



2015 Annual Report

St. Mark's Lutheran Church by The Narrows
Tacoma, WA

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2015 Theme: Gathered, Nourished, Sent

"We invite all people to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fullness of God's grace through worship where we are gathered, nourished and sent to be Christ's body in the world."

St. Mark's Statement of Mission, Vision and Ministry

In every week of 2015, diverse people were gathered around the Lord's Table at St. Mark's to feast on the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ. We were gathered, too, around tables in nearly every other room of the church for nourishment of our bodies and minds and spirits. We broke bread together, we welcomed the hearing of God's Word, we practiced story telling and holy listening, we crafted things with our hands, we filled bags with food for others, we made important decisions about life and mission, we played games, we raised money to support a variety of ministries, and we gave thanks for the nourishment that God provided in each and every encounter.

Beyond St. Mark's, we also gathered around tables at places like Peace Community Center, and the Nativity House, and DeLong Elementary School, and the Washington Corrections Center for Women, and many other communities of mission and ministry in this small corner of God's world.

Going further from home, some of us even gathered around tables in places like Montana and Mexico and Nicaragua and Namibia. We feasted on the gifts that were shared with us in each of those settings where God dwells among faithful people, and we were greatly satisfied by the bounty of God that was given and shared in our time together.

The banner which hung in our sanctuary and parish commons throughout the year gave us a beautiful image of this table fellowship which kept getting broader and broader as the months progressed. It also helped us to see how we are the body of Christ in the world. In the people of diverse age, and gender, and race that are depicted in every circle of relationships on the banner, we saw who we are together and we remembered the love of God which welcomes us all into holy communion.



A Greeting from our Council President *Bill Klancke*

As we begin another new year it seems natural to look back and reflect on what we have just completed as a community and congregation of the ELCA. There is much for which we are grateful as we look forward. Last January, we were preparing a new budget for the approval of the congregation and we were looking at our expected income against the ministry we wanted to expand. The numbers weren't coming out. The Council took a bold position and said the ministry should not shrink or remain static. A budget was presented to the congregation that provided for growth and the congregation responded. The Stewardship Committee asked for an increase in giving and the people of St. Mark's responded generously and gave even more than was asked. As far back as I can remember, this congregation has been like this.

This last year was our first full year living out the new Mission, Vision and Ministry statements that reflect the priorities you individually and as a congregation set for us. Again, this shows what we as a congregation see as important. We are to develop ministries that serve those broken by the circumstances of life and work as advocates for social and institutional change so that society might better reflect the values of the kingdom of God. The many ministries that thrive at St. Mark's are evidence that this mission is alive, well and active.

We are in the midst of a change this spring that will bring our fiscal year to begin on July 1 and end on June 30. This means that we will consider our Learn, Serve, Grow commitment in spring instead of fall. The Council will bring forward new and in some cases expanded priorities at the congregational meeting in May and again ask for a bold budget that will reflect our desire to serve others. In addition, there will be news for the congregation about debt retirement. We are handling our mortgage payments well as part of our budget, however, this is money that could be better used for ministry. The Council is actively working on this and will have a complete plan for you in May.

So, we look forward with gratitude and excitement to the new year. We have much to do as a congregation and we will accomplish much as we look out and serve our neighbors in need.

Church Council Jan–May 2015		Church Council Jun 2015–Jun 2016	
President:	Derek Smith	President:	Bill Klancke
Vice President:	Bill Klancke	Vice President:	Anna Ahrens
Secretary:	Deborah Herforth	Secretary:	Deborah Herforth
Treasurer:	Jerry Foss/Barbara Meyers	Treasurer:	Barbara Meyers
Peace & Justice:	John Avery	Peace & Justice:	John Avery
Children & Youth FF*:	Libby Postovoit	Children & Youth FF*:	Bennett Fors, III
Adult FF*:	Steve Ilyko	Adult FF*:	Steve Ilyko
Stewardship:	Courtney Stringer	Stewardship:	Courtney Stringer
Outreach:	Linda Dieckhoff	Outreach:	Lisa Daniels
Congregational Care:	Diana Busch	Congregational Care:	Barbara Holme
Worship & Music:	Jon Rodin	Worship & Music:	Jon Rodin
Finance	Larry Bitter	Finance	Larry Bitter

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP JAECH

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the Academy Museum in Florence, Italy, you find Michelangelo's incredible statue of David, but in the hallway leading up to David, another statue catches your attention. It is Michelangelo's unfinished statue of St. Matthew. St. Matthew looks as though he is trapped in the rock and trying to escape.

Michelangelo talked about this when someone asked him how he did his work. He said, "I went to the quarry and looked for a block of stone with the stirring of life in it. My task was then to chip away the marble to free the figure within."

