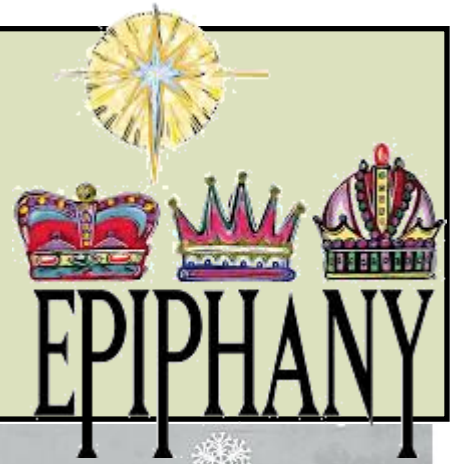


The **SERVANT**

January 2024



Contents

Pastor's Lori's Letter.....	2
Pastor Sawyer's Letter....	3
Vicar Melinda's Letter.....	4
Christmas at St. Mark's...5	
All-age Communion.....	6
Welcome New Members .6	
Living Lutheran Online....	6
Uncle Ray's Nativity.....	7
A Joy-Filled Book Study..	7
Annual Meeting.....	8
Online Offerings.....	8
The Journey (RIC Update).....	9
Council Minutes.....	10
Calendar.....	11
Contact Information.....	12

Worship

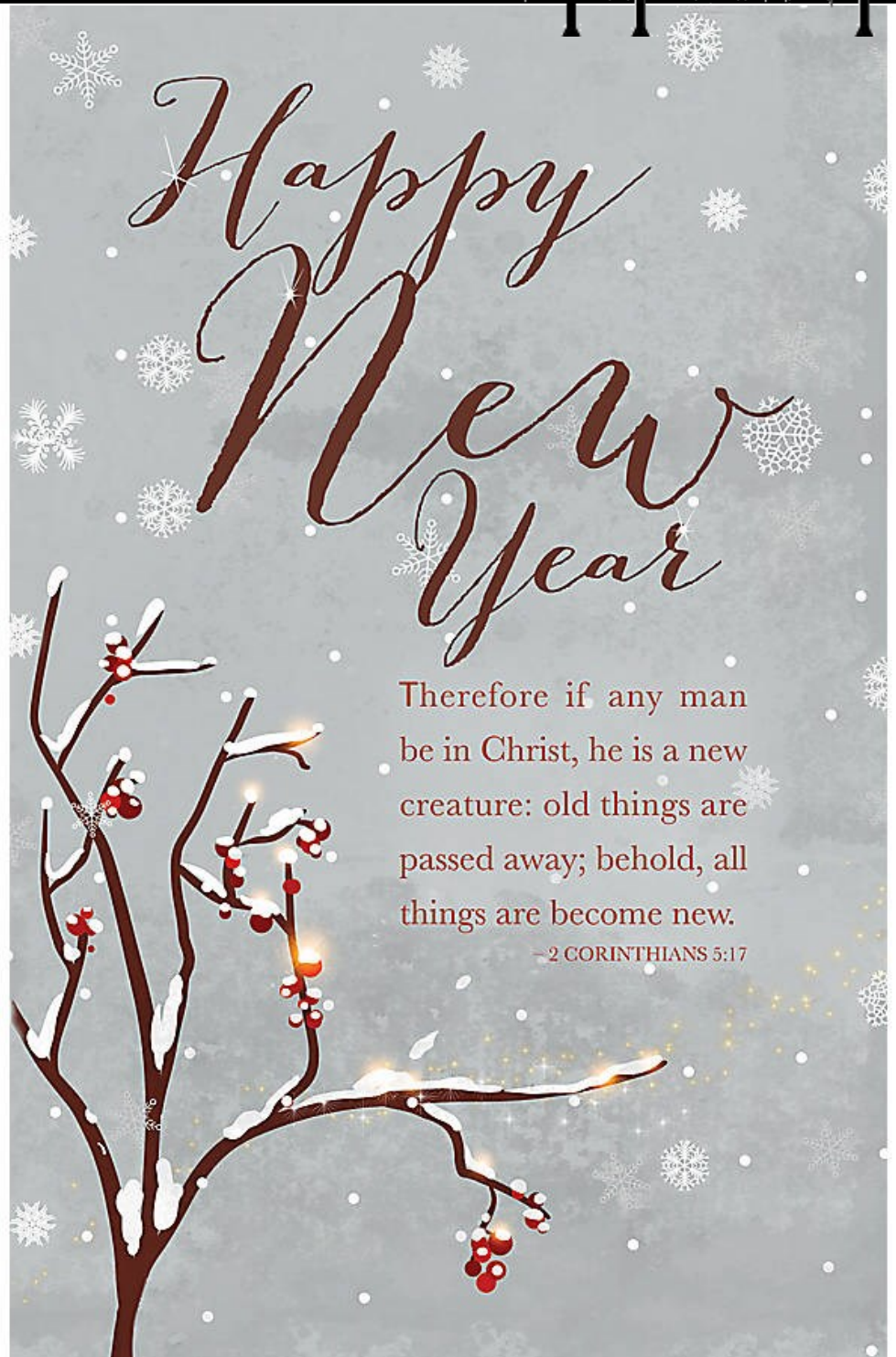
Saturday, 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, 8:30 a.m.
Sunday, 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

