

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
302 East Pearl St.
Wapakoneta, OH 45895

St. Mark's Messenger, January 2026



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Pastor Doug's Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

This newsletter is arriving in the midst of the 12 days of Christmas. The commercial Christmas ended on Christmas Eve and the faith festival began on Christmas Day. It lasts until the coming of the magi on January 6. Now that the shouts of "buy this" and "give this" have faded away, we can turn to discover Jesus in the out of way places he loves to inhabit.

The world loves glitter and glamor, the ever larger and more extravagant. God's grandeur comes in the work of creation. God's extravagance is found in purple mountain's majesty, the thunder of Niagara Falls, and the billions of glittering stars. Did you know that there are 5,000 species of ladybugs around the world? This is God's first incarnation—the spiritual God manifested in the physical world. From quarks to galaxies, everything is fearfully and wonderfully made, glorious and splendid.

But in the second incarnation—God coming in human form—God chose the setting for the birth of his Son in a barn. It was not in a magnificent birthing suite in a palace attended by the finest of physicians. It was a barn, smelling of manure and sweet hay. The sound of the gentle movements of the sheep and goats mingled with Mary's panting breaths. Most likely a midwife was the only attendant while Josph paced nervously outside. God came, shoved into an out of the way place in a tiny, obscure town. There was no room for God.

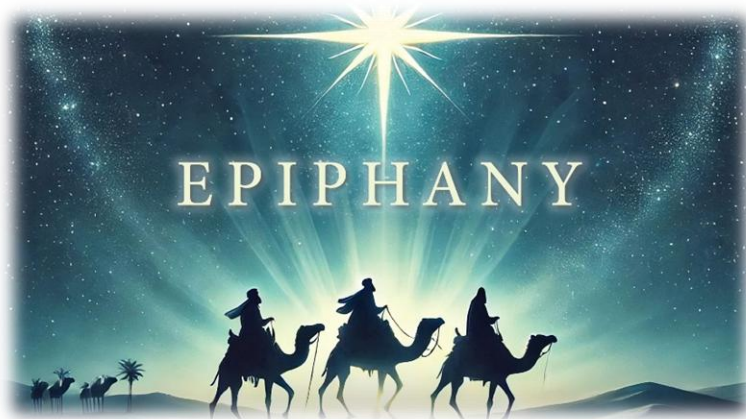
God's one grand gesture was a magnificent angel filling the dark sky with light and announcing the good news. Innumerable angels also appeared singing the most glorious song rustic shepherds had ever heard. It was as if God could not resist at least one moment of splendor.

Perhaps it is in these 12 days that you can hear and discover God in a quiet moment reading the Christmas story. Perhaps with the pressure off to-be-here and to-do-this, maybe you can be fully present to a family member, a friend, or a coworker. Maybe in an out of the way place and in an unremarkable, ordinary event you will encounter Jesus. He seems to love to sneak in uninvited and unexpected in the ordinary and the real. Turn away from the sights that dazzle and the loud voices. Look for Jesus in simplicity and silence. He is to be found among the ordinary people and only rarely among the gods and goddesses of this world.

Peace,

Pastor Doug

Pastor Doug



Combatting Anxiety & Depression

Combatting Anxiety & Depression, a six-week session to help heal from anxiety and depression will be offered by Pastor Carol Pretorius on Monday evenings on January 12 & 19 and February 2, 9, 16, & 23. The sessions will be held from 6:30 pm to 8 pm at St. Peter Lutheran Church, 422 N. Pierce Street, Delphos. Pastor Carol has a background in Healing Care Practices as well as a master's degree in Education and Clinical Mental Health Counseling.



Super Bowl Chili Cook-Off



St. Mark's will be having its first Super Bowl Chili Championship right after the church service on Sunday, January 25. This will be taking place in the Gathering Space and overflow into the Adult Sunday School Room. Hope to see you there!

Offering Envelopes

The 2026 Offering Envelopes are on the table in the entryway. If you are unable to make it to the church to pick up your box, but would still like to have your envelopes, please contact Elaine in the church office. Or if you currently do not have an offering number that corresponds to a box of envelopes, but would like one, also contact Elaine in the church office.



