

The Marker

February 2026

From Pastor Dave

“The LORD looks at the **heart**.”

(First Samuel 16:7)

Valentine’s and Ash Wednesday Month both involve the **heart**, as does the whole of our lives and faith!

The Old Testament story of David, Saul, and Samuel, and how the kingship of Israel came to be, is a fascinating study of power, authority and obedience – issues that still resonate today.

King Saul caused God grief through his disobedience and failures, therefore God sends priest Samuel to the little village of Bethlehem to find Jesse and anoint (messiah) one of his sons to be king. The youngest of eight, David, the shepherd boy, is chosen by God to become God’s anointed. God says, *the Lord does not see as mortals see: they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*”

Anyone who knows the rest of the David story surely knows that David was . . . less than perfect. During King David’s reign, “mistakes were made,” as the “non-apology apology” of today’s politician’s goes. To tell the David story means to tell the truth about David including his sins of adultery and murder, which Psalm 51 partly shares. Ash Wednesday includes this prayer of repentance.

*Create in me a clean **heart**, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. (KJV. Ps. 51:10-12)*

The good news is clear. Because of the Lord’s character (the first words of Psalm 51 are: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to your steadfast love”) **there is hope for human hearts**. Our character is flawed. We are broken. We sin against God and against each other. But with God there is steadfast love, mercy, forgiveness of sins. God can create clean hearts. God takes our sinful selves, **hearts** us, forgives us, graces us, and reminds us that we are not only sinners but also saints.

Later in the Bible, First Corinthians reminds us “*God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong...*” (1 Cor. 1:27-29) As saints, loved and forgiven by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we don’t have to worry about how wise or clever we are – God chose the foolish. We don’t have to worry about how powerful we are – God chose the weak. God chose you and me too. So we confess our failures and disobedience to God on Ash Wednesday, receive a clean **heart** and a free spirit to live into Lenten disciplines – humility, fasting, prayer, sacrificial giving, and works of love – which are really how we are called to faithful living year-round. As the LORD looks at our **heart**, let us participate in Christ’s **heart** by living like Christ and even like St. Valentine.



St. Mark's Congregation Council 2026

Mitch Abraham
President & Worship/Music

Dan Dubay
Vice-President & Finance

Linda Locklin
Secretary & Faith Formation / Stewardship

Jenny Horton
Community Ministry

Bonnie Klos
Evangelism

Barbara Barteau
Hands On

Darren Jones
Technology

Larry Davis
Administrative/Personnel

Marc Wulf
Finance

Prayer Concerns

St. Mark's Members: Mary Trimberger, Lorri Monterose, Bob Anderson, Mike Carter, Ruth Ann Swart, Peter Cuocolo, all who are homebound, all who are caregivers.



St. Mark's Friends & Family: Dan Ciccone (friend of Sharon Gombotz), Bri Yarbrough (friend of Nancy Tyree), Maureena (sister of Karen Pettit), Lisa Santapaola (friend of the Pettits), Mike Staley (Tracy Staley's dad), David Whitlow (son of Liz W), Wendy Phillips (friend of Nina Keck), Sandy Monterose (Tommy's sister), Luz Ortiz (friend of Peter Cuocolo), Adam Mann (son-in-law of Saleebys), Wes and Judy Koch (friends of the Hokes), Brynda Bechtold, Dave & Annette Simpson (friends of Peter Cuocolo), Renee (friend of Cindy Wilkins), Dave (friend of the Greene Family), Colin Goracke (Jack & Melanie Altman's grandson), Cindy Munsey Hall (friend of Peter Cuocolo), Glen Bannister (Sharon Roy's brother-in-law), Betty Lowe, Sue Wilson (Michelle Corbett's mother), Bleier family, Sandra Davis, Zebulon Hounslea (friend/student of Judy Fletcher), Maria Cuocolo, Ronnie & kids, Emma (15- Hodgkins Lymphoma), David Moregas (friend of the Kecks), Harriett Hepler (Barbara Overcash's sister), James Nicholson (friend of Peter Cuocolo), Tori (friend of Liz McNabb), Anne Monterosso (fiancé of Colin Davis), Marty Rink (friend of the Van Horns), Carol Masters (friend of Liz Whitlow), Pastor David Gerber (Diana Cosme Avery's stepfather), Clark 'Tiger' LeBrun (cousin of Donna Enroth & Linda Melin), Ian Russell, Kim Dobbins (friend of Terry Seyllar)

St Mark's Military Members: Tommy Upshaw, Erik Crowder, and Janet Smeltz's grandson- Dalton Leik, Andrew Boman, BK & Laura Barringer's great-grandson- Christopher Barringer.

Condolences: We extend our Christian Sympathy to the families of: Janet Buie at her death; Don Fletcher at the death of his sister, Carol Cataldi; Malinda Little at the death of her brother, Steve Belton; Wes Koch at his death (friend of John and Sondra Hoke)

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner

February 17

6:00 pm
in the FLC



Ash Wednesday
February 18

(anniversary of the deaths of
Martin Luther, 1546; and Dale
Earnhardt Sr., 2001)

10am worship in
the sanctuary

5:30pm Potluck Soup
Supper in the FLC

6:30pm special
worship in the flc



LADIES INVITED!



