

St. Mark's Messenger, February 2025



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Pastor Doug's Letter

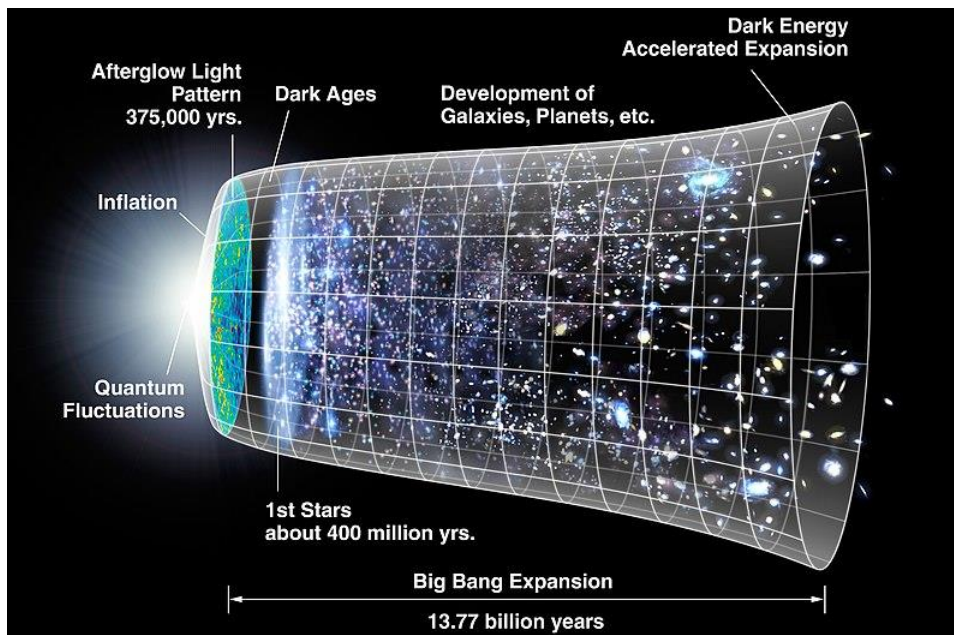
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Bible study on Ephesians reminded me why this book has captured my attention. Paul presents a cosmic image of Christ that radically changes our perspective. After Paul gives his greeting, he says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as **he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world** to be holy and blameless before him in love."

This highlighted phrase is beyond our comprehension.

Because we are both people of the word of God and we are people of our present age, we carry a dual perspective of the nature of creation. As people of the Word, we believe God created the world and everything in it. God created us and re-creates each of us every day. Scientifically, however, we understand that the physical universe began as an explosion of energy that has been proceeding outward for the last 13.77 billion years.



I found this image of The Big Bang. It made me marvel to consider how it could be that God is both greater than the cosmos and how it could be that God knew who I would be 13.7 billion years ago. As I consider the joy and excitement and the anticipation that parents have when they are expecting a baby (just like our administrative assistant Elaine and her husband Riley are anticipating their first child on July 28), and as I contemplate that God's love is greater, deeper, and more long lasting than any parent, words fail me. Metaphors are unsuccessful. What remains is the faith and hope that God's love is working more powerfully than any current event.

Peace be with you all,

Doug

Social Ministry Committee

The Social Ministry Committee will be meeting for the first time in 2025 on Tuesday, February 11, at 5:30 pm. They are seeking new members to help plan the church birthday party, Mother's & Father's Day gifts, visiting shut-ins, and all other new ideas. If you feel called to participate in any of these plans, please join the meeting!



Photo Directory

St. Mark's will be preparing a new church Photo Directory! Mark your calendars. The photo dates are Tuesday & Wednesday, March 25 & 26. You will be contacted next month to sign up for photo shoot time.