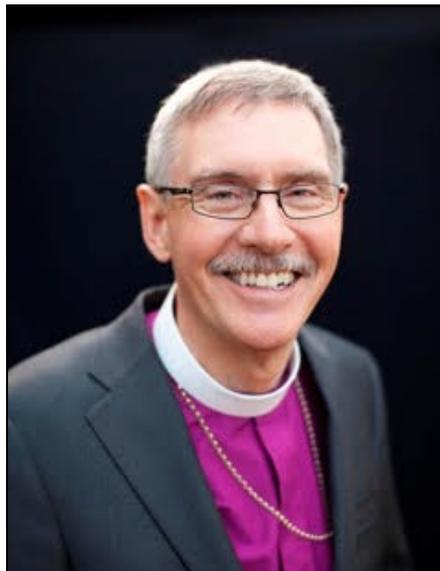
As we celebrate the birth of Christ and also enter into a New Year, we are in a time of new beginnings. Even as God stirred miraculous new life in Mary, so God comes to breathe new life into us and into our world. Yet, as we look around and within us, we realize that creation is still a work in process. In tragic and painful ways, we remain trapped by the stony shells of fear, suspicion, judgment and violence. Families are shattered; children die daily; nations are locked in war. Therefore, through the incarnate Christ, God comes to chip away the stone that entraps us in order to free us to new life.

As Mary and Joseph modeled for us, God also invites us to share in the task of setting creation free. Mary said, "*Let it be with me according to your word.*" In trust, she allowed her own life to be made into something entirely new. In so doing, she became a co-creator with God of a new world, enabling the new Way of grace and peace to be born.

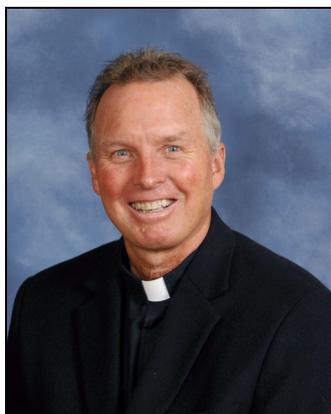
"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I pray that God's gift of new life first come to you in this season of Christ's birth. I further pray that this new life come to all the places in our world where we remain trapped in stone. Through our "Yes" to God, we join Mary in giving birth to a new creation.

Bishop Rick Jaech



Pastor Jan Ruud



“Why is St. Mark’s growing and flourishing?” A visitor from another state asked me that question in early 2016, and it caused me to reflect a little more deeply on what I am experiencing here as a pastor and as a member of the congregation.

First of all, I think we are growing and flourishing because of a shared vision that God has given us of what the church is meant to be. Among my colleagues on staff and the congregational leaders who serve in diverse ways, there is a common desire to be a people and a place for God’s grace, just as we say in our mission statement. By that, I mean that we have a common desire to be an open and affirming community that celebrates the gifts of God in all people and a yearning to share God’s love and grace with the world around us. Throughout 2015, I saw this expressed in countless ways and it makes me happy to be here with all of you.

In addition, I feel that our experience at weekly worship is very formative. We love hearing the Word of God, with all the blessings and challenges that it brings, and we expect that it will have something to say to us every time we gather. Judging by the number of comments I receive about my sermons, I know that this congregation is filled with people who listen intently for something meaningful that will touch their lives, and that is very inspiring. In our worship, we are also deeply touched by music, and that is another reason why our congregation is flourishing. In that part of life together, our cup is running over!

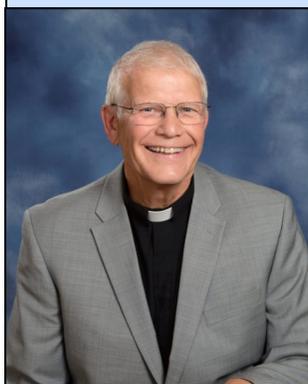
A third thing that comes to mind is our congregation’s commitment to faith formation at every stage of life. With strong leadership, we do this with children and youth and their families and with adults of every age group. That matters! What we learn and discover stimulates growth within us, and the people of St. Mark’s seem to understand that very well.

When I look at the size of our congregation, I know that we would not be growing and thriving if we were not committed to caring for each other. In 2015, I witnessed a renewed focus on this important part of community life, and I am so appreciative of all those who have helped us move in that direction. Thankfully, this commitment to congregational care does not come at the expense of those beyond our circle, which leads me to another important observation. God has given us a spirit of compassion that extends into our neighborhood and into the much larger world around us. As a mentor once said, “If you want a lively congregation, then get involved in the lives of other people in ways that allow you to both give and receive.” This is happening here, and it is changing us every day.

Finally, I think we are growing and flourishing because God has given us a spirit of generosity. As members of the congregation, you not only have unique and remarkable gifts, but you have a desire and willingness to share them with others. You step forward when you are asked to give, and you dream of new ways that we can all share God’s bounty with one another and with the world around us. With the generous gifts of your time, your talent, and your possessions, you filled this past year with signs of God’s gracious love and you enabled us to fulfill the vision for mission that we affirmed together in trust and hope.

I am so thankful to be with you on this journey, and I look forward to another year of grace upon grace.

Pastor Phil Rue



The proverb says it well. *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.* Perhaps you’ve heard it in the older language, *Train up a child in the way (s)he should go, and when (s)he is old, (s)he will not depart from it.* Either way it reminds us how what becomes a part of us in our youth is able to carry us through into older age.

