



ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Planting Generosity

IN ACTION FOR GOD'S KINGDOM IN YOUR LIFE

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32

9/29/25

People of God at St. Mark's,

In childhood classrooms, how many of us soaked beans, wrapped them in wet paper towels and watched attentively each day for signs of growth? Remember how exciting it was to see new those new shoots and leaves taking shape? Some of us never got over that sense of awe at the way plants sprout and thrive and are still tinkering in gardens and growing vegetables to this day. It is a wonder to see life take root and grow, and this is what the kingdom of God is like! Jesus repeatedly compares the kingdom of God to the growth of seeds, emphasizing that we do not fully understand how it works (Mark 4:27), that there are limits to how much we can control the process (Luke 8), but that big things grow and flourish out of starts we might have judged too small to amount to anything (Matthew 13:31-32).

A year ago, in the wake of Helene's devastation, our community saw the enormous impacts of generosity growing and blossoming. You likely could tell seven stories about the ways you lived it and received it. Part of the way we experienced it as St. Mark's was that congregations and individuals from all over the country sent us money to help our community. Gifts came in from Minnesota, Georgia, Nebraska, New York, Washington, South Dakota, Mississippi, California, and closer to home, largely without clear ties other than that these sisters and brothers in Christ wanted to help. Because of the seeds of generosity sown by people we did not know, our congregation received and disbursed over \$25,000 directly to people in need, including:

- 2 CWA preschool teachers whose mobile homes washed away in Swannanoa and 4 more whose homes were damaged
- 6 more CWA preschool teachers whose loss of income threatened their ability to make rent
- tuition for 2 families once the preschool was able to open
- nearly \$5,000 for community rent support in coordination with Grace Covenant Presbyterian
- working through ABCCM's Faith 360 network to cover temporary lodging for an elderly couple waiting on a replacement for their mobile home

Seeds of generosity, scattered and planted, took root and grew in this community, making big impacts for people in need. This is what the kingdom of God looks like.

As we reach the time of year when St. Mark's does our planning and budgeting, you will soon be invited to share with us how you might plant seeds of God's kingdom through your generous financial support of this congregation in 2026. Through a pledge card or an online form, we will ask you to let us know what support we can plan on in the coming year. This week, would you start to consider with your household what that plan might look like? Find a time, put it on the calendar, and have a real conversation that asks: "How will we use what we have in support of God's kingdom in the coming year?"

Our calling is to plant the seeds of God's kingdom. Often we don't know how they will grow or which ones will take root. But we sow generously, trusting that God will bring forth new life.

Thank you for all that you do, through St. Mark's and beyond, to work for God's kingdom of justice, love, and grace in the world!

Pastor Matt and the St. Mark's Stewardship Team



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In Action

Generosity in action is active, just like love. Love doesn't sit passively; it connects us to others. I experienced this last year when my car broke down. Feeling scared and alone, I shared my situation with members of my church, St. Mark's Lutheran. They listened to my struggles, offered to drive me places, and one even offered to lend me their extra car. This was a true example of love in action.

In His Kingdom

Planting seeds for the kingdom of God means starting with small, impactful actions in our congregation and community. I recently learned about St. Mark's Lutheran Church's commitment to welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. By opening our doors to all, including people of different genders, sexual orientations, and other diversities, we are a great example of this principle.

In Your Life

As an educator for chaplains and a psychotherapist, I am privileged and thankful to see God using me as a vessel for His love and healing. I can see how He has used me, and continues to use me, to provide love and healing to others for His glory.

PASTOR
JACK & LINDA
MCHENRY



In Action

In 1999 we moved to Asheville from California to go to a Lutheran Seminary somewhere. We made St. Mark's our church home and were immediately welcomed into the church family and folded into the life of the church. Pastor David Martin suggested it would be best if we attended Lutheran Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC and helped us navigate our way to getting accepted there. When the time came to actually go, St. Marks decided to pay one full tuition for our four years of seminary. We hadn't known that such a generous gift was even a possibility. St. Mark's just surprised us with the gift. And four years later when, we received our first call to ministry, St. Marks hosted our ordination service. Since then we have seen St. Mark's support other seminarians in the same way.