In the Spotlight

There are several servants of the Lord who have been contributing to the Homebound and Shut-in Ministry at St. Mark's. Robbin Hoge, Sandy Swaney, Julie Miars Golden, Kristin Doll, Marian Schlegel Kreger, Cindy Klosterman, Jeanne Clark, and Carol Rogers are assisting Pastor Doug with providing short worship services each month at The Gardens and at Otterbein-Cridersville. They attend once or twice a month at one of the assisted living sites and pass out bulletins, read scripture, assist with communion and greet the residents. Members Janell Lochard, Jean Landry, Jean Thompson, Faye Sorensen, and Anne Grove love seeing familiar faces and still feeling tied to the St. Mark's family.



This list doesn't include the different members who participate in a card ministry to shut-ins. Thank you, Laura Heitz who provides this important ministry!

See Pastor Doug if you are willing to bring home communion to those who are no longer able to join us at worship. Also contact him if you would like to assist with the worship services at The Gardens or at Otterbein-Cridersville.



Online Statistics

Our technology coordinator Dustin Jeanneret Reports:

Here are some interesting statistics for 2024, these are always so much fun to discover and report to you! Thanks to everyone for making 2024 a wonderful year on social media!

YouTube Interesting Stats:

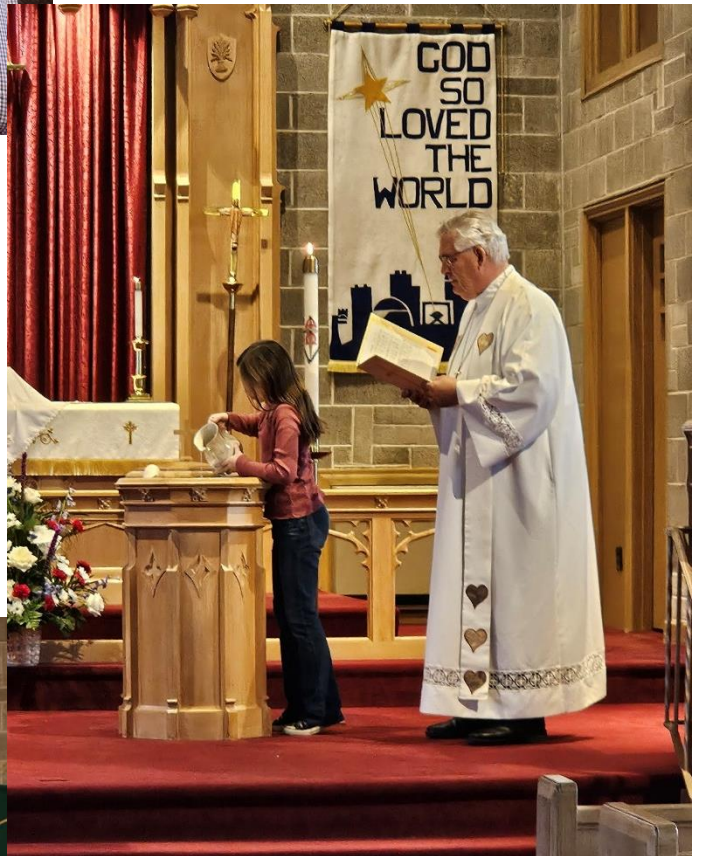
- We're hovering at 2.2K in total views (down 9% from 2023), 365 watch hours (down 7% from 2023), and we gained 8 subscribers (an increase of 60%).
- 65% of our viewership are not subscribed; 35% are subscribed.
- 100% of our viewers are between the ages 55-64 years of age. (This is not always accurate because people use their family's YouTube accounts).
- 72% of our viewers are all about the live streams while 28% watch afterwards.
- Our most popular video by far (412) views this year was the Sunday School Kids Choir posted on August 30th.
- 21% of people found us with YouTube searches, 18% were from browsing, 18% were from our website or are unknown.