Among our friends and members I am privileged to visit are those who eagerly receive again words and rites that they have known from their youth. Very often there is a voice that accompanies my reading of a scripture lesson, or the words of institution during the Eucharist. These promises and proclamations received in younger days freely flow from the hearts and lips of those whose shorter term memories are sometimes challenged, but who are still held and comforted by these life-giving treasures first received years before. Such saints in our midst remind us how

Pastor Rebecca Shjerven

This past year, 2015, included all of the familiar activities and rhythms that I so appreciate about Christian community. We shared our life together in Christ as we worshipped and studied and served, as we shared meals and made plans for our mission and ministry. Like family life, congregational life is both ever-changing and always-new. Predictable patterns and practices open new growth, new possibilities. I saw evidence of this in all of the program areas of ministry with which I work: Adult Faith Formation, Children, Youth and Family Faith Formation, St. Mark's Preschool, Peace and Justice Ministries (see individual program reports). In each of these ministry areas, new and seasoned leaders shepherded existing programs and added new opportunities. I am looking forward to 2016, when Congregational Care ministries will also be part of my scope of care and support.



This past year, for me, also included a break in familiar rhythm and activity, as I took a 3-month sabbatical, generously provided by you, the congregation. I could not have predicted how enriching and beneficial this time would be. It is a rare thing to have time to study and engage material deeply, without needing to immediately transform it into a meaningful sermon or class. Seeds that were planted during sabbatical, both literally and metaphorically, continue to grow and yield fruit. Sabbatical was also a time to personally grow in faith, as I set aside my “professional Christian” role, and took my place in the pews with everyone else. It is a perspective I continue to cherish.

As we begin this new year, I give thanks for our life together as the Body of Christ in this place. I give thanks for the Spirit of God who continues to gather, nourish and send us as messengers of divine goodness and grace.

important, life-giving and life-sustaining is the work of a congregation for people from birth through the end of life.

Many other reports in this booklet celebrate the faith formation and nurturing that happens here. My position represents that part of our congregation that embraces the gifts of our members and friends when the circumstances of life no longer allows them to worship, be nurtured, and serve as before. I get to go where they live and bring the life and gifts of faith of the congregation—and receive the gifts of their stories of faith and memories laced with the wisdom of their experiences. A typical month includes between 25 to 30 such calls.

Working alongside me is a Visitation Team that meets once a month to help ensure that all those needing contact are remembered by the ministry of the congregation. And your phone calls and visits are very special to those who no longer can get out personally, and are encouraged. And please let me or our church office know when you may be aware of someone who may appreciate a call or visit.

Our Mission, Vision, and Ministry

Our Mission:

We are a people and a place for God's grace, claimed and called by Jesus Christ to worship, witness, learn, serve, and reach out with words and deeds of love.

Our Vision:

- ◆ St. Mark's is a place in which every person is spiritually nourished.
- ◆ St. Mark's is a congregation in which all persons are active in our mission.
- ◆ St. Mark's is a church that is connected to the larger, more diverse human community in which we both offer and receive gifts.

Our Ministry:

We provide a place for God's grace.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to steward the gift of our facility through hands-on care and financial support.*
- ◆ *We nurture a congregational culture of hospitality, creating gracious space for people to grow in relationship with God and with one another.*
- ◆ *We share our facilities with the broader community, in fitting with our mission.*

We invite all people to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fullness of God's grace through worship where we are gathered, nourished and sent to be Christ's body in the world.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to develop a practice of weekly worship and daily prayer.*
- ◆ *We provide engaging, renewing worship for all generations, connected to opportunities for hospitality and fellowship.*
- ◆ *We extend hospitality to all who come to worship, with particular attention given to those who are not members of our congregation.*

We share God's story and our stories to witness to God's love.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to reflect on ways in which faith is central to his/her life.*
- ◆ *We nurture a congregational culture of holy listening and storytelling.*
- ◆ *We share our stories of faith in the broader community, and listen to the diverse stories of those outside the walls of our church.*

We learn by providing opportunities for all generations to explore their diverse stories in light of God's story in order to answer Christ's call.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to be intentional about his/her continued formation in the Christian faith.*
- ◆ *We nurture a congregational culture that honors and enriches the faith formation of children, youth and adults through cross-generational experiences.*
- ◆ *We learn from the skills and stories of those in the broader community, and provide opportunities for congregation and community to learn together*

We serve God by generously giving our time, talent, treasure and by sharing all the resources God has given us.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to prayerfully consider how he/she will serve God by sharing his/her gifts.*
- ◆ *We nurture a congregational culture of generosity and humble service.*
- ◆ *We care for our broader community and the world God made by living out our baptismal calling in all aspects of our daily life.*

We reach out to one another with words and deeds of love.

