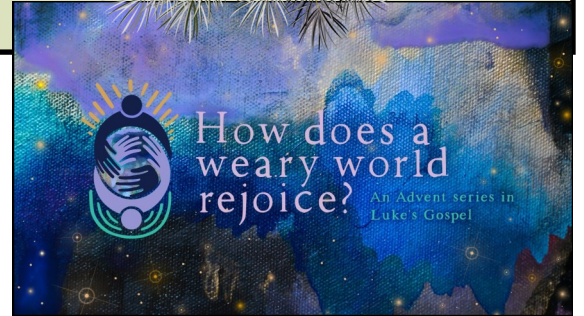


The **SERVANT**

December 2023



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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

Christ was born into a weary world. King Herod ruled the land with a legacy of ruthlessness. The Romans treated the people of Israel with contempt, imposing harsh taxes and land seizures that forced many into subsistence farming. Poverty and destitution were pervasive. And yet, Christ was born, bringing good news of great joy for all people.

Take a look around today and we see weariness all around us. War and conflict continue to ravage many parts of the world. People continue to hunger. We are weary of politics. We are weary people living in times of heartache and strife. As Advent comes again to a weary world, we ask, "How does a weary world rejoice?" This year, St. Mark's will follow the stories in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel. As we hold space for our weariness and our joy, we will seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world as we wait for the coming of the Christ-child.

This Advent, may we find many ways to rejoice.

The Last Time I Saw God

The last time I saw God face to face
I was looking at a bed of tulips.
God was every color of red.
I was merely a mortal,
in awe of it all.

The time before that,
we were tying back the curtains,
looking for stars.
God was the deepest purple
and the brightest light.

The time before that,
the city was soft with snow.
God was the quiet
that tucked us all in.

And in between these small
gifts there were
newborn babies,
and sapling trees,
homemade bread,
the sound of a church
singing on Sunday.

...
Why, yes, we are lucky.
We are more than lucky
for the moments when
delight and awe
unzip the weight
we carry around.

Prayer by Rev. Sarah Speed |
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

“The Waiting Place”

from Pastor Lori

Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come,
or a plane to go or the mail to come,
or the rain to go or the phone to ring,
or the snow to snow or waiting around for a Yes or No
or waiting for their hair to grow.

Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite
or waiting for wind to fly a kite
or waiting around for Friday night

or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake
or a pot to boil, or a Better Break
or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants
or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.

Everyone is just waiting.

(Excerpt from *Oh, The Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss)

As Tom Petty famously told us, “the waiting is the hardest part.” During the season of Advent we take the time as people who know how this story ends to wait, reflect, remember, wonder, sigh, breathe deeply, and ponder. Despite the baking, shopping, wrapping, programs, celebrations and parties, we decide to sing, listen and speak about waiting. In our waiting space we are actively praying, feeding the hungry, speaking up for the marginalized, visiting those who are sick, comforting the grieving, and listening to God speaking to us in 2023.

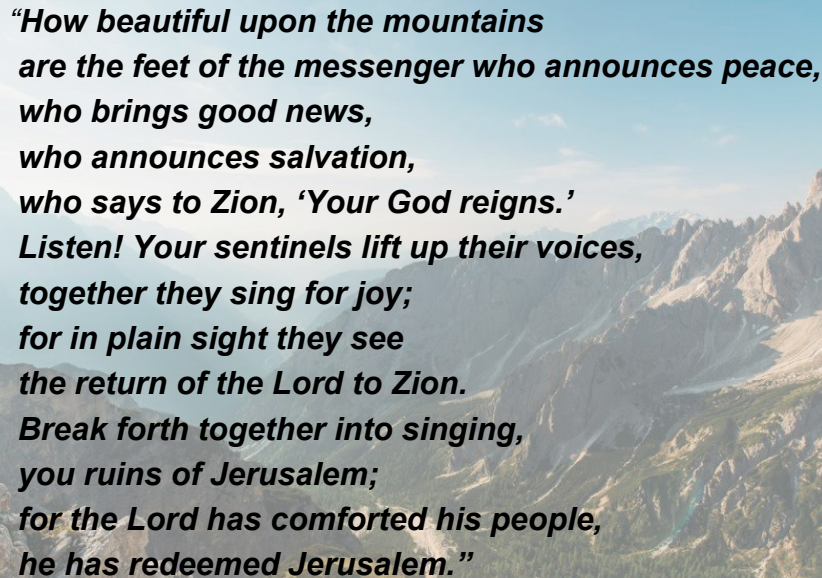
We wait together in hope, peace, joy and love.