Website Interesting Stats:

- We are sitting at just over 1K for site visitors for the year (1,158).
- The most surprising stat was that 95% of our site viewership are new visitors (817) versus only 5% (42) were returning. On one hand it means the congregation doesn't necessarily visit the site all that much, but on the other, we're receiving a great amount of exposure.
- We are split around 54/44 on devices, with 622 users using a desktop computer and 507 using mobile phones.
- Our top sections of the site are the homepage (or course), contact, staff, events, and our church history.
- Our most popular visiting cities are Columbus, Maumee, Dayton, Washington D.C., and Charlotte.



Top Left: Our sound and video setup in the balcony. Pictured: Chad Doll, one of our sound techs, and Dustin Jeanneret, main video tech, with his daughter Bella.



Middle Right: Evelyn Oen pours water into the baptismal font as Pastor Doug reads all the promises God gives us in baptism in the ritual of the Thanksgiving for Baptism.



Bottom Left: St. Mark's was blessed with the great music played by the **Ruta Beggars** on Sunday, January 26.

Thank You Notes Received

(All thank you notes are displayed on the cork board in the Seltzer St. entrance hallway.)

Christmas Jubilee

We received two thank you letters from the Christmas Jubilee program for:

- 1) the annual donation of \$250 and
- 2) all of the gifts received for the Jubilee Tree.

ELCA



The ELCA would like to thank our congregation for our support. We have helped them to build homes and churches, plant crops, and nurture future leaders.

12 Days of Christmas Cards

Multiple families have reached out to say how much they appreciated the 12 Days of Christmas Cards put together by Pastor Doug and the youth of St. Mark's for those who have lost a loved one in the last year: Katie Hunlock, Marilyn Wills, Elaine Dotson & Family, and John Kies. Below is a bit from the email from John Kies reminiscing of old:

Judy Winter's passing was just the beginning of 2024, a year I am glad to see behind us. As 2024 went on, I lost two classmates from WHS '66 including Chris Mincks, and Nick Earl. Chris and her family were a big part of St. Mark's for many years; and her husband, Brian, was my closest friend from kindergarten through senior high. He passed away in 1972, if memory serves. Another was George Krites; his wife Cathy lived behind our home and a good friend through graduation. As the year continued, I lost two very dear friends from college years in Colorado. There was a group of eight of us who met during our freshman year and have remained close friends ever since. We still gather with our families at least every five years. The photo on the right is from the gathering in 2000, the last when we were all still alive.



Worship Services for February

Feb. 1 & 2 **Healing on the Sabbath** 4th Sunday after Epiphany, Sunday Communion



Jesus Heals
on the Sabbath

Psalm 92 Luke 6:1-16

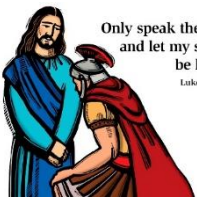
Rest Boldly

Two of the most pronounced Jewish acts of piety are Sabbath Keeping and Keeping Kosher. Devout Jews are vigorous and scrupulous in observing these practices, overly so in some cases, as we hear about in today's Gospel readings. Christians, however, have taken Jesus' words of freedom in regard to these actions and have fallen off the horse on the other side, so to speak.

Feb. 8 & 9 **Raising the Widow's Son** Fifth Sunday after Epiphany TSC Taping

Psalm 119:105-112 Luke 6:12 - 7:17

Faith Finds a Way



Only speak the word,
and let my servant
be healed.
Luke 7:7, NRSV

Today we hear Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. This is Luke's shortened version of the Sermon on the Mount, with a twist. It is not the poor in spirit who are commended, but simply, the poor. Following Jesus' sermon, we will hear how Jesus puts his words into action. This is a model for us to imitate.

