

**ST. MARK’S LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING DOCKET
September 9, 2024**

Contents

Attendance Record.....	2
Minutes	2
Council Chair Report	4
Finance Update : July / August 2024 Financial Statements	5
Church Finance Committee Meeting Notes – September 9, 2024	6
Congregational Care and Community Outreach, September 6, 2024.....	8
Update: Private Sponsorship of Magribi Family	9

Appendix

Youth and Young Adult Committee Report
Pastor's Report

Attendance Record

Date: September 12, 2024	Location: St. Mark's Church
Time Started: 19:00	Time Ended: 20:56

Invited	Jan 25	Feb 29	Mar 21	Apr 25	May 30	June 20	Sep 12					
Nathan Cook (S)	P	P	P	P	P	E	P					
Lynda Joyal (T)	E	E	P	E	E	P	P					
Nels Kristenson	-	-	-	P	P	E	E					
Tom Lewis	P	P	P	E	E	E	P					
Jodi Pappel	P	E	P	P	P	P	P					
Cole Parsons (VC)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Marijus Timmerman (C)	-	-	-	P	P	P	P					
Pastor Zsófi (exofficio)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
VACANT												
VACANT												
	Guests											
Signe Jewett				P								

Minutes

- 1) Approval of Agenda for September 12, 2024

MSC CC-2024-46 That the Agenda of September 12, 2024 be approved.

- 2) Approval of Minutes

MSC CC-2024-47 That the Minutes of the Council Meeting dated June 20, 2024 be approved.

- 3) Finance

4) Reports

- a) Chair - Report in Folder
- b) Pastor - Report in Folder

7) Committee Reports

- a) Congregational Care
- b) Refugee Sponsorship
- c) Finance
- d) Y&YA Committee

MSC CC-2024-48 **That Council approve the payment from the St. Mark's Youth Fundraising Account of collected travel funds in the amount of \$120.00 to Nathan Cook to cover costs. (Nathan Cook abstained.)**

MSC CC-2024-49 **That Council supports the Prayer Partners initiative proposed by the Youth and Young Adult Committee and that council agrees to compensate adult participants for the cost of the required Vulnerable Persons Check.**

MSC CC-2024-50 **That Council support the initiative for Youth to paint the Youth Room and expenditures for the activity up to \$200.00.**

e) Property

MSC CC-2024-51 **That the Council approve the expenditure of \$300.00 for a one-hour AED and CPR training session for 10 to 15 congregation members.**

8) New Business

- a) Sunday Service
- b) Phone Hardware

Adjournment

Council Chair Report

For September 12, 2024

Submitted by Marijus Timmerman

Summer has come and gone but the memories will live on I'm sure. It is my hope that yours have been pleasant memories. The return to our season of programming has started with Come Together Sunday and Sunday School Registration. Thanks to those who have been hard at work over the summer cleaning, culling and preparing the church basement for a return to use and thanks to Melissa and the Music Ministry crew for helping provide a welcoming return to our Fall worship.

As you know we have a new Office Administrator, Alison Norberg, who has been getting accustomed to her surroundings and the business operations here at St. Mark's over the past month and a bit. We welcome Alison and we are grateful for her work with us.

Some things to consider:

- The Congregational Care Committee led by Signe will be looking to update our membership list and we as Council members are asked to make some of the calls that will be needed to accomplish this task when the time comes.
- Envelope offering is down almost %50 – ideas?
- Save the date – October 20 “Taste of Syria”
- Keep an eye on household goods that will be required for the Refugee Sponsorship.
- Note the Prayer Partnership initiative and how we may be able to help.
- Sunday School will be up and running but could use some more volunteers – do we know anybody that might like this ministry?

There are many good things happening already and many capable and talented people offering their leadership here at St. Mark's. As I read in an article recently we may be small but we can be mighty.

Finance Update : July / August 2024 Financial Statements

Income

- The decline in giving through envelopes received at Sunday worship services during July and August was significantly greater this year than last. In 2023, July and August envelope giving was just over \$6,000. This year, July and August receipts from envelope giving totaled \$2,171.
- Through the first eight months of the year, overall general offerings are down almost \$4,400. Giving via regular offering envelopes is down over 50%. This has been offset somewhat by an increase in giving via PAD. Loose offerings are down about 50%. The overall decrease in general giving was cushioned by a large one-time donation of securities received in June.