ANNE & BILL
SITES



In Action

Every good and perfect gift is a gift from God, to paraphrase James 1:17. Every planted "seed" is an investment with a bounty that should be shared. He/she that plants a tree loves others besides themselves just as our gifts/contributions to St. Mark's is a gift for all of us and for all of the people and programs that St. Mark's is a significant part of. Especially at this time, we need to give generously to St. Mark's.



In Action

The night Helene hit, our Evelyn was 10 days old. In the moments between trees falling on our house and cell service going out, I got a text from a praying friend in Colorado asking how we were “holding up with all the rain.” I asked her for prayers, and I truly believe those prayers were the seeds of generosity that got our little family through one of the strangest times of our lives.

Within hours, if not minutes, our support systems both near and far were springing into action. My dad, having just driven from Asheville to Chicago two days before, got back in the car and drove several extra hours to navigate around a washed out highway 40 just to make sure we were safe. My mom helped me keep Evelyn comforted and fed, and with an endless amount of selfless energy, made sure I was still recovering as much as I possibly could (including carrying buckets and buckets of water from the hotel pool...if you know, you know). Pastor Matt and Keri found a St. Marks member who offered us her home with running water, without ever having met us.

Neighbors we had never met before were offering to help. James, a general contractor, climbed on top of our house to cover the holes in our roof and then managed the restoration of our house for the next six months. Ira, the owner of a tree removal business, at first said the job was too big but came back the next day with a crew and got it done. In the weeks after the storm, my friend’s parents invited Bob to their lake house to shower and regroup (again, without ever having met him). Bob’s co-workers spent a weekend clearing our yard of debris, leaves, and branches. During the months when Evelyn and I were staying with my parents, my aunts made sure Bob had food and water, and neighbors invited him over for dinner and fellowship. As our house repairs neared completion, Bob’s sister and niece spent a weekend scrubbing away drywall dust, re-painting Evelyn’s room, and putting our home back together. And throughout it all we were just simply surrounded by so much love.

Our situation wasn’t ideal but it certainly wasn’t the worst. I don’t believe God blesses some and not others, but we most definitely felt God’s love through the generous actions of so many. People love to say that we will have quite the story to tell Evelyn about her first few weeks of life, but it feels like so much more than just a story. In circumstances that were beyond our control, we got to witness how God stirred in the hearts of those around us, and experienced love in ways we could have never expected.



In His Kingdom

With everything going on in the world, I think a lot of people have a hard time believing God is at work. Bob and I are grateful for a community of people that actively demonstrates love and kindness through ongoing efforts to serve and lift others up. We’ve never felt so welcomed at a church as we have at St. Marks, and I think this welcoming spirit is one of the most powerful ways to share God’s love with the world.



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The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow; he does not know how. Mark 4:26-27

10/6/2025

People of God at St. Mark's,

As an ABCCM board member I (Pastor Matt) recently accompanied the NC Synod Council and Synod staff on a tour of the ABCCM warehouse in Arden. Our Lutheran siblings from across the NC Synod heard about the many ways ABCCM helps congregations live out Christ's call to serve, providing supportive and permanent housing options for women, children, and veterans; the medical clinic; residential substance abuse recovery; crisis intervention; the jail ministry, and more. As we were wrapping up the tour, the folks at ABCCM said this: "Of all the 300 congregations that support ABCCM, the two congregations that make the highest contributions through their annual budgets are the two NC Synod congregations. Knowing we can always count on that consistent support is such a blessing!" Another staff member chimed in, "AND St. Mark's hosted our downtown crisis ministry in their building for three weeks this summer!"

Jesus calls us to give generously of what God has first given us. Ultimately, we can't control how God will use those gifts for the God's kingdom. We are simply called to plant those seeds of generosity, trusting that God will use what we give for the sake of the world. But we see the ways that the seeds of generosity that St. Mark's plants are bearing fruit with ABCCM, in our many community partners, and in the sharing of good news! In people fed, babies baptized (be on the lookout for 3 baptisms in October!), and proclamations of the resurrection in the face of death, God is growing big things from our generous giving.

