



*connect faith + life*

Fall classes and programs begin this month to help everyone ***connect faith + life!***

*connections*  
**AUGUST 2023**

Does “God and the Originals” sound like a strange subtitle for a class on Genesis? If it does, don’t worry, I can’t draw comic book characters to go along with it! Ha! But I can teach on what it’s all about and how it shapes the rest of scripture.

If you could only read one book from the Old Testament, I would tell you to read Genesis.

While the Books of Psalms, Isaiah, and the historical records are certainly integral, without Genesis, so much of their meaning would be missed. Martin Luther, in his commentary on Genesis says that *“There is nothing more beautiful in Holy Scripture than Genesis as a whole.”* I would agree.

It’s beautiful because it’s full of engaging plots, epic tales that span centuries, in depth analyses of individuals and families, some of the greatest heroes in scripture and some of the most evil villains. It is beautiful because there are stories of underdogs, poetic justice, miracles, and reconciliation. But above all it is beautiful because it shows us our origins - how we got here, what our purpose is, how we’re broken, and God’s plan to fix it all through Jesus. In fact, Genesis just means “origin.” And that is exactly what it’s all about.

You’re invited to join me, whether you are a Bible veteran or scripture novice, as I teach through the Book of Genesis this school year. Genesis has 50 chapters which means it’s gonna take some time, but please know that even if you can’t make it to all of them, they will be recorded and put online every week - so feel free to come as often as you can.

Our format each week is pretty simple. I hand out study questions and we answer them either as a group or at our tables. Sometimes I hand out “to dos” between classes (like watch a video online or read the next couple of chapters), but none of it will be graded! Ha!

We’ll meet in Connections Cafe each Thursday from 2:00-3:30 pm with classes starting September 14. We will also livestream each session, so you can watch live (just click the blue WATCH LIVE button on our website) or re-watch the recording at a later date! Please register for the class at [stmarkscr.org/events](https://stmarkscr.org/events)

Genesis is worth your time. So invite a friend and please join me for a look at God and the Originals; how their stories shape so much of scripture, and how they speak to us today.

**CONTACT**  
[phennings@faith-life.org](mailto:phennings@faith-life.org)

# GENESIS

## *God and the Originals*

**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY WITH PASTOR PAUL**

September 2023-May 2024

Thursdays at 2:00 pm beginning September 14 on-site and online

Register at [stmarkscr.org/events](https://stmarkscr.org/events)



**ANNUAL MEETING**

**August 27 at 11:30 am**

All partners are encouraged to attend the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, August 27 at 11:30 am to review the past fiscal year, hear from church leadership, elect new Council members, and hear about plans for next year. We will be voting on church constitution and bylaw changes. Please register to attend on-site or online at [stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting](http://stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting)

**COUNCIL FORUMS**

**August 20 at 9:30 am or August 23 at 6:00 pm**

These open forums are designed to give everyone the opportunity to ask questions and allows the council an opportunity to get feedback from partners prior to the Annual Meeting. Please register to attend on-site or online at

[stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting](http://stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting)

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAW CHANGES**

In reviewing the Constitution this past year, the Church Council found that some portions still describe a management model of governance instead of our current policy governance model for leading the church. Changes are needed to update the document to fully align with the policy governance model. A packet to review is available at

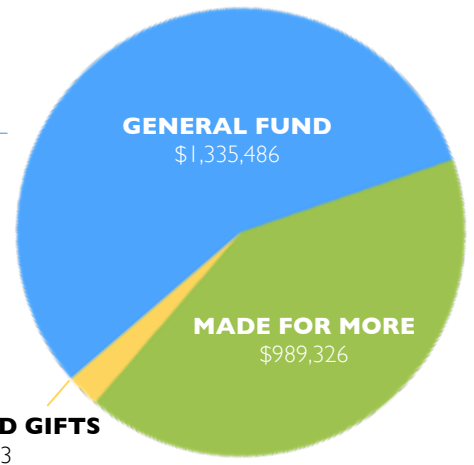
[stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting](http://stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting)

**ANNUAL REPORT**

Copies of our fiscal year Annual Report will be available beginning on Friday, August 11 at [stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting](http://stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting) and at the Welcome Center.

