



**Sunday, December 3, 2023**

**St. Mark's and St. James United Church of Christ**

Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz, Pastor

Kathy Jurk/Randy Sohn, Organist

Advent Candle Reader and Lighter

St. Marks: Ann Adams and Iris Wagner

St. James: Doris Sprenger and Parker Sprenger

Lori Roelse, Liturgist and Reader

Cindy Sohn, Choir Director

*When the star in the sky is gone, when the Kings and Princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins.*

Meditative Music

Bells Ring

Prelude Gathering for Worship:

St. Mark's: *Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying*

**Call to Worship: (Psalm 122:1-2, Isaiah 2:3-5)**

L: I Was glad when they said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

**P: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,**

L: That we may learn God's ways and walk in God's paths.

Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem,

**P: Come let us walk in the light of the Lord!**

**Prayer:**

**Unknowable God, you come to make yourself known to us in a loving relationship. You come with a message of hope and comfort for those who are hurting and those who are tired. As you did centuries ago, be with us again today as we seek to learn from you and from one another. In the name of your Child, Jesus Christ who walked among us. Amen**

♪ *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*

(St. Mark's #153; St. James #89)

**Young at Heart:**



**Reading:** When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among the people,  
to make music in the heart. (Howard Thurman, 1899-1981)

**The Lighting of the Advent Candle:**

The work of Christmas calls us to tasks which never end,  
to reconciliation, injustices to mend;  
When Bethlehem's star is absent, and kings and princes gone,  
And shepherds back to herding, the work of Christ goes on.

**St. Mark's: (#248)**

**St. James Choral Anthem:**

*I Want to Walk as a Child of Light  
O Come to Us, Emmanuel*

**Scripture Reading:**

*Psalm 122*

*I was glad when they said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the LORD!"  
Our feet have been standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem!*

*Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together,  
to which the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
There thrones for judgment were set,  
the thrones of the house of David.*

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
"May they be secure who love you!  
Peace be within your walls  
and security within your towers!"  
For my brothers and companions' sake  
I will say, "Peace be within you!"  
<sup>9</sup>For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.*

**Message:**

*The Work of Christmas Begins*

**Offering:**

The offering will be made as ushers bring the offering plates to you. Offerings, tithes and gifts can also be made before or after worship in the offering baskets/plates at the welcome area of the church. St. James is also set up to take on-line offerings through the website ([stmstjucc.org](http://stmstjucc.org)).

**Offertory Music:**

St. Mark's: *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*  
~ *The offering is brought to the altar* ~

**Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving:**

Precious Lord, amid the twinkling lights, the bustling shoppers, the heavy traffic, we see you. We see you in the smile of a child who is sitting on Santa's lap and in the face of a homeless man who is standing on a street corner. We see you and are amazed by your abiding presence. You are always with us! Accept our gifts in gratitude for your presence. O come, O come, Emmanuel. *Amen.*

**People's Prayer ~ Lord's Prayer:**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

♪ *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

*(St. Mark's #191; St. James #107)*

**Benediction:**

Go forth in faith during this season of Advent and put on the armor of Christ's light. As the days grow short and the sun's light wanes, we will shine for all the world to see. God forth in love during this time of waiting and embrace the peace that passes all understanding. Go now to love and serve our Lord. *Amen.*

**Postlude:**

St. Mark's: *Lift Up Your Heads*

***COME & JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS!***

***St. James UCC***

***1st & 3rd Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.***

***2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.***

***~Sunday School meets 9-10am at both churches~***

***St. Mark's UCC***

***1st & 3rd Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.***

***2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.***

Services are recorded and available on our church YouTube channel:

St. Mark's & St. James UCC

Like us on Facebook 

Check out our Website: [www.stmstjucc.org](http://www.stmstjucc.org)

Join our prayer team; contact Karen in our Church office: [stmstjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stmstjoffice@gmail.com)

# Staying Close, Staying Connected

## Our Church Celebrations!

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:**

*December 4 - Tyler Bramstedt, Ellen Mae Surfuss, Jim Taylor  
7 - Ben Grunwald*

### **NO ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK**



## **TODAY IS BUILDING FUND SUNDAY**

**POINSETTIA ORDERS** – Due TODAY, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, at St. James

**ST. JAMES CONSISTORY MEETING** – tomorrow, Mon., Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm

**ST. MARK'S CHOIR REHEARSAL** – Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

**ST. MARK'S CONSISTORY MEETING** – Thursday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

**SIGN UP FOR USHERING AT ST. MARK'S** – either in the church entryway or online at: <https://bit.ly/usher2024>

### ST. JAMES ADOPTED GIVING TREE FAMILY –

The tags are on the table in the Narthex rather than on a tree in past years.

