



Disciples of Jesus, Connecting Our Community to Christ

Greetings!

Welcome! Please visit our website to find our Sunday livestream, worship videos, Sunday bulletins, audio bible, personal devotions, calendars and more.

Visit our
Website

Pastor's Ponderings

"Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future, Rooted in Christ" Colossians 2:6–7

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

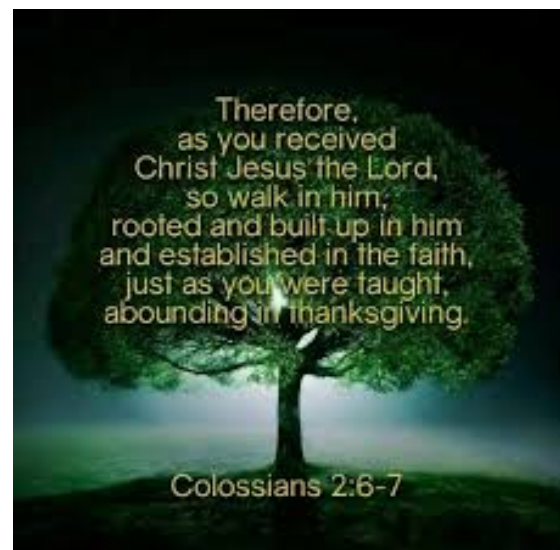
As we approach the close of 2025 and look with anticipation toward 2026, I want to share some important updates about our communication as a congregation, reflect on the journey we have taken together this past year, and look forward with joy to the celebration of Christmas and the New Year.

A New Season for Communication

Beginning in January 2026, St. Mark will shift from our long-standing monthly *Crossroads* newsletter to a weekly rhythm of communication through our email updates. This change enables us to share news, prayer needs, and ministry stories more promptly and effectively. You can expect the same kinds of helpful content you've enjoyed in *Crossroads*, now delivered in smaller, more regular pieces designed to keep us connected throughout the week.

Looking Back: A Year of Growing as Disciples

This past year, we intentionally focused on the first part of our mission statement: **"Disciples of Jesus, Connecting our Community to Christ."** Throughout 2025, we explored what it means to be a disciple of Jesus through eight key dimensions of



discipleship:

- Experiencing God – learning to recognize His presence in worship, prayer, and Scripture.
- Spiritual Responsiveness – listening for the Spirit’s prompting and stepping out in obedience.
- Generous Living – embracing a lifestyle of gratitude, stewardship, and service.
- Disciple Making – growing in confidence to share the hope of Christ with others.
- Personal Transformation – allowing Christ to shape our character and daily life.
- Authentic Relationships – investing in genuine community rooted in grace and truth.
- Community Transformation – seeking the good of Mendon and our surrounding neighborhoods.

I’m grateful for the ways these qualities have taken deeper root among us—through worship, prayer, learning, service, and fellowship. It has been a joy to see God shaping us into a community of disciples grounded in His grace.

A Season of Hope: Christmas and New Year’s

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we remember that everything we do as a church—every act of service, every prayer, every step of discipleship—flows from the good news that *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”* Christ’s coming is the source of our hope, the anchor of our faith, and the light that shines into every corner of our lives.

I pray that your Christmas season is filled with the peace and presence of our Savior, whether you celebrate surrounded by family, serving others, or simply resting in the quiet joy of Emmanuel—God with us. If in town, this year we will celebrate Christmas with three special services. Christmas candlelight worship at 5pm and 11pm, and special Christmas morning communion service at 10am.

As we turn the calendar to 2026, may the Lord guide our steps into the new year. New Year’s always invites reflection—on where we’ve been and where God is calling us to go. My prayer is that we enter this new year with hearts open to His leading, trusting that the One who came in Bethlehem continues to walk with us and work through us.

May Christ’s light lead us into a year of renewal, gratitude, and joyful expectation.

Looking Ahead: Our 125th Anniversary

In 2026, St. Mark Lutheran Church will celebrate **125 years of God’s faithfulness in Mendon, NY**. What a gift! Our theme for this anniversary year is: **“Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future, Rooted in Christ.”**

Based on **Colossians 2:6–7**, this theme calls us to remember where we have come from, give thanks for the firm foundation of Christ, and look ahead with confidence to the work God continues to do in and through us.

Throughout the coming year, you will hear more about special services, events, and opportunities to participate in. My prayer is that this anniversary year will honor our history, strengthen our sense of mission, and inspire us to step boldly into the future God is preparing for St. Mark.

Thank you for walking this journey together. May the Lord continue to deepen our discipleship, strengthen our fellowship, and use us to connect our community to Christ.