**GIVING UPDATE**

The graph to the right shows giving at St. Mark's from July 2022-June 2023. More detailed information will be provided in our Annual Report. The General Fund is where your tithes and offerings go - supporting the church here in Cedar Rapids and around the world. It's the fund that allows us to reach people with the gospel through our weekend services, family ministries, service opportunities, missions, and more.



**MADE FOR MORE CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

For many, August brings closure to the season of relaxation, a slower schedule, or vacation time. Thanks to the faithful support of our partners, we give thanks for a fruitful summer and prepare to sprint toward autumn with energy and resolve to continue the quest to eradicate our debt! Stay tuned as we prepare to write another BIG CHECK!

In the meantime, the partners and friends of St. Mark's have stepped up in a big way. Vacations, absences, and unpredictable activities have not prevented you from fulfilling your commitment to the MADE FOR MORE Capital Campaign.

- This three-year campaign that officially kicked off in April 2022, has received **60%** of the total amount committed! We have pledges (and cash gifts) totaling \$3,408,682, with \$2,034,073 paid through June 2023.
- **91%** of those sharing God's financial resources with the campaign have made at least one payment.
- We remain committed to no campaign dollars spent until the cash is in hand.

Thank you for the generous and faithful ways in which you have responded to the MADE FOR MORE campaign; we pray this has enriched your spiritual life and relationship with Jesus. God has big plans for St. Mark's and each gift brings us closer to fulfilling his mission to our community and beyond.

## LEARNING IS FOR EVERYONE!

### BACK TO (SUNDAY) SCHOOL SERMON SERIES

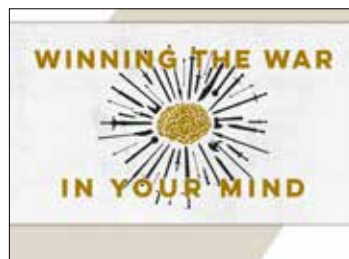
It's that time of year again: back to school! We've decided to do a little "back to (Sunday) school" work for our next sermon series starting August 13. Depending on what worship service you attend, you will hear a little bit of a different message! Our 8:30 am traditional service will take an in-depth look at the liturgy while the 10:00 am modern service will focus on broader basics. So welcome back to (Sunday) school everyone!



### CONNECT WITH GOD WITH THESE UPCOMING BIBLE STUDIES



**ALPHA**  
BEGINS AUGUST 29  
Provides an opportunity to ask questions and explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting. Our next 1-week course begins August 29. Each session includes a meal, followed by a small group discussion. Nursery is available.



**WINNING THE WAR IN YOUR MIND MEDIA STUDY**  
BEGINS SEPTEMBER 11  
In this 5-week class, Pastor Craig Groeschel lays out practical strategies that will free you from the grip of destructive thinking and enable you to live the life of joy and peace that God intends you to live.



**GENESIS**  
BEGINS SEPTEMBER 11  
Genesis tells us who God is, who we are, how things went wrong, and the plan that God has put in place to return the earth to the way it was meant to be. Pastor Paul will lead a weekly Thursday study from 2:00-3:30 pm from September - May. Available on-site and online.



**CROSSWAYS**  
BEGINS OCTOBER  
A comprehensive study of the Bible using visual aids, Bible Project videos, and each other to focus on Jesus, the Servant-King. Our weekly study will cover the New Testament this school year! It is always fascinating to see how different Bible translations provide light into God's Word.

Register for all classes at [stmarkscr.org/events](https://stmarkscr.org/events)

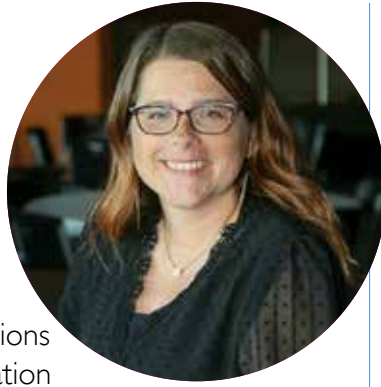
### UPDATE FROM OUR SEMINARIANS

What began as taking the Micro MDiv class together in Fall 2019, our cohort comprised of Michele Jones, John Mosinski, and Alice Murray have continued their studies towards becoming pastors through the Master's Institute! They are in the home stretch of their last year of seminary and are thankful for the opportunities they've had at St. Mark's to grow in their skills as they work to earn a Master's of Divinity. This final year, they will have 13 classes including Gender Equality in Leadership, Heart and Theology of Worship, Dynamics of Pneumatology, Developing a Leader's Self Understanding, Pastoral Acts: Funerals, Grief, Loss, Death & Dying, and Romans. As you see, they have a heavy class load this sixth and final year! Their graduation is scheduled for May 18, 2024. St. Mark's partners, please pray for our seminarians, for endurance so they can finish strong, and for their families who have supported them along the way!



