

## *A Joyful Privilege*

During the high days of the pandemic, a visitor worshipped in the parking lot at St. Mark's with some of her neighbors. A year later, St. Mark's began hosting a Lutheran Services Carolinas refugee resettlement office and was preparing to welcome an Afghan family of 10, displaced from their homes by the Taliban because of their support for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. When that visitor from a year earlier heard about those efforts, she knew she wanted to help. She had been a refugee from Europe in the aftermath of World War II, so she knew exactly what it was like to lose her home and start over with nothing. Her check for \$5,000 arrived at St. Mark's and made an immediate difference in the support we were able to offer to our Afghan family, helping to provide vital start-up funds for their new life.

Then, when war broke out in Europe for the first time since her family had been displaced, we received another \$5,000 check for relief efforts in Ukraine. "I never thought that something like this would happen again," she said, "but I trust your church to use this money to help." Because of her generosity, and the generosity of the St. Mark's community, we were able to send \$16,854 to the ELCA's Ukraine Crisis response fund- thanks be to God!

Until all creation is made new in the fullness of God's kingdom, we know that there is so much brokenness in the world. But stories like this one remind us that there is also so much goodness and light. We, as the Church, the body of Christ, are called to spread that light around, sharing the good news as we care for one another. What a joyful privilege!



*The children of our supported Afghan family got acclimated to their new home at the local park.*

# Profiles in Giving



-Beth Korb

When I give, I feel like I am supporting God's mission in our broken world, doing my little bit. I also think it goes beyond my monetary contribution to what I contribute in service. My budget doesn't stretch all that far but I enjoy contributing. When my parents died it gave me great pleasure to contribute to St. Paul's St. Josephs' group who faithfully visited my parents no matter where they were housed and brought them communion and companionship when I couldn't be there. I also contribute to Lower Cape Fear Life Care in memory of my parents and in gratitude for the hospice and palliative care they render to people in Wilmington. Their work is so important. I love working on the projects my Silver Sisters undertake. It is so much fun to do things for our community and church family. The fellowship is also great!



-Cindy Lauster

When I grew up, I didn't see regular giving to the church by my parents. We weren't involved lots in the church. After marrying my husband and joining the Lutheran church, the idea of giving became more important to me. I became involved in the church and saw all the different activities that the church does not only for the congregation, but also the community. I give not only money, but time and talents to the church. None of what I can give would happen without God giving me the ability to earn this money and share my talents. I give in thanks for all God has given me, and when I do, it makes me feel like part of the church and its involvement in the community. By myself, I could not accomplish what the church does, but I know that my contribution helps do the little and big things. When my husband died, I was able to give a larger donation to the church and the larger community. This donation gave me joy in being able to help more things that I know will work to make the world a better place for our grandchildren and the future.



-Linda Kinsinger

I give to the church out of gratitude for all I've been given. Also I understand that maintaining a church building and staff and programming requires funding and I have a responsibility to contribute to that if I expect those things to be present. Giving makes me feel satisfied and comforted that I'm doing my part. I would feel badly if I didn't give. For a long time, I've been able to give a tithe. I have sent my contribution in automatically on the first of the month, before other bills are paid. Then I base the rest of my expenses on what is left, because I trust that God will provide me with the ability to get through the rest of the month. I am now at an age where I am required to receive a yearly distribution from my retirement accounts. This allows me to make some charitable contributions to organizations that I support. In addition to giving to St. Mark's, this spring I made a significant contribution to MANNA during a time when they were raising money to buy fresh produce for folks who couldn't buy it on their own. Being part of the effort to bring fresh produce to families in need really brought me a wonderful feeling. I knew it had an immediate and meaningful benefit for those families. Working to help people get healthy food is something that's very important to me.

# St. Mark's Lutheran Church

10 N. Liberty Street  
Asheville, North Carolina 28801



10/10/2022

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Recently, a visitor asked me (Pastor Matt) after worship if we could start a conversation about baptizing a child. It's always a joy to speak with parents about how we believe God is at work to claim and call us through the waters of baptism, so I was glad to start looking at dates for us to talk. But the parent had an important question that needed to be addressed before planning could move forward. "How much would it cost to have the child baptized?" I was quickly hit by two emotions. Initially it was heart-breaking to realize that somebody had an expectation that finances might stand in the way of baptizing a child. But pretty quickly that heart-break turned to joy inside me. I was the one who got to tell this parent that we don't have a fee for baptism. It's God's gift of pure grace. It doesn't cost a thing. The parent's face lit up immediately as the expected barrier to the sacrament vanished!

