



8300 C Ave. NE
Marion, IA 52302

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Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Address Service Requested

Church office hours:

Monday - Thursday: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Friday: 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Phone: 319-447-0100
Text Alerts: Text **STMARKSCR** to **94-000**
stmarkscr.org

Sunday Worship:

Livestream begins 2021 at stmarkscr.online.church
8:30 AM | Traditional: the majesty of liturgy,
pipe organ, & choral music

10:30 AM | Contemporary: joyful contemporary
worship in a casual setting

In-Person Schedule Beginning 12/6/2020

8:30 and 10:00 AM | Traditional: the majesty of liturgy,
pipe organ, & choral music

10:30 AM | Contemporary: joyful contemporary
worship in a casual setting



The Living Story

A Christmas gift to our community

stmarkscr.org/livingstory

DECEMBER 17-19 AT ST. MARK'S FROM 5:00-6:30 PM EACH NIGHT

WHAT IS THE LIVING STORY

At the beginning of August, St. Mark's staff began discussing what Christmas could look like this year. We had our first Christmas event planning meeting set for August 11th. Anyone remember what happened August 10th? That's right, a natural disaster!

The Living Story is a live nativity and unique Christmas event where our community can drive through our parking lot and experience all the wonder and celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, without exiting their vehicle.

Our first planning meeting was essentially pushed back a month to September and we've been planning, strategizing, and modifying ever since! We're proud to present "The Living Story" - a Christmas gift for our community in December.

Our planning team is working to making The Living Story as COVID friendly as possible! Watch for updates on social media and at stmarkscr.org/livingstory

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We'll need your help to make this possible! We hope you can help us by volunteering for a shift (or two) at The Living Story. Watch our Volunteer Needs video and sign up for a shift at stmarkscr.org/livingstory



- CAST MEMBERS** standing in a nativity scene - no lines to memorize!
- HOSPITALITY** greeting vehicles, directing traffic
- OPERATIONS** checking in volunteers

JOIN US
December 17-19
5:00-6:30 PM

CHURCH COUNCIL



BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

At the October 2020 Council meeting, the church council voted on amendments to the bylaws of our congregation. The second vote (to approve) these amendments will be taken at the next Council meeting on Tuesday, November 24.

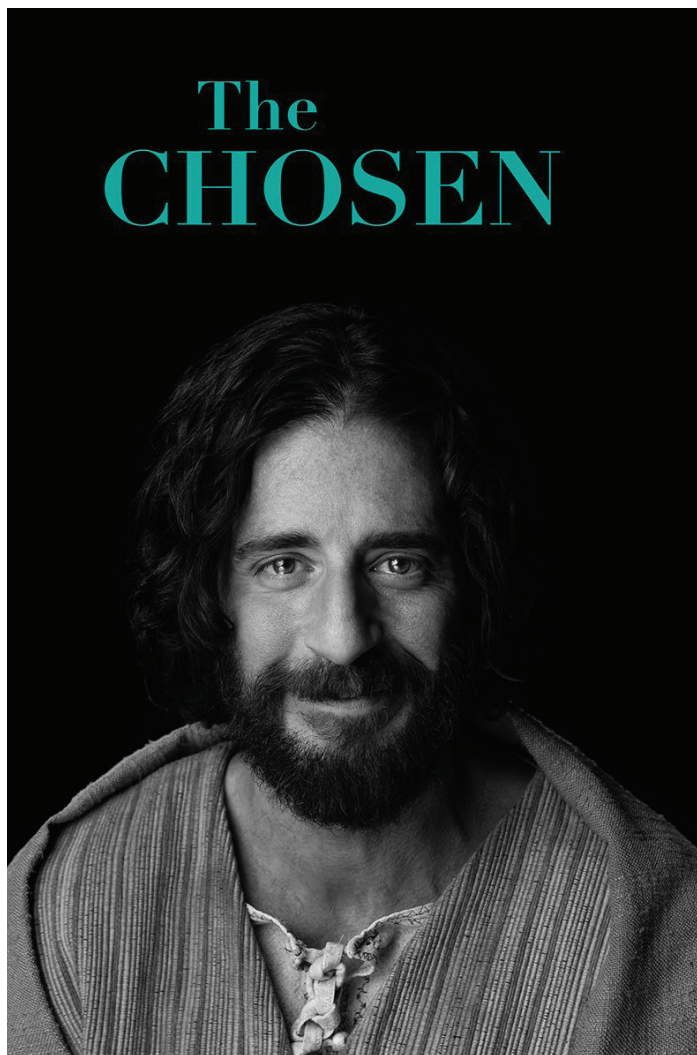
The proposals are available in digital format to review. Please contact Pam Schulz, our Executive Director, to view the proposals or ask questions.