- ◆ *We encourage each person to extend care to those in need, and to receive care during time of need.*
- ◆ *We nurture a congregational culture of loving care by providing both formal and informal opportunities to connect to each other in times of sorrow and in times of celebration.*
- ◆ *We commit to being a public presence in our community in order to share the love and justice of God with all people.*





In our desire to answer Christ's call, St. Mark's Lutheran Church by The Narrows remains committed to ministry in the areas of Peace and Justice, Outreach, Congregational Care, Worship and Music, Stewardship, Faith Formation with Children and Youth, and Faith Formation with Adults. Throughout 2015, each of these ministry areas flourished, thanks to the generous sharing of time, talent, and treasure by many people! The next several pages contain updates from each ministry area.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

As a team, the Adult Faith Formation Standing Committee strives to facilitate a variety of faith formation opportunities ranging from fellowship to formal studies. Faith formation offerings are facilitated by a combination of pastors and congregation members. If you are interested in facilitating a class or study, please contact Pastor Shjerven or Mary Jo Larsen. We look to congregation member interests and passions when planning series. If you have a passion for a particular formation activity or group, please contact us for ideas on moving forward.

We launched many new faith formation opportunities in 2015. In February, 32 women participated in our first annual Women's Retreat. A monthly Theology on Tap and quarterly house gatherings were offered to young adults with a great turnout throughout the year. These activities were started in response to the 2014 strategic planning survey and significant increase in the 22-35 age demographic. AFF also sponsored 5 small groups during the season of Lent in which people shared a meal, conversation and prayer. We are encouraged by the new and continuing Women's Circle Bible Study groups that have formed and will offer support and resource as needed.

For a look at the broad range of ongoing Adult Faith Formation offerings, please pick up a brochure on the Welcome Table in the narthex. We look forward to your participation in 2016!

Mary Jo Larsen, Chairperson, Adult Faith Formation

PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Peace and Justice Ministry Team has been privileged to provide leadership for this very generous congregation through an increasing number of ministries. As a congregation, this is part of what we were doing...

Globally: 1) Sewing quilts and donating supplies for Lutheran World Relief personal, baby care, and school kits that reach people in areas of great need, like Syria. 2) Sending mission teams to build homes Mexico and Nicaragua as well as supporting a woman's shelter in Nepal. 3) Supporting a synod team including two congregational members to travel to Namibia to support and report on our efforts to partner with churches and schools there. 4) Selling fair-trade products, on the first Sunday of every month and at the Holiday Bazaar, to provide a sustainable wage and income to people across the globe.

Nationally: Advocating on hunger issues through Bread for the World and the lobbying efforts of the ELCA.

Locally: 1) Providing lunches through the DeLong backpack program and providing companionship through DeLong's Lunch Buddy program. 2) Tutoring at the Peace Community Center in Tacoma's Hilltop. 3) Providing shelter and food in partnership with the Family Housing Network for two weeks out of every year and additional support when families are housed at the Family Housing Network's Day Center. 4) Sponsoring Lutheran worship services four Sundays a year, Family Renewal Retreats two Saturdays a year and a 6-week recovery class for incarcerated mothers at the Washington Correction Center for Women ("Purdy") through Empowering Life as well as donating backpacks with school supplies for mothers at Mission Creek Correction Center for Women (Belfair) to give to their kids at their summer family event.

Financially: 1) Contributing directly to many of the ministries detailed here. Members often support these ministries individually as well as through our church. 2) Contributing 10% of all congregational revenue to the General Fund Benevolence designation. For 2015, this amounted to \$79,823.00 and went to support 32 ministries to be Christ hands in a needy world. 3) Collecting additional funds weekly in the hunger basket (\$8,406.00 for 2015) and distributing it to global and local ministries to alleviate the pain of going hungry.

OUTREACH MINISTRY

The vision for outreach ministry continues to be a stronger connection with our immediate neighborhood. In 2015, we got more specific about how we define our geographic "parish", and we joined other Faith Formation teams in a commitment to explore our environs with greater attention given to demographics, distinctive features, institutions, religious communities, schools, businesses, etc.

Looking ahead, we still want to organize and host an annual event on "National Night Out" for all those who live nearby. This could be done in our church parking lot and we could invite collaboration from many other people and agencies that have a similar interest in strengthening community ties.

As the new year begins, we are looking for people at St. Mark's who would like to plan this fun event with us.

STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Ministry Team began the year with an invitation to the congregation to reconsider 2015 Plans for Giving in order to fund the ministry that God was calling us to deliver. At the semi-annual meeting in January 2015 and in letters that followed, we explained the case for a fully funded mission and asked the congregation to increase our financial commitments by about \$60,000 above what had been committed so that all of the ministry being planned for 2015 could be accomplished. Those attending the meeting then approved the annual operating budget and endorsed the concept of balancing the budget at the beginning of the fiscal year rather than making appeals at the end of the fiscal year. The response to the special appeal was timely and robust. Our giving throughout 2015 has been consistent and faithful, so much so that a potential \$60,000 deficit became a \$35,000 surplus by December. Thanks be to God for the generosity of the people of St. Mark's.

A major goal for 2015 was to make stewardship a year-round conversation about generosity. Stewardship messages were included in quarterly statements and the Bridge contained frequent stewardship messages. To support the goal of year-round stewardship, we proposed and implemented an expanded approach to online giving. With valuable assistance from the office staff, our members have new options for financial support. Another way we are supporting year-round stewardship is to link stewardship education to the calendar and the church year. In November, we encouraged members to share stories of gratitude. For Lent 2016, we are collaborating with Adult Faith Formation and the pastors to encourage growth in faith, friendship and generosity. Finally, we are working closely with the Finance Committee to support the shift in fiscal year to July 1.