New Beginnings Learning Academy in conjunction with St. Mark's Lutheran Church donated 351 cans of food to Mercy Unlimited in November! Thank you to everyone who helped make the annual food drive a success in a year when it was needed more than most.



Top Left: St. Mark's parishioners were able to provide gifts for 73 children who would not have otherwise received Christmas gifts this year through the Christmas Jubilee program. Thank you to all who donated!

Top Right: Pastor Doug said a blessing over Kerrigan Lenhart (left) and Lyla Wilder (right) who spoke about their time in college so far. They both have enjoyed their first year of college.

Bottom: Pastor Doug leads the youth sermon while the kids explore their light-up toys.





A Christmas Play: There were no plans to have a Christmas play in 2025, but the catechism students would not accept that and convinced Pastor Doug to write a play. Here are the photos of the play put on by the youth on Sunday, December 28. Technical Director was Ruth Doll and Assistant Director was Tracy Blake.



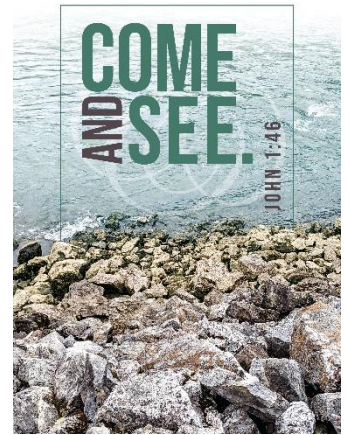
Worship Services for January

Jan. 3 & 4 **Jesus Says Come and See** Second Sunday of Christmas Communion

Psalm 66:1-9 John 1:35-51

What Are You Looking For?

Christmas is still with us, because in the church it lasts until Monday, January 5. On the 6, we celebrate the coming of the wise men and begin the season of Epiphany. The church is out of sync with our culture which started Christmas sometime before Thanksgiving, while we celebrated Advent in which we waited for the coming of the Messiah. Christmas celebrates that he is with us. Today's Gospel lesson is about Jesus as an adult being revealed as the Messiah among us.



Jan. 10 & 11 **Wedding at Cana** Baptism of Our Lord

Psalm 104:1-16 John 2:1-11

Marriage Wine



Today is the baptism of our Lord. We celebrate the gift of baptism and the new life that comes from it. Baptism may be a one-time experience but there are other experiences which happened on a regular basis which are also transformational. One of the places in which God works his will is in the gift of marriage.

Jan. 17 & 18 **Jesus Cleanses the Temple** 2nd Sunday after Epiphany / Communion

Psalm 127 John 2:13-25

I've Got Some Religion to Sell You.

Jesus gets really angry at those who were disrupting the prayers of the women. So much so that he drove out of the temple all of those who were buying and selling animals for sacrifice. Beware of those who are trying to sell you religion! They are after your money, and they don't really care about your faith.



Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Jan. 24 & 25 **Nicodemus** Third Sunday after Epiphany Youth Sunday Youth Bells

Psalm 139:1-18 John 3:1-21

Born Anew



Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

When Nicodemus talks with Jesus late at night, he learns about the difference between the spiritual and the physical. The two are intertwined but it is the Spirit which gives life. We are invited to be open to the Spirit's call to have faith in Jesus.

Thank You Notes Received

God's Storehouse, Inc
P.O. Box 72
107 W Pearl Street
Wapakoneta, Ohio 45895

(Date) 11/21/25

St Mark Lutheran Church

On behalf of God's Storehouse, Inc, we would like to thank you for your donation of

500⁰⁰

Your contribution makes it possible for us to provide food to those in need.

God's Storehouse, Inc is committed to helping those locally who may need a temporary hand up. With the help of supporters like you, we can provide help during the clients' time of need.

THANK YOU

Appreciatively yours,
God's Storehouse Board of Trustees

Martine Albrecht
Volunteer who received donation

God's Storehouse is tax exempt according to Section 501 © (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our Determination Letter Number is 17053179711063.

If you itemize deductions on your tax return, your contribution is deductible as allowed by current law at its fair market value. No part of the contribution was exchanged for goods or service.

Warmest Thoughts
And Best Wishes
For a Wonderful
Christmas and a
Very Happy New Year.

Doug +
St Mark's

Thank you so much for the thoughtful gift. It was so kind of you.

