

CHRISTMAS EVE, 2023



*Christ has Come*



**Christmas Eve Service of  
Lessons and Congregational Singing**

Sunday, December 24, 2023 | 7:00 PM



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Christmas Eve is a celebrated time in the Christian church, and especially here at Saint Mark United Methodist Church. It is a time when we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child – God taking human form and coming to live among us. It is because of Jesus’ coming that we can truly celebrate for it is through him we know the love of God and have forgiveness of sins. It is a high and holy occasion, and we are privilege to celebrate the advent of Jesus Christ, and to worship God together with you.

Each year, during all of our Christmas Eve Services, the offering collected goes directly to the ministries of our church. The ministries include our Breakfast and Supper Clubs, where we provide hot meals to many persons who are food insecure and unhoused in the midtown area. Each Saturday, we feed approximately 85 men and women at our Breakfast Club, and over 80 each Tuesday afternoon at our Supper Club. At the end of 2023, we will have fed over eight thousand five hundred men and women. We are able to do this life-saving act of kindness because of your giving.

You will have the opportunity, again during this service to give. And again, your gift will touch the lives of so many. Please know your giving is making a difference in the life of someone in need.

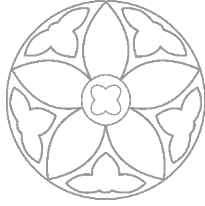
There are multiple ways you can give. You can make a check payable to Saint Mark UMC. You can also give online at our website ([www.stmarkumc.org](http://www.stmarkumc.org)) or via the QR code at the back of this worship bulletin.

On this Christmas Eve, we light our candles, remembering that Christ, the Light of the world has come, and “shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome Him.” This is the truth of why we celebrate, and I pray you will continue to let the light of Christ shine through you into all the world.

Merry Christmas,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carolyn".

Pastor Carolyn.



# Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Congregational Singing

*\*You are invited to stand as you are able in body and spirit.*

Music as we Gather

The Welcome

The Prelude

**A Tender Rose Has Blossomed**

**John M. Rasley**

The Call to Worship

Beloved in Christ, at this Christmastide let it be our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing, which is come to pass, and the Babe laying in a manger.

Therefore, let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose for us even from the beginning of creation, and of God's salvation offered to us by this Christ child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world, for peace on earth and goodwill among all God's people, and for unity within the church universal, which Christ came and establish.

And knowing this is Christ's charge to us, let us remember, in His name, the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and those that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or know of His love for them, or who by sin have grieved His heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but have joined the heavenly church, and are in a greater light, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom we are one in the Lord Jesus for evermore.

\*The Opening Carol

**UMH No.250 | Once in Royal David's City**

The Invocation

Almighty God, by the birth of your holy child, Jesus, You gave a great light to dawn on our darkness. Grant that in his light we may see light. Bestow upon us that most excellent Christmas gift of love to all people, and that we may have the ever-brightening hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Invitation to the Offertory & The Offertory Prayer

The Offertory

*Sweet Little Jesus Boy*

Minister Sheila Stephens, Soloist

Spiritual

## \*The Doxology

D Bm A A<sup>7</sup> D/F# G D A<sup>7</sup> D A<sup>7</sup>  
 Praise God from whom all bless - ings flow. Praise God, all  
 7 D G A<sup>7</sup> D A<sup>7</sup> D A<sup>7</sup> Bm A A<sup>7</sup>  
 crea - tures here be - low. Praise God a - bove, ye  
 12 D/F# G D A<sup>7</sup> D A<sup>7</sup> D G A<sup>7</sup> D A<sup>7</sup> D  
 heaven - ly host. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.  
 18 A<sup>7</sup> D Bm F#m D G A<sup>7</sup> D A  
 No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el,  
 22 Bm D/A G D A<sup>7</sup>/E D/F# D/A A<sup>7</sup> D  
 born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Words: Thomas Ken, 1674  
 Music: Trad. English Carol

*THE FIRST NOEL*  
 Irr. with Refrain

## Part I | The Promise to Israel

### Scripture

**Isaiah 40:1-8**

### Prayer

One: Faithful God, you have never failed to fulfill your word, and you keep your promises even to a thousand generations. You bring to pass what you have promised, and we trust you to continue to be faithful.