Wrapped, labeled (with recipient & contents) gifts due at church Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>.



### ST. MARK'S ADOPTED GIVING TREE FAMILY –

Either take an ornament off the tree in the church entryway, sign up online

<http://bit.ly/sharegifts2023>

or contact Karen for help ([stmstjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stmstjoffice@gmail.com))

Wrapped, labeled (with recipient & contents) gifts due at church Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>.

### ST. MARK'S COOKIE EXCHANGE

If you would like to participate in a cookie exchange, sign up on the sheet in the church entry. Package your cookies in groups of 6 in bags, boxes, or plates. Signups are due by this week Saturday, December 9. I will let you know by Sunday, December 10 how many half-dozens to bring. Have your cookies at St. Mark's by 9:00 am on Sunday, December 17. After the church service, you will have a beautiful assortment of cookies to take home. A maximum of 12 people may participate. \*If you would like to bring extras for Pastor to take along on his home visits, that would be welcomed as well.



-Contact Lori Roelse with questions.

#### ST. JAMES:

Today – Practice/Sunday School until 11:00am

Dec. 10 – Sunday School/Practice from 9-11am

Dec. 17 – Program Practice 9am  
**Program presented at 10:30am**



**Program Practice**

#### ST. MARK'S:

Today – Program Practice 9-11am

Dec. 10 – Practice 9-11am

Dec. 17 – Practice 9-11

**Program presented at 4:00pm.**

**Please arrive by 3:30**

**ST. MARK'S** – On the table in the church entrance way are some cards that on the front say “You’ve been prayed for” (donated by one of our members). If you mention someone’s name during prayer time, feel free to take a card and send it to them. It’s suggested that the card be signed either ‘St. Mark’s UCC Congregation’ or your name and St. Mark’s UCC.

**SUPPORT  
THE MISSION TEAM**  
To Elliot County, Kentucky

**KWIK TRIP CAR WASH CARDS**

**\$36 FOR 5 ULTIMATE CAR  
WASHES (VALUED AT \$50)**

It's that time of year! Time to gather those last-minute gifts and stocking stuffers for family, friends, teachers, co-workers, you name it. It's the perfect gift for any driver; salt and cars don't mix!

**Available  
NOW through  
Dec. 22nd!**

**CONTACT: ANNA MARIE  
BRAMSTEDT (920)698-7656  
OR ANY OTHER MEMBER**

If you're interested in joining the Mission Trip July 14-19 when they travel to KY, contact Anna Marie Bramstedt asap and she'll find out if there's room for you to come along.

**NOTES:**

## GPS

**Grow** – deeper in our faith and relationship with God.

**Pray** – pray daily for family, neighbors, and others.

**Study** – read the Bible, pray over what we read, ask questions.

Who comprehends the forgiveness God grants us? “Seek me,” says the Lord... “Call on me,” says the Lord... “Forsake your ways... return to me,” says the Lord... the unflaggingly faithful Lord calls his people to him, not to receive judgment and punishment, but to receive compassion and pardon. Indeed, who can understand it?

The Lord himself reassures us in our inability to comprehend his faithfulness. He announces, “My ways are not your ways...” “My thoughts are not your thoughts...” Nothing in this sin-broken creation prepares us for the Lord’s mercy. No relationship on earth exudes love and faithfulness like our Lord’s claim upon his people. That divine mercy and compassion are too good to be true.

“Surely,” we think, “there must be a catch... The Lord cannot simply up and forgive sins, can he?” So, in our skepticism, we fall into one or the other of the two traps around the Lord’s faithfulness. The first trap convinces us that our skepticism is true. God does not simply up and forgive sins. No, he does not. We must add some work of our own: sorrow, repentance, amendment of life... whatever the trap contains.

The second trap convinces us that it is certainly true: God does indeed up and forgive sins. In fact, since that forgiveness stands over our entire lives, there is no need even to admit to our sinfulness. We say to ourselves, “I like to sin; God likes to forgive; it’s a match made in heaven.”

But not so. God does indeed simply up and forgive. His pardon is so exceedingly abundant, it’s incomprehensible. This pardon... this compassion... this love from God is (as Paul preaches) only available in Jesus Christ. Not in that “something” you must add... not in your assumption of pardon... only... only in Jesus Christ! (The Institute of Lutheran Theology)