

Annual Report

May 2024- April 2025



The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark

in joy we share Christ's truth



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Table of Contents

Annual Meeting Agenda	Page 2
Council Positions For 2025	Page 2
Council President's Report	Pages 3-4
Church Council Realignment	Pages 4
Alternate Solutions Committee Report	Page 5
Long Haulers Committee Report	Page 5
Minister of Music's Report	Page 6
Worship and Music Committee Report	Page 7
Christian Education Committee Report	Page 8
Outreach Committee Report	Page 9
Missions Committee Report	Pages 10-11
Fellowship Committee Report	Page 12-13
Property Committee Report	Page 14
Care for Creation Committee Report	Page 15
Stewardship Report	Page 16
Financial Secretary's Report	Page 16
Treasurer's Report	Page 17
Mission Endowment Fund Report	Page 18

Agenda

The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark Annual Meeting April 27, 2025 Agenda

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| 1. Reading of previous meeting minutes | 3. Election of Council members |
| 2. Review of Annual Reports | 4. Other New Business |

Council Positions for 2025

Nominations:

Treasurer — Linda Obedzinski
Secretary — Open
Worship and Music Committee — Open
Property Committee — Open
Fellowship Committee — Open
Missions Committee — Open
Member at Large (Youth) — Open

Council President's Report—Ray Frick

Introduction

The overlying theme last year was: *What Is the Future for St. Mark?* After a delayed start, the council dug into a study of trends, opportunities, constraints, resources, and our community make-up at its retreat in June. Out of this came 3 actions:

Take a pulse survey of the congregation to see how much we are willing to support St. Mark. This was done in the fall. The results were encouraging in the confirmation of support, which was demonstrated by a very successful stewardship drive.

Determine if we have enough funds to sustain 3 years of operation at the current level of ministry. This exercise concluded that we do have enough money to do so.

Knowing that we have the congregation's support, two committees were formed. "The Longhaulers" goal is to determine how to grow using our resources and community connections. "The Alternatives" purpose is to investigate other options (i.e. part-time pastor, merging, closing, etc.). These committees are active.

And then life happens. After celebrating Pastor Hoffman's 25th ordination anniversary, she announced her acceptance of a call to Grand Junction, CO. I'd like to make a personal observation on her decision. It had nothing to do with any conflicts with us. During the council retreat, as we discussed our future, she was bold and with candor discussed options about closing and maybe needing a part-time pastor. She probably was more comfortable in these discussions than we were. I think the great, loving gift she gave us was removing herself so that we could frankly and candidly make the correct decisions for St. Mark without worrying about hurting someone for whom we cared deeply. For example, we might determine that we need a pastor with a different skill set than she had.

We expected to have a significant budget shortfall in 2024. Then, the Baptist church worshiping in our building decided to close and gave us \$11,000. Between this unexpected generous gift, getting interest on our accounts, and some budget savings, we ended with a surplus. We expect to have a surplus this year without the expense of a full-time pastor. The surplus will probably be necessary for the call process.

As you know, we are in the middle of doing the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT). I asked the "Alternatives" committee to coordinate this, and they graciously accepted the challenge. Transition details will be shared as things develop.

It is easy to become apprehensive and maybe even a little discouraged about what lays ahead for our future. Recently, in the Calumet listing of donors, there were 5 gifts from closing NE Synod churches. But, St. Mark *is* a vibrant, mission orientated congregation making a difference in our communities. The last *Glastonbury Citizen* had 3 articles about St. Mark: Easter egg hunt (color picture), prayer wall (picture), and an article about our May 4th Earth Care event with a picture. Pastor Hoffman listed our accomplishments in her final message to us that was published in the winter *Messenger*. My article in the spring *Messenger* was chock-full of our mission work and worship activities. So, there is much for which to remain optimistic. Please continue to support your church community by attending worship, special activities, and inviting a friend (or maybe work on getting a grandchild) to worship or one of our activities.

Continued next page

President's Report—*continued*

Our committees work hard. Please take the time to read this report. Remember to thank those who “make it happen.”

Ray
Council President

Church Council Realignment—Ray Frick, Council President

One of the tasks the council took on this year was to examine and possibly change our council structure. Over the years, it's become evident that no one wants to be on the nominating committee for council members. It also seems as if no one wants to be on council (too much time, I've done my share, I don't want to head a committee, etc.). In light of this, we did a survey of several other Lutheran church councils and 5 items became obvious:

Our council membership is larger than other church councils. We have 15 lay member: 5 officers (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary,) 2 at large, 7 committee chairs. 7-9 lay members were a common number. (Note: The pastor is always a member of the council.)

Other churches had 3 or 4 officers. No other church had a finance secretary as an officer. The vice-president office was missing in the churches with 3 officers.

No other church required committee chairs to be council members.

Terms ranged from 1-3 years, with a normal limit of 2 terms. Our practice of 2 year terms with a 2 term limit is not outside the norm.

Election of officers were either by the council using an ecclesiastical ballot, or by the congregation (as our officers are selected).

