The Gift of Presence—Pastor Linda

Christmas is the season of gifting. We give what we can to those whom we love, and many give as we can to those in need whom we don’t know but whose need is great and touches our hearts. And Christmas is the season when we remember that God put skin on and came into our world as an infant born to a woman to show us what God’s love looks like person to person. God in human form is the gift to us all of Christmas. And God in human form is the gift of presence.

Presence is the in your face experience of another. And presence is the best present of all. When God chose to take on flesh and be born, God declared that the greatest act of love is being with, near, side-by-side with the object of that love. And God so loved the world that he gave his son, his expression of that perfect, accepting, welcoming love, to live and even to die to show us just how wide and deep and high that love is. Jesus is God’s present of presence to a world longing for such love to be made real.

Christmas and Easter are joined in this story of the divine and human born to a virgin and living among us. Because that present of presence needed to be like us in every way, living and breathing, and dying and then rising out of death, so that we could see our reason for being created. And so that we could have hope that love like this never dies.

We are created in the image of God to be the gift of the Presence of God’s love to everyone else. We are created to be filled with God’s love and to pour that love out wherever we go. And we have hope that cannot die because we saw that love that was born at Christmas, rise from death at Easter.

This Present of Presence is what we gather to receive every time we come to the bread and the wine at the table of Eucharist. Eucharist means ‘thanksgiving’. And we are thankful that grain is ground and grapes are crushed so that we can taste and see God’s present of presence in us and with us.

Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving, birth and death and resurrection, joy and sorrow are all mingled together in this season. Is it any wonder it is such an emotional time of year? So as we are present with our presence to one another let us hold that gift and that hope that love is in us and fills us and that it is this love we share that can never die. Let us taste and see that the Lord is good.
**Children's Christmas Pageant - Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus**

Join us for worship on at 11am on December 17th, when St. Mark’s children will lead us in celebrating the birth of Christ. Through readings and song, they will proclaim the Good News that a Savior has been born for all!

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**Parent's Night Out**

Saturday, December 9
5pm-9pm

Children age 3-Grade 5 will enjoy an evening of crafts, games, dinner, and a movie while parents get an evening to themselves! A freewill offering will be collected to support future Youth Group events and trips. Please sign up using the Tear and share and see Deacon Katie for more information.

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**Christmas Caroling— December 17th**

Here we come a caroling… to visit our beloved shut-ins!

Lay Ministers cordially invite anyone and everyone from the congregation to accompany us as we Christmas carol to shut-ins on Sunday, December 17th after second service.

We will gather in the Fellowship Hall after second service for chili and cookies before heading out to spread Christmas joy. Four teams will be formed and each team will make approximately four stops. This joyful event can lift anyone’s holiday spirits! Call Kathy Eison with any questions 828-484-8962.

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**Annual Christmas Pot-Luck — December 25th**

All are welcome to gather for a potluck meal together on Monday, December 25th at 1pm.

Enjoy a Christmas celebration with your St. Mark’s friends and family, wear a tacky sweater, and bring your favorite game to add to this festive time together. For more information please contact Rose Boblak, uroseb@gmail.com or 707-1246.

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**ST. MARK’S HAPPENINGS—SPECIAL HOLIDAY GATHERINGS**

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**Christmas Benefit Concert— December 2nd**

Join us December 2nd at 5pm for a program of Christmas and holiday music presented by pianist Alex Watson. Alex will play classical and jazz piano arrangements of familiar holiday music. This concert is a benefit for the Veterans Restoration Quarters. The VRQ is a comprehensive residential program that addresses every area of restoration in the life of a homeless veteran. All proceeds will go to this ministry; suggested donation $20.

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**Christmas Eve Services**

There are 3 opportunities to worship on December 24th:
- 4:00pm—Family Candlelight Service
- 7:00pm—Our Traditional Candlelight Communion Service
- 10:00pm—Our Traditional Candlelight Communion Service

Special music will begin one-half hour before each service.

Please note, we will have one service in the morning on the 24th at 8:30 only. This will be our traditional Holy Communion service.

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The church staff extends our warmest wishes to all for a blessed Christmas season and a happy and healthy New Year.

Pastor Webb, Deacon Katie Rivers, Cantor David Anderson, Scottie Miller, Eileen Cram, Pastor Linda McHenry, Vicar Matt Hoffman, Gage Hampton
December Advent Schedule:

As we have done for the last several years, we will be part of a “round robin” group of ecumenical mid-week Advent services with St. Eugene Catholic Church, St. Mary’s Episcopal Church and St. Paul’s Methodist Church.

Here is where we will be each Wednesday and who will be preaching:
December 6 @ St. Paul’s—Father Norris from St. Mary’s
December 13 @ St. Mary’s—Pastor Webb from St. Mark’s
December 20 @ St. Mark’s—Father Pat from St. Eugene’s

We will gather for a soup and sandwich supper each week at 6:00pm and the service will follow at 7:00pm.

As we prepare to host the supper here on December 20, there will be a sign-up sheet on the “Sign-Up Central” bulletin board. We will need help to provide soup, sandwiches and baked goods.

Festival of Lessons and Carols

Do you love Christmas carols? Those memorable melodies and powerful words which teach us about the great love of God in human form? “The Bells of Christmas”? “The First Nowell”?” “In the Bleak Midwinter”? “Once in Royal David’s City”? If so, you won’t want to miss our annual Festival of Lessons and Carols on December 31, 2017.

The Festival of Lessons and Carols is one of the most delightful gifts we have received from the Anglican tradition (wassail and figgy pudding notwithstanding). It was first held at Truro Cathedral in the far western part of England in the 1800s. In the early twentieth century, Eric Milner-White introduced the Festival at King’s College, Cambridge, where it became extremely popular. It has been celebrated every year since, even during the Second World War, and is rebroadcast on radio stations across the world. Combining the scripture readings for Christmas with traditional carols and new compositions, this service is always a delight to hear -- and has long been the dream of certain cantors to attend in person.

At King’s College the Festival is heavily weighted toward choral arrangements (exquisitely rendered), but at St. Mark’s we use all carols and hymns that the congregation can sing. This year our services will be enhanced with instrumentalists, as well. So come out at 8:30 am or 11:00 am on December 31 and join the herald angels in singing glory to the newborn King!
Faith Formation Classes for December:

_The Forgotten Luther, the Church in Society_—The remaining classes will focus on the following subjects and how they now relate to us now: Hunger Near & Far, Racism, Immigration, and a Movie Night (12/12) on the Environment.

_Children's Faith Formation_
On Sunday, December 17 at 11am worship, St. Mark's children and youth will provide our annual Christmas Pageant. Please pray for them as they prepare to lead worship and share with us the joy of Christmas.

_There will be no Faith Formation classes for children or adults on December 24 or December 31. Classes will resume for all on January 7._

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**Youth Group! Assemble!**

**Sunday, December 3**
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
The Youth Group will go to see "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" at 2:30pm.

**Saturday, December 16**
Youth Christmas Party
Join your friends for the annual Christmas Party at Deacon Katie's house! Food, games, and a white elephant gift exchange.

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**Thank You St. Mark’s**

_Dear People of St. Mark's,_
_Thank you for your kind thoughts, prayers, cards and the most beautiful bouquet of flowers I have ever seen._
_-Phyllis Myron_

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**St. Mark’s Holiday Hours**—Please note the church office will be closed beginning Friday, December 22nd—Wednesday, December 27th. We will resume normal office hours on Thursday, December 28th. The offices will also be closed on Monday, January 1st. If there is an emergency during this time, please call Pastor Linda ph#828.337.5876.
Holiday Shopping Online?
You can donate to St. Mark’s and do shopping at the same time! I’m sure a lot of you visit amazon.com to buy your gifts. What if this year, you went to smile.amazon.com and shopped there instead? You can choose a charity to support—and why not support St. Mark’s. Amazon will donate a percentage of your shopping to us! And it’s your amazon account—only difference is charity!

RETURN TO BETHLEHEM
December 7, 8, 9, 10
Greco United Methodist Church
954 Tunnel Road
Performance times are Thursday, Dec. 7 (6-8:30pm); Friday, Dec. 8 (6-8:30pm); Saturday, Dec. 9 (2-8:30pm) and Sunday, Dec. 10 (2-6pm). Entrance is available on a first come, first served basis—capacity is limited. Return to Bethlehem is presented as a gift to the community by ABCCM.

Volunteers are needed. Can you help? Please contact Brad Owen at 259.5526.

Steadfast House December Donations
The Steadfast House collection for December is coffee and creamer for the women. Donations can be placed in the bin next to the playground doors. Monetary donations are also welcomed. Thank you for your continued support!

Save your pop tabs from soda cans for WELCA!!
The Women will be collecting soda pop tabs in for the Ronald McDonald House in Greenville, NC. Throughout the Holiday season remember to save the small little tabs on top the cans. A collection jar can be found close to the WELCA bulletin board.

2017 Annual Congregational Meeting—Sunday, December 10th at 9:45
Please join us in the Fellowship Hall to discuss and vote on the following:
1) Election of new members to serve on the:
   - Congregational Council
   - Benevolent Foundation Board
2) As a voting member at the NC Synod Assembly
3) Update on the Rooted in Faith - Growing to Serve goals and projects

Crop Walk Hunger—Update
Thank you St. Mark’s for your participation and financial support of the 2017 Hunger Walk. Unfortunately the weather was not very cooperative, and it was windy and cold, with some sleet mixed in! But approx. 100 hardy souls from local Churches were willing to do the Walk anyway. More than thirty St. Mark’s members participated at the Walk, and many more of you supported with your sponsorships. We will share the financial report soon. Please let us know if you would like a free Hunger Walk T-shirt.

-Christian Action Team

Join The Christian Action Team—
Have you been attending the "Church In Society" faith formation classes? As you know, the topics we have chosen to cover (Hunger, Racism, Immigration, and the Environment) are difficult to squeeze into a one hour class. But these are some of the issues the Christian Action Team talks about and gets involved with each and every month. If you would like to be kept up to date with what our team is doing, please join our email list, and then simply jump in and get involved when something speaks to your heart. Or better yet, please JOIN the Christian Action Team—an easy and fun way to BE THE BODY OF CHRIST! Our meetings are the first Monday of each month. Email Debbie Layne at reindeb70@att.net to be added to our list.

God's peace!
December Birthdays

1. Joan Galvin
2. Bruce Gutknecht, Brittany Kittel, David Rowe
3. Genie Hygon, Richard Taylor
4. Sara Larschan
5. Brett Davis
6. Thera Powell, David Van Tassel
7. Bear Davis
8. Richard Burns, Susan Morgan, Elsie Signor
9. Sierra Kindley, George Kroncke, Xayvria Noel
10. Melissa King, Elaine Pope
11. Louis Taylor
12. Adam Powell
13. Becky Knight
14. Riley Kelling, Carol Mott
15. Ray Polasky, Jack Wilson
16. Jenny Surnett
17. Rob Hubler, Raven Robinson
18. Chris Brown, Miles Webb, Paula Whitener, Natalia Gohdes
19. Susan Van Tassel
20. Dominic Saccone
21. Sarah Dawson
22. Meredith Crowell, Kari Warren, Zoe Muse

NEWS AND UPDATES

Wednesday, November 8th, WELCA women visited Eleanor Kittel at Pisgah Valley Rehabilitation Center in Candler. Seven women attended the somewhat surprise visit. Janet Hanson provided quiche, cookies, coffee and apple cider. YUM! Eleanor is a long time member of St. Mark’s, she has been a member since before 1980. She holds the Mission Community office for the WELCA group where she is responsible for the NC WELCA Service Projects. She is recovering from foot surgery.

Caring Ministries

It may sound strange to some to have Caring Ministries as a separate entity since all ministry is about caring. We believe that Jesus shows us that we are created by love to be love in the world and caring is just love shared. Even so there is a mighty band of folks who set time aside each week to go visit shut-ins, those in the hospital or in Rehab, or those for whom getting out and about is a challenge. They go because they care. They go on behalf of us all at St. Mark’s because they want everyone who is part of our church family to feel connected and important to us even when they can’t get to church functions. The Jesus in the visitors goes to meet the Jesus in those they visit.

Some of those caring visitors just go on their own initiative and we love that. Others are trained to go out as official representatives and we are grateful for that as well, and some of those even take communion with them so as to offer this communal meal of grace to the folks they spend time with.

We are so very glad you are all part of this caring family and hope you will join us officially or unofficially as a caring visitor to those who you know who can’t come to church.

2018 Altar Flowers

The Altar Flower chart for 2018 is posted on the Sign-Up Central bulletin board. Choose your special date and take an envelope to make your payment ($25). Please indicate on the envelope what you would like printed in the bulletin that Sunday and if you would like to take the flowers after the services or have them delivered to shut-ins.
Learning About Planned Giving—Charitable Trust

For some people, establishing a Charitable Trust can provide great opportunities for themselves, their heirs, and for their church. Charitable Trusts work two ways.

**Remainder Trusts:** With a remainder trust, the donor gifts an asset to the trust (often to avoid capital gains taxes), then the donor receives an income for life, or a period of years from the trust. It is also possible to grant your children or grandchildren a period of time to receive that trust income. Following the prescribed time period, the trust assets are then transferred to the church.

People who don’t want their children to inherit a lump sum of money will appreciate this option so that the income is provided to heirs over a period of time.

**Lead Trusts:** These work opposite of remainder trusts. In a lead trust, the charity receives an income stream from the donated assets for a period of years. Following the term of the agreement the asset transfers back to the original donor or to whoever the donor designates.

Both Remainder trusts and Lead trusts require professionals to set them up. ________ will utilize either the ELCA Foundation or the InFaith Foundation that have small fees, but a long history of servicing these charitable vehicles.

For more information about Charitable Gift annuities, please contact the church office or return the coupon below in the offering plate.

If interested—please mail or drop this off by the office:
I/we __ have __ are interested in including St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in our estate plans. Please contact us.

Name ____________________________________________
Phone ____________________________________________
Email ____________________________________________

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**2017 LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF TOTALS**

The total number of Lutheran World Relief resources shipped out from St. Mark’s from the 12 participating churches are as follows:

- Quilts 736
- Fabric kits 4
- Personal Care Kits 130
- School Kits 302
- Pounds of Soap 215

The grand total was 179 cases weighing 3,890 pounds. Of this total, St. Mark’s contributed 200 quilts, 52 school kits and 87 pounds of soap. Wow, we more than doubled the amount of soap over the last year. Well done one and all.

Many thanks to all who donated items, assembled kits, made quilts and loaded the truck! We couldn’t have done it without you!

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**FINANCIAL REPORT 2017**

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<th>Fund</th>
<th>October</th>
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<tr>
<td>Income budgeted</td>
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<td>Difference</td>
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<td>Loan balance 10/31/17</td>
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Want to stay connected with St. Mark’s? Here’s how: Past sermons can be heard on St. Mark’s website:

www.stmarksllutheran.net

Prayers are sent out weekly—want to be on the Prayer Net? Want to know what’s happening each week? Sign up for our weekly email newsletters. Email Scottie at admin@stmarksllutheran.net and she will add you to either of these lists.
“1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.” * ‘Tis the season for beginnings and anticipation. With the beginning of Advent, we begin the church year anew anticipating the celebration of the birth of Christ. What a celebration that will be! Be sure to take note of the Christmas Eve services which this year fall on a Sunday. There is no 11:00 am service, only an 8:30 am one so that the sanctuary can be prepared for the Christmas Eve Services at 4, 7, and 10 pm. We have the rare opportunity to worship all together at the 8:30 am Sunday morning service, December 24th.; Then later that evening we bring in Christmas as we “come before his presence with singing.” What fun! What joy! A perfect way to bring in Christmas.

“2 Serve the Lord with gladness” * We also prepare for the beginning of 2018 on Sunday, Dec 10th with our annual congregational meeting, to be held between the services (about 9:45 am). Five council members will be elected – four to a 3-year term and one to a 1-year term. Please join me in thanking David Bennett, Marvin Pope, and Henry Ulrichs for their service to this congregation. This is my last Council Corner as this is also my last year on council. I will miss connecting with you all each month. As we prepare for the upcoming year, please prayerfully consider serving in leadership positions, on the various teams and in other roles in this church. The blessings you will share with others is only exceeded by the blessings that are bestowed on you by serving. As Luther expressed so many times, “This is most certainly true!”

“3 Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” * As part of God’s flock on earth and the sheep of his pasture, each of us is important enough to him that when any one of us go astray and get lost, he goes looking for us to bring us back. (Luke 15:3-7) It is comforting to know that God cares so much for each of us; that’s you and that’s me, too. He gives us the means and the desire to share his love and our blessings with others. We just prayerfully considered those blessings and gave in response to God’s love, pledging our gifts for 2018. Thank you. The budget that we adopt in December is just as prayerfully prepared to use those gifts carefully to God’s glory. No one knows for sure what the future will hold for any of us, but we do know that God will walk with this flock loving us every step of the way. We have but to follow in faith.

“4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” * As we gather this season and throughout the coming year, let no one and nothing separate us from the love of God and of one another. In a time of divisiveness, we choose to be different. Council came down strongly this past month when we stood together, amidst that which could divide us, to openly declare that we are all part of God’s family, each with our own talents, our own sensibilities, our own passions. We are created for many different purposes and are not of one mind in our actions, except in the most important aspect of all – we are each part of God’s family. We have much work to do in God’s world. Let us work together, honoring each other’s differences and respecting each other’s talents, content in the belief that we are all led by God in each of our paths.

“5 For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” * Amen. Merry Christmas to each of you. And may your walk with God this month and in 2018 be a blessed one. Roseanne Doane

Serving the Lord with gladness along with…

Erin Bonawitz, Juliet Dixon, Mark Fritch, Eve Kindley, Deb Layne, Marvin Pope,
Paul Ramsey-Smith, Trudy Streilein, Henry Ulrichs, Eric Van Tassel, and Amy Zellers,

*Psalm 100 (King James version)

Be sure to read the minutes of each council meeting. November’s meeting was a very busy one.
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**DECEMBER CALENDAR**

- **Sun:** 2 PM Holiday
- **Mon:** 1:00 Library
- **Tue:** 2:00 Property Team
- **Wed:** 6:30 Council
- **Thu:** 10:00 Yarn Angels
- **Fri:** 7:00 Chancel Choir
- **Sat:** 2:00 Property Team

**December Events:**
- **Christmas Eve Services:** 11:00 Worship
- **Christmas Day:** 8:00 Christmas Eve Services
- **New Year's Eve:** 12:00 Yarn Angels
- **New Year's Day:** 8:30 Worship
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**No 11am Service**—Christmas Eve Services will be at 4p, 7pm and 10pm. Worship Assistants will be scheduled separately.

**Date**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Worship Assistants**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Altar Guild**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Others**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Greetings & Lay Readers**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Ministers, Assistant Ministers & Communion Assistants**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan

**Altar Guild, Acolytes, etc.**

- **31**: Trey Doss
- **24**: Katie Rivers
- **17**: Ray Polasky
- **10**: Karon Puhloin
- **3**: Al & Susan Morgan
MEMBERS
SHUT-INS: Polly Book (Mars Hill Retirement Center), Genie Hygon (home), Phyllis Myron (home), Dorothy Trexler (Trinity View), Annemarie Keller (The Lodge at Mills River), John Yoder (Brian Center), Vi Adams (Trinity View), Natalia Gohdes (Belle Vista)

ILL/RECOVERING: Silas Noel, Alva Holk, Eleanor Kittel, Nancy Dodenhoff
SPECIAL REQUESTS: Karen Webb, Alice Silver; Dorene Lassiter, Henry Dixon, Beverly Orr, Linda Palazzolo, Anne Blackwell, Margaret Ackley
DEPLOYED: 2nd Lieutenant Caitlin Curley (John & Theresa Yoder’s granddaughter), Major Josh Baker (Cindi Fridd’s son)
IN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE: Nicholas Dudde, Julia Johnson, Sierra Kindley, Julia Rhodes, Andrew Webb, Nancy Dodenhoff, Katherine Webb, Jamie Rhodes, Max Schmidt
JOYS / CELEBRATIONS: Nick and Samantha Hunkele are expecting their first child; Rachel Brown and Patrick Maloney are expecting a baby boy in Jan/Feb

RELATIVES
Eleanor Favrot, Katherine Laveck’s mother, is dying and Katherine is with her.
Harold Miller, Carol Sturm’s uncle, has lung cancer
Chad Ham, Joan Galvin’s cousin had both kidneys removed and is currently on the list for a kidney transplant
Connor, Donna Fleming’s 20 year old grandson died in an automobile accident last week
Vickie Webb, Bonnie Richard’s niece, underwent knee replacement surgery last week
Edee Buzzell, Connie Koiner’s sister, is suffering with dementia
Sally Hollar, Jackie Harron’s sister and Eileen Cram’s friend
Allon Silver, Bill Silver’s uncle, passed away
LJ Hauser, Vickie Hauser’s nephew, lost his house to a tornado

FRIENDS
The refugee crisis in Europe & the victims of terrorist attacks and their families
Our men and women serving in the military and their families
The racial unrest here in Asheville
Flood and storm victims in Texas and Louisiana
Hurricane Victims in Texas, Florida and the islands
Victims and survivors of the Las Vegas concert shooting
 Victims and survivors of the Texas church shooting
Tom Green, Carl Schreck’s best friend, will undergo brain surgery this week
Bill Rammler, Evelyn Reinhold’s friend, is being treated for lung cancer
Brittany Wentworth, Anne Blackwell’s friend
John, Eric Van Tassel’s friend, is very sick
Deacon Gary Kovach and his family, he is a friend from St. Mary’s, his wife passed away
ST. MARK’S LUTHERAN CHURCH
10 N. Liberty Street, Asheville, NC 28801
Mail: P.O. Box 8608, Asheville, NC 28814
Phone: 828-253-0043 Fax: 828-252-1181
E-mail: admin@stmarkslutheran.net
Website: www.stmarkslutheran.net

STAFF:
Senior Pastor: The Rev. Christopher Webb
Director of Discipleship & Faith Formation:
   Deacon Katie Rivers
   Cantor: David Anderson
Parish Administrator: Scottie Miller
   Pastor of Caring Ministries:
   The Rev. Linda McHenry
Seminary Intern: Vicar Mat Hoffman
   Facilities Manager: Eileen Cram
   Custodian: Gage Hampton
   Nursery Director: Ginger Dixon

Church Office Hours:
Mon.-Thu. 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
Fri. 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

OUR MISSION:
Making disciples by loving Christ, growing in faith, serving all people

OUR VISION:
Transforming lives through God’s grace as an inclusive, intergenerational congregation through Worship, Outreach, Learning and Fellowship