Peace,
Pastor Lori L. Hope



“Our Weary World Rejoices”

Pastor Sawyer



***“How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.”***

Isaiah 52:7-9 (NRSV)

Dear friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the One in whom we are waiting for: Jesus the Christ.

Advent is my favorite church season. I think it is fitting that the new liturgical year begins with Advent because the church begins by being counter-cultural to the rest of the world. Many of us get to the last month of the calendar year and rush to complete things before the new year starts on January 1. But, in the church, we *begin again* by slowing down, waiting, and preparing to receive Christ, the messenger who announces peace and brings good news, into our hearts and into our homes.

Advent is also a reminder of how we live in the “already and not yet.” We live in a world knowing that Jesus has already come, and yet we are waiting for the return of Christ. We wait for there to be peace among nations, for every hungry soul to be fed, for wars to cease, and for all children of God to be one with each other. So while we wait and prepare, we recognize that the world is weary, and yet we find ways to rejoice by seeing the image of God on the faces of those we see as we go about our daily lives.

Jesus Christ was born into a weary world. Christ, who is God in the Word made flesh, knows our suffering and sees our weariness. And yet, the Good News that Jesus came into the world *for us* continues to be proclaimed in the same story that has been shared for over 2000 years. Because of that Good News, our weary world rejoices.

Peace to you this season. May you find ways to rejoice in your weariness for God is with you.

Pastor Sawyer

“Waiting on the promise”

Vicar Melinda

As we enter the Advent season, we are filled with the possibilities of new beginnings. It is a new year! A time to hope and prepare for the coming of our Lord. A time filled with joy and love as we patiently wait. Wait on the promise of celebrating the birth of the chosen one — Emmanuel — God with us.

Waiting is not always an easy thing to do. It can be difficult to wait when so much around us feels out of control. It can feel impossible to wait when all we want to do is celebrate.

Can you imagine how Mary and Joseph must have felt on that first Christmas Eve? As they journeyed to Bethlehem, their waiting ended, the time had come for their little one to be born. Nothing could prepare them for his arrival, especially in a city that was not ready to receive them. But through the discomfort and uncertainty, a way was made for them. Joy came forth! Love came forth!

In our lives, we travel through journeys that are not always certain and smooth. Some paths take us down long and lonely roads. Some paths move us forward to roads of peace. In our lives, we experience seasons of waiting and seasons of rejoicing. In every season and on every journey, there is a time for hope, joy, and love.

Our theme for Advent this year is *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?* That is a perfect question to explore in a time of heaviness and unsureness. It is an honest question to explore in a season of new beginnings. Jesus said, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Let us journey together this Advent, as one community, one family. Rejoicing in our weariness and resting in Christ.

Feliz Navidad!

Vicar Melinda



Christmas Calendar

December 8 and 9

St. Lucia Festival

St. Mark's 48th St. Lucia Festival is Friday, December 8, and Saturday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome for this free and meaningful event that celebrates the best things of Christmas: community, light, family, children, and good food. Free will donations support The Banquet.

December 17

Sunday School Christmas Program

The St. Mark's Christmas Program will be presented during worship at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday, December 17. The preschool, elementary, and middle school Sunday School students are preparing to tell the Christmas story again to remind us in story and song how Christ comes into our world and into our lives. Please come to celebrate this story with us!



December 17

Launch event for Shepherd's Table

Shepherd's Table will be holding its launch event on December 17 at the PRISM Community Center, 500 North Western. Shepherd's Table is a community founded on the principle of God's love extending to all people — everyone has a place at the table.

Pastor Sawyer Vanden Heuvel of St. Mark's is the Mission Developer and Pastor for Shepherd's Table.

Let there be light for all.

The table is being extended in Sioux Falls
for all to find a place to belong.

SHEPHERD'S
TABLE

Sunday, December 17, 2023
3:00 PM - 5:30 PM
PRISM Community Center
500 N Western Ave.