In 2016 we will continue to reinforce the message that the purpose of stewardship ministry at St. Mark's is "to be a people and a place for God's grace who freely and generously share their God-given gifts of time, talents and resources in love and in gratitude." We will celebrate the understanding that we are called as a community to worship, learn, serve and reach out in words and deeds of love because we are stewards of the blessings we have received.

Jim Pence and Courtney Stringer for the Stewardship Ministry Team

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

The Congregational Care Committee seeks ways to develop and enhance a sense of belonging in our congregation and to reach out to all those who are not with us on a regular basis. Because our congregation is constantly changing and growing, new ways of mutual care for one another needs to be continually nurtured. One of the ongoing tasks of the committee is to work with the Pastors to identify people who have been absent from worship and to send personal notes to them. Members also send regular cards to those who are sick, people who are going through difficult times and people who are celebrating special birthdays, anniversaries and other joyous events.

Name Tag Sunday, the first of the month, is a way to encourage people to meet and greet one another and to be more intentional in reaching out to one another on Sunday mornings.

An emerging ministry has been to partner with Lutheran Community Services in piloting the Connect and Care TimeBank. A TimeBank is a time exchange system that strengthens our church community by building relations through the sharing of time, talents, skills and care activities. To date almost 50 people have received training and have begun to use the TimeBank. Over the next few months the committee will work with Lutheran Community Services to evaluate this year of implementation and to seek ways to improve participation.

The Committee has recently focused on having a better understanding of the varied activities that fall under the purview of congregational care. These activities include Visitation, Stephen Ministry, Parish Nurse Ministry, Women of St. Marks, Gay Straight Alliance, Baptismal Quilts, Prayer Shawl Ministry and Cooks Club to name a few. As a result of this focus we have requested leadership training money for the Stephen Ministries.

The Committee is beginning another new project this year. We will look into using a web-based program to formalize and expand providing meals to members who have recently been ill or hospitalized.

The Committee is appreciative of an expanding membership which has brought new ideas for service.

WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S

2015 brought together the Women of St. Mark's to do the work of Jesus in our hearts, in our Church, and in our community.

The year began with our Spring Tea attended by over 100 women. Rebecca Anderson, pattern designer and teacher, brought her collection of sixty plus aprons from 120 years of American history complete with models from St. Mark's. The men of St. Mark's served tea and its accompaniments of scones, sandwiches, and desserts.

We held craft meetings monthly led by Celesta Smith. We created many items to be sold at our annual Bazaar.

In November we held our annual Bazaar. Over 100 members participated, and we raised almost \$12,000, 50% of which went out of house.

Our year concluded with an Advent Brunch in December led by Celesta Smith. The Bells of St. Mark's entertained us with festive music that fit the theme of "Ring in the Joy." Char Leone shared interesting information about Church bells and bells at Christmas. A traditional Scandinavian breakfast nourished everyone.

The participation and attendance of the Women of St. Mark's has been encouraging. We look forward to many activities during the year ahead.

CHILDREN & YOUTH FAITH FORMATION

The Children and Youth Faith Formation Committee engages in the formation of disciples by providing opportunities for children, youth and their families to be nurtured by God's word and to engage in activities and worship that will encourage Christian growth. Team Members: Char Leone (Children's Faith Formation); Bennett Fors, Jr (Council Rep.); Mary Jo Larsen (Adult Faith Formation Rep.); Laura Oellerich (Preschool until June 2015) Anne Zimmerman (Preschool); Linda Wimberley (Parent Rep); Carl Steingrebe (Confirmation); Julie Milasich (Parent Rep.); George Meers (Parent Rep.) Ingelaurie Lisher (Director of Youth and Family Ministry); and Pastor Rebecca Shjerven (Pastoral Staff).

Highlights of 2015 include:

- ◆ A Milestone event was added to the schedule to include—the Lord's Prayer for students in 1st grade.
- ◆ 16 youth and 5 adults headed to the Rocky Boy Reservation for our 8th trip.
- ◆ 15 youth and 4 adults went to Detroit to attend the ELCA Youth Gathering.
- ◆ Over 100 children 4yrs to 5th grade and many adult and youth volunteers attended VBS Aug. 3-7. Thanks to Katie Jones and Erika Anderson for directing and leading the program this year.
- ◆ 4 youth grades 5-7th grade attended summer camp at Lutherhaven in Coeur d'Alene ID.
- ◆ 10 youth Affirmed their Baptisms on October 25th, with a brunch held on Oct. 24th.
- ◆ In June we celebrated with 12 High School Seniors as they received their graduation quilts and marked this milestone in their life.
- ◆ Holy Moly, under the leadership of Char Leone and the Children's music programs with direction from Cooper Sherry, continues to serve elementary age children on Wednesday nights.
- ◆ Thanks to Amy Wigstrom, Cooper Sherry and the Praise Band under the direction of Darren Kerbs for directing the K-5th grade Christmas program and to Elizabeth Hirschl, Diane Busch and Char Leone for leading the preschool Sunday school children in theirs.
- ◆ The Steingrebe's, Wascher's, Reynolds' and Smith's continue to support the youth by hosting the Epiphany Event and Music on the Lawn fundraisers, which were well attended and the additional support for the youth and children's programs is greatly appreciated.
- ◆ Youth Group and Youth Choir for grades 6-12th meets on Thursday evenings throughout the school year.
- ◆ Fall 2015 we welcomed Anne Zimmerman, Julie Milasich and George Meers to our team.