The council is proposing the following changes:

The Vice-President office will be eliminated.

The council will consist of 4 officers, 3 at-large members, and the Pastor.

Terms will be for 2 years, and can serve a total of 3 terms (6 years total). Finance secretary and treasurer will have no term limit.

Election of officers will be by congregation vote. In the event of an officer vacancy, the council will replace the officer by appointment of a volunteer or by ecclesiastical ballot if necessary.

The Outreach and Missions committees will be combined into a Mission Outreach committee.

These changes require a change to our constitution, which can take over a year. Given that these are major changes, and the council felt it would be worthwhile to try them for a while. Therefore, during the upcoming year, we will operate as if the changes were in effect. The committee chairs and at-large member in the middle of their term will be active members. Committee chairs whose terms are up, will not be replaced, but according to the constitution, will officially remain on council. Therefore if a major decision is required (i.e. pastoral call), then we still have a constitutionally correct council. If the proposed changes work smoothly, then the process of changing the constitution will start.

This will be an ongoing process, so the preceding is the current plan, but changes may occur.

Alternate Solutions Committee Report—Betsy Crayton, Secretary

The Alternate Solutions Committee (ASC) has been tasked to explore options to move our church forward if our current church structure isn't able to sustain our budget beyond the next 3 years. Members of our committee agree that our best solution is to hire a full-time pastor who is mission focused and can help lead us toward growth. Other solutions which we consider our "Plan B" include these topics discussed during meetings:

- Raise funds by making fuller use of our buildings & renting the parsonage
- Hire a part time pastor or share a pastor and staff with another church
- Merge with another Lutheran or Episcopal church
- Sell the property and continue worshiping together elsewhere
- Holy closure and go our separate ways

Currently our focus is on encouraging all church members to complete the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) during the month of April. The CAT is the first step in the search for our next pastor. The CAT Café Kick-off Brunch on April 6th was a big success, and we especially thank Linda Hilliard and Deb Gresens for assisting our committee for this special event. Once we have the data from the CAT, we will have a better understanding of the pulse of the congregation and can use that information to continue our discussions. Please feel free to reach out to any of our committee members if you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,
Betsy Crayton, ASC Secretary

Long Haulers Committee Report—Deb Gresens

The *Long Haulers* met bi-monthly to discuss the following:

- Who are we?
- What are we?
- Why are we important to the community?
- Where are we?

After much discussion and leg work, the *Long Haulers* have chosen several activities and events to work toward establishing St. Mark's as vital part of the Glastonbury community and beyond.

In order to become more visible and community based, the committee has chosen the following projects to be a focus for 2025:

- Music—a coffeehouse
- Community garden—expanding the existing garden to encourage groups using the church and fellowship hall to plant and care for their own garden space
- Easter egg hunt—invite children in the VRABE nursery program to participate and possibly expand in 2026 to other community groups
- Personally invite The Potter's Workshop, The Korean Church, VRABE and support groups using the church to participate in activities at the church, for example, annual picnic, Sunday fellowship, concerts (Cuatro Puntos, Eclectica, Cabaret), spring and fall clean-up
- Continue to network with local church leaders in Glastonbury and surrounding communities

Committee Members: Jan Frick, Leslie O'Rourke, Cathleen Decker, Aaron Fernandez Castro, Mark Crayton (Chair), Valerie Taff, Linda Hilliard, Anne Davis, Deb Gresens

Minister of Music's Report—Martin Smith

"Restless is the heart until it comes to rest in you. All the earth shall remember and return to our God." Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430) *Confessions*

This text from an anthem the choir sings and enjoys each year (usually during Lent), I believe, is quite meaningful to us at the time where we find ourselves now: Spring, Easter, in pastoral transition, in national and economic upheaval, awaiting new beginnings. The rest of the anthem text is from Psalm 90 and I would like to suggest that you take the time to read the psalm and the refrain above as you read this article, even this entire annual report, as words to which to return when things may feel unstable. God has been our refuge... and God still is.

As I reflect over the year 2024, the highlight is our Glastonbury Choral Festival at Saint Paul Church in May. Choirs and directors from four denominations and six churches prepared music which culminated in the concert with brass, handbells, oboe, organ and piano. Not only was it inspiring to hear, but to prepare, to lead, to accompany and share with our faithful choristers. And the refreshments! Heartfelt thanks to all from Saint Mark who contributed their talent, time and treasure. Later last year we gathered to give, pray and sing together at the interfaith Thanksgiving service at First Church. Once again, as our Bishop Piphio likes to say *"We are (were) church together"* and that wonderful comradery of working and singing together once again lifted our spirits. Pastor Hoffman's 25th Ordination Anniversary was the third opportunity for us to gather with those beyond the Saint Mark community; it was equally inspiring and a pleasure to prepare with our choir and Pastor. These events are what give me hope and inspiration in challenging times, as those in which we may find ourselves today.