### **ALICE MURRAY,** DIRECTOR OF CARE AND HOSPITALITY

Caring for YOU is one of my top priorities. Since beginning my role in May 2021, I have worked to add more opportunities for connections and care for our congregation in all stages of life and seasons of need.



**CARE TEAM:** Did you know that we have a compassionate and well-trained team of partners who volunteer their time to visit folks in the hospital, nursing homes, and those who are homebound? I am looking to expand our Care Team opportunities to include people to reach out to those in need by providing a listening ear. If you are a trained Stephen Minister or have experience meeting with others during their time of grief, please contact me!

**HOSPITALITY:** We want St. Mark's to be a welcoming place to all the people who enter as well as open to our community. If you love to smile and talk with people - we need you on our team! Please reach out and we will help you get started. We have opportunities on Sunday mornings and weekday evenings.

**GRIEF SHARE:** Are you on the journey of grief? It is a very painful, unpredictable and long journey. We want to be able to walk the journey with you through a 13-week program called GriefShare. GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you. *(There are all new videos, so if you have taken this course before you can take it again with new video testimonials!)* We will begin meeting on Monday, September 11. Registration will open in August and will be available at [stmarkscr.org/events](https://stmarkscr.org/events)

**ONE-ON-ONE:** I love to meet with people one-on-one to talk through all of life's ups and downs. Please reach out and let us know how we can walk alongside you.

#### **CONTACT**

[amurray@faith-life.org](mailto:amurray@faith-life.org)

### **YOUR STRENGTHS MAKE YOU UNIQUE**

God made each of us in his own image...beautifully, fearfully, wonderfully. We want to help you connect with your purpose by understanding how God has uniquely equipped and called you. We do this through CliftonStrengths. This assessment will help you identify your strength talents -- how you naturally think, feel, and behave. They help you understand who you are, why you do things the way you do, and why you are better at some things than others. Take the CliftonStrengths assessment and discover your top five strength talents. Request your access code at [stmarkscr.org/strengths](https://stmarkscr.org/strengths)

#### **FALL STRENGTHS CLASSES**

Learn more and register for all classes at [stmarkscr.org/strengths](https://stmarkscr.org/strengths)

**INTRODUCTION TO STRENGTHS:** This class will remind you that you are designed by God with specific talents that are unique to you. You will look closely at your top strengths and what it means to you, and how you can use it to serve your family, your workplace, your community, and your church.

**DEEPER DIVE INTO STRENGTHS:** Now that you understand your strength talents and are aware of them, join us for a deeper dive into what strengths can do. We hope you remember your high school chemistry lessons because, like the elements of the periodic table, we're going to learn what happens when you combine your strength talents.

**PARENTING WITH STRENGTHS:** Look at your Top 5 Strengths through the lens of parenting. Just like you, your children are fearfully and wonderfully made. See how you can use your strengths to reach your children and how you may interact with each of your children according to their strengths.

### **SARAH BARTLETT** DIRECTOR OF FAITHLIFE MINISTRIES & CERTIFIED STRENGTHS COACH



#### **CONTACT**

[sbartlett@faith-life.org](mailto:sbartlett@faith-life.org)