Your Letter Carrier

Nicole

St. Mark's,

Thank you for the thoughtful care package. I enjoyed all of the little treats inside and it was very nice to know my church family is supporting me even while I am away. I appreciate all of the love and effort that you put into these care packages!

Thank You,

Zach Rogers



St. Mark's Lutheran Church Council November 20, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Nelson Golden, Laura Heitz, Karen Lenhart, JP Metz, Shelley Schlegel, Amanda Schmerge, Mark Swaney, Marguerite Wallen, and Pastor Doug. Corrin McBride was excused from the meeting.

Devotional: Pastor Doug led council in devotional on Luke 17:11-19 and a prayer.

Nelson Golden called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM. The Church Council read the **Motto, Mission & Vision Statements** in unison.

The October 16, 2025, Council Minutes were approved unanimously. Mark Swaney moved and Amanda Schmerge seconded.

Financial Report: Council reviewed the Treasurer's report. In October, income was at \$20,400.71 with expenses at \$23,728.72. Year to date income is \$214,404.84 with expenses at \$217,084.88. Laura Heitz moved to accept the report, Pastor Doug seconded; motion carried.

The **Social Ministry Committee** report was given by Karen Lenhart. The committee will be meeting on January 6, 2026 and plans are in the works for a chili cook-off on January 25th.

Marguerite Wallen gave the **Property Committee Report**. The bathroom project has been completed. A tree will be removed from the property on September 20th at 10:00am. Maintenance on brick work near the main entrance will be scheduled for this fall.

In **new business**, Laura Heitz, JP Metz and Karen Lenhart will be completing their term with church council. Jen Garber and Richard Ault are willing to serve on council. **The Annual Meeting** to approve the 2026 Budget and to vote on council members will be Sunday December 7 at 11:15, immediately following the worship service. Members are encouraged to attend the meeting to ensure that a quorum is met.

Pastor Carol Pretorius painted an image of Jesus that has been donated to St. Mark's. Pastor Doug has donated six glass oil lamps that can be used for All Saint's Day or to decorate the church. Council thanks both of them for their generous donations.

The Next Meeting will be on December 18, 2025 @ 6PM

Shelley Schlegel moved to **adjourn** the meeting and JP Metz seconded; motion carried.

The meeting was closed with The **Lord's Prayer**.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Schlegel

St. Mark's Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting Minutes December 7, 2025

Nelson Golden, Council President, called the meeting to order at 11:24 AM.

Pastor Doug opened the meeting with prayer and thanked Laura Heitz, JP Metz and Karen Lenhart for their service on council.

Nelson Golden asked the members to examine Congregational Minutes from December 1, 2024. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Ruth Doll and seconded by Jen Garber. Voice vote approved the minutes. Minutes from the June 1, 2025 special congregational meeting were also reviewed. Paul Fox made the motion to accept the minutes and Kristin Doll seconded. Motion carried.

Paul Rogers presented the 2026 Budget to the congregation and thanked the finance committee for their time. The budget reflects a 3% increase over the 2025 Budget. An approximate 5% increase was proposed for Pastor Doug's compensation to work towards aligning to Synod recommendations. Nelson Golden moved on behalf of council that the 2026 budget be accepted. The motion was seconded by Julie Miars Golden and passed unanimously by ballot.

While the votes were being tabulated, Nelson Golden thanked Laura Heitz, JP Metz and Karen Lenhart for their service on council. Richard Ault and Jen Garber accepted nominations to serve a three year term. Nelson Golden asked for a motion to accept. Chad Doll made a motion to accept the nomination, seconded by Julie Miars Golden. Motion carried.

Nelson Golden called for any new business, hearing none, asked for a motion to adjourn. Melissa Grunden made a motion to adjourn and Ashley Schmerge seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Schlegel



John Richardson	January 1	Marilyn Wills	January 12
Rick Regula	January 1	Shirley Wiesenmayer	January 14
Isabella Jeanneret	January 2	Randy LaMarr Jr.	January 22
Larry Thuman	January 3	Lyla Wilder	January 24
John M. Doll	January 3	Trish Miller	January 26
Nate Garber	January 4	Cathy Klima	January 26
Katie Hunlock	January 5	Addi Fisher	January 26
Dustin Dobie	January 7	Carrol Garber	January 27
Steven Hegemeier	January 8	Bev Cummins	January 28
Chris Sorensem	January 9	Marian Schlegel Kreger	January 30

St. Mark's Motto

Be God's Grace in Action

St. Mark's Mission

St. Mark's Mission is to fulfill the Great Commission by extending God's Grace to all people.