This week, we ask your attention and help so that our congregation can make good plans to steward gifts faithfully in 2026. Would you let us know your plan for how you intend to support St. Mark's financially in 2026? Please fill out the blue Intent Card and return it to the church office in the mail or offering plate by October 26. Or you can use the QR code on the back of the financial pledge card to fill in your details on our online form.

Thank you for partnering with us to grow in generosity and spread the good news of God's grace and love for all people. Please continue to pray for our congregation and its ministry!

In Christ,

Pastor Matt and the Stewardship Team



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DAN & MARY DUDDE

For God's Kingdom

As God's people, we are given the opportunity to be planters of generosity. We have been entrusted with an abundance of goods, love, skills and energy. God's expectations for us include sharing all of these daily, and with compassion.

St Mark's has been, and continues to be, a wonderful place to live out our commitment of generosity. Whether you are sewing quilts, making sandwiches, sharing your financial gifts, listening to someone who needs to be heard, or just showing up, it's all part of God's agenda. As the saying goes, "do things for people not because of who they are, or what they do in return, but because of who you are". You belong to God, and he is counting on you!

CHUCK & JANET JOHNSON

In Action

We all saw a huge outpouring of generosity in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, but the small action that really struck me was our sister Lutheran congregation sending the long chain of origami birds for us to hang from the ceiling. Did it rebuild anyone's house or restore anyone's life? No. But it reminded us all that people distant by states and time zones cared about us enough to share that small bit of kindness. All those little birds were seeds of generosity.

For God's Kingdom

St. Mark's plants seeds and tills soil through the many ministries we support very locally. I see the long-running participation we have had with ABCCM and Transformation Village as a particular stand-out here, especially in the dedication of the Christian Action Team serving "TV Dinner" on third Fridays. No direct payback here, other than the frequent thank-yous, but a concerted effort to help ABCCM stabilize and improve the lives of several dozen people, including a lot of kids.





VICKIE
HAUSER

For God's Kingdom

Do you remember how excited you were as a child to receive a gift? It didn't have to be something expensive, even a balloon could give you a thrill. Imagine being an adult excited because you received a brand new t-shirt, one that no one had worn before! This is what happened at Living Waters Church with one of our donations. We do not always realize how our giving can mean so much to someone else.

At St. Mark's we have the privilege to give in so many ways. Our dollars help our St. Mark's family by providing worship opportunities, faith formation classes, music, fellowship, and the ability to share our building with children and folks needing help. Our dollars also reach out to our community through ABCCM, Homeward Bound, WNC Baptist Congregation, Living Waters Lutheran, etc.

Secondly, we have the opportunity to serve during worship, sing in the choir, play handbells, serve on council or congregational teams. You can prepare food for dinners and receptions, visit shut-ins, send cards, help count the offering, work with the property team and the list goes on and on.

So ask yourself, what talents and gifts has God given me and how can I use them to help others? Your willingness to be generous with your talents, your time, and your dollars can make a difference to our St. Mark's family and to people in our community. You can answer Jesus' charge to Love Your Neighbor!



TOM
BEACHAM

In Action

I have attended St. Mark's for over a year now, and from my first visit was welcomed by Mike and Helen Masters. They have shown me kindness in ways that I can only pray I can obtain through my daily walk with God, to help me stay in line with what I have learned at St Mark's. Mike with his strong handshake and Helen with her sweet hugs. Then to top it off, they supplied me with fresh homegrown goodies from their garden. I have learned from their example that caring for all people is what God wants us to show the world. I have a long way to go, but their caring for me, directed me to St Mark's with their example of caring for all people. A quote comes to mind...When we are generous to others in all ways, we are pointing people towards God's love. This they have certainly done for me.

For God's Kingdom

I believe we are planting wonderful seeds of love when we welcome everyone into our church family. I see St Mark's opening its arms of love for all people...meaning all as All, no matter what the situation is. We truly have a special movement towards this end. I am excited to be a part of this movement ...loving everyone, and that can be hard at times, but with God's love and grace He demands that from us.

Bearing fruit in my life, is walking into the doors of St. Mark's. I have never met one person who looked the other way when I walked in, only smiles and welcomes. This has opened my eyes to the fact that even a smile can do wonders for me, and I want to pay it forward.