Christmas Calendar

December 21

Blue Christmas



Blue Christmas is a service of worship held on one of the longest nights of the year. The service includes music, readings, a brief meditation, and an opportunity to light candles, lifting before God our deepest sadness and burdens before we gather for our Christmas celebrations. We remember our deepest sorrows and the need for Immanuel, God with us. Please consider joining us for the Blue Christmas worship service at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 21. Invite friends and family who might need such a time of reflection. Please know you are remembered during this difficult time and during this season.

Christmas Clothing Tree

This year St. Mark's has the opportunity to help 60 teenagers in our community through our Christmas Clothing Tree. So many times, teenagers are an overlooked group at Christmas time. They don't want much — a simple hoodie, a decent pair of jeans, maybe a pair of sweatpants for gym class or to stay warm in as they walk to school. To help, simply take a colored tag off the Christmas Clothing Tree in the narthex and put your name on the white tag under it. Then purchase your gift, wrap it, add the colored tag, and return it to the church by December 17. Feel free to include a pair of gloves, mittens, a hat, or a game of UNO in your present. If you have any questions, talk with Pastor Lori, Pastor Sawyer, or Becky Luke.

December 23

Service for Fourth Weekend of Advent

We will observe the fourth Advent service on Saturday, December 23, at 5:00 p.m.

December 24

Christmas Eve Dinner

You are invited to join other St. Mark's members and families for a Christmas Eve Dinner on Sunday, December 24 following our 5:30 p.m. service. A catered meal will be served in the fellowship hall. Please call the church office or sign up on the sheet on the table in the narthex by December 18. We are also looking for volunteers to help set up, serve, clean up, or donate Christmas cookies. If you need a ride, let the office know by Friday, December 22.

Christmas Worship Services

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve services with candlelight and communion are scheduled for 2:30, 5:30, and 10:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 24. There will not be a morning service that day. The Christmas offering will be split between the Sioux Falls Public School Lunch Angel Fund, the fund that helps pay for lunches of students that cannot pay for their own lunches, and Shepherd's Table ... *angels and shepherds*.

Christmas Day

There will not be a service on Christmas Day, Monday, December 25.

New Year's Services

On New Year's weekend, the Saturday, December 30, service is at 5:00 p.m. The Sunday, December 31, service will be held at 10:00 a.m. There will not be an 8:30 a.m. service.

A Report from St. Mark's Quilters

Quilts for Bethany Home ... and more



Bethany Home residents Ray and Shirley Schaikoski with their lap quilts from St. Mark's.

The year 2023 has been a busy, productive, and blessed year for St. Mark's quilters. We were blessed with a huge (four pickup trucks full) donation of fabric and batting from Augustana Lutheran Church. We also received two large donations of fabric from Sheri Goldhammer. One of her donations included Christmas fabric — a donation that made possible our project to make lap quilts for our neighbors at Bethany Home.

We have made and donated 150 quilts to organizations around Sioux Falls and South Dakota. Organizations that have received quilts include Union Gospel Mission, St. Francis House, McCrossan Boys' Ranch, Red Shirt Table, Center of Hope, 15-5 Ministries, Oxford House, Boys and Girls Club, Children's Inn, Rapid City Warming Project, Shetek Camp, Lutherans Outdoors ... to name a few.

We also gave to our graduates and to our employees.

Blessed—yes! Productive—yes! Busy—yes, yes!!

St. Mark's Quilters



Vicar Melinda and Donna Hirsch delivered 57 lap quilts to Bethany Home.



St. Mark's quilters (from left) Tyone Kruse, Cathy Larson, Donna Hirsch, and Shirley Larson prepared the sanctuary for the Blessing of the Quilts which was included in worship services November 18 and 19.

St. Mark's Mission Statement

to nurture faith and life for loving service in Christ's name.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnals

St. Mark's has purchased 30 Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnals (ELW) to supplement our current number.

You may purchase copies of ELW in honor or memory of loved ones. Hymnals will have bookplates indicating the names of donors and those who are honored and remembered. The cost is \$27.00 per hymnal.