The reason I was able to make this parent's day and proceed with plans to welcome the child into the Body of Christ, of course, is you. As a supporter of the gospel ministry of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, you make this possible with your giving. In fact, you make all the sermons, hospital visits, first communion instruction, faith formation classes, and songs of praise that happen through St. Mark's possible, and it is amazing what we can accomplish together. As we make plans for ministry in 2023, I hope you will continue to joyfully support the kingdom work of this congregation and let us know your plans to do so.

Enclosed with this letter is a pledge card that we ask you to fill out and **return to the church office** in the mail or offering plate **by October 31<sup>st</sup>**. Or, if you prefer, you can use the QR code on the pledge card to fill in your details on our online form. But whatever method works for you, in prayer and conversation, please make a plan with your household for how you intend to support the ministry of St. Mark's in the coming year and let us know. We can't do this without your support!

And as a special incentive, some members of the congregation have offered to match increases in giving, dollar for dollar, up to \$5,000 for any household currently giving less than \$39 a week (about \$2,000/year). Can you help us make the most of this match with an increase in your pledge toward ministry through St. Mark's in 2023?

Whatever your ability to give, thank you for being a partner with us spreading the word about God's grace and love for us, and please keep our ministry together in your prayers!

*Pastor Matt Smith*     *Deacon Katie Rivers*

Pastor Matt & Deacon Katie, with the Stewardship team

Telephone: 828-253-0043

Website: [www.stmarkslutheran.net](http://www.stmarkslutheran.net) E-mail: [admin@stmarkslutheran.net](mailto:admin@stmarkslutheran.net)

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



# SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY TOGETHER

## WHAT'S THE OPERATING FUND?

The Operating Fund at St. Mark's includes funding for ministry teams, worship expenses, staff salaries, youth activities, as well as a variety of other line items that make the ministry at St. Mark's possible.



Youth Ministry

The youth ministry program participates in a variety of activities including hosting Blessing of the Animals and Trunk or Treat. They can also be seen volunteering at Trinity View, a Lutheran Senior Living Community.



Staff Salaries

The staff of St. Mark's is made up of 6 employees. Each employee provides a different skill for the mission of the body of the church and is compensated from the operating fund each fiscal year.



Ministry Teams

Ministry teams are made up of parishioners that share a common passion such as community, hospitality, teaching, outreach, and financial planning. Funding is provided to these teams so that they can keep St. Mark's connected both within and outside of the walls of St. Mark's.



## WHAT'S THE BUILDING FUND?

The Building/Debt Reduction Fund is used to pay the monthly mortgage for St. Mark's. Each month we contribute \$5,351 to reduce this debt. Not only does this fund allow us to keep a beautiful worship space, it creates a space to spread our ministry to Christine W. Avery Learning Center (CWA), Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC), and a variety of support/recovery groups including Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Our partners, who directly impact our community, are able to have a dedicated space for their work and this is seen as an extension of St. Mark's building ministry.



Lutheran Services Carolinas welcomes refugees and immigrants and helps them transition into a new life and a new culture through its New Americans Program.



The Christine W. Avery Learning Center is an educational nonprofit organization that strives to enhance the state of marginalized communities by equipping, empowering, and energizing the next generation of socially conscious leaders by providing academic, social, cultural, spiritual, and civic development to disadvantaged families in Western North Carolina.



Narcotics Anonymous, founded in 1953, describes itself as a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. NA provides anonymity through recovery support groups.



## *Grow my giving?*

As you consider your giving to the church next year, please consider how you can grow in your own generosity. Try these ideas to get you started:

**1 Regular giving** leads to generosity: For most people, we can grow significantly in our giving just by making our gift on a regular basis. Sign up for automatic giving or just add an amount each week or month. Already giving automatically? Consider upping that amount. Growing your giving by \$1 per day equates to significant growth over the course of the year.

**2 An extra gift** or two during the year: During the crisis, a story was shared in a stewardship workshop about someone who said, "I'm not sure what the future holds for me, but for now I am doing okay, so I will double my giving in the month of April". Well, what if we decided to double our giving one month or even two months next year?