Our choir, the faithful remnant, *anawim* in Hebrew, as I often call them or think of them, gathers twice weekly to prepare and lead the Saint Mark congregation in worship. We are blessed! I am blessed by their talents, sacrifices of time, and care for each other as they work hard to make our music the best. The Holy Spirit often needs to be there to help us over the edge musically, and we do our best to be open to the Spirit in all that we do. The Folk Group, too, works hard at choosing and preparing musical alternatives to the traditional selections and offers us new repertoire to inspire us. We are blessed by their presence among us!

Bidding farewell is never easy. Having worked with two pastors and an interim, I have been blessed and enriched by their presence and guidance. I believe we all become stronger and wiser in the process and I believe that our current transition will be equally rewarding. *Ad multos annos*. May we continue to support one another in every endeavor over these next months as we prepare for more new beginnings.



Worship and Music Report—Dottie Marschhausen, Chair

Last year at this time we were wrapping up our Lenten observances with The Wandering Heart. The poetry and devotional material were based on John's Gospel and the experiences of St. Peter. It proved to be a favorite!

As summer approached, we joined with our friends at St. James and St. Lukes for the annual Jazz Service featuring The Hot Cat Jazz Band.

On September 24 it was our turn to host our annual picnic. St. James, St. Luke's, and The Potter's Church joined us at JB Williams Park for worship and fellowship. Linda Hilliard and the folk group provided the music. The Build-a-Grinder luncheon was a hit. Many thanks to Elaine Auger, Carol Weber and Anne Davis for all their planning and hard work. The fall continued with excitement and enthusiasm for our very first Appreciation Sunday. Each committee high-lighted their members and the committee activity and projects. There were even gold stars for the participants.

The church year began, as always, with the season of Advent. Our theme for this year was WAIT-WATCH-WONDER-WELCOME. Our Advent Matins was on Tuesday morning via Zoom. Vespers on Wednesday evening were preceded by a fellowship hour with a meal and on several evenings a hymn sing. Thanks, Martin.

In mid-December we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Pastor Hoffman's ordination. Bishop Piphio preached and joined our congregation and friends for a wonderful meal and a delightful evening.

At the end of January, we said goodbye to Pastor Hoffman who had accepted a call to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Grand Junction, Colorado.

On February 9 Pastor James Krauser began his tenure as our "pulpit supply" pastor. Pastor Krauser will be with us through the Easter Season.

This brings us back to Lent and Easter. Our traditional soup suppers were held on Wednesday evenings, followed by Holden Evening Prayer in the sanctuary. Our Palm Sunday and Easter Celebrations were wonderful thanks to Martin Smith and his extremely talented musicians.

Thanks to everyone who helps with worship and music. Thanks to the lectors and prayer leaders, the communion assistants and the altar guild. Thanks to our two choirs and to Martin and Linda H. and Linda O. We couldn't do it without you!



Christian Education Report—Jan Frick, Chair

Prayer Retreat: The prayer retreat was held on Saturday, May 18th and a dozen people participated. While the attendance was smaller than hoped for, this was a great first event like this. Many of the stations will remain up for a period of time, so that others can benefit from these, as the Holy Spirit moves them. The retreat evaluations were quite favorable, so we most likely will look to hold another retreat.

In the Fall 2024, the Sunday Evening Bible Study group concluded their study of the book, “Inspired Imperfection” by Gregory A. Boyd. It was a very engaging discussion about how to think about scripture.

Fall Dinner Church: On Wednesday, October 23rd prior to vespers, seven people attended dinner church and learned about the many devastating impacts that food insecurity and hunger have on people around the world. On a lighter note, the group engaged in a friendly game of corn-hole afterwards to raise funds and collect food items for Feed Northeast.

Advent Dinner Church: On Wednesday, December 4th prior to Vespers, a dozen people attended dinner church. During the meal and devotional time, attendees were invited to discuss with each other and also personally reflect on what it means to be people who ‘Wait’ for the fulfillment of God’s promises.

The inaugural First Sunday of the Month event was held on January 5, 2025 and was very well attended. Pastor Hoffman’s pictures were incredible and many were truly breathtaking. We all got a much better appreciation of first century challenges that faced the Apostle Paul and his associates, as they spread the gospel throughout major cities in what are now Turkey and Greece.

During Epiphany and Lent 2025, the Sunday Evening Bible Study group watched Season 1 of the television series, ‘The Chosen’. The group felt the episodes brought the Bible to life in new ways and with deeper meaning. The group thoroughly enjoyed the first season and welcomes all to join them in Fall 2025 to watch Season 2 with them.

The second First Sunday of the Month event was held February 2nd. Unfortunately, due to lack of heat at St. Mark, we moved the benefit concert to Concordia Lutheran Church in Manchester. Andante Strings performed a wonderful benefit concert for Interval House and MACC. A total of \$550 was raised at the concert and split between the two organizations. Many, many thanks go to Deb Gresens and Linda Hilliard who stepped in to take over with the raffle baskets and reception after Jan Frick suffered a foot injury and contracted the flu.