There's a TV series worth watching right now. Actually, it's not really a TV series as much as it is a YouTube series and the largest crowd-funded film or TV project in history. It's **The Chosen** and here's the description from its webpage (thechosen.tv):

"The Chosen is the first-ever-multi-season TV show about the life of Jesus. Created outside of the Hollywood system, The Chosen allows us to see Him through the eyes of those who knew Him. No matter where you are at in your journey with Jesus Christ, this TV show is for you."

Let me tell you why I'm impressed. I've seen a lot of Christian films that do a nice job delivering a moral story or a creative re-telling of someone's faith journey, but with The Chosen I am drawn to something more than just a good story or direct appeal to faith. I am drawn to look at my own life through the lives of those impacted by Jesus. Without directly focusing on the life of Jesus, but instead focusing on the lives of those around Him, it gives us a glimpse of the staggering impact Jesus truly made on characters we know from the Gospels.

I appreciate how it depicts the religious issues of Jesus' day. So often it's easy to miss the impact of Jesus' message and miracles in the Gospels because we are generally unacquainted with the culture and religious climate of the time. But with The Chosen, the plot line intertwines some of those public biases and brings them to a climax that's hard to miss when Jesus arrives on the scene. A prime example of this is Nicodemus who we know cursorily from the Gospel of John. He is mentioned only five times in scripture, but through creative storytelling in The Chosen his conflicted journey from religious questioning to faith in Jesus helps us understand our own spiritual issues and hopefully inspires us to see Jesus the way Nicodemus did.



A unique aspect of The Chosen is that it is a project funded solely through donations. You can watch all of season one for free, but they are currently raising funds for season two. You can support season two by either "paying it forward" or purchasing merchandise from their online store.

There's rich scriptural and theological content in The Chosen. I'd love to hear from you if you've watched any of the episodes! E-mail me at pennings@faith-life.org and tell me what you think.

The Chosen gets two thumbs up from me!

COMMITMENT CARDS

Check your mailbox - we've mailed you a commitment card! Please prayerfully consider how you can financially support St. Mark's next year. Return your completed commitment card to the front office at St. Mark's or go online to stmarkscr.org/commitment to make your commitment by December 15th.

Our ministries depend on your commitment, so thank you in advance for your generosity.



WELCOME PAM KORANDA!

Meet Pam, our new part-time Financial Assistant! Pam and her husband Mark moved to Marion for their retirement to be closer to their two sons/daughters-in-law and five grandkids (ages 6-13)! Pam and her husband enjoy walking their dogs, biking, and going to their grandkids' sports activities.

Pam previously worked in the Sun Prairie, WI school system and then served as the Financial Secretary at a church in Atlantic, IA.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



December

- 12/6: WELCOME TO ST. MARK'S CLASS**
Looking to take the next step with St. Mark's? Please join us for the opportunity to learn more about our church, missions, values, and how to connect. A box lunch will be included.
- 12/17-12/19: THE LIVING STORY**
Join us for a COVID-friendly drive-through nativity experience. We can't wait to share the joy of Christmas with our community!
- 12/23 & 12/24: CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES**
Join us for Christmas carols, Scripture readings, and of course, ending the night singing of "Silent Night."

January

- 1/10: ALPHA COURSE BEGINS AT 11:00 AM**
Got questions? Try **Alpha**. Alpha is an opportunity to ask questions and explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting. Our next 12-week session will begin on Sunday, January 10 with both in-person and online meeting options.
- 1/31: ANNUAL CELEBRATION**
That's right - it's a celebration of all things St. Mark's! Join us for an all-congregational get-together to review how God worked in 2020 and prepare our focus for 2021.

FAMILY MINISTRY UPDATE

Alice Murray, Director of Family Ministry



We are so proud of our Middle Schoolers who participated in their **First Communion on November 15**. It was a first for us too - virtually! It wasn't what we planned for, but it was beautiful and impactful by the grace of God! Thank you to our students, parents, staff, and volunteers who came together to make this a special experience for our 5th and 6th graders.

72 people tuned in to our virtual First Communion on Zoom!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MINISTRIES

This fall we began a hybrid method for our Wednesday night activities for our students (grades 1-8). We have both in-person and virtual options to help engage students (and parents). In mid-November we did decide to go totally virtual for awhile, while our church helps slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

We have loved using **RightNow Media** as a way to connect with our families and provide devotions and resources on weeks that our students aren't meeting.