Sources of General Offerings for the period January - August

Source	2023	2024	Change
			-
Envelope Offerings	29,689.72	14,010.00	15,679.72
PAD Offerings	115,881.00	120,880.00	4,999.00
Electronic Transfers	18,412.00	17,365.18	-1,046.82
Loose Offerings	961.25	412.00	-549.25
Gifts of Securities		7,766.10	7,766.10
Canada Helps	96.00	230.40	134.40
Overall General Giving			-4,376.29

Expenses

- Total expenditures YTD by program committees is \$1,600 less than it was at the same time last year. Total expenditures on administration (office related expenses) are down by a similar amount.
- YTD Property-related expenses are about \$1,000 less this year compared to last year.
- YTD Personnel expenses are down almost \$14,000. Some of this can be explained by position vacancies and reduced benefit costs for Office Admin position.
- No benevolence remittances were made to the MNO Synod in July or August. The next remittance will be made in September covering Quarter 3 (\$3,957).

Operating Profit/Loss

- YTD as of August 31, expenses have exceeded income by \$1,352.
- An operating deficit is funded by drawing down cash reserves.

Financial Statements

- A balance sheet as of August 31 and an Income Statement covering the period January through August are available on Google Drive. See Council/Finance Documents.
- The next Budget to Actual expenditures report will be available for the October council meeting.

Church Finance Committee Meeting Notes – September 9, 2024

Present: Lynda Joyal, Cole Parsons, Brian Lorch

1. Business Arising from Meeting Notes from May 5, 2024
 - (a) Payment for custodial contract has been switched to auto-debit from bank account.
 - (b) Trading authorities for the TD Direct Investing Account have been updated. Brian Lorch, Cole Parsons and Lynda Joyal are listed on the account as have trading authority.
 - (c) Record keeping related to VISA purchases. B. Lorch to speak to Pastor about greater adherence to established protocols by cardholders.
 - (d) The 2023 CRA charitable return was successfully filed in June ahead of the submission deadline.
2. Review of July / August financial statements.

No revisions were noted. General offerings given by regular envelopes continue to decline. Compared to 2023, YTD giving via the offering plates is down \$15,700. Some discussion around the effect of not passing an offering plate during the service on giving. No recommended action at this time.

YTD operating deficit stands at just over \$1,200. A one-time donation of securities in June of \$7,800 has helped to offset a year over year decline in general giving of about \$4,400.
3. Donation of securities

A member has donated 30 shares of Royal Bank. The shares have sold resulting in a net gain of \$4,900. This will be reflected in September giving statistics.
4. Bank Reconciliations

L. Joyal to review July and August reconciliation reports.
5. 2025 Budget Cycle

B. Lorch will be sending out requests for input from committees and administration for the 2025 budget will be sent out by September 16. Deadline for receipt of budget requests will be Friday, October 11.

A first draft budget will be ready for presentation to council on October 21.
6. Expenditure request from Youth and Young Adult Committee.

The Y&YA committee is seeking approval for an unbudgeted request of \$960 to support a proposed prayer partner program involving adult members of the congregation and members of the confirmation class. The funds would be used to cover the cost of background record checks of participating adults.

The committee agreed that there is enough wiggle room in the 2024 budget to accommodate the request. The Y&YA budget for local programming has about \$650 remaining to be spent. There are other program committees that are not expected to spend their budgets this year (e.g., Social Ministry).

B. Lorch to communicate our opinion to the committee and the council chair.

7. Office Support for Bookkeeping function

B. Lorch reported that the office administrator was not able to fulfill her bookkeeping support duties this past month with regard to assembling statements and invoices needed by the bookkeeper to complete bookkeeping entries for August.

This should not be an onerous task. Some statements are received in the mail as hard copies and need to be opened and placed in a folder for "Current Month" transactions. Other statements arrive as electronic attachments and can either be printed or uploaded to a Current Month folder on G Drive. The "Current Month" documents are to be ready for pick up by the bookkeeper by the 6th day of month. The bookkeeper was able to complete the August entries only because of being able to access the office email account and gather the needed information.

It is understood that there were extenuating circumstances that impinged on the time of the office administrator. That being said, the time needed to complete the support work mentioned above would be 30 minutes at best. Items received electronically can in theory be handled as they arrive throughout the month to avoid having the work pile up ahead of a deadline.

The committee will monitor the situation in the coming month. If there is no improvement, it will recommend to council that the office administrator's probationary period be extended for three months.