In Christ,
Pastor Brad Urlaub

Come, Let Us Adore Him

November 30	First Sunday in Advent	9am worship
December 3	First Wednesday in Advent	6pm dinner 7pm worship
7	Second Sunday in Advent	9am worship
10	Second Wednesday in Advent	6pm dinner 7pm worship
14	Third Sunday in Advent	9am worship
17	Third Wednesday in Advent	6pm dinner 7pm worship
21	Fourth Sunday in Advent	9am worship
24	Christmas Eve Candlelight	5pm worship 11pm worship
25	Christmas Day with communion	10am worship

Advent Dinners



Please join us for catered dinners at 6pm, followed by worship services at 7pm on Wednesdays, December 3, 10, and 17. The cost for each meal is \$14. A sign-up sheet is located in the fellowship hall, and menus will be forthcoming. Contact Guenther Heiss with questions.

Council News



He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. Psalm 147:16 NIV

This verse describes a familiar scene for those of us who live in the northeast. But whether the snow arrives or not, in December we finally enter the “official” Christmas season –Advent, Christmas, and then the 12 days of Christmas leading to Epiphany. How interesting it was to observe that the country seemed to begin the Christmas season around the time of Halloween, and we will probably see it end Christmas night. The world seems to encourage everyone to characterize Christmas as a party, a burst of abundance and overindulgence. People tend to buy more, spend more on what is bought,

eat more, and go out more. It seems that we live in a world that is caught up in a party

mode and concentrating on the abundance or expense of things above all else. And then the party ends, Christmas day is over, and the world moves on.

The Bible tells us the Wise Men brought precious gifts to Jesus. "...and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11 ESV That was a sign of how important He was to them. How important is Jesus to you? If we consider Christmas like a birthday party for Jesus, just imagine if a party were planned for you but no one came or everyone went somewhere else to celebrate instead of with you and gave each other a gift but did not include you. Are you coming to God's house to celebrate His birthday? What are you giving Jesus for Christmas?

In our plans of the season, do we think about the gifts we give to everyone but Jesus? One might ask, "What can I give to Jesus?" The little drummer boy played a song, but you can give Him your trust (faith is voluntary). You can make him the center of your life (and avoid making idols of other things). You can give him all of yourself – thought, word, and deed. You can bring others to Jesus; that was His plan, his directive to us. These are valuable gifts to give to our Lord; gifts you can give every day, not just on Christmas day. As you make your list of things that you hope to receive as a gift or a list of what you are giving to others, remember to make your list of what you can give to God. God gave his Son, Jesus for you. Jesus suffered and gave his life for you.

As a church some of the gifts we give to Jesus throughout the year include the myriad aspects of our time, talent and treasure as the pastor expounded on in the explanation of the four Rs Repentance, Relationships, Responsibilities, Resources. Throughout the year, members of Council take care of the daily/routine needs of the church and currently continue work on strategic planning and budget preparation. A meeting of the voters assembly will be held on December 21 to present these matters.

While we are all enjoying Christmas, we need to remember to thank God for all the gifts he has given to us, especially his Son Jesus Christ. Also, let us each remember to be good Christians stewards of all that God has given us and to continue Christmas all year. As Mother Teresa said, "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you. Yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand."

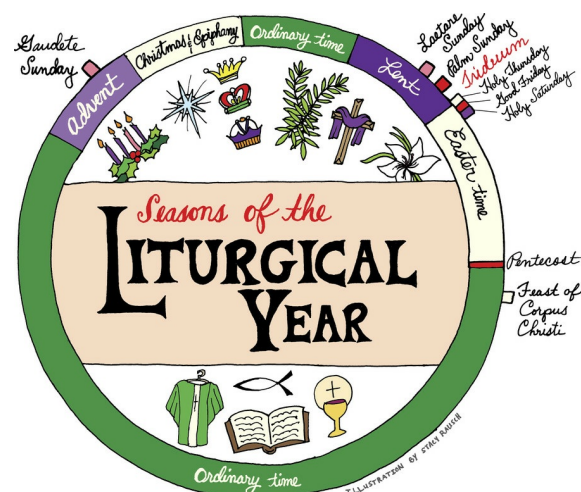
On behalf of Council, Merry Christmas!
Kristen Waterstram-Rich

Colors of The Church Year

The Church Year Begins - November 30, 2025

Happy New Year! Those words typically refer to January 1. In business, someone may ask is the new year the fiscal year or the calendar year. In academia, someone may ask if the new year is referring to the academic year, the fiscal year, or the calendar year. In the church, we refer to the church or liturgical year.

The Liturgical Year centers upon events in the life of our Lord Jesus and His Church. The first half of the church year centers on the life of Jesus. Since most popular holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, occur in this period, this is called the Festival Half of the Church Year. The second half of the church year is called the Non-festival Half or the Church Half



of the church year.