Valentine Breakfast

With special dessert and prizes!

9AM IN THE FLC

Saturday, February 14



HOSTED BY THE
LUTHERAN MEN IN
MISSION

The Annual Valentine's Breakfast hosted by the St. Mark's Lutheran Men in Mission will be on Saturday, February 14 in the Family Life Center. Check-in opens at 8:30am, and breakfast will begin at 9am. A country breakfast will be prepared and served by the LMM. ALL women in the church are invited to attend. After breakfast, Lorri Monterose will provide a yummy chocolate "Million dollar bar". Door prizes will be presented to lucky winners. Sign up online or on the sheets in the Narthex, on the WELCA Bulletin Board, or in the FLC near the kitchen. Hope to see you there!

Welca will host a One Day Retreat on February 21st, Saturday from 9-1:00 in the FLC. All women all invited, subject will be "I am She -A Bold Woman."





COUNT ME IN!

Many thanks for your generosity in 2025! The Lord blessed us with a strong year in ministry, stewardship, and financial stability. Thanks be to God!

Please see the table with comments and explanation below.

St. Mark's Giving Profile to Budget				
2025				
	2025 Q1 YTD	2025 Q2 YTD	2025 Q3 YTD	2025 Q4 YTD Giving
Budgeted	\$ 143,750.00	\$ 287,500.00	\$ 431,250.00	\$ 575,000
Giving (offering)	\$ 120,614.75	\$ 269,454.60	\$ 397,152.00	\$ 587,290
Expenses	\$ 135,413.14	\$ 270,008.47	\$ 389,178.00	\$ 514,485
Giving less Expenses	\$ (14,798)	\$ (554)	\$ 7,974	\$ 72,805

The financials above represent contributions from congregational members and visitors in 2025. We had 201 member givers and 63 non-member (unnamed) givers. We had additional revenue of \$20,488 from bank interest and FLC/Church Rental income. (This additional revenue is not included in the table above.)

Another thing to celebrate is how the congregation responded to our **COUNT ME In!** stewardship campaign. “Intentional giving” pledges for 2026 were the best in years. Look at this snapshot:

Pledges in 2023 for year 2024 = \$268,025

Pledge in 2024, for year 2025 = \$289,440

Pledges in 2025, for year 2026= \$406,000!

Many thanks to all who submitted their “intention to give” to support St. Mark’s ministries! It is heartwarming to know we have more and more members who are prayerfully planning their gifts to St. Mark’s in both intentional giving and volunteering.

Another positive to note, our approved budget for 2026 is \$586K. We should have a promising year. Let’s look forward to being a part of St. Mark’s as we live into our full ministries (and budgeted) plan. If we raised \$587,290 in 2025, together we will do it in 2026!

Blessings to all!

Stewardship/Finance teams

Community Missions Meeting

Tuesday, February 24
6:30pm
in the conference room

Community Missions will be leading a collection for Bridge of Hearts' "Caring for Children" program. The Giving Tree will be in the Narthex on Sunday, January 31st. Please take a heart (or several) from the tree and purchase the items listed. The items will be used for hygiene kits and healthy snack kits for local children. We are also working with Hands On to make "Go Bags" for the organization to distribute to community children who are unhoused or housing insecure. Please note that toiletry items need to be full-sized (not travel sized or hotel samples). Place your items in the boxes under the tree on or before Sunday, February 21st. Our church is such a wonderful, caring partner with so many helpful organizations in our community!



Hands On

Tuesdays at 12:30pm
in the FLC

Serving our community and beyond

**White Cotton Sheets
are needed for the Hands On
rolled bandages project. Used
or new donations are
appreciated and can be left
with Priscilla Abraham on
Sunday mornings.**

Food for Days

ITEM OF THE MONTH

January: Chewy Granola Bars
February: Pudding Cups
March: Chicken noodle (10.5oz)
April: Beans & Franks-8 oz
May: Ravioli (flip top cans)
June: Oatmeal, variety pack
July: Crackers (variety pack))
August: Ramen Noodles
September: Pop Tarts
October: Lg. Chef Boyardee
Nov: Fruit & Applesauce Cups
December: Vienna Sausages





Youth Sunday

FEBRUARY 15TH 8:30 & 10:30

SENIORS: WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORY! JOIN US TO SHARE A SHORT REFLECTION ON YOUR JOURNEY OF FAITH AT ST. MARK'S.

YOUTH: LEAD THE WAY! VOLUNTEER FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES IN EITHER SERVICE.

BREAKFAST: DON'T MISS THE YOUTH-HOSTED BREAKFAST BUFFET DURING THE CONNECT HOUR!