8. Other Business

B. Lorch noted that the lease for our telephone system hardware expires on November 1. The monthly lease payment is \$115. Beginning November 1, we will own the equipment outright and no longer have to pay this fee.

Noted that there is no urgent need to act on replacing the phones. However, council in collaboration with staff, may wish to assess our phone hardware needs as there are known issues with the current messages people hear when calling the church. For example, there is still a reference to Pastor Rick. Many attempts have been made to correct this situation but with no success.

We are currently paying Rogers/Shaw for three outgoing lines. An option might be to purchase one multi-line phone set for the administrator's desk assuming that phones in the other offices and kitchen will continue to work. Our current contract with Rogers/Shaw does not include an answering service but that could be added. With that service, messages could be accessed remotely.

Congregational Care and Community Outreach, September 6, 2024

There have been no appointments to committee membership so I will endeavor to act as a wick to maintain a record of activities within this umbrella group. I see things happening on a more spontaneous basis, but I do intend to implement at least one goal under the Congregational Care Subgroup. Our membership list needs to be reviewed and contact to inactive members needs to be attended to. I will consult with Pastor Z and draft a list of information that needs to be gathered (especially as it relates to Churchwatch data) and create a template to be used as a guide for calls to members. I hope that I can count on council members to make a few of these calls as this is a way of capturing the pulse of the membership through conversation.

Ron and Judy Long continue their work in personal connections with members who are unable to attend in person and will pass along pertinent information when indicated. Ron keeps a roster of home communion participants and communicates with Worship Committee in this activity as well.

The Social Committee has lost its leaders of James Golas and Wade Quehe but they will still continue to participate in the activities of it. I can coordinate in the interim of finding some new participants/ leaders here as well.

An upcoming event on September 28 is a Spaghetti Dinner and desert night followed by games is being planned by Mary Mazur and Rachel Kristenson. It is intended to be an all-ages social event.

Respectfully submitted,
Signe Jewett

Update: Private Sponsorship of Magribi Family

September 12, 2024

The private sponsorship of Abdulaziz, Meryem, Ayse and Hasan Magribi has moved forward since the announcement to the St Mark's congregation in May.

The paperwork for the sponsorship was signed and submitted to CLWR (the sponsorship agreement holder) in April. In June, we received word from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), that our application to sponsor the family has been approved and the documents have been forwarded to the visa office in Turkey. This is a major step that often takes between 12 and 14 months to accomplish. We are thrilled the approval was received so quickly.

Despite the quick approval of our sponsorship application, the processing time for sponsorships in Turkey is somewhere between a year and 18 months. Given that the documents were received in Turkey in June, it is unlikely that the family will receive their visas and travel documents until at least June 2025 or slightly later.

In July we received word from Abdulaziz that things have become more difficult for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Turkish nationals have been targeting Syrian families with increased harassment and in some cases violence. This escalation has been reported in main stream media here in North America. In addition, Syrians are unable to legally work in Turkey. Abdulaziz was doing some work under the table, trying to augment the meager funds that UNHCR provides to them when he was caught by Turkish authorities. He was warned that if he was caught again, he would be deported back to Syria. This is a dire threat as a return to Syria would mean certain death. In order to help out, the family here has been imploring Abdulaziz not to work, and they have been sending small amounts of cash for necessities such as food, diapers for the baby and medical care. The situation is quite precarious.

When word was received that Turkey was becoming increasingly unfriendly to Syrian refugees, I contacted Bob Granke (former CLWR Executive Director) and he agreed to join me in a visit to our member of parliament Terry Duguid. We visited Mr Duguid at the end of July and he asked us to provide evidence of violence against Syrians in Turkey which I did (media stories and videos). He and his staff have pledged to do what they can to follow the case and request a quicker processing time for the application. At the same time, I asked Abdulaziz to write a letter in his own words about his family's fear about their situation in Turkey. The letter was received in early August and the Arabic speaking interlocutor at CLWR translated it for us into English. Here are the contents of that letter:

I am Abdul Aziz Mogribi, writing to let you know the dire / hard situation here, we are living in fear from hatred, and fear of death threats in any time, any moment!

We cannot work at all, and we cannot go out to buy food for the children, we are being subjected to get beaten or killed. We are in fear.

Please help us to have the application processed as soon as possible.

Abul Aziz Mogribi

The letter in Arabic and English has been forwarded to Terry Duguid's office and to the Turkish visa office (via CLWR).