The church recognizes different Sundays, seasons, feasts, festivals, and days of commemoration, with applicable songs, other music, words, and readings, but the church year is also reflected in the use of color. Watch the colors of the vestments and altar paraments change throughout the seasons and on special festival days. Pastor Urlaub often matches the color of this shirt to a festival day; have you noticed? The paraments reinforce or reflect the sense of the season in colors. There is much that could be said about each color and each season, below is a simple summary.

Enjoy the colors of the church year.

Advent: The church year begins with Advent which begins in either November or December, depending on the year. It is the four-week preparation for the coming of Jesus on Christmas Day. This year, the first Sunday in Advent is November 30. The color purple or violet is used as a color of penitence or royalty. Some churches, including ours, use blue representing the sky and a color of hope.

Festival of the Nativity of our Lord Christmas – White is the color of this season, which signifies joy. Christmas Day begins the 12 days of Christmas that end with Epiphany on January 6.

Epiphany Season – This season can have up to 8 Sundays. White is the color of the season for the first Sunday. Green is the color for the remaining Sundays, which signifies growth. It is by far the most common color seen during the year. The last Sunday of the Epiphany Season is Transfiguration Sunday, and the color is white.

Lenten Season – This season begins on Ash Wednesday, has 40 days and six Sundays. The color is purple which signifies repentance and penitence.

Holy Week – This week begins on Palm Sunday and ends with the Festival of the Resurrection. The color is purple or scarlet on Palm/Passion Sunday and until Maundy Thursday when the color is white. On Good Friday there is no parament, or black, the color of sorrow or death.

Easter (Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord) Season – This season has 7 Sundays, and the color is white. In addition to joy, white signifies new life. This is a Festival of our Lord.

Pentecost Season – This is the longest season and has 24–27 Sundays. Colors include the following: First Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, is red (which signifies power); second Sunday (Trinity Sunday) is white; and all other Sundays the color is green which signifies growth. The last Sunday in Pentecost season is the last Sunday of the church year and, also Christ the King Sunday. For those who celebrate this Sunday Christ the King Sunday, the color is white which signifies Victory – a festival of our Lord.

Voters Assembly



Please mark your calendars to attend the voters meeting on December 21. It will be held in the Fellowship Hall following worship. The tentative agenda includes the following: the budget; updates on the strategic plan; and the LCMS convention.

Ladies Aid

Thank you to everyone who generously donated items for the Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes and to all who helped pack them on Saturday, November 8. We were able to fill 31 boxes and an additional 3 more have been donated for a grand total of 34 boxes. This surpassed our amount from last year which was 25!! The boxes were taken to the drop off location on November 17.



Our next meeting will be Saturday, December 13 at 11am. We will be discussing events for the upcoming year, especially regarding stewardship collection opportunities to coincide with the 125th anniversary including Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes, college students, Keeping Our Promise and food pantry. We would also like to open this up to the community to give them opportunities to donate.

Christmas Flowers



Celebrate Christmas with Flowers

Help adorn the church by donating to the Christmas Flower Fund. Contributions in any amount are appreciated. Flowers may be taken after Christmas, by those who donated. The flowers remaining will continue to beautify the church and later be shared with our shut-ins. Donations needed by December 15. Checks made out to St. Mark Lutheran Church. Write "Christmas Flowers" in the memo.

Trinity Guest House

Help Support Missionaries and Mission Volunteers in Liberia: The Trinity Guest House is located within the Lutheran Liberia Mission Community approximately 50 miles from Monrovia and provides temporary housing to stay in safety and comfort for visiting missionaries and mission volunteers supporting the Lutheran Liberia Mission. They are seeking monetary donations to help with their current projects and buildings. Woodworking tools and machines were donated for vocational training and for pastors to be able to support themselves. Work has begun on a technical education building but funds to complete it are low. To learn more about this amazing mission and their needs, please check out their website: trinityguesthouse.org.



Stamps for Bibles

Eastern District LWML collects cancelled postage stamps for the Canadian Bible Society which uses the stamps to purchase Bibles for prisoners. These hand-delivered Bibles become living water when chaplains share the love of Jesus with a person in prison.



For stamp collection, please cut out the stamps from the regular mail and Christmas cards that you receive. Remember, to cut ½ inch around each stamp, BUT do not throw stamps away if you cut a little too close. Cut-out stamps can be used AS LONG AS THE PERFORATIONS are all intact. Deposit stamps in the “Stamp Jug” in the narthex. Please continue to pray for the prisoners and chaplains; and remember to keep saving those stamps all year long.

St. Pauly Shed

When cleaning out closets, please remember to donate to St. Pauly Textiles. From the website (<https://www.stpaulytextile.com/about-us>), “St. Pauly Textile Inc. is a Western NY based, family owned for-profit company and an A+ member of the Better Business Bureau. Our goal is to get USEABLE clothing to people who can use it, here in the U.S. and in developing countries, while having a meaningful impact in our local communities.”