Pastors

Lori L. Hope
Sawyer Vanden Heuvel



St Mark's Lutheran Church
2001 S Elmwood Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
605-332-4092
www.smluth.org



“The Lord bless you and keep you” **from Pastor Lori**

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, *Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying,*

“Thus you shall bless the Israelites: you shall say to them, ‘The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord’s face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!’”

—Numbers 6:24-26

We know these words so well. We have been blessed by them hundreds of times in our lives so sometimes the magnitude of this blessing gets missed.

Aaron was a Levite and one of the chief roles of the Levites is invoking God’s blessing. This blessing reminds us how God acts in our daily lives. God is blessing and keeping us. God’s love is shining in our lives. God is gracious to us. God looks upon us with kindness and gives us peace.

Once again God is the one acting and we are the ones receiving. This blessing is bestowed upon us when we are walking through the darkest valley and when our lives are sunny and warm.

We have just lived through the 365 days of 2023. There were so many wonderful days and there were days that knocked us to our knees. Each of those days we are reminded of blessing, being kept, light breaking in, grace, compassion and peace. Sometimes they just feel like words and other times we sincerely believe them.

The good news? We don’t have to believe them for the words and actions to be true.

Once a four year old I had taken care of during the day as a nanny was saying her bedtime prayers. I had come to watch the children one evening so the parents could go out on a date. Ellie started the litany of God bless... God bless parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and then she declared, “God bless Lori!” She raised her head, opened her eyes, planted her eyes on me, and said ten more times, “God bless Lori!”

It was like the names she said night after night was just a list but here was one of those people she had prayed blessing upon in the flesh. A benediction that was based on a trusted relationship and one that changed my life forever.

May the Lord bless you and keep you,
Pastor Lori L. Hope



“Happy New Year”

Pastor Sawyer

*O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.*

—Psalm 96:1

Dear Friends at St. Mark’s,

Happy New Year!

It is hard to believe we are already entering into a new year. I suspect 2024 will go just as fast as it did in 2023. For me, entering into a new year comes with a mixed bag of emotions. I grieve for losses in the past year and things I failed to do. I look ahead to the new year with anticipation for what is to come, but I also give gratitude for what the past year brought, for the things I learned and the milestones reached.

For me, a huge milestone was graduating from seminary, followed by receiving my first call to become your pastor and getting ordained. All of these things couldn’t have happened without many mentors and guides along the way and, most importantly, the work of the Holy Spirit. Becoming one of your pastors has been a huge joy in my life. I give thanks for the many ways you have already supported me and partnered with me for the sake of the ministry we do here together.

I like to think of the new year like going on a new hiking trail that I have never been on. I do not know what twists and turns will show up, nor do I know if there will be challenging and steep climbs or low valleys to pass through. Likewise, in ministry, I do not know what this new year will bring as far as challenges and opportunities, but I am looking forward to more ministry that will happen here at St. Mark’s and also my work with Shepherd’s Table. It’s an exciting time to be a pastor and to do this thing called church together.

Whatever this new year brings, whether it is joys or challenges, I hope you will not hesitate to reach out when you need someone to come alongside you. May God continue to guide and bless you in the year ahead and may you find reasons to sing a new song to the Lord!

Peace be with you,
Pastor Sawyer

P.S. If you’d like to grab a cup of coffee sometime in the New Year, send me an email at sawyer@smluth.org or contact the church office. Pastors love drinking coffee and most importantly, we love having coffee with a conversation partner!