I am so proud of our Family Ministry staff and volunteers for pouring into our students - whether gathering in-person or online!

57

volunteers sharing the love of Jesus and discipling students in Family Ministry.

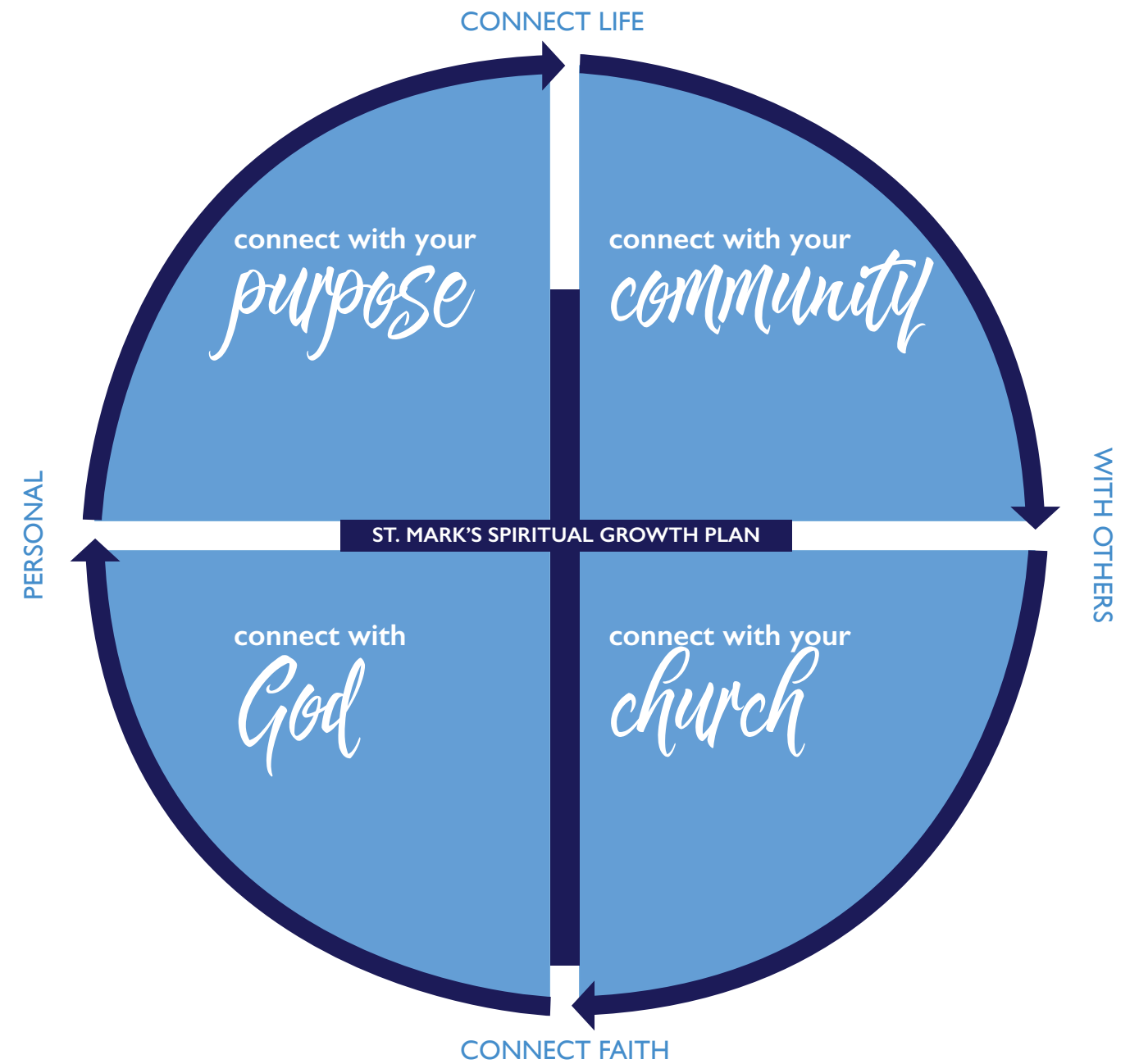
50

average attendance of THE EDGE (high school) on Sunday nights.

200

approximate number of students (grades 1-12) registered for Family Ministry.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH PLAN



This fall we introduced our **SPIRITUAL GROWTH PLAN!** We're so excited to share this with you and to use this tool as a way to grow, both individually and as a congregation. The growth plan is modeled after the way Jesus sends his disciples out and helps them grow (Mark, chapter 6).