Outreach Committee—Elaine Auger, Chair

We have secured J B Williams Park for September 21 for our multi-Church outing. We will work with Carol Weber and Anne Davis to invite St. James, St. Luke's as well as The Potter's Workshop Church and perhaps the Korean Church as well. We will order food and purchase table coverings etc. and arrange for set up. Will need to speak to whomever our interim Pastor will be regarding the service. Before she left, Pastor Hoffman suggested we might ask Father Handi to conduct the service. We will discuss with Council.

We participated in the coordination of Pastor Hoffman's Anniversary Ordination Celebration including ordering deli platters and arranging for table set up, clean up etc.

We worked with Missions Committee on disbursement of Mission Grants and Easter Bags.

Thank you to Anne Davis for continuing to send information and photos to the Glastonbury Citizen, and to Dottie Marschhausen for continuing to update the sign on the lawn.



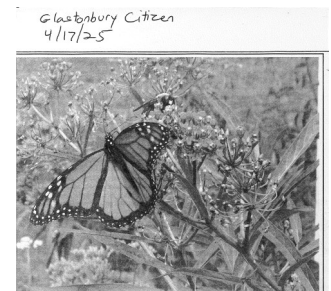
Glastonbury Citizen 11/21/24

A Tremendous Response... The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark thanks everyone who donated to Thrivent's Feed the Northeast Food Drive. The response was tremendous, as over 800 items were collected! Pictured (l-r) are Ray Erick, Jan Erick, Jake Auger, Pastor Cheryl Hoffman and Linda Hilliard.



April 17, 2025 • The Glastonbury Citizen

Easter Egg Hunt... The children of students enrolled in the Vernon Regional Adult Based Education Program recently enjoyed an Easter Egg Hunt on the lawn at the Lutheran Church of St. Mark. Classes meet at St. Mark weekly.



Pictured are pollinators visiting the Community Garden at St. Mark, part of what the church called its "commitment to care for creation."

Celebrate Spring at May 4 Earth Care Event

On Sunday, May 4, at 4 p.m., St. Mark will be hosting a timely event, Earth Care: Are We Stuck on Hold or Moving Forward? It's wrong! Time to dig in and prioritize how our actions impact our planet. As we celebrate the return of spring, it is clear that our care of the earth needs more attention. Floods, raging rivers, huge winter storms, heat waves and devastating fires can be overwhelming. Some positive changes to care for the earth have been made, but what can each of us do to move care for the planet forward? St. Mark is excited to have longtime proponents of Earth Care come and share their insights with the community about the beneficial impact that each of us can make. Join the Reverend Darrell Urban and his wife, Nancy.

Glastonbury Citizen 10/17/24

St. Mark Holding Food Drive Saturday

The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark will be holding a food drive this Saturday to support "Feed the Northeast" and help stock up food banks before the upcoming holidays. Volunteers will be collecting nonperishable food items on Saturday, Oct. 19, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. at the Stop & Shop located at 215 Glastonbury Boulevard. Although any nonperishable food item is appreciated, the most needed items are instant potatoes, mayonnaise, beef stew, ramen noodles,

regular coffee, sugar, pasta and pasta sauce, jelly, baking mixes for cakes and brownies, rice and rice mixes. Please support those in our communities who are dealing with food insecurity. For additional information, contact the church office at 860-633-1188. The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark is located at 75 Griswold St. For more information about current outreach activities or worship opportunities, visit www.saintmarkglastonbury.org.

Glastonbury Citizen 9/5/24

Music of the Middle East at St. Mark

Experience the music and instruments of the Middle East at the Lutheran Church of Saint Mark in September and October. "Sounds of the Silk Road: Ameen Mokdad & Cuatro Puntos Ensemble" will take place at St. Mark on Thursday, Sept. 19, at 7 p.m. Enjoy musical improvisations that take you on a journey... to a warm summer's night, drinking tea atop an ancient sandstone building, while local musicians get lost in a unique world of their very own. Iraqi violinist Ameen Mokdad will be joined by musicians of Cuatro Puntos Ensemble, as they perform on various modes of the maqam system. This is a system of scales used for centuries in areas of Arab and Persian influence. More information and the ticket link are available at cuatropuntos.org. Suggested donation for this concert is \$20. A demonstration of Afghan instruments by eight musicians from Afghanistan will take

place at St. Mark on Saturday, Oct. 26, at 6 p.m. (Ticket link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/demonstration-of-afghan-instruments-tickets-816525181077aff-oddidtreator>.) Eight musicians from Afghanistan will demonstrate various traditional Afghan instruments: rubab, tabla, sitar, harmonium and others. They will give an informal performance and answer questions. This demonstration is a prelude to their performance the next day of "Symphony of Resilience: The Afghan Orchestra Unsilenced" at the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford. This demonstration concert is free of charge. And consider attending the concert at the Bushnell on Oct. 27. Organizers ask those interested to sign up for both events to facilitate preparations. The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark is located at 75 Griswold St. Additional information can be found at saintmarkglastonbury.org.