2016 will continue to provide many opportunities for children and youth to be formed in faith: This year under the theme of Let All Creation Praise—our youth grades 4-12th will have the opportunity to head to Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp July 23-30th.

STEPHEN MINISTERS

On Sunday, August 16, 2015, three new Stephen Ministers were commissioned at St. Mark's: Lori Clark, Ginny Conley, and Ronda Shelton. They join the currently active Stephen Ministers, Linda Durant, Jerry Foss, Char Leone and Judy Rucker. There are many other trained and commissioned Stephen Ministers at St. Mark's who use their Stephen Minister skills to listen to and care for members of our congregation and our community.

Sarah Callow, Stephen Leader

WORSHIP & MUSIC MINISTRY

Worship continues to be the center of our life together at St. Mark's, and we are thankful for all those who lead and serve in ways that make it meaningful for all of us. In addition to the pastors and music leaders, we are grateful for singers and instrumentalists, lectors, ushers, communion assistants, altar guild servers, communion bread bakers, and greeters.

In 2015, we added some new worship experiences and continued to be creative with the existing ones on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. One of the new experiences was Morning Prayer (Matins) during the season of Lent. We used a lovely musical setting written by Marty Haugen and we gathered in the chancel area of our sanctuary on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In September, we moved our Sunday morning worship service to the gymnasium of DeLong Elementary School, where we celebrated "God's Work, Our Hands Sunday." Following worship, we gathered on the playground for a potluck picnic and then did several clean-up projects in nearby DeLong Park. The response was very positive, and we look forward to continuing this tradition at a new location in 2016.

At our regular Sunday morning worship services, we added more testimonies from congregational members at monthly "Mission Moments", we made use of short videos highlighting service and gratitude at St. Mark's, we blessed animals on the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, we turned the focus to Thanksgiving on the last Sunday of the church year, we included the little children's Christmas program in our 11:00 worship service, and we had a special service of carols after Christmas where worshippers picked many of the songs we sang together.

The change in communion bread in the fall of 2015 was the subject of much conversation among worshippers. The bakery that supplied our Challah bread went out of business, and we decided that we liked the idea of baking the bread ourselves each week. We chose a recipe that is used in many Lutheran congregations around the country, and we invited worshippers to bake the bread at home and then bring it to church for us to share at the Lord's table. We will continue to ask worshippers to bake the communion bread in 2016, but it will all be done in our church kitchen at monthly gatherings of bakers.

PARISH NURSES

The Parish Nurse Ministry promotes health and wholeness in body, mind and spirit for not only congregational members and also to neighbors and friends. Examples of activities include individual home visits, hospital or nursing facility visits as well being available on Wednesday Church night.

Parish Nurses, along with six volunteer nurses, take blood pressure measurements on the last Sunday of the month. During these times, and via email or phone, they are available to answer questions and provide health information and other health related resources.

Parish Nurses contribute articles on a variety of health topics to the Bridge or present information at Adult Forum. The Parish Nurse page of smlutheran.org has additional information.

It is an honor to provide a presence as faith community nurses. At this time there are two faith community nurses who maintain their registered nurse licenses. We are available for members to contact us regarding health concerns or questions. We encourage members to let us know if there are ways in which we can support and assist.

Patty Reinkensmeyer, RN and Helen Bache, RN; Faith Community Nurses

REPORTS FROM PROGRAM DIRECTORS



Celebration Ensemble (8:30 Worship)

Celebration Ensemble continues its ministry of living into the role of “liturgical hosts” through music. The choir seeks to enhance the spirit of worship and the song of the congregation by means of diverse music from traditions around the world. As such, emphasis remains on eclectic music from many countries. In 2015 this group grew substantially, ending the year with an active roster of 25 members.

Canticle Choir (11:00 Worship)

The Canticle Choir has developed into a robust, yet small choir of talented singers that provides traditional SATB anthems and psalms for the 11:00 worship service.

There are 12-15 members at a typical rehearsal, and the group has come to be made up primarily of worshippers native to the late service. The group consists of many professionally trained singers and accomplished musicians, compensating for its small membership with vocal expertise and the ability to learn challenging music very quickly.

St. Mark’s Chorale

St. Mark’s Chorale was begun in the last decade in an effort to provide an opportunity for members to participate in “big choir” anthems which our 3-service structure normally makes difficult to achieve. In this choir, attendees of all three services are encouraged to participate once a month in a choir that welcomes people of all ages and all levels of talent and experience regardless of which service they might normally attend. The Jubilation Choir is a part of this group, resulting in an inherently multi-generational core for the choir. The choir strives to provide one anthem each month to sing at the 11:00 service.