CONNECTING WITH GOD includes focusing on daily Bible-based devotion and worship. We want everyone in the word - and at worship on a weekly basis.

Jesus teaches his disciples that they have been called and have unique gifts. To **CONNECT WITH YOUR PURPOSE**, we will focus on your strengths and developing leaders.

Jesus sends disciples into the community. We want St. Mark's partners to know our neighbors - wherever we are living! This is how we **CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITY** - both locally AND globally.

We **CONNECT WITH OUR CHURCH** by coming back together. After Jesus sends out his disciples, they return to share what happened on their journeys. We have FaithLife groups here at St. Mark's - and we want everyone to be a part of a group!

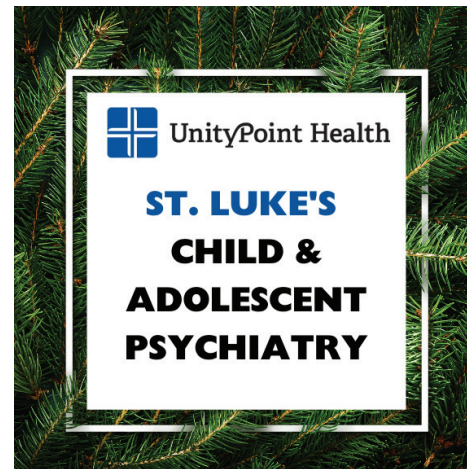
THE GIVING TREE

The virtual Giving Tree is live! Our tree has gone virtual - all sign-ups are online at stmarkscr.org/givingtree. We have over 330 potential gifts to bless others with in our community - children, veterans, those seeking medical supplies, adults, and more!

Sign-ups are online at stmarkscr.org/givingtree from November 15-28. The suggested spending amount is \$30-\$35 per tag, unless otherwise stated.

This year, gifts **MUST** be returned to the church office during office hours **Monday, November 30 through Friday, December 4**. Thank you for blessing others this Christmas season!

stmarkscr.org/givingtree



FAITHLIFE MINISTRIES

Sarah Bartlett, Director of FaithLife Ministries

FAITHLIFE FACILITATORS NEEDED!

I hope you caught St. Mark's Disruption sermon series this fall! It was a great series that taught us that God uses disruption in our lives to do a new thing. As part of that series, Pastor Paul introduced us to our Spiritual Growth Plan to connect faith and life. (see page 3) You may remember the four "connect" points...connect with God (worship and personal devotion), connect with your purpose (strengths and leadership development), connect with your community (neighborliness and service), and connect with your church (FaithLife groups and St. Mark's events).

As the Director of FaithLife Ministries, it is my joy and passion to get people connected in a FaithLife (FL) group. I have an abundance of people who are interested in joining a group. My current challenge is that I need additional FL facilitators.

Would you prayerfully consider becoming a FL facilitator?

What would that mean for you? It would mean that you would attend a two-hour training and then be prepared to begin facilitating a new FL group as one is needed. That might be in a few weeks or it might be in six months or more...you would be "waiting in the wings" for the opportunity.

What kind of commitment are we talking about? After the initial training and after a group is formed, it would be a commitment of 1-2 hours each week, plus preparation time.

You might be thinking: "But I'm not qualified to facilitate a FL group." I'm not looking for perfect, all-star, super-trained Biblical scholars. I'm looking for people who are willing and obedient. Remember, God doesn't call the equipped; he equips the called.

I'm praying for you. Not just that you'll say yes to becoming a FL facilitator, but that you are actively connecting your faith and life, and that your life is a living testimony of Christ's love for you.

Sarah Bartlett | sbartlett@faith-life.org

STRENGTHS

We are so excited to offer a class about your strengths beginning in January 2021! If you haven't already taken your CliftonStrengths Assessment, get your access code in one of two ways:

- 1 Text the word STRENGTHS to 94000
- 2 Visit stmarkscr.org and click on the "Strengths Access Code" button on the homepage.

We believe everyone at St. Mark's is a leader and has influence. Knowing your strengths is essential to knowing your purpose.



2020 MISSION SUPPORT

Thank you to our partners who have given over \$100,000 to mission work locally, nationally, and internationally!

