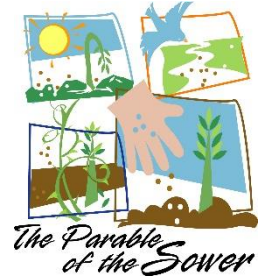

Notes From the Organ Bench by Ross Jallo, Minister of Music:

On July 12th this year our Gospel reading is one the most memorable teachings of Jesus -- the parable of the sower. You may remember how it goes: there's a sower who spreads seeds all over the place. Some seeds land on the path, where birds eat them; some end up on rocky ground, and spring up, but don't have enough soil to flourish; some land among the weeds and are out-competed. (At this point, one starts to wonder whether the sower is particularly good at his job.) But some of the seeds fall on good soil, where they are very productive.



As much as it may make us Lutherans uncomfortable, this is a parable about evangelization, about spreading the good news of Jesus. We can take heart from the fact that even Jesus acknowledges that most of our efforts at evangelization will probably fail. But the sower, in the parable, keeps spreading the seeds anyway -- he trusts that, eventually, some will take root and grow. To evangelize, we need to 1) trust that our efforts will eventually be worthwhile, but also 2) be comfortable with failure! Evangelizing is a skill, just like anything else. If you're going to learn to throw a football, or play the piano, or knit, you have to accept that you will fail a *lot* before you start to be able to do it properly. So it is with sharing our faith: we must realize that we will fail, more often than not, to win someone over. And that's okay. Ultimately, we know that, though we can spread the seed, it's up to God to make it grow. As our hymn of the day on July 12th says: "We plow the fields and scatter / the good seed on the land, / but it is fed and watered / by God's almighty hand."

Spiritual Care Needs, Prayer Requests and/or Hospitalizations/Deaths:

Please notify Beth Claeys, Lay Minister (563-940-0899), or for non-emergency matters call the church office at 563-322-5318 which is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays when messages will be checked. You may also e-mail Sue Geise, sgeise@stmarkcares.org which will be monitored on days the office is open. There are also parish visitors available for home visits if needed. Thank you to all of you who are ministering to each other with cards, calls, prayers, and visits.

Greetings From Beth Claeys, Lay Minister:



As the warm sunshine breathes new life into our days, we experience a different rhythm. It is a season defined by longer days, vacations, and a shift in our daily schedules. For many of us, this means taking a step back from our usual routines to rest, recharge, and reflect.

In the busyness of the rest of the year, it is easy to forget that rest is a deeply spiritual practice. In Genesis, after creating the world, God rested on the seventh day. Summer can serve as a gentle invitation to a Sabbath - a dedicated time to pause, step away from the noise of our daily lives, and notice the presence of God in the beauty of creation. Whether you are relaxing on a beach, working in a garden, or enjoying a morning coffee on the deck. let these moments remind you of God's abundant gifts.

As our schedule changes, our connection to our faith commitment shouldn't take a vacation. While travel and recreation are important for our well-being, this season offers opportunities to engage with the church in new ways.

Some ideas to consider to stay spiritually grounded this summer -

- Worship while traveling. If you are away on a Sunday, consider visiting a church in the area. This can be a beautiful reminder that the body of Christ is everywhere.
- Embrace the outdoors - Take some time to reflect and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. This could include visiting our beautiful prayer garden.
- Summer Reading - Use your free time to read a new devotional, a book of the Bible, or the book for Theology on Tap.

As we enjoy the warmth of summer, let us carry a spirit of gratitude and renewal into everything we do. May this summer be a time of both physical rest and spiritual growth, drawing us closer to God and one another.

Beth

After talking with many of the people that attend the evening service, and many discussions at council meetings, a decision has been made. The majority of people that attend that service prefer Saturday night so starting in August, the evening service will move to the 1st and 3rd Saturday at 5:00 and meet in the chapel. We welcome anyone who would like to attend this service.

Bunco – Friday, July 31st:

Bunco will meet Friday, July 31st at 6:30. Everyone is welcome. Please bring a snack to share. If any questions, the contact person is Beth Claeys.

Foot Clinic – August 3rd:

The next foot clinic is the morning of Monday, August 3rd - by appointment only. If you are interested, please contact Nancy Beaderstadt. The cost is \$35. Suggest bringing a towel.