**Pastor Sawyer’s new stole is a gift
from St. Mark’s in honor of his ordination.**



“We’re on Our Way”

Vicar Melinda

“I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don’t get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back.”
Philippians 3:12-14 (the Message translation)

Dear Saints,

We are on our way to new things! As the new year begins, we set our goals; we set our resolutions; and we set our lives on a new course. The promise of “starting over” or “starting something new” has always been refreshing to me. I have set many new year’s resolutions in the past and most often they last until Lent. My intentions are always good and my motivation is strong in January, but then life happens and I realize that I was too ambitious when setting them. I have learned to set smaller goals and less resolutions. I have learned to celebrate the small wins throughout the process instead of waiting for a grand celebration at the end. Celebrating the small victories helps me get to the next step in completion of the larger goal.

2023 was a year of many small victories and next steps which all led to my spending the Advent season at St. Mark’s as your vicar. Last January (2023), I had no idea how my year would go or where my studies would lead me. I only knew that I was entering a year of transition. So I set my goals and resolutions small—complete academic courses, interview internship sites, accept a placement, submit work resignation, and move. Praise God that each step was accomplished, one day at a time, with support from family and friends. As the scripture in Philippians stated “I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me.” We are able to get through it because we are not alone—Christ is with us. We are not alone—we are with one another. Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

I am certain that many of you navigated a year of transition in 2023 as well. Some of the transition was planned and some was not. All of it was life changing! As we enter the beginning of 2024, we are blessed to have an opportunity to “start over” or “start new” again. Starting over or starting new does not erase the journey that we have been on. It only expands the road to new paths or refreshed pavements. We walk into the new year celebrating the birth of the Messiah and look onward to meeting him at the Cross. And along the way we celebrate each step together.

I look forward to journeying with all of you this year. We are on our way to new things!

Happy New Year,

Vicar Melinda

Christmas at St. Mark's



**St. Lucia Festival
December 8 and 9**



**Christmas Program
December 17**



**Blue Christmas
December 21**



Thank you to all who helped with St. Lucia



Thank you so much for all of your help in making this year's St. Lucia Festival a success! Hundreds of people visited our church to celebrate St. Lucia and enjoy the dancing, singing, treats, and fellowship

The festival cannot happen without your support. From setting up the church, baking treats, working in the kitchen, serving at the event, publicizing the event, singing in the choir, helping with dancers, and more, the committee greatly appreciates everyone who helped make the festival a success.

We also want to thank the 33 students who spent hours perfecting their Swedish dances. The festival received around \$2500 for The Banquet, which will help feed so many in our community. Thank you again to all for generous donations of time, talents, and funds!

God Jul!

Kerri Smith -St. Lucia Festival Chair

Communion Instruction

St. Mark's will offer communion instruction on Sunday, January 21, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Please let the office know by January 18 if you will be attending.

Any-age Communion

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) allows for *any-age communion*. St. Mark's has been practicing any-age communion since 2015. Since the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are *gifts* from God, *all* are welcome to receive these gifts. It's not about *knowledge* of the gifts, but about God's *grace of gifting*.

Welcome New Members

Cruz and Emily Trujillo

Cruz and Emily are excited to join the St. Mark's family. They live in Sioux Falls with their two large rescue dogs, Jack and Erika. Cruz is a clinical mental health therapist who works with children. Emily is a state and local government audit consultant who works remotely. In their free time they enjoy spending time with their dogs, volunteering, and outdoor activities like camping, hiking and rock climbing.

Welcome!

Living Lutheran goes to online format

How to subscribe

It has been St. Mark's practice to provide a paid subscription to *Living Lutheran* magazine for every member household. *Living Lutheran* has transitioned to an online format and published its final print issue in December 2023.

The magazine's content will continue to be available at no cost to readers at livinglutheran.org. Videos, audio stories, podcasts, live events, and a robust social media presence will also be used to share and spread good news.

No login information is needed to access the website. Sign up at livinglutheran.org/subscribe for the magazine's free e-digest, where you can get links to stories based on your preferences delivered to your inbox weekly, biweekly or monthly.

Uncle Roy's nativity scene



The nativity scene carvings in the narthex during Christmas were carved by A. Roy McCrae, the great-uncle of Cathy Brechtelsbauer.

Cathy's Uncle Roy (1889-1979) was a person undaunted by his disabilities. He and three siblings (from a family of eight children) were albino with very weak eyes. Roy was legally blind and walked with a cane, but at about age 76 decided to try some artwork.