MISSIONARIES



Keep up to date with all of our missionaries! Each month we offer a prayer guide on our website: stmarkscr.org/serve

Watch a new video from our global missionaries at stmarkscr.org/special-videos

ETHIOPIA UPDATE

We recently received an update from our mission partnership with the **Mekanissa Congregation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.**

During Lent 2018, St. Mark's had a special mission emphasis and raised funds to support the Mekanissa Congregation of the Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus in their mission to educate Evangelists to go out into the city and countryside to spread the Word of God. Due to a shortage of pastors, these lay Evangelists would be trained to spread the Gospel however; facilities, educational materials, and scholarships were lacking. St. Mark's raised about \$45,000 to assist the congregation in their project to build classroom space and help as needed.

This has been a larger project than we even imagined. As permits were laboriously obtained and construction began, COVID-19 hit Ethiopia as well. They have battled through and their structure is nearing completion as they continue to serve new believers thirsting to hear about Jesus.



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Acts 1:8

2021 HAITI MISSION TEAM

Mark your calendars for June 9-18, 2021 as we plan to travel to Haiti and serve.

DECEMBER SERMON SERIES “CHRISTMAS CLASSICS”

In our December sermon series, we'll be looking at some memorable Christmas movies to help us learn how to prepare ourselves for the coming Christ. Wondering what holiday movies to watch this year? Might we suggest The Santa Claus, A Christmas Story, How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1966), and Elf. See you at the movies worship!



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Our services this year will be 30-minutes long with a focus on faith and time with family. This year we're offering 12 separate services across two evenings to help accommodate for expected crowd sizes and to keep people socially distanced. All are welcome to attend. Registration opens December 1st at stmarkscr.org/christmas

Our COVID-19 mitigation practices will be utilized for Christmas Eve. All worshippers must wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose for the entire service and maintain a six-foot distance from those not in their family group. We will sanitize surfaces and disinfect the air in each worship center between services.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

Traditional 6:00 PM
Contemporary 7:00 PM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

Contemporary 3:00 PM
4:00 PM
5:00 PM
6:00 PM
7:00 PM
Traditional 8:00 PM
3:30 PM
4:30 PM
5:30 PM*
11:00 PM*

*with communion

LIVESTREAM MINISTRY



The funds for our livestream equipment and production room were made possible by partners in our congregation!

Join our Digital Engagement Team!

This new ministry will bring Jesus to people online. Digital engagement isn't only about cameras and lights, it's about worshipping in your home with your FaithLife groups, hosting online watch parties on Facebook, getting involved in the chat and comments, and sharing links with friends and families that don't have a church family or can't attend their church in this season.

The temple curtain separating people from the presence of God was torn in two on the day Jesus died (Mark 15:38). God has left the building! These are exciting times... God is truly doing a new thing.

Celebrating Christmas






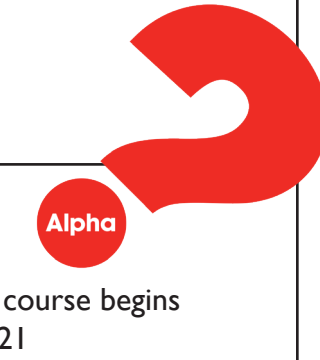
at St. Mark's

REGISTRATIONS

In-person Sunday services: stmarkscr.org/worship

Christmas Eve: stmarkscr.org/christmas

Calendar last updated 11/19/2020 - our goal is to be back for in-person worship on 12/6

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
 GIVING TREE GIFTS DUE TO FRONT OFFICE stmarkscr.org/givingtree						
						
6 <i>Christmas Classics</i> - feat. The Santa Claus T 8:30 ^o and 10:00 AM C 10:30 AM ^o *Communion at all services Welcome Class at 11:30 AM stmarkscr.org/events		8	9	10	11	
13 <i>Christmas Classics</i> - feat. A Christmas Story T 8:30 ^o and 10:00 AM C 10:30 AM ^o	14	15	16			19
20 <i>Christmas Classics</i> - feat. How The Grinch Stole Christmas (1966) T 8:30 ^o and 10:00 AM C 10:30 AM ^o *Communion at all services	21	22	23	24 <i>Christmas Eve services</i> C 3:00 PM T 5:30 PM* T 3:30 PM C 6:00 PM C 4:00 PM C 7:00 PM T 4:30 PM C 8:00 PM C 5:00 PM T 11:00 PM*	25	26
			<i>Christmas Eve services</i> T 6:00 PM C 7:00 PM		Merry Christmas! Church office closed	
27 <i>Christmas Classics</i> - feat. Elf T 8:30 ^o AM C 10:30 AM ^o	28	29	30	31	New Year's Day! Church office closed	

Key

- * Communion
- T** Traditional service
- C** Contemporary service
- ^o Online service (Facebook and YouTube)

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid.
I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

LUKE 2:10 (NIV)