**3 Grow by a percentage** each year: For some, the idea of a tithe is unachievable in a single year, but something people would like to reach someday. By growing giving by a percentage each year, it is achievable over the long-term. If you currently give away 2% of income, perhaps you can reach 3% next year and 4% the year after. This takes discipline, but over the long-term is effective for some.

**4 Grow by keeping up with inflation:** This year some estimates put inflation around 8-9%. A gift that increases at least that amount means that your giving does the same amount of ministry that it did last year.

**5 An idea for someone whose income has gone down in the last year:** Everyone can grow in generosity, even if that means the overall dollars given decreases. Perhaps, if before your income decreased you were giving away 2% of your income, now with income being less, can you find a way to grow the percentage of giving to 3 or 4%? There are people in our congregation who will need to decrease the total dollars given because of loss of work or other reasons, but this may still represent an increase in generosity!

# Profiles in Giving



Eric and Susan  
Van Tassel

“

I believe that it is our responsibility to share as we are instructed to in the Bible, but it also provides satisfaction to me to be able to share. Giving makes me feel good--I look forward to giving. During the pandemic there were several local organizations that were helping so many in our community. My wife and I were able to donate funds to some of these groups. Helping our local community during a time of need felt great!

“



Tom and Brenda  
Stewart

In a congregation struggling to look beyond itself, our new pastor's first sermon focused on the meaning of grace in our lives in a very personal way – the greatest of gifts. Her goal was to rejuvenate that sense of mission the congregation had started with, but lost focus on. From that time on, her question to our church was a matter of a choice. Do we want to look inward and be a chapel for ourselves or do we look outward and be an inviting church to the community. Soon, hearts were changed, and it seemed every challenge found a solution. Eventually, the Lutheran Cooperative was formed to share resources in a “grace-filled community that shares God’s love through caring, teaching and supporting all people.” It was a transformative success for more than just our congregation.

Generosity flows from Grace. It's like breathing. We take in God's immeasurable gift. We breath out our gratitude. Our breath is our resources, the very same that sustains our Christian mission. We're compelled to be generous. It is life.

## GENEROSITY - A JOYFUL PRIVILEGE 2023

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

- 2 Corinthians 9:7-8



St. Mark's  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

## 2023 PLEDGE

Keep for your records

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month

For OPERATING FUND

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month

For BLDG/DEBT REDUCTION

I/We pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month for the **OPERATING FUND**

(Daily work of the Church—white envelope).

I/We pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month for the **BUILDING/DEBT REDUCTION FUND**

(Church Mortgage—yellow envelope).

- ☐ I/we have included St. Mark's in my/our estate planning
- ☐ I/we would like information on setting up recurring contributions electronically
- ☐ I/we would like to receive weekly contribution envelopes

Household Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_

Please Return by October 31st

Prefer to submit online?  
Scan the QR Code.



To calculate your pledge, find your income on the left, and read across to the percentage of income you are able to give

Annual Income	Monthly Income	Weekly Income	10%		7%		5%		3%	
			Annual	Weekly	Annual	Weekly	Annual	Weekly	Annual	Weekly
\$10,000	\$833	\$192	\$1,000	\$19	\$700	\$13	\$500	\$10	\$300	\$6
15,000	1,250	288	1,500	29	1,050	20	750	14	450	9
20,000	1,667	385	2,000	38	1,400	27	1,000	19	600	12
25,000	2,083	481	2,500	48	1,750	34	1,250	24	750	14
30,000	2,500	577	3,000	58	2,100	40	1,500	29	900	17
40,000	3,333	769	4,000	77	2,800	54	2,000	38	1,200	23
50,000	4,167	962	5,000	96	3,500	67	2,500	48	1,500	29
60,000	5,000	1,154	6,000	115	4,200	81	3,000	58	1,800	35
70,000	5,833	1,346	7,000	135	4,900	94	3,500	67	2,100	40
80,000	6,667	1,538	8,000	154	5,600	108	4,000	77	2,400	46
90,000	7,500	1,731	9,000	173	6,300	121	4,500	87	2,700	52
100,000	8,333	1,923	10,000	192	7,000	135	5,000	96	3,000	58