Theology on Tap (a.k.a. Book Group):

Theology on Tap will meet Tues July 7th at 5:30 at Granite City. We are reading Boundless Compassion by Joyce Rupp. Please sign up on the sign up sheet in the lounge if you plan to attend. Please use the lounge sign-up sheet, or contact the office, so that reservations can be arranged for size of the group. Contact person: Beth Claeys.

St. Mark Financial Report:

General Fund Summary for May:

Weekly Offerings \$15,117

Expenses \$37,490

Income through May 2026:

Income Received Including Supplemental Resources \$128,873

Amount Expected to Maintain Budget \$167,383

Total Expenses through May 2026: \$148,990

Iglesia Camino de Emaus (Spanish speaking congregation) meets Sunday afternoons at 5:30pm where they share space in the St. Mark building. Pastor Pilar may be reached by e-mail at pastor@caminodeemaus.org or by call/text at 563-296.0166 for further information.

July Worship Schedule and Notes:

9:30am Sunday Worship In person each week in the sanctuary. There is a schedule of worship leaders through August with Beth Claeys, Lay Minister and Pr. Randy Willers. Schedule of services with and without communion will vary but typically will be communicated in advance.

Online Church – Weekly online link available per e-mail or Facebook or per YouTube search. The 9:30am service will be streamed live or may be viewed at a later time/day.

4:00pm Sunday Worship will be held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of July in the chapel (July 5th & 19th). Beth Claeys, Lay Minister, will lead these worships.

At this time, there will not be communion. Beginning in August this service will change to 5:00pm on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays (August 1st & 15th).

Social Ministry Committee:

During the month of July Social Ministry committee will continue to provide lunches for Habitat for Humanity volunteers and we will of course continue to take care of the ever-growing needs of our food pantry. Near the end of July, we will meet to finalize project plans discussed at our April meeting, including the upcoming fall events. Thank you to all that continue to give of themselves in the service of others. If you are interested in being involved with Social Ministry projects or on the committee, please contact Gretchen Flynn.

Social Ministry - Habitat for Humanity:

House #146, 424 East 15th street on Saturday July 25th is the location and date of our next lunch provisions for Construction Volunteers. Look for a sign up in the lounge. We could always use volunteers to deliver this simple lunch to the site and IF there are extras to some of our church members.

Thank you to those who provided tissues and paper towels in response to the request last month. Greatly appreciated.

Social Ministry – Food Pantry:

During this past quarter (March, April, May) our St. Mark food bank continues to see and serve a great need in our community in the most economical ways possible. For the quarter, the total number of households served was 666 (average of 222 per month). Those households were comprised of a total of 1,982 individuals (average of 660 individuals per month) that were served.

Donations and rescue food totaling 7,087 (avg of 2,362 per month) were provided by:

- St. Mark Members and Friends
- Starbucks
- Wal-Mart
- KwikStar
- Popcorn Charlie's
- Midwest Food Bank
- Zion Lutheran Church

An additional 9,856 pounds of food was procured from River Bend Food while spending only \$48.16. Combined total for the quarter was 16,952 pounds/units (average of 5,650 per month) moving through the St. Mark Food Pantry and on to those with food insecurity. Thank you to all who support this ministry with donations, volunteering with the clients, volunteering with transporting food and restocking, and keeping all of the statistics required. All contributions are important and valued! Thank you.

Preschool and Kids Crossing:

The summer program is underway, and the kids are thoroughly enjoying the engaging activities planned by Ms. Hannah. For a glimpse of all the fun, be sure to visit our Facebook page.

We are now accepting fall enrollment for children ages 3 to 5. Flexible options are available, including three-day or five-day programming, with before and aftercare offered as needed. For more information or to reserve a spot, please call 563-326-5060 or email Desiree at dgstmarkpreschool@hotmail.com.

Council Corner – The following was discussed at the June 18, 2026, meeting:

Barb reported that giving has dropped. Mid-American has increased our “budget” payments by quite an amount for the next 3 months and we are not currently charging rent to our Preschool, as their summer enrollment has dropped substantially. If there was ever a time to be generous and keep up on your tithing, it is now.