Feb. 15 & 16 **More than a Prophet** Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, Sunday Communion

Psalm 148 Luke 7:18-35

Expectations



Healing
the lame

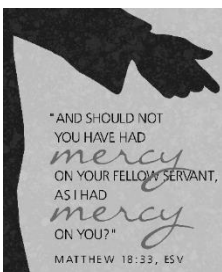
Back in Jesus' day people were looking for the Messiah. The anointed one of God. God's Great Leader. The Savior. Whenever a strong warrior, a powerful leader, or a wise teacher became prominent, the people wondered, "Is this the One?" Even John the Baptist who had been gifted with a vision that the one who received the Spirit when he was baptized would be the Messiah, and even though John recognized him as the Messiah, John still wondered, "Is this the One?" Jesus did not meet his expectations. Whatever your expectation of God, God is not that.

Feb. 22 & 23 **Forgiven at Jesus' Feet** 7th Sunday after Epiphany, Youth Sunday

Psalm 103 Luke 7:36-50

Forgiveness: When God Breaks God's Rules

We want forgiveness. We need forgiveness. We expect forgiveness...for us...when we are sorry...when we ask for it...for our small, tiny, insignificant, miniscule sin. But. That big, honking, flagrant, scandalous, in-your-face thing others do...they deserve everything they have coming to them.



St. Mark's Council Meeting Minutes for January 9, 2025

President Nelson Golden called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

In Attendance were Nelson Golden, Laura Heitz, JP Metz, Karen Lenhart, Marguerite Wallen, Mark Swaney, Corrin McBride, Amanda Schmerge, Shelley Koch and Pastor Doug.

Opening Prayer & Devotion were led by Pastor Doug. Isaiah 55:3 was read. A discussion followed where members shared ways that they are pausing to hear God's word in their daily lives. The Church Council read the **Motto, Mission & Vision Statements** in unison.

The December 19, 2024, Council Minutes were approved unanimously. JP Metz moved, and Laura Heitz seconded.

The December 19, 2024, Treasurer's Report was presented by JP Metz. He explained the details of the year-end finance report. The budget from 2024 projected a year ending income of \$254, 404.00. The actual income for 2024 was \$254, 603.42 for a difference of \$199.42. The finance committee was complimented for the accuracy of their projections. After a brief discussion, the council is requesting further clarification on a line item in the dedicated accounts. Mark Swaney moved the December 2024 Treasurer's Report to be accepted, and Shelley Koch seconded. It was approved unanimously.

New Business: Council Officers and Liaison Responsibilities:

JP Metz accepted the responsibility of Treasurer and Shelley Koch will serve as secretary. Amanda Schmerge will be the liaison for Worship and Music and Marguerite Wallen for Property and Maintenance. JP Metz will be the liaison for the Finance Committee and Corrin McBride for Young Adult Ministries. Laura Heitz and Karen Lenhart will work with the Social Ministry Committee. Laura will continue her role with Loaves and Fishes and the Card Ministry. Karen will work with Homebound Ministries. Mark Swaney will serve as a liaison at large.

Council Installation was moved to the worship services of January 12 and 13.

The Next Meeting will be Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 6:00pm.

Shelley Koch moved to adjourn the meeting seconded by Amanda Schmerge; motion carried. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted, Shelley Koch

Worship Attendance for Jan. 2025

	Sat.	Sun.	Stream	SS
1/4/25 & 1/5/25	20	55	134	18
1/11/25 & 1/12/25	20	53	89	21
1/18/25 & 1/19/25	20	50	119	24
1/25/25 & 1/26/25	20	71	166	22

Financial Information YTD as of January 27, 2025:

General Fund YTD:

Income = \$15,429

Expenses = \$10,400

General Fund Month of January:

Income = \$15,429

Expenses = \$10,400

Worship & Music Minutes
Wednesday, January 8, 2025, 5:30-6:40 p.m.
Multi-Purpose Rm 2

Members present: Barb Srisongkham, Melissa Grunden, Tina Waltz, Ashley Schmerge, Kristin Doll, Julie Miars Golden, Amanda Schmerge (Council Liaison) and Pastor Doug Pretorius. Shelley Koch, Jen Garber, and JP Metz were excused.