CONTACT AMY WALL OR USE THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP

4TH - 6TH GRADERS

**JOIN OTHERS WITH
A GOAL TO...**

S *eek God's Truth*

E *xpress God's Love*

R *espect All People*

V *olunteer with Joy*

E *xalt His Name*

**Meets the 1st Sunday of
Each Month during the
Connect hour
between services**

**See Michael Fitzgerald
if you have questions.**

BEER & BIBLE

@ ON TAP (MAIN ST)
7:00 PM
2ND & 4TH THURSDAYS

E.N.J.O.Y. *Empty Nesters-
Just Older Youth*

Are you between the ages of 45ish and 65? Join us on **Friday, February 20 at 6:00pm** at **Picasso Taqueria & Mediterranean, 500 S Main St. Suite 200,** Contact **Kristie Ward** with any questions at **704-807-6155** or rkward93@yahoo.com

WED, FEB 11
11:30 AM

Ladies Lunch Bunch

FRESH CHEF
635 BRAWLEY SCHOOL RD, 28117

RSVP BY MONDAY, FEB 9
SUSANALTIERINC@GMAIL.COM
704-929-5648

Wednesday Evenings
Dinner and Devotions

5:30 - 6:45 PM
IN THE FAMILY LIFE CENTER

FOOD + FELLOWSHIP + FAITH + FUN

BRING A DISH TO SHARE!

Altar Flowers
2026 sign-up sheet
now available
on bulletin board near
the office

Martha Circle
Meets on 4th Mondays
at 10:00am
in the conference room

Women of the ELCA

LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION

MONTHLY BREAKFAST
FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
7:30AM
IN THE FAMILY LIFE CENTER

**ALL MEN WELCOME-
CHURCH MEMBERS
AND GUESTS**

**COME FOR BREAKFAST,
FELLOWSHIP, DEVOTIONS,
AND A BUSINESS MEETING.**

Bible Study with Pastor Dave

WEDNESDAYS AT 10AM
IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM

St. Mark's Annual Chili Cook-Off 2026

It's a chilly weekend, a perfect time for a Chili Cook-off. Thanks to the 75 members, family, friends, and guests who made our Annual Chili Cook-Off a BIG success!

We enjoyed traditional chilis, chili made with fresh sausage, chili dip, pizza chili, chicken chili, vegan chili, and chilis made from old family recipes. It was a true chili-fest! We also enjoyed all the fixings for a great meal, including delicious desserts. Don't forget Bingo, fun gaming to complete our evening!

The judges tasted 21 chilis and after much discussion, decided on the winners. First place goes to Doug Uszarski; Most Creative to a tie: Oliver Mize and Ellen McAndrew, and the People's Choice award goes to Shirley Locklin. The wonderful thing to note is that St. Mark's has an abundance of great chefs! Of the 21 chilis, 18 received votes for the People's Choice award! Wow! Many thanks to judges Dan Markley, David Saleeby, and Allen Sloop for tasting so many chili's during the contest.



1st Place
Doug Uszarski



Most Creative
Oliver Mize



Most Creative
Ellen McAndrew



People's Choice
Shirley Locklin

We had many requests for recipes of chilis. If you would be willing to share your recipe, please send it to Susan Bostian or Jan Wagoner, who will compile them. Please email/text a picture to them to share with the congregation. Contact information is below:

Susan Bostian: email sjbostian1@gmail.com phone 704-654-7500

Jan Wagoner: email jan.wagoner82@gmail.com phone 704-572-2166

Thank you again for sharing your chef's delights with us! It was clear at our 2026 Annual Chili Cook-off that everyone is a winner!

Many blessings!

Susan and Jan

Birthdays



1 Haire, Winn	11 Sloop, Tommy	23 Barone, Charlie
2 Johnson, Sylvia	12 Morrison, Kayla	23 Upshaw, Craig
4 Chelgren, Jim	14 Joy, Madison	24 Kline, John
4 Enroth, Donna	14 Kowatschitsch, Michelle	24 Schmid, Patty
5 Shields, Alder	15 Castoral, Roger	25 Isetts, Chris
5 Gray, Allison	15 Grebe, Cooper	26 Grebe, Heather
5 Proefrock, Jeanne	16 Enroth, Ashley	26 Truesdell, Ryan
6 Stevens, Tyler	18 Lown, Jim	26 Hillman, Kaylin
8 Cline, Cameron	18 Meadows, Aaron	27 Kraft, Ethan
10 Shields, Lisa	20 Dubay, Brooks	27 Hays, Stephen
11 Cline, Matt	22 Tidwell, Tristan	28 Gombotz, Sharon
11 Ensley, Keith	23 Goethals, Reston	29 Pettit, Karen

Anniversaries

3 Jason and Dana Meadows	25 yrs
4 Mary and Dennis York	54 yrs
4 Woody and Tammy Parker	42 yrs
7 Mike and Patty Schmid	50 yrs
11 Marc and Natalie Wulf	9 yrs
12 Ben Ontiveros and Lisa Leal-Ontiveros	27 yrs
15 Bart and Tonya Mays	34 yrs
16 Craig and Mitsi Upshaw	46 yrs
19 Bill and Cindy West	43 yrs