**Complete and return
the order form
to the church office or
fill out the [online form](#).**

ELW Order Form

Name: **please print**

Number of Books _____ at \$27/book

If desired you may designate your gift:

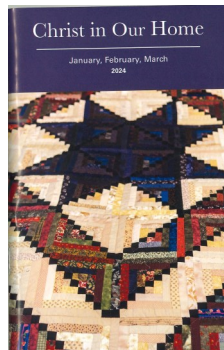
In honor of: **please print**

In memory of: **please print**

Make check payable to St. Mark's Lutheran Church with "Hymnals" on the memo line. Checks/cash may be mailed to St. Mark's with the order form or paid in person at the church.

New Member Night

We would be happy to welcome you into our congregation. Join us for New Member Night — a time to learn more about St. Mark's, ask questions, and enjoy an informal visit. New Member Night is Tuesday, December 12, at 7:00 p.m. Please call the office, 605-332-4092, if you would like more information.



Christ in Our Home

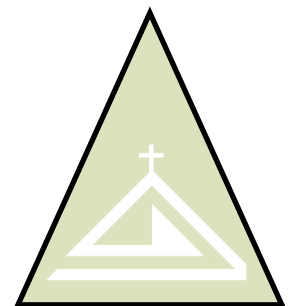
Copies of *Christ in Our Home* for January, February, and March are available in the Narthex.

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 1975:

- **Groundbreaking was held for St. Mark's new "pyramid" addition on May 11.**
- **St. Mark's began its sponsorship of refugees on September 15.**
- In response to the energy crisis, daylight saving time commenced nearly two months early in the United States.
- Microsoft was founded as a partnership between Bill Gates and Paul Allen.
- *Saturday Night Live* debuted on NBC.



Musicians for our Sunday services



Do you play a musical instrument and have interest in participating in worship? St. Mark's has a great deal of musical talent in the pews, and we would love to have you join us in making a joyful noise unto the Lord! Instrumentalists of all ages are invited to help support and enhance liturgical music on Sundays and for special services; all instruments are welcome. If you're interested, please speak with Jonathan Neiderhiser.

Fill Your Cup

Join Vicar Melinda for a time of fellowship to fill your cup through conversations about life, theology, and faith. Fill Your Cup meets the second Wednesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. and the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at St. Mark's. December's sessions are December 13 and 14.



Thank you! Thank you for the cards, texts, emails, prayers and gifts for my surgery and recovery. It was clear to me that I was surrounded with so much love and grace.

Thank you,

Pastor Lori

Thank You!

Noisy Offering December 16/17

St. Mark's "Noisy Offering" will be the third weekend in December. Noisy Offering, which is usually on the fourth weekend of the month, goes to ELCA World Hunger.

Poinsettias

Please add color to the sanctuary for Christmas by purchasing a red poinsettia plant and bringing it to the church anytime in December. Thank you!

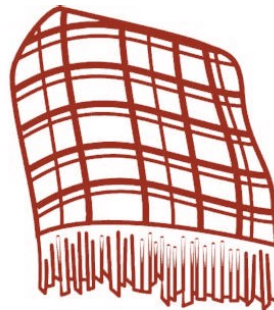
December Baptism Anniversaries

Candace Cameron
Adam Des Enfants
Hans Harmakaputra
Robert Joyce
Sally Kocon
Rich Lauer
Kari Sansgaard
Pat Seiner
Madelyn Turner



Blankets for refugees

With more refugees arriving regularly, and with the arrival of winter, Lutheran Social Services' Center for New Americans in Sioux Falls is in need of supplies.



To help, St. Mark's will hold a blanket drive from December 4-18. Please drop off new or slightly used—but clean—blankets to the refugee closet located in our Reformation Room.

St. Mark's members have always been extremely generous in helping out LSS and your generosity with the blanket drive would be greatly appreciated, too!

THANK YOU

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

Transportation Ministry Sponsor
Marlon Mollet is the December sponsor.

Mission Ministry Sponsors

December 3: Marlon Mollet
December 10: Marlon Mollet
December 17: Marlon Mollet
December 24: Lorie Laurila
in memory of Ray Laurila
December 31: Marlon Mollet

Council Minutes

St. Mark's Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes

11/21/2023

Kent Alberty, Barb Stanley, Pastor Lori, Pastor Sawyer, Luanne Alberty, Karin Lindell, Dianne Schnabel, Barb Stanley, Vicar Melinda, Katie Harms, Mark Smith, Angie Smith, Sally Turner, Darrell Herman, Kyle Alberty, Becky Luke

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

Minutes –MSC.