“What to Drop-off: [Gently] Used Clothing, shoes, sneakers, belts, purses, linens, pillowcases, blankets, curtains, and stuffed animals.

What **Not** to Drop-off: Furniture, electronics, household items, books, toys, garbage, pillows, rags, and fabric scraps.” This is important to note because we have had several “unacceptable” donations for St. Pauly that result in us having to throw them in the dumpster, however, they could have been donated elsewhere.

In addition, to the donations helping people in need in the United States and around the world, St. Mark gets paid per pound of donations. Many thanks to Joyce Haag for taking care of prepping the shed for the weekly pick-ups from the box in the St. Mark parking lot.

Community Event

The Messiah Has Come!

Choruses with Orchestra from Handel's Messiah, along with festive Christmas carols, Grace Choir and Pearce Choir will hold a concert Sunday, December 14, 3pm at Pearce Church, 4322 Buffalo Road, N. Chili. Free and open to the public.



Eastern District Events

Holy Land Trip

Dr. Charles and Susan Whited of First Trinity (Tonawanda, NY) invite you to join them for a 10 day tour of the Holy Land, October 13-22, 2026. They will visit Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem, take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, walk the path Jesus took from the Garden of Gethsemane to the dungeon in Caiaphas' house, travel the Via Delarosa (way of the cross) through Jerusalem, and so much more. It is the spiritual adventure of a lifetime. For information call (716-835-2220) or email Pastor Chuck

Camp Pioneer

Pioneer on the Lake is open year-round! Youth groups, family reunions, women's/men's groups, church families and friends come together at Pioneer in every season to connect with God, build community, and create memories that last far beyond the summer season. Whether it's summer sunshine or winter snow, Pioneer is always a warm Place in the Son. Give them a call to book your group's retreat. 716-383-6157.

December Celebrations



Effie Steingasser 12/7
Adam Potter 12/7
Zach Lehning 12/10
Mary Ann Snyder 12/10
Ginnie Knopp 12/11
Ryan Potter 12/15
Sue Eilinger 12/16
David Bendschneider, Jr. 12/17
Don Snyder 12/25
Dave Bendschneider 12/26
Peter Lehning 12/27
Marilyn Ryan 12/29



Jeff & Deborah Lillie 12/3
Peter & Lisa Lehning 12/21

December Calendars

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 6pm Advent Dinner 7pm Worship	4 7pm Choir	5	6
7 8:45am Prayer Group 9am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	8 Bulletin Items Due	9	10 6pm Advent Dinner 7pm Worship	11 7pm Choir	12	13 11am Ladies Aid
14 8:45am Prayer Group 9am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	15 Bulletin Items Due for 12/22 & 12/28	16 4pm Council	17 6pm Advent Dinner 7pm Worship	18 7pm Choir	19	20
21 8:45am Prayer Group 9am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	22	23	24 10pm Christmas Eve Candlelight worship 11pm Candlelight worship	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS	26	27
28 8:45am Prayer Group 9am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	29 Bulletin Items Due	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE			

December 2025 Server Calendar

	December 7	December 14	December 21	December 28	January 4
Elder	Guenter Heiss	Ted Veit	Ted Veit	Ted Veit	John Lehning
Comm. Assistant	Peter Lehning	Mike Monnat	Gary Weisensel	John Lehning	Peter Lehning
Ushers	Sally Hacker & Scott Stranford	Guenter & Margaret Heiss	Ken & Patty Hampson	Guenter & Margaret Heiss	Chuck Bannister & Sally Hacker
Greeter	Gary Weisensel	Georgette Peterson	Kristen Waterstram-Rich	Sally Hacker	Barb Done
Altar Care	Barb Done	Marlene Hampson	Kristen Waterstram-Rich	Margaret Heiss	Sharon Flischetti
Office Help	December 5 Sharon Flischetti	December 12 Marlene Hampson	December 19 Barb Mitchell	December 26 Kristen Waterstram-Rich	January 2 Sharon Flischetti

	December 24 5pm	December 24 11pm	December 25
Elder	Chuck Bannister	Guenter Heiss	Chuck Bannister
Ushers	John & Peter Lehning	Rob Amidon & Deb Bolcko	
Greeter	Barb Done	Kay Killenbac	

Disciples of Jesus, Connecting Our Community to Christ
St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church
18 Vinton-Henderson Road, Mendon, NY 14506
(585) 624-1766 disciples@mendon.org
Pastor Brad Vukobrat - bradvukobrat@mendon.org
Pastor's Office Hours: Thursday 10 am - noon, other times by appointment



585-624-1766
secretary@stmarkmendon.org

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Find us here

St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church | 18 Victor-Mendon Rd P.O. Box 239 | Mendon, NY 14506
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