In addition to advocacy work on the file, Ahmad and Khadija Al Khatab and I have been working on fundraising plans for the sponsorship. The extended Syrian family here in Canada and I will be hosting a 'Taste of Syria' evening at St Mark's on Sunday, October 20. The evening will feature an introduction to the Al Khatab/Magribi extended family, a typical Syrian meal, musical entertainment (planned by Sarah Harrington) and an update on the sponsorship. The Syrians figure that they can comfortably cook for a maximum of 50 people so there will be 50 no-cost tickets available for the event. Although there is no cost, attendees can expect that we will be talking about the financial needs of the sponsorship and asking them to donate to or make a pledge to the sponsorship budget. Tickets will be available starting on Sunday, September 22.

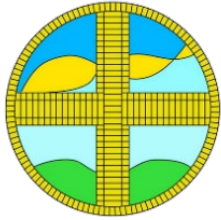
In addition, two other MNO Synod congregations have indicated support for the sponsorship. Gimli Lutheran Church has pledged an initial \$5000 to the fund and is looking forward to hosting a Syrian meal in their congregation to do additional fundraising. I also attended a council meeting in June at Epiphany Lutheran Church and they have indicated an intention to participate, probably by allowing fundraising in their congregation. I await their decision after their September meeting.

By way of update on the finances, with the initial pledge from Gimli and some donations already received, we have raised about \$7500 of the \$30,000 total required. A reminder that some of that \$30K can be in material goods, or complimentary housing as was secured when we sponsored the Jumaa family. Tom Brook and I continue to explore options for free or subsidized housing.

I am also working with the extended family here to create a list of household goods that they know the family will need or find helpful when they arrive. I will assemble the list and publish it on a free app called 'Sign Up'. Folks can check the app for items needed and sign up to provide them as they are able. This will ensure that we don't receive doubles or triples of some items. The catch here is that donors would need to store any items they would like to donate until we are ready to set up the new home as we don't have storage space to keep things until the family arrives.

Once again, I extend thanks from myself and Ahmad and Khadija for the Council's willingness to enter into this private sponsorship. Your support and prayers are appreciated.

Submitted by:
Rhonda Lorch
Co-Sponsor



Youth & Young Adult Ministry Committee

St. Mark's Lutheran Church (SMLC) Winnipeg MB

Committee Meeting Sept 5, 2024 7:30 pm Please advise writer of any errors or omissions

Pastor Zsófi PZ	Rachel Martens RM	Lawrence Gargol LG, co-chair
Wei-An Lau WL	Brenda Catchpole BC	Annette Gargol Ag, co-chair

In attendance / regrets

Item		Action by
1.	Opening Prayer / Agenda Review Agenda: .1 Opening prayer .2 Agenda review & update .3 Subcommittee Review: Confirmation/Youth/Young Adults .4 Other .5 Closing	Info
.2	Subcommittees Review (see attached notes)	
	.1 Confirmation reviewed as follows:	
	.1 Classes will rotate among Messiah, Sherwood Park and SMLC (Feb-Mar); 2x 8wk segments on Sunday afternoon, 2-3:30pm. There will be no Zoom component, but classes will be recorded & available to students. Any support needed from this committee will be clarified closer to SMLC hosting time.	Info
	.2 A curriculum for confirmation age is in planning to occur in youth room for grades 7, 8 & 9 as parallel with Sunday School. Youth leaders/PZ to oversee with possible leadership participation of other SMLC young adults.	
	.3 Synod WinterQuest event in February will be open to youth & confirmation age attendance.	Info
	.4 Confirmation app is in the development similar to the Sunday School app created by Pastor; hopefully maintenance will be passed off to this committee.	
	.5 Budget amount available for events has been confirmed as \$200. This could be used for a social event; perhaps in conjunction with Prayer Partner introductions.	
	.6 Confirmation Sunday is tentatively planned for Oct 27, 2024 for one SMLC member.	Info
	.7 Prayer Partner plan prepared by Brenda was confirmed as generally amazing & well done; and discussed as follows:	
	.1 SMLC eNews and in-person announcements will be planned for next week / week of Sept 9 th .	BC
	.2 Child Abuse / Criminal Records checks for approximately 14 individuals may be a significant cost; SMLC policy, exact amounts and options to cover to be reviewed.	BC
	.3 Student & Prayer Partner social gathering such as a pizza / game party will be considered once there is further progress on Prayer Partners program.	Info
	.2 Youth Group reviewed as follows:	
	.1 Activities are planned & ongoing as per attached summary	
	.2 Mabel Harrington is coming on as new Youth Leader in Training; Nathan is stepping back & attending SMLC events as able.	Info
	.3 Youth Room Painting: a request will be made to the Property Committee to prime to room; take-offs & material costs are being worked out, a proposal will be submitted to council.	WL/RM
	.4 Luther Village Thanksgiving Retreat costs are \$190/\$225 with transportation.	Info
	.5 Nov/Dec request for cookies / pre-made dough to be issued similar to last year; response last year was very good.	LG