The Opening Prayer was offered by Chair, Julie Miars Golden. Ashley Schmerge was welcomed as a new committee member and Amanda Schmerge was welcomed as the new Council liaison. She invited people to share feedback regarding Advent and Christmas Eve services. Comments included skits were enjoyed and well-received and included some new performers, beautiful church décor, well-attended Christmas Eve services (200 total at both), and advent meals were enjoyed as people lingered to visit with each other.

It was discussed whether to go to one Christmas Eve service. It was decided to continue with one at 5:00, to accommodate people who need to attend a family gathering, while the 7:00 provides for the people who work on Christmas Eve and could not attend an earlier service.

Feedback on the movement of announcements in the bulletin was solicited. It was the consensus that it is helpful to have the info about the worship centering activity continue to be at the beginning of the bulletin, and the announcements in the back of the bulletin.

Much discussion ensued about whether people read the announcements in the bulletin or online. People were asked how they seek their news, and the following suggestions were offered:

1. Facebook
2. TikTok
3. Bulletin
4. Newsletter
5. Add Table Tents or plastic stands in which updates could be inserted and have on Gathering space tables
6. Post announcements on the TV in the Gathering space with the music playing still, rather than the changing scenery pics
7. Send PDF of bulletin on email blast on Fridays, so that people watching online would have a bulletin to follow as they watch the service
8. "Toilet Talk" sheets posted in a hard plastic sheath on restroom stall doors

It was suggested that these ideas be shared also with the recently reorganized Social Ministry Committee so they could let people know about upcoming events well in advance.

Midweek Lenten services will include 3 people each week doing a reader's theater. Julie asked for a volunteer to assist her with inviting people to participate with the reader's theater, which will be used in place of a sermon. She reported that we have many people with strong reading and acting skills in the congregation and they have always been responsive when invited to participate.

A congregational member asked if it would be possible for the service PowerPoint to include bullet points for the sermon, so as to highlight often the 3 main points and conclusion. Melissa commented that the challenge would be that Pastor's sermon on Saturday is often not identical to the one delivered on Sunday, as Pastor Doug often tweaks it, based on how the Saturday one was received or understood. It was recommended that Pastor Doug use visual supports whenever it is possible to aid with understanding the sermon focus better.

Julie closed the meeting by thanking all of the people who so faithfully serve on the Worship and Music Committee, as there is a lot of talent and leadership on this committee. She shared she will be stepping down, as she has served on the committee for 41 years, while chairing it for 39 years. She stated that it was time for some new leadership and fresh ideas, and she will still serve in the choir and as song leader but felt called to provide some leadership in the Homebound and Shut-in Ministry at St. Mark's. She encouraged them to continue their dedication in providing new ideas for worship experiences for St. Mark's.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Future Meetings - April 23, 2025 & August 6, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Miars Golden

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St. Mark's 2025 Officers and Council Members

Nelson Golden, President

Laura Heitz, Vice-President, Loaves and Fishes, & Social Action Ministries Co-coordinator

JP Metz, Treasurer

Shelley Koch, Secretary

Mark Swaney, Liaison at Large

Marguerite Wallen, Property Committee Liaison

Amanda Schmerge, Worship & Music Committee Liaison

Karen Lenhart, Social Action Ministries Co-coordinator

Corrin McBride, Young Adult Ministries Liaison



Claire Burton	February 1	Rebecca Jeanneret	February 17
Michael Burton	February 1	Lauren Doll	February 18
Bill Long	February 1	Landon Baeumel	February 20
Tori Gegel	February 2	Tom Baeumel	February 20
Lee Winemiller	February 4	Deacon Retterer	February 20
Kevin Ruck	February 5	Zach Rogers	February 24
Emilia Woehrmyer	February 5	Erika Lisi	February 25
Lynn Hengstler	February 7	Ruth Doll	February 26
Denton Retterer	February 8	Blake Rogers	February 26
Addie Newman	February 11	Travis Baeumel	February 27
Heidi LaMarr	February 12	Anne Grove	February 27