Wednesday Night Children’s Choirs

Between Jubilation Choir (grades 3-5,) Joyful Noise Choir (grades K-2,) and Little Angels Choir (ages 3+) there are around 30 children who have been involved with the choir programs at St. Marks. Regular attendance tends to be 10-12 for Jubilation, 6-9 for Joyful Noise, and 5-7 for Little Angels, with some kids who we only see once in a while filling out the roster the rest of the time. The curriculum grows from the bottom up, focusing on music reading, choral technique, community and team building, and God’s love for and through all members. The older choir is involved semi-regularly with singing in worship, and all ages had the chance to be a part of our Christmas Musicals in December and our Easter Vigil last Spring.

Youth Choir

2015 ushered in the newly formed Youth Choir (grades 6-12) which has had around 20 active members in most months. Early on, the choir proved capable of singing 4-part a cappella music, and sang for worship numerous times throughout the year. In addition, they were involved in the Easter Vigil, and the Easter Choir, and individual members helped lead the 4:00 worship service on Christmas Eve. This group keeps growing, and teenagers are great singers, if they ever get the chance to find out what they can do. Help get them into this group, parents and friends!

Bell Choir Ministries

The Bells of St. Marks have enjoyed a year blessed by the joyful and expert direction of Karen Moats, who began her ministry in the Fall of 2014 with this group. Anthems have been included at all three services in most months, as well as at events such as the Women’s Brunch. During Holy Week, and at all three Christmas Eve services, the Bell Choir was a vital and beautiful part of the music ministry. New members are always sought after, so please contact Karen Moats if you have any interest in ringing.

Cooper Sherry, Director of Music Ministry

REPORTS FROM PROGRAM DIRECTORS



Praise Team

The Praise Team continues to enjoy its weekly role as musicians and worship leaders at the 9:45am service on Sunday mornings. The group is richly blessed with talented vocalists and instrumentalists as we rotate these musicians over an eight-week schedule. I personally enjoy the collaborative creativity as we blend styles of contemporary Christian music, sacred hymns, gospel and global selections, and how we are able to customize and tailor this music as much as possible.

As I reflect on my tenure at St Mark's, I'm fortunate to experience who we are to each other as individuals, the talents we are able to share with each other and other congregants, our continued journey to improve and grow as musicians, and what lies ahead for us as worship leaders. If anyone who attends our service has comments or suggestions for me - I'd love to hear!

Darren Kerbs, Director of Music for Contemporary Worship



In looking back over 2015 I believe I truly embraced the *Sent* portion of our *Gathered, Nourished and Sent* theme. Over the year I was sent to Detroit MI, twice; once for a pre-gathering conference and the second as a leader at the tri-annual ELCA Youth Gathering. There youth and adults from our congregation joined 30,000 other Lutherans from around the United States. I was sent to Montana for our 8th trip to serve on the Rocky Boy Reservation. I was sent to Lutherhaven in Idaho with 4 youth to experience my 1st time at Camp and I was sent to Germany as I explored the many towns that framed Martin Luther's call to ministry

and faith formation.

Through all these trips and adventures I felt the support and prayers of this congregation. In addition to traveling this summer I had the opportunity to preach a couple of times while Pastor Shjerven was on sabbatical, as well as support and work alongside the many volunteers who helped with Vacation Bible School and Music on the Lawn.

2016 will see some changes to our summer schedule with the combination of one trip to Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in July—under the theme *Let All Creation Praise* along with many more monthly and quarterly activities for children, youth and families.

In Christ, Ingelaurie A. Lisher, AiM

ST. MARK'S PRESCHOOL

Anne Zimmerman
Preschool Director



Budget Report 2015

Beginning Balance (1/1/15) \$ 13,649.42

Income 2015

Donations/misc	1,880.04
Fundraising income	2,810.00
Registration Fees	2,680.00
<u>Tuition</u>	<u>62,175.50</u>
Total Income	\$69,545.54

Expenses 2015

Advertising & ELEA	1,165.00
Curriculum/class supplies	5,103.09
Donation to St. Mark's	3,600.00
Field Trips	215.50
Fundraising Expenses	1,145.81
Furnishings	1,206.42
Family Events	1,205.58
Maintenance/Improvements	1,814.03
Office Supplies	532.46
Payroll & Taxes	55,698.89
Pet Care	122.54
Staff training/education	659.44
<u>Teacher Appreciation</u>	<u>452.68</u>
Total Expenses	\$72,921.44

Grand total -(\$3,375.90)

Ending Balance (12/31/15) \$ 10,273.52

I was blessed with the opportunity to become the Director of St. Mark's Preschool this past summer. The previous director, Laura Oellerich, and I worked together to ensure a smooth transition; so far, this school year is off to a great start! We currently have 40 students enrolled in classes for ages 2.5 years to age 6. Thirty-five percent of our preschool students are part of St. Mark's congregation and the other 65% are from our surrounding communities, including Gig Harbor, Tacoma, University Place, and Midland.

This past summer, we made a few updates to our outside play area, painted the interior walls of the classrooms, and bought some new furniture for our students to enjoy. We are hoping to make some technological additions this coming year!