# AUGUST <sup>20</sup>/<sub>23</sub>

**SUNDAY SERVICES** 8:30 AM TRADITIONAL & 10:00 AM MODERN • ON-SITE • ONLINE • ON DEMAND

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
		1	2 <b>FINAL FAN THE FLAME</b> 5:30-7:00 PM Incoming 5th-8th graders are invited.	3	4 <b>CONNECTIONS</b> MAIL DATE	5	
6 <b>WALK FOR WATER HAITI FUNDRAISER</b>	7	8	9	10	11	12 <b>WORK DAY AT FAITHLIFE HOMES PROPERTY</b> 8:00 AM Plenty of yard work to do! Bring work gloves and a shovel!	
<p>Have you registered your student for Family Ministry programs yet? Our programs for PreK-12th grade work to partner and equip families to connect faith + life.</p> <p>Register at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/familyministry">stmarkscr.org/familyministry</a></p>			16	17	18 <b>MISSION OF HOPE MONTHLY MEAL</b>	19 <b>BIKE RIDE &amp; BASEBALL IN DES MOINES</b>	
20 <b>BACKPACK BLESSING</b> BOTH SERVICES  <b>COUNCIL FORUM</b> 9:30 AM	21	22	23 <b>COUNCIL FORUM</b> 6:00 PM	24 <b>50+ POTLUCK</b> 11:30 AM Bring your favorite dish to share and table service.	25	26	
27 <b>ANNUAL MEETING</b> 11:30 AM Partners are encouraged to attend this meeting!	28	29 <b>ALPHA</b> 5:30-7:30 PM Explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting	30 <b>IMPACT NIGHT</b> 6:00-7:30 PM Training and touch base for volunteers in all areas of service.	31			
RSVP at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting">stmarkscr.org/annualmeeting</a>		Register at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/events">stmarkscr.org/events</a>					

# SEPTEMBER <sup>20</sup>/<sub>23</sub>

**SUNDAY SERVICES** 8:30 AM TRADITIONAL & 10:00 AM MODERN • ON-SITE • ONLINE • ON DEMAND

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 <b>LABOR DAY</b> Church office closed.	5	6 <b>FAMILY MINISTRY FIRST NIGHT</b> 5:30-7:30 PM 2nd-8th grade	7 Register or volunteer at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/familyministry">stmarkscr.org/familyministry</a>	8	9
10 <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL</b> 10:00-11:00 AM PreK-1st grade <b>THE EDGE</b> 3:00-5:00 PM 9th-12 grade	11 <b>GRIEFSHARE BEGINS</b> 6:00 PM <b>WINNING THE WAR STUDY BEGINS</b> 6:30 PM	12 Register at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/events">stmarkscr.org/events</a>	13	14 <b>GENESIS BIBLE STUDY BEGINS</b> 2:00 PM	15 <b>MISSION OF HOPE MONTHLY MEAL</b>	16 <b>BIKE RIDE</b>
17 <b>INTRO TO STRENGTHS CLASS</b> 3:00 PM God calls you to be a leader where you are.	18 <b>BEAUTIFUL WEEK (THROUGH 9/23)</b> RSVP at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/strengths">stmarkscr.org/strengths</a>	19	20	21 <b>PRACTICING THE KING'S ECONOMY BEGINS</b> 6:00 PM RSVP at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/events">stmarkscr.org/events</a>	22	23
24 <b>WELCOME CLASS</b> 11:30 AM Learn more about our church, missions, values. Meal provided. RSVP at <a href="http://stmarkscr.org/events">stmarkscr.org/events</a>	25	26	27 <b>UNITED INVITE</b> 5:00 PM <b>NEWBO</b> Middle and high school students invited.	28 <b>50+ POTLUCK</b> 11:30 AM Bring your favorite dish to share and table service.	29	30

# OCTOBER SAVE THE DATES

- 10/12:** Deeper Dive into Strengths Class
- 10/15:** Missionary Milton Castillo from Panama at St. Mark's
- 10/20:** Mission of Hope Meal
- 10/21:** Bike Ride
- 10/25:** Trunk or Treat
- 10/28:** Confirmation Day

## FAMILY MINISTRY RECAP & UPDATE

### VBS RECAP

What a week! We had 174 students and 86 volunteers in our building for "On the Case" VBS in June. We had lots of games, stories, mysteries, and skits where we were able to learn about Jesus! Through parables in the New Testament, we walked alongside God as he taught us that spending time with God is how we grow, using our gifts is how we serve, spending time with others is how we care, and sharing our story is how we love. **We can't wait for June 2024 for another great week!**



### HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP RECAP

21 students and five leaders headed to Jackson, MS from July 21-29 for a week of service! In Mississippi they were able to serve, encourage, and share Jesus to many people, by being a window to the Kingdom of Heaven! One student said: *"Through handing out food, praying over people, hearing testimonies, leading worship, making crafts, and cleaning up sidewalks, I felt connected to God in a whole new way. I learned how to take my faith into my own hands and it was made clear to me that through God anything and everything is possible. My faith, life, and soul are forever changed."*



### LOOKING AHEAD

Family Ministry begins in less than a month! Registration is open at [stmarkscr.org/familyministry](http://stmarkscr.org/familyministry)

Kids in 2nd-8th grades meet three Wednesday evenings each month from 5:30-7:30 pm (*dinner included!*) We will start the year talking about Moses and how God leads the way.