	.2	.6	Some events will be planned in conjunction with Faith Lutheran.	Info
		.7	Quiz Night in May will be promoted more city wide.	
		.8	CLAY: Saskatoon, August 14-19, 2025; extended bus trip being considered	
		.9	Fundraisers:	
		.1	Sobey's gift cards as fall fundraiser to be reviewed	LG/Ag
		.2	'Wall of Money' to be considered for during Lent	Info/Youth
		.3	Quiz Night & Auction: donation requests to be made immediately after Christmas in January	Info
		.4	Gift Basket Raffle licence application to be reviewed in February to accommodate advance ticket sales.	Ag
		.10	Honorariums	
		.1	Maximum amount of \$200 was recommend by WL to be presented to Nathan and Rachel in recognition of their work over the past year; a request for approval will be made to Council. are less than mileage amount (\$300ish)	Ag
		.2	Compensation to volunteer leaders for Luther Village SLAW event in July was discussed; employees receive mileage however volunteers do not. Clarification on SMLC mileage policy will be requested for future understandings. Transportation amounts that were collected as part of registration (\$15ppx8 youth=\$120) will be recommended to be provided to Nathan as compensation for gas and vehicle usage.	Info / Ag
		.3	Young Adult (YA) Committee reviewed as follows:	
		.1	June game night was fun but only Wei-Ann & the Gargols	Info
		.2	List of SMLC YAs to be provided for event invitations.	PZ
		.3	Event idea: Amazing Race type night to be investigated	BC
.3	Other	.4	Travelling dinner another idea	Info
		.5	Synod events for faith direction	
		.1	Synod Sept 29 game night event	
		.2	Deacon Michelle, C2D2 program: program of discovering spiritual care	
.3	Other	.3	Synod defined young adults as 18-30 years	
		.1	No response was received to the June in-person announcement requesting a new Committee Member to assist with Youth fundraising.	Info
		.2	Sept 28 th Sunday School inter-generational event being planned: Sunday School hosted spaghetti dinner; Youth hosted ice cream & toppings dessert / Young Adults hosted games & snacks	LG/Ag
		.3	Sept 20, 5pm Counter Protest re 1 Million March at Legislative Bldg	Info
.4			Next meeting tbd.	Info
.5			Closing prayer by Pastor.	Info
Distribution: -all in attendance -SMLC Council Chair, Marijus Timmerman Attachments: -Confirmation Notes -Youth Events Lists -Youth Fundraiser List -Draft Confirmation Students Prayer Partner Plan				

Confirmation Notes:	
2020 confirmand/Class of 2023	Cyan Gargol
2021 confirmands/Class of 2024	Joshua Cook, Mabel Harrington, Dylan Jaquet, Sam Joyal, Don-Han Lau, Jillian Matsubara, Wybie Novak, Emma Palmer, Avery Pauls, Juliet Ring, Everett Smith, Felix Wegert
2022 confirmands (at another church)	Ava Gargol, Taus Christiansen, (Michael Gingrich)
2023 confirmands	Meadow Reider, Suri Christiansen, Henry Harrington, Eric Wegert, (Sarah Gingrich)
2024 confirmand	Jaina Hughesman

Confirmation Students			
2025 confirmands (2 nd Years)	Ella Dojack Sauer Mariela Kisoso Jackson Palmer	Matthew Rach Sari Reider	Ashton Saunders Maximillian Schweizer
2026 confirmands (1 st Years)	Jacob Dale Joyce Fennel	Abigale Mann Calen McNaught	Brendan Sherlock