"We could tell he had been painting," Cathy says, "by the paint on his nose." One day while waiting for the paint to dry, he started whittling. After that he enjoyed woodcarving more than painting because he could do a lot by feel. If there was a scrap of wood around, he seemed compelled to carve it.

Besides the manger scene, he carved a whole crucifixion scene, which was lost in a fire at Cathy's sister's house.

Uncle Roy would hope we would all be blessed by the one who came to earth "to bring good news to the poor."

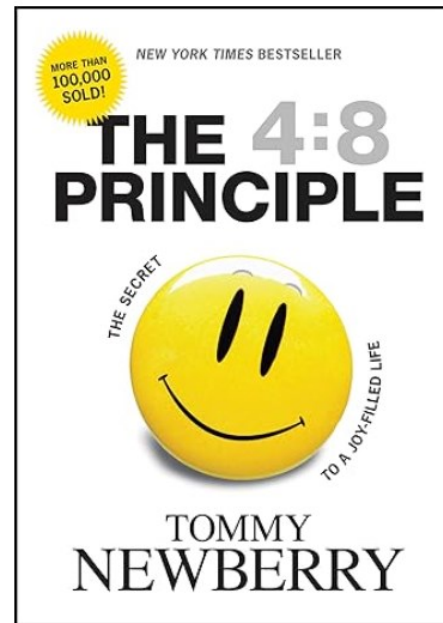
A joy-filled book study

Vicar Melinda will offer a book study in January on the book *The 4:8 Principle: The Secret to a Joy-Filled Life* by Tommy Newberry. In this book, Newberry takes the biblical principle from Philippians 4:8 and shares how it can magnify the joy we experience in our lives. The four-week book study will begin on January 17 and run through February 9. Meeting days and times are:

Wednesdays at 9:00 a.m. at St. Mark's
OR

Fridays at 7:00 p.m. online via Zoom

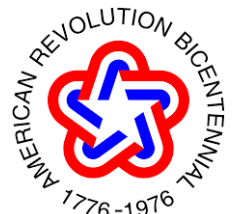
Books will be provided. Please contact the office or sign up in the narthex by Monday, January 8, if you plan to attend.



History Highlights

St. Mark's will observe its 70th anniversary in 2024. As we prepare for the anniversary, we are sharing some of the church's history highlights along with notes on what was happening nationally and around the world. **In 1976:**

- **The first worship service in the new sanctuary was celebrated on January 25.**
- **The first St. Lucia Festival was held on December 4.**
- Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs founded Apple computer in the basement of Jobs' parents' house.
- The United States celebrated the Bicentennial. All quarters minted in 1976 were dated as 1776-1976



St. Mark's Delivers!

The St. Mark's Meals on Wheels team delivers lunch seven days of each month on Route #17. (Some St. Mark's folks help with other routes and with meal packing, too.)

At this time, Route #17 is short a regular Wednesday driver. Occasional substitutes are also needed.

St. Mark's takes lunch to 15-20 people. The route takes about an hour to an hour-and-a-half. If you have not driven for Meals on Wheels but would like to try it, let the St. Mark's team know. You would be able to ride along with an experienced Meals on Wheels driver.

St. Mark's needs drivers on the following dates:

- Wednesday, January 17
- Friday, February 16
- Wednesday, February 21
- Friday, March 15
- Wednesday, March 20

Please consider. Volunteer by contacting the church office or Cathy Brechtelsbauer. Thanks!

Online offerings

St. Mark's has added two new ways to make donations. You can:

- Give online at smluth.org/give or
- Use your smartphone to scan the QR Code in the weekly worship bulletin

In addition, you can give by:

- Placing a donation in the offering plate
- Enrolling in Simply Giving for automatic weekly or monthly donations

January Baptism Anniversaries

Edith Alberty

Michelle Alberty

Abby Cunningham

Patrick Hartigan

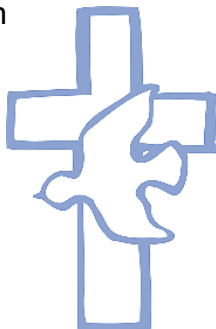
Abiaza Kane

Jana Keller

Don Laurila

Karin Lindell

Alex Luke



Mary Mortenson

Halstyn Nygaard

Jodi Randall

Rita Regina

Angie Smith

Shari Smith

Dorothy Varns

Cary Wencil

Dana Yost

Thank you

Pastors Lori and Sawyer and St. Mark's family,

Thank you so very much for the 70 plus gifts of clothing for our teens! We were overwhelmed by your incredible generosity! Thanks, too, to the volunteers who helped deliver the gifts: Kent, Mark and Jack!