The first 4:00pm Sunday service in the chapel went well. Beth has been speaking with the Sunday afternoon folks and a decision has been made to return to Saturday, 5:00pm services beginning in August. These will still be on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays. Beth will be speaking to the Synod to arrange for her to be able to give communion. We will also be looking at ways to invite others in the community to these services.

Over \$50,000 will be sent to Birdie’s for Charity with St. Mark as the recipient. After the tournament and all donations are calculated, the money we sent will be returned with an additional bonus of 5%-7%. The bonus money we receive will be placed in the general fund.

Our website update is still in the works. Linda and Kathy are working with the Augustana Web Guild to make our site more interesting, accessible, and informative.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, July 16, at 6:30 pm in the conference room. Any member of St. Mark is always welcome to attend the council meetings as a guest.

THANK YOU is not enough!! To all who sent cards, flowers, texts with words of encouragement and cheer, and most needed prayers, there are not enough words to tell you all how much every one of those meant to me. I miss you all, and as soon as I am no longer required to be hooked up to a machine, I will be at church to give each of you a well-deserved HUG. I am so blessed to have such a wonderful and caring Christian family!! Hope to see you all soon. Nancyb

August LIFE: All information for the August issue of the LIFE newsletter is to be submitted to the office no later than Monday, July 27th to be included. Please direct any questions to Sue Geise, Admin. Assistant.

Pickleball:

Well, it has been unfortunate that the pickleball courts at Northwest Park where we typically meet have been under construction. Pickleball on Wednesdays will continue to be on hiatus until the courts are again available. Sorry for any confusion this has resulted in. It is a group-led activity, but if you do have any questions, you may contact Linda Ray.

Membership Directory Update:

Thank you so much to everyone who took time to provide updated contact information to the church office last month! All of that information has been cross-checked and entered into the computer application as needed within the June timeframe. The final step prior to printing is formatting the correct information to print out as we want it to for our directory. I am working with manuals, training videos, and customer service techs to accomplish that as quickly as available time allows. Once that is accomplished the only remaining step will be to print it. Any future updates should be much easier and faster. Thank you for your ongoing patience. From the church office, Sue

Stewardship Financial – Mid-year Check in:

How are you doing with your 2026 giving/pledging amounts? We are about half-way through the fiscal year. Does your giving reflect that? To all who have continued to faithfully give, a hearty “Thank you!”. As you have likely seen in the most recent financial report (I know it is tempting to skim over it in favor of more pleasant information), overall giving has been decreasing and is below estimated / pledged amounts for this point in the year. We understand that all types of expenses are running high for everyone, this is also true of the operating expenses of the church. If you are able to catch up on your giving or provide a little extra above and beyond, it would be greatly appreciated. We ask your prayerful consideration of this request.

PS. Reminder - there is auto payment option available if that is easier than remembering to write a check for the offering plate or sending a donation. Thank you to the many members who regularly mail their offerings to the church when they are unable to attend services or it organizationally works better for them.

Stewardship - Creation Care:

Most weekends “caring for creation” is in some way shape or form included in our intercessory prayers (prayers of the people). There is “creation care” around our church not just out in the world. We are thankful for those, known and unknown, who care for the church grounds and the living plants within the building. The folks who care for the prayer garden and living altar plants & flowers of course. Also, the services of 180 that mows our grass and clears larger snow events. We also thank whomever has been caring for the mulch beds along the walks to the lounge entrance which has been VERY much appreciated! If you are looking for a one time or ongoing project.... the flower & mulch beds on either side of the main sanctuary entrance and/or around the west side of the church could use some “love”. Even if you are not interested or able yourself, perhaps you know of a teenager or young adult (or even a spry retiree?) looking to earn some additional money that you could sponsor to do it? One time or on an ongoing basis. We may need to think outside the box...the various volunteers we have had in past decades are no longer available to do the creation care they did so devotedly for so long.

St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church

2363 West Third Street, Davenport, IA 52802

Phone: 563-322-5318

E-mail: stmark@stmarkcares.org or sgeise@stmarkcares.org

Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 9:30am to 2:30pm and

Thursday 9:30am to 1:30pm.

(Closed Mondays and Fridays.)

Food Pantry Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 10:00am to 12:45pm

(Serving Iowa residents only)

St. Mark is a member of the Southeastern Iowa Synod – ELCA