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



February 2025 – St. Mark’s Calendar



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 8a- Men’s Bible Study 5p Communion
2 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Communion	3	4 9a- Preschl. Chapel 10:30a - Listening Heart 7p - Listening Ht.	5 10:30a- Gardens 6:45p- Catechism 7p- Choir Practice	6 9a- Preschool Chapel	7	8 5p Communion
9 TSC Taping 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Worship 1p- Catechism @ St. Luke’s	10 7:30p- Property Mtg.	11 10:30a- LH 5:30a- Soc. Min. Committee Mtg. 7p- Listening Ht. 8p- Finance Mtg.	12 7p- Choir Practice	13 10:30a- Otterbein Worship 6p- Council Mtg.	14 <i>Valentine’s Day</i>	15 8a- Men’s Bible Study 5p Communion
16 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Communion	17	18 9a- Preschl. Chapel 10:30a- Listening Heart 7p- Listening Ht.	19 10:30a- Gardens Worship 6:45p- Catechism	20 9a- Preschool Chapel	21	22 5p Communion
23 9a- SS for All 10:15a- Worship Youth Sunday	24	25 10:30a- Listening Heart 7p- Listening Ht.	26 6:45p- Catechism	27	28	

February Who Does What?

10:15am Sunday	2-Feb	9-Feb	16-Feb	23-Feb
Greeters, Pearl St	Braden Fisher Kim Harter	Tim & Kathy Schneider	Susan John	Jennings McEvoy Landon Baeumel
Greeters, Seltzer St & Offering	Jen & Sarah Garber	Ron & Karen Lenhart	Mandy Wilder Lyla Wilder	Kelsey Schneider Nate Garber
Bulletins & Offering	Shelley Koch Karl Schlegel	Beth & Rod Miller	Heidi Lisi John Price	Jacob Hicks Susie LaMarr
Candle Lighter	Avery Newman	Ethan Dickey	Evelyn Oen	Ella Price
Cross Bearer	Evelyn Oen	Kelsey Schneider	Avery Newman	Ethan Dickey
Reader	Courtney Burton	Jen Garber	George Hengstler	Kerrigan Lenhart
PowerPoint	Tina Waltz	Nelson Golden	Mike Burton	Ethan Dickey
Communion	Jeanne Clark	X	John Price	X
Servers	Heidi LaMarr		Amanda Schmerge	
Song Leader(s)	Nelson Golden	Julie Miars Golden	Kristin Doll	Lyla Wilder, Kaylee Dickey, Addi Fisher, Gabby Raney, Kenzie Schneider, Kerrigan Lenhart, Evie Oen, Avery Newman
Fellowship	Karen Numbers & Tracy Blake	Elaine Hawkins	Tina Waltz	Carol Rogers
Sound Tech	Chris Sorensen	Rod Metz	Chad Doll	Blake Rogers, Trent Lisi
Video Tech	Rich Garber	Dustin Jeanneret	Elaine Hawkins	Dustin Jeanneret
5:00pm Saturday	1-Feb	8-Feb	15-Feb	22-Feb
Greeter	Sandy Swaney	Marguerite Wallen	Dianne Knipp	Mark Swaney
Bulletins	Mark Swaney	Carol Jeanneret	Connie Rompilla	Sandy Swaney
Reader	Alex Rompilla	Melissa Grunden	Laura Heitz	Sue Jeanneret
Communion	Alex Rompilla	Carol Pretorius	Laura Heitz	Sue Jeanneret
Servers	Connie Rompilla	Terry Shoup	Dianne Knipp	Betty Elsass
Singer	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius	Carol Pretorius
Musician	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden	Melissa Grunden
Altar Guild for the Month of February: Kay Ault, Cindy Klosterman, Barb Srisongkham				