Watching, Waiting This Advent at St. Mark

"This Advent is sponsored by the four W's: wait, watch, wonder, welcome," stated Lutheran Church of St. Mark Pastor Cheryl Hoffman. "When we wait for something, we also often find ourselves watching—watching our watch, watching the sky, watching the calendar blocks tick by. Depending on what we are waiting and watching for, we might also do some wondering. Wondering what; wondering when; wondering how; or if the thing we are hoping for will come to be," she added. "Pastor Hoffman is encouraging everyone to make space in their Christmas calendar to wait, watch, wonder and welcome Christ's birth at any of our Sunday or weekday worship services," the church said in a press release. Advent will include Matins, via Zoom, every Tuesday morning and Vespers, via Zoom and in-person, Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. On Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 5:45 p.m., the pub-

lic is invited to bring a brown bag meal. Dinner will be followed by a Hymn Sing, led by Martin Smith. Vespers will begin at 7 p.m. Evening service on Christmas Eve marks the beginning of the Church's Christmas celebration. At 5 p.m., a Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service will be celebrated. Communion will also be celebrated on Christmas morning at 9 a.m. Both services will be in-person and via Zoom. Dec. 29, the first Sunday of Christmas, will be observed with a Service of Lessons and Carols, and communion at 9 a.m. "For those who think they've heard everything about the Christmas story, come and listen again," stated Hoffman. "Perhaps you will hear something new, something you may not remember hearing before. All are welcome, at any time." The Lutheran Church of Saint Mark is located at 75 Griswold St. Links to Zoom worship can be found at www.saintmarkglastonbury.org.

Glastonbury Citizen 12/12/24

Missions Report—Jan Frick

The Mother's Day Plant Sale held on Sunday, May 12, 2024 was a great success. A word of thanks and appreciation goes to Thrivent for approving an action grant that helped to offset plant costs for both the sale and for St. Mark's garden. Proceeds from the sale were split between ELCA World Hunger and other expenses for the garden.

St. Mark Garden 2024 Recap: We expanded the garden and were able to provide dozens and dozens more vegetables to the Manchester Area Conference of Churches (MACC) Food Pantry. The big improvement to the garden was the new gathering space platform. A great team of Ronald Kraatz, Mark Crayton, Linda Hilliard, and Ray, Jan, and Ryder Frick worked on designing and building the platform. A Thrivent Action Team grant was used to offset the costs. Many thanks go to all the volunteers who helped plant, weed, and harvest the garden during the 2024 growing season.

Care Bags: Linda Hilliard organized volunteers to purchase personal care items and assemble care bags that could be given to individuals seeking assistance.

Scrip Cards: Leslie O'Rourke is managing the scrip card sales that generate funds that can be used for charitable contributions and Missions projects. Be sure to buy cards!!

Global Refuge: Previously known as the Lutheran Immigration Refugee Service (LIRS), Global Refuge has expanded its services in supporting displaced peoples. Again as in the past, members of St. Mark wrote Christmas cards that were sent to Global Refuge for distribution to refugees.

Thrivent's Feed Northeast Challenge: Over 800 non-perishable food items were collected during the month of October and delivered to Manchester Area Conference of Churches (MACC) Food Pantry. Special thanks goes to Pastor Hoffman, Jake Auger, Linda Hilliard, and Ray Frick for their assistance with soliciting food at Stop & Shop on Saturday, October 19th. A Thrivent Action Team grant of \$250 was also used to help purchase food. And if that wasn't incredible enough, MACC also received an additional \$500 from Thrivent. It was a fantastic effort to help those facing food insecurity!!

Christmas-at-Sea: In November 2024, Eleanor Tunney organized the efforts to raise funds to provide over a dozen satchels for Christmas gifts to seafaring crews on container ships.

Community Child Guidance Clinic in Manchester: Eleanor Tunney organized the fund raising and purchase of STEAM kits for CCGC students for Christmas 2024.

Coat Donations: During winter, Deb Gresen organized collecting coats that were donated to St. James' outreach ministry, Carol's Closet.

Food Donations: Once a month, St. Mark donates and delivers food to the elementary schools for children who are at risk of not having sufficient food for the weekend. Additionally, St. Mark collects and donates food to the Glastonbury Food Bank and makes financial contributions to Glastonbury Links Together.

Christmas 2024 and Easter 2025 Joy Totes: Filling up the Joy Totes has become a favorite activity at St. Mark and is a wonderful way for us to share our joy and messages of love to the community groups using our building. On Friday, March 28th, there was a special rock painting party for the Easter Totes. A very enthusiastic group of painters (Anne Davis, Deb Gresens, Linda Hilliard, Linda Obedzinski, JaneMarie Galiette, Dave Rutz, and Ellen

Continued next page

Missions Report—*continued*

Dougherty) spent a morning painting and putting inspirational messages on the rocks that then were included in the Easter Joy Totes

Missions Endowment Fund: The 2025 distribution from the Mission Endowment Fund was \$2,700. It was disbursed as follows:

Local – MACC (\$500), Community Child Guidance Clinic (\$250)

ELCA – World Hunger (\$450), Global Refuge (\$500), Lutheran World Relief (\$1,000)

Easter Egg Hunt: On April 10th, a dozen children and their parents who attend VRABE ESL classes were treated to an Easter Egg Hunt out on the church's back lawn. It was wonderful to see all the kids having a great time finding eggs. Many thanks go to Anne Davis, Linda Hilliard, Linda Obedzinski, and Deb Gresens for helping with the hunt.