Oftentimes our teens get forgotten and many of our teens come from adverse backgrounds, so you have no idea how much these gifts meant to them; not only the item but the gift signifies someone cares about them and believes in them. Thanks for that gift as well.

During this season of giving, we are so grateful for you all! Merry Christmas and best wishes for a happy and blessed New Year,

Clay Hoffman

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Christmas Clothing Tree a huge success! Together, we were able to bless over 70 teenagers at the Boys and Girls Club. We provided so many gifts that it took two vehicles to transport them. The tables at the Boys and Girls Club were overflowing with gifts!

St. Mark's Annual Meeting: Sunday, January 28

St. Mark's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 28. There will be a potluck following the 10:45 service with the meeting starting at approximately 12:30.

All families are asked to bring an entrée *and* —

- Last names starting with A through L: dessert
- Last name starting with M through Z: salad

THANK YOU

to those who are sponsoring our missionary in Nicaragua and our Transportation Ministry during the month of January

Transportation Ministry Sponsor
Marlon Mollet is the January sponsor.

Mission Ministry Sponsors
Marlon Mollet is the Mission Ministry Sponsor for four weeks in January.

An update from the RIC (Reconciling in Christ) taskforce

The Journey

Did you know that St. Mark's has an RIC task force? The task force was formed in December 2022 after a small group of members attended a Safe Zone Training with the South Dakota Synod in 2020. The task force has two main goals: to become a member of the Reconciling in Christ program officially and to continue providing educational and informational forums on topics that impact marginalized and underrepresented groups.

What is an RIC congregation?

An RIC congregation is a congregation that has met the requirements set by ReconcilingWorks. Requirements include establishing an open and affirming call policy and wedding policy; and having a welcome statement, that includes languages related to a commitment to racial equity and support of LGBTQIA2S+ people.

Who is ReconcilingWorks? ReconcilingWorks is an independent non-profit organization that is a trusted ministry partner in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In 1974, they began their advocacy for full participation of Lutheran members in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, synods, and communities, and in 1983, they established the RIC program as "a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. [Click here](#) to learn more about ReconcilingWorks, its mission and vision, and the RIC program.

Why is it important for a church to become a member of the RIC program?

[Click here](#) to read an article from ReconcilingWorks that addresses the question above.

What has the task force been doing since its creation in 2022?

We are proud to share that the task force has been working hard over the past year and accomplished the successes below:

- Held numerous one-to-one visits with members, on the RIC process.
- Offered multiple forums in 2021 on how to become an RIC church.
- Offered two information forums on their work and the RIC process in October and November 2023.
- Created wedding and call policies with guidance from St. Mark's pastoral staff. These policies were approved by the Church Council on August 15, 2023.
 - ◊ [Click here](#) to read the wedding policy.
 - ◊ [Click here](#) to read the call policy.

What is next for the task force?

The task force is planning the next action steps for 2024 and beyond.

- Offer a panel discussion forum on Sunday, January 14, at 9:30 a.m. and Thursday, January 18, at 7:00 p.m. Select panelists will share their personal experiences as they engage in a dialogue about faith, sexuality, gender identity, and racial equity.
- Take steps towards a potential congregational vote in Spring 2024 for St. Mark's to become a member of the RIC program.
- Continue The Journey forums, providing educational and informational material on topics that impact marginalized and underrepresented groups.

If you have questions, please reach out to one of the members of the RIC Task Force: Rachel Gertner, Cathy Larson, Ann Sansgaard, Barb Stanley, Sally Turner, and Rae Yost.

We look forward to seeing you at the Panel Discussion Forum in January!

St. Mark's RIC Task Force

Council Minutes

St. Mark's Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes 12/19/2023

Pastor Sawyer, Kyle Albery, Kent Albery, Mark Smith, April Hokanson, Vicar Melinda, David Golemboski, Katie Harms, Dianne Schnabel, Deb Carrier, Barb Stanley, Sally Turner, Pastor Lori, Luanne Albery, Darrell Herman, Karin Lindell, Becky Luke

Devotions – Pastor Sawyer shared devotions. Darrell has them for January.

Minutes – MSC.

Treasurer's report – MSC

President's report – Lucia went wonderfully. Over 300 people attended between the two nights. We received over \$2500 for the Banquet.

Pastor Lori's report – The Sunday school Christmas Program was delightful.