Kids in PreK through 1st grade meet weekly on Sunday mornings from 10:00-11:00 am beginning September 10. Preschoolers are going to start at the beginning with Creation, while Kindergarten and 1st graders will learn about Moses and the Israelites. High School students meet weekly at The Edge on Sundays from 3:00-5:00 pm.

We are excited for middle and high schoolers to once again be a part of United Invite on September 27 - where youth from all over the city unite at Newbo to worship our one true God.

### FAMILY MINISTRY FALL DATES

8/20	Backpack Blessing	9/27	United Invite at Newbo City Market for middle and high schoolers
8/30	Leader Training at Impact Night	10/28	Confirmation
9/6	First Wednesday night programs for 2nd-8th graders	11/9	First Communion class
9/10	First Sunday School for PreK-1st graders	11/19	First Communion for 5th graders
9/17	2nd and 5th graders receive their Bibles		

### CONTACT

[stmarkscr.org/familyministry](http://stmarkscr.org/familyministry) • [familyministry@faith-life.org](mailto:familyministry@faith-life.org)



No matter how you would like to serve this fall, we have opportunities for you both in our community and internationally! As we serve, we create deeper connections with God and with each other.

**CONTACT**  
[mjones@faith-life.org](mailto:mjones@faith-life.org)



**START HERE**

Have you thought about participating in missions but not sure where to start or how to serve? Join this mission class, "Practicing the King's Economy." Through this course, you'll discover new ways to live out the Kingdom in your daily life at home, work and church. It emphasizes the importance of putting the things we believe into practice, not just learning new information and moving on.

This class starts Thursday, September 21 at 6:00 pm and will run for five weeks. Register at [stmarkscr.org/events](http://stmarkscr.org/events)



**LOCAL**

**Beautiful Week: September 18-23**

Mark your calendars for Beautiful Week! There will be opportunities for all ages each day of this week to serve your neighbor. This will include helping some of our own St. Mark's partners and a variety of wonderful nonprofit organizations in Cedar Rapids. Consider how you, your family, or FaithLife group could get involved!

**FaithLife Homes, LLC Update**

The renovation is ongoing! We are so thankful for the local business providing materials and/or labor towards this project. The interior demo is complete and we've started the transformation of the front porch! As interior work begins later this fall, contact Michele if you would like to lend a hand or have some trade skills you would like to put to work!

We have an opportunity to serve on Saturday, August 12 at 8:00 am for a yard clean up at our FaithLife Homes property at **1835 5th Ave SE.**



Prior to the siding being installed, we would like to remove all the old landscaping around the house and garage. We will be taking out some hosta so if you have a home for them, please join us. Bring work gloves and a shovel!

**INTERNATIONAL  
 Haiti Sponsorships**

Fall is the time to renew your UCI sponsorship for your sponsored child in Haiti. Please look for an email from Michele Jones to confirm your continued support of our Haitian friends. *Interested in sponsoring a student?* For \$180 a year, it provides a solid Christian education, uniform, and a school meal. You will also have the opportunity to send a Christmas gift!

**FaithLife Trips**

Have you ever taken an international mission trip with St. Mark's? If you have visited with someone that has, you will quickly realize that a short-term mission trip is where your faith and life intersect in a very focused and intentional way. Therefore, you will now hear our international trips called **"FaithLife Trips"**.

**Panama:** Our FaithLife Mission team will be traveling to expand and continue our relationships and work at Las Perlas School from November 3-11, 2023. Contact Michele if you are interested in joining the team! Flights are being purchased August 16 so that we can get the best price on international flights.



**Haiti:** Our next FaithLife Trip will be back to UCI in February 2024. Due to limited seating on our missionary flight on MFI, the deadline to submit the application for this trip is October 1. Contact Michele with questions.

Thank you St. Mark's and the Church Council for understanding the importance of sabbatical for church workers. The time on sabbatical was incredibly valuable and was a blessing to not only me and my family, but I believe it will be to St. Mark's as well. During my time on sabbatical, I read *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer. He quotes his mentor as saying, "At this point in my life, I'm just trying not to miss the goodness of each day, and bring my best self to it." This sentence has stayed with me as I return to work. The sabbatical has allowed me to experience pause and I know that through the implementation of pause, I will be able to sustain healthier rhythms of rest and work and bring my best self to each day.

I was able to travel on sabbatical. During the Footsteps of Paul tour to Greece and Rome, I was blessed to be able to reaffirm my baptism with Pastor Ken Hennings in the same stream where Lydia was baptized. I got to sing the doxology in Ephesus, walk along the Roman road that Paul walked on, see where he may have been held as a prisoner in Philippi, experience the beauty of the poppies in bloom, be amazed by the massive structures that were built by the Romans, and walk through thousands of years of history. The culmination of this trip is a reminder of who God is. He is timeless and faithful across all generations. He pursues us when we feel far from him. He is love and I can be assured of his love for each of us.

A huge focus of the sabbatical was to reconnect with friends and to be fully present with my family. This most definitely happened during the sabbatical. It was a gift to take my sabbatical at this time before my oldest son Grant leaves for Columbia College Chicago in August. I was blessed to have more time to spend with my loved ones ... and there are too many stories to tell. We'll have to grab coffee to hear just a few of them.

I spent time listening to God's direction for me and St. Mark's. I am exactly where God wants me to be right now. That is incredibly clear. It has been and continues to be assured with no doubts. Again, thank you for allowing me to return to work rested and ready to dive into the work of the church.

**WHAT IS A SABBATICAL?** A sabbatical is designed to provide time for rest, renewal, and rejuvenation. The Harvard Business Review reported that employees return to work after a sabbatical with an increase in overall well-being and a decline in stress and these benefits remain long after returning to work. In addition, other employees expand their knowledge base, skills, and expertise. A sabbatical is designed to completely disconnect from the workplace.

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## RECENT PHOTOS

**JUNE:** St. Mark's hosts the "Voices of Hope" Patriotic Concert in partnership with The Freedom Festival and Serve the City



**APRIL:** LCMC Service Coordinator, Mike Bradley, visits St. Mark's



**JUNE:** VBS Service Project



**JUNE:** Another incredible life-changing week on a mission trip to Haiti



**MAY:** Bike Ride to Ely, IA



**JULY:** A special visit from missionary Mark Wolter and his family



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#### Church office hours:

Monday - Thursday: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm  
Friday: 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

Website: [stmarkscr.org](http://stmarkscr.org)

Phone: 319-447-0100

Text Alerts: Text **STMARKSCR** to **94-000**

#### Sunday Worship:

8:30 am | **Traditional:** the majesty of liturgy,  
pipe organ, and choral music in Faith Worship Center

10:00 am | **Modern:** joyful worship in a casual setting  
in Life Worship Center

**WATCH LIVE:** A livestream of each service is available by  
clicking the **WATCH LIVE** button at [stmarkscr.org](http://stmarkscr.org)

## ST. MARK'S FOUNDATION UPDATE



### THE LASTING IMPACT OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH FOUNDATION

The sole purpose of the St. Mark's Lutheran Church Foundation is to serve St. Mark's Lutheran Church. So why is the St. Mark's Foundation a separate organization from the church? Why was the St. Mark's Lutheran Church Foundation created? The answers to these questions and more can be found in a short video located on the Foundation's website: [stmarkscrfoundation.org](http://stmarkscrfoundation.org)

Much like a savings account, partners' contributions to the St. Mark's Lutheran Church Foundation are preserved. Only the interest and earnings from the endowed contributions are provided to St. Mark's to fulfill its mission. Partners can make contributions to the Foundation at any stage of their life and they can direct their contribution to a specific church mission.

To learn more about the Foundation, please watch the video on our website ([stmarkscrfoundation.org](http://stmarkscrfoundation.org)) and reach out to the St. Mark's Lutheran Church Foundation President, Tim Wuest at 319-393-0170.