexton</b>	Donald Young
<b>Nursery School Dir.</b>	Jessica Broome



"Don't worry. I'm a church pastor. First little problem, and they'll find me."