Fellowship Report—Linda Hilliard, Chair

Thank you to all the many people who have helped keep us fellowshiping. The GF & Friends, Amigos and Amigas, Dottie's Team, Folk Group Friends, Godfellas, and Deb's Team have kept the coffee pot humming, and provided wonderful treats to enable us to talk, share, support each other after worship each Sunday. Thank you for all the baking, shopping, chopping, plating, decorating, pouring, loading and unloading of the dishwasher, and thanks to our coffee angel, Dave Taylor, who always wants to know who will be making the coffee, even when he is traveling.

Last spring, April 27th, Jan and Ray Frick arrived at the parking lot with the hay bales, rakes, spades and began the design and plans for our garden. Jan is masterful at having a vision for what to grow where, and a committee helped with the trellises and trying to remember how the heck to connect them again. Plants and seedlings arrived and were placed in rows. Last spring Ray and Jan also oversaw the building of a beautiful platform, assisted by Ronald Kraatz, Mark Crayton and others, complete with steps and railings, for the table and chairs in the garden. At the same time, Eleanor Tunney designed a beautiful pollinator garden on the other side of the church, with a fountain, labels for the plants, and descriptions of what was growing and how it was helping to keep the bees and butterflies around. I mention the gardens and the creative forces behind them, because much fellowship happens outside among the growing plants, in the planting, tending and harvesting. Thank you, Eleanor, Ronald, Jan, Ray, and all who spent time on these projects.

On September 15th, we had Appreciation Sunday. Pastor Hoffman worked very hard to highlight each committee's role in our collective ministry, and read Bible passages and wrote prayers, and appropriate hymns were sung as we highlighted all the work being done all year long. We posted lists of people on our committees on the windows and really reveled in gratitude for all the work done and rewarding results of the committees and workers and participants in St. Mark's ministry. Thanks go to Pastor for the many extra hours of planning, along with Dottie Marschhausen and Worship and Music.

On Sunday, September 22nd, we had our annual combined worship service and build-a-grinder event in Williams Park, inviting St. James and St. Luke's churches to join us. This event is chaired by Elaine Auger, Anne Davis and Carol Weber, with the help of a Thrivent Action Team grant. This committee really makes sure all the details are taken care of—hot coffee, condiments, gluten-free choices, decorations, welcoming table, (hauling of said tables), site details including reservations, early arrival and late clean-up. Pastor, Dottie, Martin, Lee and his tech committee, and the Folk Group coordinate the service details, and there are many, and the pavilion sure fills up with people! Thank you, one and all.

On October 27th, Pastor Hoffman enriched our coffee hour by showing her slides of In The Footsteps of Paul, and describing all that she had experienced on her trip. She brought favors from Turkey, and wonderful, inspiring stories. Thank you, Pastor Hoffman, for your efforts.

On Saturday, November 2nd at 11:30, the Hilliards hosted a fall Hike and Brats around the Manchester Reservoir. We returned to the (chilly) deck for brats, sides and conversation. Thanks to all who attended.

Fellowship Report—*continued*

On Monday, December 3rd, Leslie O'Rourke hosted the annual women's Christmas Party and Yankee Swap. The team of Crayton and Clark hosted the men at Bernie Clark's home, with Mark co-hosting their celebration and Yankee Swap. The season of Advent/Christmas had now been officially kicked off, thank you, hosts!

On Sunday, December 8th, Advent 2, we hosted Bishop Pipho as we celebrated 25 years of ordination for Pastor Hoffman with a catered meal, special guests and much merriment. Thanks go to all who planned and coordinated this special day.

December 15th, Advent 3, Pastor Hoffman announced acceptance of pastorate in Grand Junction, Colorado, resigning as pastor. In January, two committees were formed to plan for our church going forward. The Longhaulers were commissioned with talking about what we might do to bring new life to our ministries. The other committee was commissioned to explore the other possibilities for our church and property. These committees are active at this time, meeting regularly.

On Thursday, April 10th, as part of the Longhauler's vision for the church, Jan Frick coordinated an Easter Egg Hunt for the little ones participating in ESL classes. A great time was had by the many children and moms, as well as those who helped stuff and hide the eggs—Jan, Anne D, Linda O, and Linda H.

On Easter Sunday, April 20th, we celebrated with a potluck breakfast at 8:00. It was nice to revive this tradition, and special thanks go to Deb Gresens for her untiring efforts in decorating our halls with flowers, linens, decorations and much cheer.

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed.

Linda Hilliard, Fellowship Chair



Property Committee Report—Deb Gresens, Chair

Building and Structure Maintenance:

The Property Committee reports the following:

The Property Committee and Sexton, Dan Dickau work together to maintain the interior and exterior of St. Mark.