Pastor Sawyer's report – New member night included six households joining. He is working with Deb to set up Tithely, an online giving option. This is not replacing Simply Giving, but is a great option for one-time giving. Tithely has a credit card option.

Vicar's report – She really enjoyed Lucia. She and Pastor Lori just submitted her three-month review.

Committee Reports

Finance – Let's talk budget. There is a \$48,000 shortfall. They recommend an additional stewardship drive, shifting some of the mortgage money, possibly pausing the internship program (although this only saves \$12,000 in 2024). After much discussion, members of the Council brought the following amendments forward.

- Amend the budget to drop the Property Project to \$10,000 – MSC
- Amend the budget to increase the Synod contribution budget to \$15,000 – MSC
- Amend the water and sewer budget to \$1300 – MSC

The Council will send the recommended budget with a shortfall to the congregation – MSC.

The extra money in Property Projects is still there for 2023. We could use those next year as necessary, within the boundaries of the bylaws and constitution.

Youth – They continue to have fun as the year progresses.

Mission – They propose to put the RIC Journey information in the Servant in January. No objections.

Christian Ed – The Christmas program was great. The Sunday school numbers are consistently at 28 or above. If this continues, we will seriously need to consider bringing on a paid Christian Education Coordinator like we used to have.

Worship and Music – They had a wonderful volunteer turnout to decorate the church for Christmas. They purchased another communion tray so they should have enough for all services now.

Property – They just found out the downstairs girls bathroom toilet is not working. They also need to re-sign the bathrooms downstairs to be gender neutral.

Congregational Well Being – They got the college packages sent. Truman told Pastor Lori that he really appreciated his.

Old Business

Local benevolence – After discussion this will all go to Pastor's Discretionary fund. MSC.

We will have wording updates to the constitution on the ballot at the annual meeting. The Council approved them last year, but we forgot to add them to the ballot for the annual meeting.

New Business

None at this time.

We closed with our prayer concerns and the Lord's Prayer.

MSC to adjourn.

Submitted by Becky Luke, Secretary

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Pastor Lori's Sabbath	2 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m.	3 Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m.	4 Book Study, 10:00 a.m.	5 Pastor Sawyer's/Vicar Melinda's Sabbath	6 Watercolor, 10.00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
7 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.	8 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	9 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m. Internship Committee, 6:00 p.m.	10 Fill Your Cup, 9:00 a.m. Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m. 6th-8th Grade Confirmation, 7:00 pm	11 Book Study, 10:00 a.m. Ruth Circle, 1:00 p.m. Fill Your Cup, 7:00 p.m.	12 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath	13 Watercolor, 10.00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
14 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Adult Forum, RIC Panel Discussion, 9:30 a.m.	15 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	16 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m. Council, 7:00 p.m.	17 Book Study, 9:00 a.m. Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m. 9th-10 Grade Confirmation, 7:00 p.m.	18 Book Study, 10:00 a.m. RIC Panel Discussion, 7:00 p.m.	19 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath Book Study, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom	20 Watercolor, 10.00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
21 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Communion Instruction, 3:00 p.m.	22 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	23 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m.	24 Book Study, 9:00 a.m. Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m. Youth Group, 7:00 p.m.	25 Book Study, 10:00 a.m.	26 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath Book Study, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom	27 Watercolor, 10.00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
28 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Annual Meeting, 12:30 p.m.	29 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	30 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m.	31 Book Study, 9:00 a.m. Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m. 9th-10th Grade Confirmation, 7:00 p.m.			

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
2001 S. Elmwood Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57105

The Servant January 2024

Office Hours & Contact Information:

- Lori Hope, Pastor
Tuesday-Friday
pastor@smluth.org
- Sawyer Vanden Heuvel, Pastor
Monday-Thursday
sawyer@smluth.org
- Melinda Garza Moran, Vicar
Tuesday- Friday
intern@smluth.org
- Linda Hallstrom, Office Manager
Monday - Wednesday 8:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m.
Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
stmarks@smluth.org
- Karin Lindell, Ministry Coordinator
Tuesday 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Wednesday 1:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
karin@smluth.org
- Deb Carrier, Finance Manager
Wednesday
deb@smluth.org
*If you need anything related to finance,
please email Deb anytime.*

To reach a member
of the pastoral team
during non-office hours
605-215-2925

St Mark's Lutheran Church
2001 S Elmwood Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
605-332-4092



St. Mark's office is also open on Fridays
from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.