**All: Stir our hearts in anticipation of your coming, Lord. Amen.**

\*Carol

**UMH No. 234 v. 1, 3, 6 | O Come, All Ye Faithful**

## **Part II | The Promise To Mary**

Scripture

**Luke 1: 26-38**

Prayer

One: Giver of life and all that is good, you show up in our everyday routines, revealing a greater good for our lives. Help us not to be afraid of your presence, or of what you have purposed for us to do, but to obey joyfully and gladly. Let us be ready whenever you appear, at any time, in any place.

**All: Open our hearts to your plans for us, Lord. Amen.**

\*Carol

**UMH No. 240 | Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

## **Part III | Mary's Song of Praise**

Scripture

**Luke 1:46-56**

Prayer

One: God of joy, like Mary, our hearts are filled with delight at the gift of your love to us, Jesus Christ, our Lord. We celebrate this night his birth, and with joy we look forward to his returning. For this precious gift, we give you thanks and praise.

**All: We will celebrate not only in this time, but each day the gift of Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

\*Carol

**UMH No. 230 | O Little Town of Bethlehem**

## Part IV | The Night of Wonder

Scripture

**Luke 2:1-7**

Prayer

One: God who is ever near, over two thousand years ago, you closed the space between heaven and earth, bringing your Son into this world. There he lay with the lowly animals, the Savior of the world. Oh, how you love us to give your best to us, even when we neglect to create room in our hearts for him.

**All: Fill our hearts with your love again O Lord. Amen.**

\*Carol

**UMH No. 217 | Away in a Manger**

## Part V | Angels Over Bethlehem

Scripture

**Luke 2:8-14**

Prayer

One: God of glory, the angels sang of the good news for all people, filling the night skies with the radiance of their presence. This night we sing again this good news, knowing that it is indeed for all people, including us.

**All: Fill us each day with the joy of the good news. Amen.**

\*Carol

**UMH No. 218 | It Came upon the Midnight Clear**

## Part VI | Adoration of the Shepherds

Scripture

**Luke 2:15-20**

## Prayer

One: God of wonder, the shepherds were amazed by what the angels told them, so they ran to see for themselves. They stood in awe at the sight of the Christ Child and went spreading the good news of what they have heard and seen. Let us, like the shepherds, tell the good news to others.

**All: Fill us with the same urgency, O Lord. Amen.**

## \*Carol

**UMH No. 238 | Angels We Have Heard on High**

## Part VII | Here Now, the Good News

## \*Scripture

**Luke 2: 10**

The Christmas Message  
**Hear Now, the Good News**

Rev. Dr. Carolyn A. Stephens  
Senior Pastor

## \*The Congregational Response

**UMH No. 246 v.1 & 4 | Joy to the World**

*During the singing of the carol,  
Minister Sheila Stephens will come forward to light of the Christ Candle.*

## \*The Lighting of our Candles

## \*The Carol of Dedication

**UMH No. 239 | Silent Night, Holy Night**

## \*The Blessing

*Following the blessing, please extinguish your candles.*



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## **Worship Team**

<b>Preaching:</b>	Rev. Dr. Carolyn Stephens, <i>Senior Pastor</i>
<b>Liturgists:</b>	Madi Dunn, <i>Children's Minister</i> Minister Sheila Stephens
<b>Advent Wreath:</b>	Minister Sheila Stephens
<b>Music:</b>	Justin Bowen, <i>Interim Director of Fine Arts and Organist</i> V. Lee Edwards, <i>Guest Organist</i> Minister Sheila Stephens, <i>Soloist</i>
<b>Audio Visual:</b>	Johnny Sims, <i>Coordinator of Online Ministry</i> , Jay Drew, Deana Hilton, Eric Steverson, and Julie Tootle
<b>Usher Team:</b>	Joel Black

## **We Welcome You**

*As a United Methodist Church, we are proud to be a congregation with open hearts, open minds, and open doors. We strive to be a congregation that embodies God's absolute love and hospitality, proclaiming Jesus as our savior and as our model of the ultimate embodiment of God's love. We believe that all persons are of sacred worth and dignity as part of God's good creation. Saint Mark United Methodist Church welcomes all persons into the full life and ministry of our congregation, regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, family, or socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, or faith history.*



## Attendance

Please sign the attendance pad located at the end of your row or scan this QR code to register your attendance and share prayer requests using our online Connection Card.

## Prayer Requests

Let us pray for you. Prayer request cards are in the pews. Please return your request to the offering plate or the prayer boxes in the Narthex.