Annual inspections (i.e., boiler and alarm system) are supervised by Dave Rutz and Jule Beer.

The capital improvement plan is managed by Dave Rutz. He provides the Property Committee with a timeline that reflects completed projects and three (3) to five (5) year projections.

Landscape and Property Maintenance:

Landscape Maintenance and Improvement: Numerous volunteers continue to maintain the lawn, Memorial Garden, flower beds, community garden, pollinator garden and other plantings on the property. Members work countless hours planting vegetable plants, perennials and annuals for the church gardens.

Property Maintenance and Improvement: Six (6) mowing teams maintain the church lawn and large landscape gardens throughout the mowing/growing season. Fall and spring “clean-up” days continue to involve a large number of volunteers.

Building Use:

Several community support groups continue to use our facility on weekly basis.

White Rabbit Theater group, Cuatro Puntos, Eclectica and The Heart Worship Collective group have used the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary for rehearsals and performances/concerts.

VRABE (Vernon Regional Adult Based Education) continues to provide classes for ESL students (English as a Second Language), GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree) and Literacy classes. A nursery/preschool is available for parents and/or caregivers attending class on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Potter’s Workshop holds service, in Spanish, each Sunday, in the Sanctuary at 11:00 a.m., under the direction of Ramona Ojeda.

Pr. Park and The Korean Church have returned to St. Mark’s and hold a service at 1:00pm each Sunday, in the Sanctuary.

All applications for community use of St. Mark’s facilities are reviewed by the Property Committee and recommendations are presented to the Council

Personnel:

Committee Members: Dave Rutz, Jule Beer, Leslie O’Rourke, Andrea Clark and Deb Gresens.



Care For Creation Committee Report—Eleanor Tunney, Chair

We have added to the pollinator garden:

- A rain barrel has been installed to both fill the fountain basin and water the plants. This means that no Town of Glastonbury water has been used to maintain the garden. Thanks again to Jule Beers.
- A plaque from the Lady Bird Johnson wildflower farm and museum in Austin, Texas has been donated by Deb Gresens. It emphasizes the need for pollinators in a beautiful way.
- Plant tabs have been added to identify the 19 species we have growing.
- A plant list including the common name, Latin name, and plant description is available for your edification.
- No herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers have been used to maintain this garden, making it totally organic.

A few years ago we began watershed testing of streams and brooks near our homes. One problem area persists: Wildcat Brook and Candlelight Drive in Glastonbury. Bernie and Andrea Clark have continued the testing. This year they tested at the inception of spring to see if levels were lower before most lawns were fertilized. Results demonstrate that, over the years, phosphate levels have increased from 10ppm to 25ppm.

In addition to the pollinator garden and the continued water testing, last fall Eleanor Tunney began a Climate Justice course sponsored by the Center for Climate Justice and Faith at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Participants in the program are from the USA, Europe, and West Africa. The course includes written contributions and zoom sessions with cohorts and Learning Guides. The focus of the spring semester is preparation of a Sacred Action Proposal. Eleanor's project includes propagation of milkweed plants, *Asclepius syriaca*. Milkweed is the host plant for monarch butterflies, which are essential to pollination. Thank you to Betsy Crayton for securing the Thrivent grant to purchase the planting supplies. The plants are currently in the stratification stage, and will be ready for planting later in the season.

Eleanor also contributed an article to the Synod Green Team on milkweed and moss for the Lenten Walk pamphlet.

Blessed be God who is our bread; may all the world be clothed and fed.

The Care for Creation Committee: Bernie Clark, Deb Gresens, Eleanor Tunney, Chair



Stewardship Committee Report—Ronald Kraatz, Chair

Both Pigs and Chickens Commit



The response from Saint Mark members has been terrific! Pledges for 2025 from the 29 families committing have increased by \$18,235 (10.2%) over their 2024 pledges for the General Fund. For the Capital Fund, the increase is \$3,597 (26.5%). Eight families increased their pledge by ten per cent or more, some considerably more.

THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

Ronald Kraatz
Stewardship Chairperson

Financial Secretary's Report—Dave Taylor

In addition to the operating income listed below, we received \$1,748 for local missions, \$3,220 for Glastonbury Links Together and \$14,718 for capital improvements during calendar year 2024.

Thank you to all members of the St. Mark family for your continuing generosity.

