



Sunday, December 21, 2025
St. Mark's United Church of Christ
Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz, Pastor
Ann Rodewald, Organist
Lori Roelse, Reader

Our Mission is to help others deepen their relationship with God, become faithful followers of Christ, and to share the message of Christ's love with others.

Christmas Holiday Celebration of Music
Bells Ring
Prelude Gathering for Worship:

Christmas Rhapsody

Call To Worship:

The love of God draws near—
Not in might, but in mercy.

The waiting is almost over.

Our hearts make room for the Christ-child.

God's promise is sure.

Love will come and dwell among us.

Let us worship the Lord with hope, peace, joy—

And above all, with love.

Opening Prayer:

God of steadfast love,

As we draw near to the celebration of Christ's birth, fill us with the warmth of your mercy and the wideness of your welcome. Help us to love as you have loved us—not in word only, but in action, in patience, in truth. Make room in our hearts for your Son, and shape our lives around his coming.

Come Emmanuel, O come. Amen.

♪ Hymn: (#649)

Gather Us In

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried:

He descended into hell: The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

I believe in the Holy Spirit: The One Holy Universal Christian Church: the communion of saints: The forgiveness of sins: The resurrection of the body: And the life everlasting. Amen.

Light the First, Second and Third Advent Candles:

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we ask that you stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the ways of your only-begotten Son, that by his Advent we may serve you with purified minds, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Come Emmanuel. Come, Christ the Lord and dwell within us.

In this dark time of year, God, we long for your coming. When darkness falls upon the world, we long for your peace. For healing, we wait. For justice, we hope. Strengthen our hearts, that we may be steadfast in hope and constant in love. In the name of Jesus Christ we light the Advent Candle of Love.

Light the Candle of Love:



Young at Heart:

First Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 9:2-7 ESV

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.
You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon^[b] his shoulder,
and his name shall be called^[c]
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

Second Scripture Reading:

Matthew 1:18-25 ESV

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Message:

Will You Love Me?

Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz

People's Prayer:

Come to us, O God, as we gather together and pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Offertory Music:

Redeeming Love

~ The offering is brought to the altar ~

Doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving:

Gracious and Loving God, we bring these gifts before you with hearts full of gratitude. They are but a portion of what you have entrusted to us, and we give them back as an act of true worship. Bless these offerings, Lord, that they may be used to bring hope to the weary, comfort to the brokenhearted, and light to places where darkness dwells. May our lives be living offerings—serving, loving, and proclaiming Your goodness in all that we do. Amen.

Benediction:

Go in Advent Love. The God who created the universe dwells with you as you keep watch for the King whose Advent is promised. May your soul glorify the Lord; He who is named Emmanuel, God with us.

Go now to love and serve the Lord
in all that you are,
and all that you do,
and all you will be. *Amen.*

Postlude:

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates



Come and Behold Him

During Advent, we remember the good news of Jesus and why his coming and his return can help us not to fear, no matter what season we are in. This is a season that is truly for all people—whether you're brand new to faith or have been coming to church for years. This is a time to slow down, read scripture, worship together, and celebrate the great joy of Christmas as a church family.

Come and be a part of celebrating Advent with us!



Our Services

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship with Communion:

Wednesday, December 24th - 4pm and 7pm
Both services are held at St. Mark's UCC

Christmas Day Worship with Communion:

Thursday, December 25th, 10:00am at St. James UCC



Our Church Celebrations!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:

December 22nd - Mike Scharl

24th - Jenny Riesterer, Lee Sixel

25th - Raymond Henschel, Noel Wippermann

27th - Ethen Lutzke, Payton Faith Beck

NO ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK

ST. JAMES CHOIR PRACTICE – Tuesday, December 23rd, 6:30pm.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL NEXT WEEK SUNDAY, DEC. 28TH

THE FINANCIAL BOOKS FOR 2025 FOR BOTH CHURCHES CLOSE ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 29TH. Contact Sheila Hemb and St. James or Judy Steinbeck at St. Mark's for more information.

ST. MARK'S GREETER SIGN UP is in the entryway. You may also sign up Online at: <https://bit.ly/greeter2026>



ANNUAL REPORT ITEMS DUE:

ST. MARK'S, YOUR REPORTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, JAN. 2ND

ST. JAMES, YOUR REPORTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, JAN. 9TH.

Email your group's annual reports to Karen at:

stmstjoffice@gmail.com

CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING DATES:

ST. MARK'S: JANUARY 11TH

ST. JAMES: JANUARY 18TH

COME & JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS!

St. James UCC

***1st & 3rd Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.
2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.
Sunday School at St. James 9-10am every Sunday.***

St. Mark's UCC

***1st & 3rd Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.
2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.***

Services are recorded and available on our church YouTube channel:
St. Mark's & St. James UCC

Like us on Facebook 

Check out our Website: www.stmarksstjamesucc.org

Join our prayer team; contact Karen in our Church office: stmstjoffice@gmail.com