## Tithes & Offerings

Please place your offering in the plate during this evening's service, or use the Secure Giving App, or Saint Mark's assigned number for text donations is 844-703-1444 and the keyword is 'operating'. To give via text, text the word 'operating', a space, and the amount you would like to give. For example, to give \$25, text 844-703-1444 operating 25. Your generosity allows us to love, accept and serve the people of our community.



- Using your Smartphone's camera, scan the QR Code.
- Follow the prompts.

## Year-End Giving

Any gifts to the church that you would like to be credited for 2023 **must be dated and postmarked no later than December 31, 2023**. You can also drop off your gift using the newly installed mailbox outside the Church Office doors.

Questions? Contact Deana in the church office at 404-873-2636, ext. 14.

## New Year's Eve at Saint Mark

**Sunday, December 31, 2023 | 10 am**

We will have one service at 10 AM New Year's Eve morning in the Sanctuary. The service will be live streamed on Facebook and YouTube.

## **Church Offices Closed**

The Church Offices will be closed from December 25, 2023 – January 1, 2024. We will reopen at 10 AM on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

## **Restrooms**

Men's & Women's restrooms are located just outside the chapel. As you exit the sanctuary turn left. Once you reach the chapel, turn left then immediately right. The Women's restroom is the third door on the left. For the men's restroom, pass the Women's restroom and the Men's restroom is just around the corner. Gender Neutral restrooms are available downstairs. As you leave the sanctuary turn left, take the set of stairs down just before the balcony stairs on the left. The restrooms are on the first landing. Please see an usher for assistance.

## **Children's Ministry Volunteers Needed**

The Children's Ministry needs four to six volunteers to help facilitate our nursery on an alternating schedule. If you LOVE babies and toddlers and can provide a one and a half to two-hour service once a month, WE NEED YOU! Please contact Madi Dunn at [mdunn@stmarkumc.org](mailto:mdunn@stmarkumc.org).

## **Winter Weather Donations Needed**

As the weather begins to turn colder, it becomes more challenging for our unhoused neighbors to stay warm. We are requesting donations of blankets, gloves, and sleeping bags. Please bring any of these items to church and drop them off on Sunday mornings in the appropriate donation bin in the hallway between the narthex and chapel.

## **Fifth Saturday Breakfast Club**

**Saturday, December 30, 2023 | 9 am**

We need volunteers to help serve a hot meal to our food insecure neighbors on Saturday morning, December 30th. If you would like to volunteer, we need you. Please contact Mary Abbott Waite at [mawaite100@aol.com](mailto:mawaite100@aol.com) or 404-217-3614 to volunteer or show up at the Office doors no later than 9 AM. Thank you.



## **We Invite You to Stay Connected with Saint Mark**

Visit [www.stmarkumc.org](http://www.stmarkumc.org) and subscribe to the newsletter on the homepage. We send our Remarks newsletter every Wednesday, a message from our Senior Pastor every Friday, and a Sunday Morning at Saint Mark email.

## **El Viñedo Local Restaurant**

730 Peachtree Street NE | Suite 100 | Atlanta, Georgia 30308  
Across from Redeemer Lutheran

### **Christmas Eve Hours**

- Dinner 5PM to 9PM

Did you know that **El Viñedo Local** offers a 10% discount for Saint Mark United Methodist Church members every Sunday, including today, Christmas Eve? Stop by, support a local business, and let them know you are from Saint Mark.

## **Disciple Bible Study—Year 2**

Disciple 2 Fast Track Bible Study is a 24-week in-depth review of Genesis/Exodus and Luke/Acts. The study comprises 15 to 30 minutes a day of bible reading and dynamic group discussions during the weekly meetings. This study will immerse you in 4 important books of the Bible and will enhance your spiritual journey as a disciple of Christ. Please note that it is not necessary to take Disciple 1 prior to taking Disciple 2.

We are organizing a new class that will meet 12 times this spring and 12 times in the fall. We are considering several times for the class...

- 1) During the Sunday School hour;
- 2) After the Wednesday night dinner or
- 3) A virtual class Tuesday evening

The new class will begin in late January and Paul Winslow will lead the class. The book for the first session is \$17 and scholarships are available. If interested, please let **Paul Winslow** know your preferred time at [plwinslow3@gmail.com](mailto:plwinslow3@gmail.com) or **757-646-3278**.