This year, we have been working from two new curriculums that focus on letter sounds and social skills. Our kids get a great mix of art time, play time, and learning time. The pastors of St. Mark's lead chapel in the sanctuary for our older kids each Wednesday. We have been making occasional visits to the Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community as well.

We are so excited for the remainder of the school year and for all of the creativity, curiosity, and cooperation that takes place each day! Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve as the director of this special children's program!

ST. MARK'S PRESCHOOL

*Learning, growing, and sharing
in God's love is at the heart of
St. Mark's preschool philosophy.*



Pastoral Acts in 2015

Baptisms

Miriam Helen Wolbrecht
Armani Leo Ramirez
Quincy Sophia O'Donnell
Abegale Lyn McDermott
Stephanie Rene Cantrall
Iselin Jean Sonstegard
Naomi Alina Milasich
Caden John Ochoa
Regina Wren Eva Shimkus
Kelsey Ann Pero
Jordan Adarius Stewart
Jaylen Zephaniah Stewart
Augustus Doyle Elkins
Cole Arthur Williams
Beckett Keith Williams
Teena Minnis
James Fulton Standish
Andrew Watson Standish
Riley Messi McCoy Haller

Weddings

Stephanie R. Cantrall/Brittany L. Currey

Deaths

Kathryn Lueken
William Daniel Payne
Maizie Orth
Ivan Larson
Donald Gould Thomas
Joseph J. Zelazny, Jr.
Thelma Marie Loen
Mirian Graves
E. Silas Torvend
David Charles Roberts
Evangeline Billingsley
Bernice Schjoll Boe
Barbara Ehrenheim
Virginia Armstrong
Franklin Hruza
Eleanor Larson
*Frank Charles Karwoski
*Thelma Laird

*non-member

GENERAL FUND

Combined General and Mortgage Funds Report

Combined income in the General & Mortgage funds of \$1,007,461 for 2015 exceeded budget by \$35,109. Related expenses totaled \$970,983, or \$868 less than budgeted - basically right on target for the year. The net effect was an excess of income over expenses of \$36,478 for the year.

- ◆ While benevolences exceeded projections because of strong actual income numbers, ministry teams were able to keep their expenses below budget, for net spending of \$5,731 below budget.
- ◆ Office and administrative expenses were kept below budget, while facility-related expenses came in above, for a net effect of ending the year \$350 below budget (basically flat). The facilities overrun was due in large part to water damage that occurred in the lower music wing during heavy rain.
- ◆ Mortgage expenses are predictable and came in on budget at ~\$16,000 per month.
- ◆ Finally, staff expenses were \$4,704 above budget for the year. This was primarily due to spending on certain medical benefits that were inadvertently omitted during budget planning.

In summary, 2015 was a strong financial year for St. Mark's because of generosity from those who donate and because of strong fiscal responsibility across expenses. Thank you.

St. Mark's Total Income and Expense - General and Mortgage Funds Combined January thru December 2015 Actual vs. Budget

	Jan-Dec Actual	Jan-Dec Budget	Var. from Budget
Income:			
Donations	\$999,170	\$965,752	\$33,418
Other Income	8,291	6,600	1,691
Total Income	\$1,007,461	\$972,352	\$35,109
Expense:			
Ministry/Benevolence	\$109,194	\$114,925	(\$5,731)
Facilities/Admin	114,825	115,175	(350)
Mortgage	191,793	191,284	509
Staff	555,171	550,467	4,704
Total Expense	\$970,983	\$971,851	(\$868)
Income vs. Expense	\$36,478	\$501	\$35,977

Mortgage Details:

Jan-Dec Payments		Balance at 12/31/15
Interest	Principal	
\$108,321	\$83,472	\$2,361,673

THE JOY OF GIVING

As part of our commitment to Christian stewardship, St. Mark's joyfully gives 10% of our General Fund offering income to support dozens of mission partners at home and around the world. For 2015, this General Fund benevolence giving totaled \$79,823 – an increase of more than 10% over 2014.

In addition, offerings to the Hunger Basket and various fundraisers throughout the year also provide significant support to other worthy causes.

Mission partners for 2015 General and Hunger Basket benevolence included: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Pacific Lutheran University, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Lutheran Community Services, ELCA World Hunger Fund, Living Stones Congregation at the Shelton Prison, Lutheran World Relief, DeLong Food Backpack Program, 1,000 Friends in Mission, Peace Community Center, Salishan Mission, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community, Associated Ministries of Pierce County, Bread for the World, Habitat for Humanity, Emergency Food Network, L'Arche Community, Tacoma Community House, Holden Village, Tacoma Rescue Mission, Lutheran Border Concerns, Rocky Boy Mission, Nativity House, China Connect, Empowering Life, Phoenix Housing, Greater Tacoma Peace Prize, WPPC in Nepal, and ELC in Namibia.

Thanks to your generosity, St. Mark's continues to reach out far beyond the walls of our congregation to help those in need. That's indeed something to celebrate!



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Our Year in Pictures







St. Mark's Lutheran Church by The Narrows

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Tacoma, WA 98406

253.752.4966

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