Lutheran Church of St. Mark
Income History

Operating Income	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual
Pledged	175,600	175,650	184,800
Unpledged	7,562	7,006	7,927
Community Donations	5,146	6,600	17,390
Holiday Envelopes	2,493	3,610	2,320
Thrivent Choice	1,852	1,934	1,334
Loose Plate	597	65	273
Flowers & Bulletins	950	1,545	0
Utilities, Snowflakes	970	20	0
Lyman Developers		1,500	6,000
Interest/Adjustments			2,000
Total	195,170	197,930	222,044

Treasurer's Report—Linda Obedzinski

2024 Operating Expenses

Expenses by Category	2024 Actual	2023 Actual	Difference
Ministry	134,182	137,015	-2,833
Missions	11,170	12,000	-830
Committees	3,195	6,991	-3,796
Operating	59,645	62,877	-3,232
Other	3,252	1,652	-1,600
TOTAL	\$211,444	\$220,535	\$-9,091

Lutheran Church of Saint Mark

Total Asset Balance Sheet

	3/31/2025	12/31/2024	Change from prior quarter	Notes
ASSETS				
---Cash and Bank Accounts				
St Mark Checking Account (082)	\$ 37,906	\$ 67,812	\$ (29,906)	Moved funds into interest-bearing savings acct.
St Mark Savings	\$ 103,457	\$ 57,648	\$ 45,809	Some 2025 pledges are paid in full
ELCA Mission Endowment Fund	\$ 67,289	\$ 67,917	\$ (628)	
TOTAL Cash and Bank Accounts	\$ 208,652	\$ 193,377	\$ 15,275	
LIABILITIES				
Key Deposit	\$ 1,216	\$ 1,216	\$ -	
Memorial Fd Liability	\$ 6,251	\$ 6,251	\$ -	
Memorial Fund Rindi Taylor	\$ 1,586	\$ 1,586	\$ -	
Memorial Fund Wes Clark	\$ 2,351	\$ 2,351	\$ -	
Mission Endowment Fund	\$ 67,289	\$ 67,917	\$ (628)	
Restricted - Capital Campaign	\$ 30,132	\$ 18,371	\$ 11,761	Some 2025 pledges are paid in full
Restricted - Mission	\$ 2,266	\$ 2,164	\$ 102	
Restricted gifts World Hunger	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Restricted-Next Year Pledges	\$ -	\$ 51,479	\$ (51,479)	
Restricted-Youth Group	\$ 8,162	\$ 8,162	\$ -	
Special Funds Held	\$ 2,777	\$ 4,347	\$ (1,570)	Short-term collections for flowers, campaigns
Pastor's CE - accrual of unused funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Sabbatical Funds - Pastor plus church	\$ 558	\$ 558	\$ -	
Glastonbury Links Together	\$ 10	\$ 1,140	\$ (1,130)	
Pastor's Discretionary fund	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ -	For hardship assistance
			\$ -	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 124,598	\$ 167,543	\$ (42,945)	
			\$ -	
Equity (assets less liabilities)	\$ 84,054	\$ 25,834	\$ 58,220	Some 2025 pledges are paid in full

Mission Endowment Fund Report — David Obedzinski

Provision D of the St. Mark's Mission Endowment Fund Policy requires that the Endowment Investment Committee (EIC) report Fund balances, investment performance and material investment recommendations to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting following Council's formal review and approval.

NOTE: Within the ELCA Foundation the name of the fund where our fund is invested in the “Ministry Growth Fund”.

FUND BALANCE: The St. Mark investment account began 2024 with a balance of \$64,727.15 and ended the year with a balance of \$67,917.43.15. I fulfilled a request from the Church Council and Missions Committee for a withdrawal of \$4,000 from the fund, \$2,000 for 2024 grants and \$2,000 to reimburse the church for its outlay of unreimbursed grants in 2023.

PERFORMANCE: Specifics are unavailable at this time. I will post in the Messenger soon.

MATERIAL INVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: There are no recommendations at this time. The Fund continues to focus on the longer term, adhering to its overall strategic asset allocation, seeking to deliver solid, long-term results through a blend of asset classes.

GIFTS MADE TO THE FUND BY MEMBERS: There were no individual gifts made to the endowment by members or others in 2024. For more information about how to make a gift to the fund see the text below. There are quarterly fund earnings that are folded back into the principal of the fund annually and help it grow.

MISSION GRANT IMPACT OF OUR FUND: Having exceeded the \$50,000 minimum required by our church for a withdrawal we were once again able to fulfill the Fund's purpose to support and enhance the mission of our Church. With the 2024 grants of \$2,000 the Fund has generated a total of \$19,900 for Missions work/grants since the Fund's viability in 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A 2025 WITHDRAWAL: I had recommended to the Finance Committee and Board making a maximum withdrawal of \$2,700 for this year's selection of grants to be made, they approved that amount; I have made the request for the funds and have received confirmation that it is being processed as of 4/22/25.

Member Reminder About Contributions — Congregation members can make contributions to our Mission Endowment Fund at anytime by designating a gift to the ***Mission Endowment Fund*** in gifts to Saint Mark. Additionally, members may also designate a gift to the fund in their estate plans which will eventually add to the fund and allow us to make more of an impact with our Mission work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Contact David J. Obedzinski, (Hofstrafan@msn.com/860-805-8198) - Finance Committee Representative to the Mission Endowment Fund – April 25, 2025

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of our members who have contributed their time and generosity in supporting the ministry of St. Mark.



**The Lutheran Church
of Saint Mark**

In joy we share Christ's truth.

75 Griswold Street
Glastonbury, CT 06033