Treasurer's Report – Reviewed the reports and discussed with Deb questions he had. Worked with Finance. We discussed Simply Giving and how important it is to the life of the church. Some think it is confusing. Kyle suggested we send out the form in an email. MSC.

President's Report – She and Sawyer have discussed the growing pains that are happening in our church. Nothing specific was mentioned.

Pastor Lori's Report – Thank you for all of your prayers and support. She feels great. Tonight is her first night back after surgery.

Pastor Sawyer's Report – Ordination and installation were amazing and exciting! Thank you to everyone that helped make them so special. Thank you to the Property Committee for all of their hard work of moving everything around in the church to make room for him. Thank you to the office staff for working with him and helping bring him up to speed. He is looking ahead to 2024.

Vicar's Report – Fill Your Cup was well received. Both instances will be held at St. Mark's going forward. It was a bit noisy at Severance because they didn't have a separate room. She is working on her End of Year project idea.

Committee Reports

Property – Lots of changes going on but all seems to be going well.

Congregational Well-being – They are meeting on Friday, November 24, to prepare boxes for college students.

Finance – The Lilly Grant did not come through. We, as a congregation, need to make sure we can continue to support the staff we have. Pastor Sawyer and the committee are discussing an on-line giving option. Maybe reach out to people who are disillusioned by the idea of a church but not by God.

Youth – They went bowling before Pastor Lori went on leave. They are planning a Christmas activity.

Mission – The Refugee Closet needs twin and full sized blankets. We will be doing a blanket drive at St. Mark's to help with this. We've received word that 35 new refugees have arrived. We will get a list of clothing needs for them soon. There will be an RIC forum on November 30 at 7:00. Sally passed around a draft of a possible welcome statement.

Christian Ed – The Christmas Program is December 17 at the second service.

Worship and Music – They are decorating the church for Christmas on December 2.

Old Business – No old business.

New Business

The Thanksgiving offering will be split between Lutheran Disaster for Middle East Crisis and Pastor Lori's Discretionary Fund. The Christmas offering will be split between the Sioux Falls Public School Lunch Angel Fund, the fund that helps pay for lunches of students that cannot pay for their own lunches, and Shepherd's Table. As a side note, after this motion was made, we realized that angels and shepherds were very appropriate for Christmas. MSC.

Blue Christmas is December 21.

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

MSC to adjourn.

Submitted by Becky Luke, Secretary

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath	2 Watercolor, 10:00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
3 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Lucia Rehearsal, 12:00 p.m.	4 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	5 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m. Internship Committee, 6:00 p.m. Finance Committee, 7:00 p.m.	6 Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Lucia Dress Rehearsal, 5:30 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m.	7 Book Study, 10:00 a.m.	8 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath Lucia Festival, 7:00 p.m. 	9 Watercolor, 10:00 a.m. Lucia Festival, 7:00 p.m.
10 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.	11 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	12 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m. New Member Night, 7:00 p.m.	13 Fill Your Cup, 9:00 a.m. Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m.	14 Book Study, 10:00 a.m. Ruth Circle, 1:00 p.m. Fill Your Cup, 7:00 p.m.	15 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath	16 Watercolor, 10:00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
17 Worship, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Christmas Program, 10:45 a.m. High School Christmas Party, 5:00 p.m.	18 Pastor Lori/Vicar's Sabbath	19 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m. Council, 7:00 p.m.	20 Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m. Watercolor, 1:00 p.m. Middle School Christmas Party, 6:30 p.m. Choir, 7:00 p.m.	21 Book Study, 10:00 a.m. Blue Christmas, 7:00 p.m.	22 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath	23 Watercolor, 10:00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
24 Worship, 2:30, 5:30, 10:30 p.m.	25 Christmas Day 	26 Quilters, 9:00 a.m. Office Staff, 9:30 a.m.	27 Lectionary Discussion, 11:00 a.m.	28 Book Study, 10:00 a.m.	29 Pastor Sawyer's Sabbath	30 Watercolor, 10:00 a.m. Worship, 5:00 p.m.
31 Worship, 10:00 a.m.	Journaling for Joy Reflect on the past year. What are the moments and memories that are filled with joy?					

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

The Servant December 2023

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.