St. Mark's Vision

St. Mark's will transform the Wapakoneta area and the world into a community of love by connecting the disconnected to God's grace and salvation.

We welcome, support, and care for all people.

Pastor	Doug Pretorius	PastorDougP@gmail.com	419-512-4491
Administrative Assistant	Elaine Hawkins	StMarksWapak302@gmail.com	
Church Musician	Melissa Grunden		
Custodian	Amanda Wilder		
Technology Coordinator	Dustin Jeanneret		

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church

302 East Pearl Street, Wapakoneta, OH 45895

Office Phone: 419-738-3122

Office Cell Phone: 567-356-6799

Website: www.StMarksWapak.Org



January 2026 – St. Mark's Calendar



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <i>New Year's Day</i>	2	3 8a- Men's Bible Study 5p Communion
4 9a- SS Adults Only 10:15a- Communion	5	6 9a & 12:15p- Preschool Chapel 5:30p- Social Ministry Meeting	7 10:30a- Gardens 7p- Choir Practice 7p- Catechism	8 9a- Preschool Chapel 10:30a- Otterbein Worship	9	10 5p Communion
11 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Worship TSC Taping	12 7:30p- Property Meeting	13 9a & 12:15p- Preschool Chapel 8p- Finance Meeting	14 6:30p- Handbell Practice 7p- Choir Practice 7p- Catechism	15 9a- Preschool Chapel	16	17 8a- Men's Bible Study 5p Communion
18 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Communion	19	20	21 10:30a- Gardens 7p- Catechism	22 6p- Council	23	24 5p Communion
25 9a- SS for All 9a- Youth Bells Pr. 10:15a- Worship Youth Sunday 11:15a- Superbowl Chili Cook-Off	26	27	28 7p- Catechism	29	30	31 5p Communion

January Who Does What?

10:15am Sunday	4-Jan	11-Jan	18-Jan	25-Jan
Greeters, Pearl St	Karen Numbers	Susan John	Karl & Shlley	Susie LaMarr
	Tracy Blake	Mandy Wilder	Schlegel	Ella Price
Greeters, Seltzer St	Kim Harter	Rod & Sheila	Carol Rogers	Landon Baeumel
& Offering	Deb Osborne	Metz	Heidi Lisi	Jennings McEvoy
Bulletins & Offering	John Doll	Devin & Corrin	Richard & Kay	Jacob Hicks
	Paul Fox	McBride	Ault	Ethan Jeanneret
Candle Lighter	Avery Newman	Ethan Jeanneret	Kelsey Schneider	Marlow Johnston
Cross Bearer	Ella Price	Marlow Johnston	Evelyn Oen	Avery Newman
Reader	George Hengstler	Cortney Rogers	Courtney Burton	Ella Price
PowerPoint	Shelley Schlegel	Richard Ault	Mike Burton	Ethan Dickey
Communion	Jeanne Clark	N/A	Tina Waltz	N/A
Servers			Meddy Ruck	
Song Leader(s)	Kristin Doll	Jen Garber	Melissa Grunden	Kids
Fellowship	Carol Rogers	Ashley & Amanda Schmerge	Tom & Paula Schmerge	Jen Garber
Sound Tech	Chad Doll	Rich Garber	Rod Metz	Blake Rogers, Trent Lisi
Video Tech	Rich Garber	Dustin Jeanneret	Ryan Schneider	Dustin Jeanneret
5:00pm Saturday	3-Jan	10-Jan	17-Jan	24-Jan
Greeter	Laura Heitz	Barb Srisongkham	Marguerite Wallen	Sandy Swaney
Bulletins	Marguerite Wallen	Dianne Knipp	Sandy Swaney	Mark Swaney
Reader	Laura Heitz	Melissa Grunden	Sue Jeanneret	Carol Pretorius
Communion	Terry Shoup	Betty Elsass	Mark & Sandy	Laura Heitz
Servers	Barb Srisongkham	Carol Pretorius	Swaney	Dianne Knipp
Singer	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius
Musician	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden