

# upcoming@st.mark's

the monthly newsletter of St. Mark's United Methodist Church

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Every year, when the days grow shorter and the nights stretch long across Bloomington, the Church begins her quiet, expectant journey into Advent. This season is not merely a countdown to Christmas. It is a sacred pilgrimage of waiting, watching, and hoping. Perhaps this year more than most, we resonate with the words of the old carol: "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices."

We are indeed living in a weary world. We carry the fatigue of personal struggles, national anxieties, global tensions, family pressures, and the quiet burdens that accumulate over time. Advent does not ask us to hide that weariness or pretend everything is fine. Instead, it invites us to bring our whole, honest selves before God. The modern theologian Fleming Rutledge captures this spiritual posture beautifully when she writes:

"Advent is the season that, when properly understood, does not flinch from the darkness that stalks us all in this world. Advent begins in the dark and moves toward the light — "

Advent starts in the shadows of our lives as we are longing for light, longing for peace, and longing for God to break in and make all things new. Advent reminds us that God's coming is not dependent on our readiness or perfection. Christ enters our world not when everything is tidy but when everything is real. Advent invites us not just to prepare our homes for Christmas, but to prepare our hearts — to slow down, to breathe, to listen again for the whisper of God's promise.

In a time when our lives often feel hurried or complicated, Advent offers a different rhythm. It invites us to pause long enough to notice the quiet ways God draws near: in prayer, in community, in service, in the small and sacred moments of daily life. Advent is the gentle reminder that God still meets us in our longing, our questions, and our hope.

As Advent leads us toward the joy of Christmas, I warmly invite you to join us for one of our three Christmas Eve services as we celebrate the birth of Christ and welcome the Light of the World:

- 10:30 AM – Christmas Eve Morning Worship - A peaceful service of scripture, carols, and Christmas reflection.
- 4:00 PM – Christmas Pageant - A joyful, family-centered retelling of the Nativity featuring our children.
- 11:00 PM – Candlelight Service - A beloved late-evening service of scripture, communion, carols, and candlelight as Christmas begins.

As you move through December — with its beauty, complexities, and moments of both joy and longing, may Advent renew your spirit. May you find rest in where you feel weary, hope where you feel uncertain, and peace in the promise that God is drawing near.

May the light of Christ be born anew in you this Advent and Christmas.  
Grace and Peace,  
Pastor John Huff

# sunday@st.mark's

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Join us for Sunday worship at St. Mark's United Methodist Church at 10:30 AM! We are an open and affirming congregation, welcoming everyone with love and acceptance. Our services are a time for spiritual growth, community connection, and heartfelt worship. We especially welcome you to stop in for a cup of coffee and fellowship before worship, or drop in and meet our thoughtful Nomads Adult Sunday School Class. Children and Youth are welcome and celebrated in worship and our Sunday School Classes; we also offer infant and toddler care!

Whether you're a lifelong member or exploring faith for the first time, you'll find a warm and supportive environment here. Experience inspiring music, uplifting messages, compassionate prayer, and the joy of gathering with others in faith.

Together, we celebrate diversity and seek to reflect God's love in all we do. Come as you are — your presence enriches our community. We'd love to have you with us this Sunday! For more information, feel free to reach out or visit our website, [www.smumc.church](http://www.smumc.church).

We look forward to welcoming you to St. Mark's!

Can't join us in person? No problem!  
Connect with us on livestream through the link on our website:  
[www.smumc.church](http://www.smumc.church)

## our regular sunday schedule

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COFFEE & TEA TIME	9AM-10:15AM	Garton Hall
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL Nomads	9:30AM	Room 8/Zoom
RECONCILING MINISTRIES CONVERSATION HOUR	9:30AM	Library
INFANT & TODDLER CARE  0-3.5 Years (Contact Church office if 9:30AM care is needed)	10:15-11:30AM	Room 24/25
SANCTUARY WORSHIP	10:30AM	Sanctuary
CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL  3.5 years + potty trained to 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10:30-11:30AM	Check in by the Children's Ministries office.



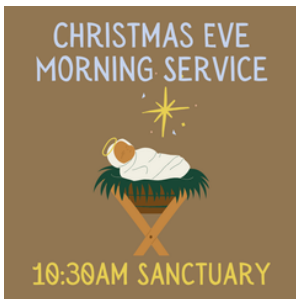
## BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30pm

For many, December is a season of lights and celebration — yet it can also stir tender places. The weight of grief, exhaustion, uncertainty, or change can make this time of year feel complicated. If you're carrying heaviness of any kind, you're not alone.

We invite you to gather with us in the St. Mark's Sanctuary for a gentle Blue Christmas service — a space where stillness, prayer, music, and candlelight offer room to breathe. Together we'll share simple carols, moments of reflection, and an opportunity for anointing and healing.

Come as you are. Bring whatever you're holding. May this quiet service make room for comfort, honesty, and the soft glow of hope.



## CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING SERVICE

Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 10:30am

Begin your Christmas Eve with a peaceful service of scripture, carols, and Christmas reflection. We'll hear the story of Christ's birth, share a brief Children's Moment, and conclude by singing Silent Night with candlelight — a quiet and meaningful way to enter this holy day.

Whether you join us in the sanctuary or online, you are warmly invited to pause, breathe, and step into the hope and beauty of Christmas Eve with your St. Mark's community.



## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 4pm

Join us on Christmas Eve for a joyful, family-friendly service as our children and youth lead us in telling the story of Christ's birth. Through scripture, carols, and the creativity of our youngest storytellers, the wonder of the Nativity comes to life in a way that touches all ages. The service concludes with candlelight and the singing of Silent Night, gathering our whole church family in a moment of shared peace and beauty.

Whether or not you have children participating, you are warmly invited to celebrate the joy and hope of Christmas Eve with this beloved tradition. (Details about participating in the pageant can be found in the Children's Ministries section.)



## CANDELIGHT WORSHIP

Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 11pm

A beloved late-evening tradition, this Christmas Eve service invites us into the beauty and mystery of Christ's birth. As the night grows still, we gather for scripture, communion, and carols that draw us into the heart of the Christmas story.

The service culminates in candlelight as we sing Silent Night together — one small flame passed from hand to hand until the whole sanctuary glows with hope. It is a gentle, sacred way to welcome Christmas and center ourselves in the love God brings into the world.

All are welcome to join us, whether in the sanctuary or online, as we greet the coming of Christ with peace, reverence, and joy.



## CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERINGS

The offering from the 10:30, 4pm pageant, and the 11:00pm Christmas Eve service will be divided evenly between the Bishop's Christmas Offering for Children and St. Mark's Nursery School and Kindergarten Scholarships. The Bishop's offering helps fund opportunities for children & youth, including summer programs, and provides funds to address urgent needs of children locally and globally. For over 50 years, St. Mark's Nursery School & Kindergarten has been recognized for its high-quality early childhood education. Donations to the Scholarship fund help us ensure that St. Mark's Nursery School and Kindergarten is accessible to all children and families.

Thank you for your generosity to these important ministry areas at this special time of year. On Christmas Eve, if you plan to bring contributions for the general ministries of St. Mark's, or toward your annual giving (or pledge), please make sure that you note that on your check or envelope.



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

As is our Advent and Christmas tradition, we will decorate the altar area of the sanctuary with beautiful poinsettias. If you would like to sponsor a poinsettia in honor, in memory, or in celebration of loved ones, please fill out the form online and linked in the weekly newsletter, or call the church office. A donation of \$15 per poinsettia is suggested. This can be paid by cash, by check (write 'poinsettia' on the memo line) or online via the Donate link on the church website. We will produce a document commemorating those donations and those they honor or memorialize. All who donate will be invited to take their poinsettias home after the Christmas Eve services. Please contact the church office with any questions.



## THE ST. MARK'S CAROL CLASH IS BACK!

Get ready for a joyful musical face-off at St. Mark's — the 2025 Carol Clash is here! Each week, you'll have the chance to vote for the carols you most want to sing on Sunday, December 21. Will longtime favorites like *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!* and two time champ *O Come, All Ye Faithful* keep their crowns, or will a new contender rise to the top?

Add your vote, cheer on your favorites, and help shape the soundtrack of our Christmas season!



## END OF YEAR GIVING

Year-end contributions can be brought to the church office by Wednesday, December 31, 2025. Staff members will be in the building to accept your year-end gifts. Ring the doorbell at the south, east or sanctuary entrances. Contributions can also be dropped in the secure mailbox off the South parking lot, or postmarked by Wednesday, December 31, 2025, to be recorded as charitable contributions for the 2025 tax year.



# children's and youth ministries @ st. mark's



## DECEMBER SUNDAY SCHOOL

This December, our Journey to Christmas series continues as we explore the incredible stories and people who were part of Jesus' birth. Each week, kids will experience the wonder of the season through storytelling, hands-on activities, and meaningful conversations about what Christmas truly means.

Sunday School is open to all children ages 3.5 through 6th grade, while nursery care is provided for our youngest friends (birth–3.5 years) in Room 25. Join us for these special lessons all month long and help your child experience the season with joy, curiosity, and faith. Please contact Madison Sinan, The Director of Children's Ministries, with questions.

12/7: The Road of Change (Joseph)

12/14: The Road of Wonder (Shepherds)

12/21: The Road of Worship (The Wise Men)

**12/28: No Sunday School and No Nursery Care**



## FIRST ANNUAL JINGLE JAM! FRIDAY DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup> 6-8PM

St. Mark's is excited to host our first annual Jingle Jam, a special Christmas celebration for children and their families on Friday, December 12 from 6–8 PM. This joyful event will feature music, crafts, games, and photos with Santa, along with a variety of snacks for everyone to enjoy. Jingle Jam is a wonderful opportunity for kids to experience the fun and meaning of the season in a festive, welcoming environment. The event is free, but if you are able, we ask that everyone bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to the Hoosier Hills Food Bank.



We invite families from both our congregation and the wider Bloomington community to join us. All are welcome! Bring your friends and come celebrate with us!



## CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> @ 4PM

All are invited to join us in the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve at 4:00 PM for this year's Children's Christmas Pageant, a heartwarming retelling of the Nativity story led by the children and youth of St. Mark's. Through costumes, carols, and scripture, we'll reflect on the wonder of Christ's birth in a way that's meaningful for all ages.

Children and youth of all ages are welcome to participate whether they'd like a speaking part, a costume role, or simply to sing along. It's a beautiful and joy-filled way for young people to take part in the Christmas story.

Our full rehearsal will take place on Tuesday, December 23 from 5–6 PM. We encourage all participants to attend so they feel confident and prepared for the big day. If you can't make it to the rehearsal, we still want you to be part of the pageant; just register and let us know, and we'll find the perfect role for you!

Come be part of the story, and bring family and friends to experience the beauty of Christmas through the voices of our youngest storytellers.



YOUTH MINISTRIES IN DECEMBER

December is here, and the fun (and festivities) are just getting started! We'll kick things off with The After Party on December 7 and 14. On December 7, get ready for some friendly rivalry during the Reindeer Games Smackdown. Then on December 12, you can help with crafts, games, and more at JINGLE JAM. We'll round out the month celebrating with the Christmas Eve Pageant, sharing the story of Christmas together. It's a month full of community, fun, and exploring our faith. Don't miss out! Please contact Madison Sinan, the Director of Youth Ministries, with any questions.

- December Schedule:
- 12/7 – The After Party
  - 12/7 – Reindeer Games Smackdown
  - 12/12 – Jingle Jam (volunteer opportunity)
  - 12/14 – The After Party
  - 12/24 – Christmas Eve Pageant



HELP MAKE THE SEASON BRIGHT – VOLUNTEER WITH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES!

As we enter this joyful season of preparation and celebration, Children's Ministries is seeking volunteers and donations to help make our Advent events meaningful and memorable for the children and families of St. Mark's, and we'd love your help!



For our first annual Jingle Jam on December 12, volunteers are needed to lead craft and game activities, assist with the snack and refreshment tables, and support set-up and clean-up. Donations of snacks and refreshments are also welcomed to help keep the festivities lively. For our Christmas Pageant, volunteers will be invaluable in helping children choose costumes, guiding groups of participants, ushering guests, and managing costumes before and after the pageant. No special experience is required – just a willingness to share your time and the joy of the season. If you'd like to volunteer or donate, please sign up using the QR code or contact Madison Sinan, Director of Children's Ministries (madisonsinan@smumc.church). We can't wait to celebrate the season together. With your help making it truly unforgettable!

news from the Nursery School and Kindergarten



GOSPEL CHRISTMAS CONCERT  
Sunday December 7<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

All are welcome to the 4th annual "Gospel Christmas" concert featuring Jeanelle Crouch Ogunsemore & Friends.

The concert benefits St. Mark's United Methodist Church Scholarships for the Nursery School. See you there!





## BRING ITEMS FOR “MUSH” CHRISTMAS TREES

There are multiple MUSH Christmas trees at St Mark's: in the sanctuary, Garton Hall and in the Nursery School & Kindergarten Hallway. You are encouraged to bring in new mittens, underwear, socks, and hats, for children and adults in need of these items. You are welcome to hang hats and mittens (or gloves) on the trees, and place underwear and socks under the trees. The donations will be taken to our non-profit partners who will get these to those most in need. Thank you for your continuing generosity during this season.



## BACKPACK BUDDIES

On the first Sunday of each month, we collect food items for Community Kitchen's "Backpack Buddies" program. Backpack Buddies provides backpacks of weekend food to selected low-income children at twenty-one local schools. During the school year, children receive a backpack of food each week to help them and their families with their weekend food needs. They are currently providing this service at nearly every school in the county. They have nearly 500 children enrolled in this program. *This need will be especially great throughout the holiday season while students are off of school for an extended break.* You can bring your donated food items to church on the first Sunday of the Month, or there is a box in Garton Hall that you can donate to throughout the month. You can also order via the amazon wishlist in the weekly newsletter.



## UWF SHOEBOX AND FABRIC BAG PROJECT

Since the founding of St. Mark's, the United Women in Faith have gathered on the first Monday of each month to prepare care gifts for neighbors in need. The project alternates between shoeboxes for Middle Way House and 20 handmade hygiene bags for Friend's Place, Beacon Inc.'s overnight shelter. Donations of hygiene and comfort items are always welcome. Drop them at the church office (M-F, 9-3), place them in the Garton Hall basket on Sundays, or send items through the Amazon Wishlist found in our newsletter. Thank you for helping us care for our community.



## HOOSIER HILLS FOOD BANK FOOD DRIVE

As many neighbors in our community continue to face gaps in food assistance, food insecurity remains a growing concern. To help, St. Mark's now has Hoosier Hills Food Bank collection barrels in Garton Hall and near major entrances to the building. If those of us who are blessed with food to share each bring a shelf-stable item on Sunday mornings, together we can make a big impact. Small acts create big care.



## MONROE COUNTY HUMANE ASSOCIATION

### HOLIDAY DONATION DRIVE

As we move into the heart of the holiday season, we to invite our St. Mark's community to support the Monroe County Humane Society's Holiday Drive. Their pet food pantry helps families in hard seasons keep their beloved pets at home and cared for.

A donation bin will be available in Garton Hall throughout the season.

Most-needed items:

Wet dog or cat food, dry dog or cat food, gallon-size Ziploc bags, paper towels, spray cheese, soft treats (like Pupperoni), creamy peanut butter, leashes and collars.



# advent/christmas events

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## THE HANGING OF THE GREENS SUNDAY NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> AFTER WORSHIP

Join us for our annual Hanging of the Greens on Saturday, November 30, as we prepare our church for the Advent and Christmas season! We'll gather right after worship to decorate the sanctuary together — hanging garlands, placing candles, and adding those special touches that make St. Mark's feel like home for the holidays. When we finish, everyone's invited to Garton Hall for a cozy, turkey-free meal and time to share conversation and laughter around the tables.

After lunch, we'll continue spreading cheer as we decorate the rest of the building. Children and youth are welcome to take part. Bring your friends, visiting family, and festive spirit — all are welcome to join in the fun and fellowship!



## JOYFUL SOUND! HOLIDAY CONCERT SUNDAY NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> @ 1:30PM

Ring in the Advent season with the Joyful Sound Holiday Concert on Sunday, November 30th, at 1:30 PM in the beautiful St. Mark's Sanctuary. This festive and FREE (donations greatly appreciated) performance by Indianapolis' premier handbell choir will fill your heart with the joy of the holidays.



## FABRIC BAG MINISTRY FOR FRIEND'S PLACE MONDAY DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> @ 9:30AM (UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH)

Come and help fill fabric bags with personal hygiene items for patrons of Friends Place. Current needs include toothbrushes and personal size lotion. Future needs for Middle Way House (for January) include full-size bars of soap and toothpaste.



## TRUSTEES MEETING MONDAY DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> @ 7PM

Trustees meet in open session the first Monday of every month at 7PM in Rm. 8, with a Zoom option available.



## COOKIE SHOPPE BAKING AND DECORATING DAYS DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>, 4<sup>TH</sup>, 5<sup>TH</sup>

Help make Cookie Shoppe Magic with United Women in Faith - All are welcome to join in the joy of cookie making!

Wednesday, December 3rd, 6:30-8:00--Church kitchen: Making Mexican Wedding Cakes and Turtle Candy

Thursday, December 4th, 9:00-12:00--Room 8, Sugar Cookie Decorating

Friday, December 5th, 9:00-3:00--Room 8 and Garton Hall: Set up for Cookie Shoppe and Craft Bazaar



COOKIE SHOP AND BAZAAR SIGN UP



## UWF COOKIE SHOPPE AND CRAFT BAZAAR SATURDAY DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>

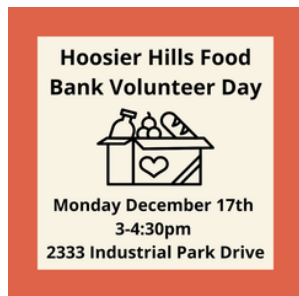
**COOKIES: 8:30AM-NOON | CRAFTS: 8:30AM-3PM**

Cookie Shoppe and Craft Bazaar in Room 8 and Garton Hall. Fill a box or two with Christmas cookies and shop in Garton Hall for handmade items available from local vendors and St. Mark's crafters. Pick up lunch at the kitchen window to enjoy at church or at home. Want to help? You can use the sign-up genius to donate food items, cookies, craft items and to help.



## COMPASSIONATE THREADS MONDAY DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> @ 11AM

Compassionate Threads is a group of St. Mark's quilters. Bring any and all things quilty. Feel free to bring your lunch. We have outlets and tables for machines and comfy chairs for hand sewing.



## HOOSIER HILLS FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER DAY MONDAY DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> @ 3PM

Join your St. Mark's friends in a time of service at the Hoosier Hills Food Bank. Children 10 and older are welcome as volunteers if accompanied by an adult, although some restrictions are in place for their safety. Please note that when participating in any volunteer activity, wear close-toed shoes!



## EVENING OF TAIZÉ AT ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS TUESDAY DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> @ 4:20PM

Weather permitting, we invite you to join a small group from St. Mark's for our next pilgrimage to St. Mary-of-the-Woods to attend the beautifully designed, ecumenical Taizé service led by the Sisters of Providence and their gifted musicians. Each monthly service centers on a unique spiritual theme, weaving together readings, Taizé chants, and a period of silence. These evenings have been deeply meaningful for many who have traveled together over the years — both for the worship and for the fellowship on the journey.

We will depart from the south parking lot at 4:20 p.m. and stop for dinner at New Day Café (2919 S. 3rd St., Terre Haute), a welcoming spot with a varied and affordable menu. After dinner, we'll head across the Wabash River to the serene campus of St. Mary-of-the-Woods for the meditative Taizé service, which begins at 7:00 p.m. We expect to return to St. Mark's at approximately 9:20 p.m. Charlie Matson will be offering rides for this trip. For questions or to RSVP, please contact Charlie directly.

# advent/christmas events



## LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> @ 7PM **PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**

Leadership Council will meet Wednesday, December 10th, at 7 pm in Room 8, with a Zoom option available.



## 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS BRUNCH SATURDAY DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> @ 9:30AM

It's the 11th annual Women's Christmas Brunch. Come enjoy breakfast and good conversation as we celebrate the Christmas season with the age-old Christmas story and Christmas carols.

There is no charge or donation of a food item; just an RSVP to Nina Taylor or Linda Crawford is all that is required.



## SPECIAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP - SUNDAY DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> DURING WORSHIP

On Sunday, December 14, our worship will feature special choral music that invites us to experience the Nativity from a unique point of view: the animals gathered in the stable. Through imaginative texts and beautiful choral writing, we'll listen in as the creatures who witnessed Jesus' birth "tell the story" in their own way. Come and join us in worship as we encounter the Christmas story with fresh ears and open hearts. This is a wonderful Sunday to invite a friend or neighbor to share in the music and the message of hope.



## SOUL FEAST - ENGAGING THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES SUNDAYS DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> & 28<sup>TH</sup> AFTER WORSHIP

This monthly gathering initially drew inspiration from Marjorie Thompson's Soul Feast, and may continue with this book for some time, but is open to exploring a variety of Christian spiritual practices of interest to participants. If interested, please attend an exploratory meeting in our library after service on December 14th or 28th or contact Chris Haynes.



## MESSIAH SING ALONG - BLOOMINGTON CHAMBER SINGERS SUNDAY DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> @ 3PM

Join the Bloomington Chamber Singers for this long beloved Bloomington Tradition and join us in singing this masterwork with an incredible orchestra. Admission is free, but we ask that you bring canned goods to donate to a local food pantry.



## PUB THEOLOGY MONDAY DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> @ 6:30PM

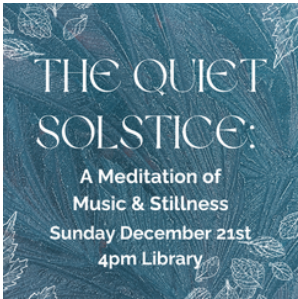
You're invited to join us for the next Pub Theology gathering on Monday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m. at Red Lobster. Many folks arrive around 6:00 to get a head start on food and conversation — come early if you'd like! Pub Theology is a relaxed space to share food, fellowship, and meaningful conversation about life, faith, and the world around us. Join us for a conversation centered around contemplation of the Nativity. We hope you'll join us for this evening of connection and reflection.



## ART JOURNALING

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup> @ 1PM

Most of us have had short-lived attempts at writing a diary or painting a canvas of a special place in our lives. But with the help and the encouragement of other beginners, you might just see how combining a few of your words with some simple sketches in a journal book can become a continuing practice which will feed your soul. And most journalists find there is fun and good fellowship to be had by sharing journaling ideas with a small group.



## THE QUIET SOLSTICE: AN HOUR OF MUSIC AND STILLNESS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup> @ 4:30PM

You're invited to a quiet hour of music and stillness in the St. Mark's Library as we approach the longest night of the year. Hosted by Charlie Matson, this peaceful time together will feature seasonal selections by Liz Story, Michael Jones, David Lanz, and Ola Gjeilo, with gentle pauses of silence woven throughout.

We'll gather from 4:30 to 5:30 PM, letting the music carry us toward sunset as Christmas draws near. All are welcome to come, rest, and breathe in a moment of calm during the busy season.



## HOLIDAY BUILDING CLOSURES

THURSDAY DECEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup> & FRIDAY DECEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>

THURSDAY JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup>

The St. Mark's Staff will be taking a break in honor of the holidays. We wish you safe and meaningful celebrations. In the event of a pastoral emergency, please call the church office. More information is provided in the answering machine message.



## GRACEFUL STEPS WINTER HIKE

THURSDAY JANUARY 8<sup>TH</sup> @ 8AM

The plan for January 8th is a hike at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature preserve. After the hike, we will come stop at Janice's house for a light lunch, share our individual Graceful Steps 365 experiences, our spiral trackers/progress, and look ahead to the coming year. We hope to get some ideas for future hikes and set some tentative dates to coordinate with the church calendar for those hikes. We will plan to meet at the Kinser Pike Kroger at 9:00am and car pool from there to the preserve, to the house and back to Kroger. New participants are welcome!



## FRESH CHAPTERS: A 2026 READING KICKOFF

JANUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> AFTER EPIPHANY WORSHIP

Join us in the St. Mark's Library on Sunday, January 11, after worship. We'll talk about our best reads of 2025, take a look at new titles, and set gentle reading intentions for 2026. A light lunch will be served.

As a fun bonus, we're hosting a "mystery book exchange" — wrap a book you love, write a little teaser on the outside, and enjoy the surprise of choosing someone else's hidden gem.





## St. Mark's United Methodist Church

Pastors	Reverend John Huff Reverend Mary Beth Morgan
Lay Leaders	Dian Ludlow Jonathan Michaelson Madison Sinan
Director of Children's and Youth ministries	Brian Samarzea
Director of Music Ministries	Evelyn Rohrbach
Asst. director of music ministries/Organist	
A/V Tech	Ilze Akerbergs
Finance director	December Smedley
Administrative Assistant	Patrick Conklin
Social Media	Stephanie Conklin
Custodians	Jeff Wyatt Matt Allen Blake White

## St. Mark's Nursery School and kindergarten

Director	Kate Morris
Assistant Director	Julie Hammond
Office Manager	Susie Walker

**upcoming@st.mark's** is published each month as an informational resource and guide to the activities and events within and around the St. Mark's church community. Copies are distributed at the beginning of each month along with the Sunday worship bulletin. Additional copies are available at the Welcome Center Desk, at the main entrances to the building, or by contacting the Church Office.

An online copy of **upcoming@st.mark's** can be downloaded from our church website ([www.smumc.church](http://www.smumc.church)). We welcome articles for publication. **Deadline for submissions for the JANUARY 2026 issue is DECEMBER 15th.** For more information please contact Stephanie Conklin at [StephanieConklin@smumc.church](mailto:StephanieConklin@smumc.church).

ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA IS AN INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITY BRINGING CHRIST-LIKE LOVE, HEALING, AND HOPE TO ALL.  
WE EMBRACE THE UNITED METHODIST IDEAL OF OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS AND OPEN  
DOORS BY WELCOMING THOSE OF ALL RACES, CULTURES, FAITH TRADITIONS, SEXUAL  
ORIENTATIONS, AND GENDER IDENTITIES.