2024 Youth Events			
January	Manitoba Harvest	April	Siloam Mission Volunteering
	Siloam Mission		Holy Humour Sunday
February	Winter Retreat		Escape room
	Festival Du Voyageur	May	Quiz Night 7-9:30pm
	Gloria Dei Post Clay Event		LV Young Adult Retreat
March	Games Night		Siloam Mission Volunteering
	Synod Event at Gloria Dei		Glenlea delivery
	Palm Sunday Dramatic Reading	June	Pride Parade
	Good Friday Singing		Picnic
	Easter Brunch	July	LV Youth Retreat hosted by SLAW

2024/25 Youth Events			
September 21	Youth Room Painting	February 15	Winter Quest Feb 15
October 11	LV Thanksgiving Retreat	22	(Synod Games Night?)
26	A Maze in Corn	March 1, 8 or 15	Escape Room
November 2	Youth Ministry Round Table event	29	Siloam Mission
16	Games Night	April 19	Easter Brunch (prep on 18 th)
30	Volunteering (Christmas Cheer board?)	May 3	Quiz Night
December 8	Synod event Fort Whyte Advent-ture	4	Synod Learning Event
7 ^{or} 14	Cookie Baking & Decorating	24	Volunteering (Take Pride Wpg)
15	Pageant & Congregation Event	June 1	Pride Parade
January 12	Synod Youth Service	15	Synod Service at King's Park
18	Volunteer at MB Harvest	24 or 28	Picnic Assiniboine Park
		August	Clay Gathering Saskatoon SK

Youth Fundraisers						
		Raised				Balance
2023	Spring Glenlea	\$963.73				
	Easter Brunch	\$598.51				
	Quiz Night	\$386.63				
	Gift Baskets	\$290.00				
	Sobey's gift card	\$516.15				
	Shelmerdine's	\$ 88.60				
2024	Easter Brunch	\$399.39				
	Quiz Night txts	\$800				
	Gift Baskets	\$314				
	Glenlea Spring	\$786.75				
	Silent Auction	\$145				
						\$2796.11*

*To be updated

Draft Prayer Partner Plan for St. Mark's

PLAN SUMMARY

- (1) Select adult partners
 - ☐ Recruit volunteers from the congregation – correspondence explaining the purpose and requirements
 - ☐ Each partner should have a vulnerable sector check (will the church will cover cost?)
 - ☐ Gather some follow-up information to assist with matching
- (2) Confirm youth partners
 - ☐ Send communication to parents seeking their permission
 - ☐ Collect some youth info to assist with matching
- (3) Match adults & youth based on an assessment of interests and where possible use same-sex pairings.
- (4) Arrange a social event for everyone to meet their partner. This would be partly social, partly educational. Include a short demonstration on how to pray for another person, written instructions, and ideally handouts or reference sheets on prayer for takeaway. Communicate matches and copies of written instructions to parents.
- (5) Arrange a wind-up meeting at the one-year mark – encouraging partners of year 1 and 2 youth to continue the relationship.

KEY DECISION

The biggest decision that needs to be made is the degree of interaction we want to occur between the confirmands and the adults. While I see that some churches who implement this program encourage a high degree of interaction (sending messages, buying gifts, potentially meeting outside of church, etc.), many established organizations (Salvation Army Prayer Partners Program, Girl Guides of Canada, Scouts Canada) preclude direct written communications (texting, email, direct messages, social media connections) between youth of this age and adults unless there is a copy to the parents, and preclude meetings or conversations that not in the presence of another adult. Given the age and vulnerability of the children, our inability to monitor the situation, and our lack of expertise on this topic, my recommendation is to follow the guidance of the Salvation Army who have clearly considered this at length and likely have sought expert opinions. All the recommendations that follow are predicated on this assumption.

DETAILS:

(1) Select adult partners

Announcement for E-News:

Hello adult members of St. Marks!

Investing in the youth of our church is one of the most important things we can do. With this in mind, the Youth & Young Adult Team are launching a new initiative, and we are asking for your help. Our goal is to match youth in the confirmation program with adult prayer partners. We hope this project will help our youth feel cared for by the congregation, strengthen their connection to our church, and develop their understanding of the power of prayer. We are looking for adults who meet these criteria:

- Have, or are willing to apply for a Child Abuse Registry Check (costs will be reimbursed)
- Willing to commit until the fall of 2025, with potential to continue
- Willing to regularly pray for the confirmand (ideally daily)
- Would be comfortable being prayer partners with a confirmand whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientation is different from your own
- Willing to meet with the group of other adult prayer partners and confirmands on occasion.

If this sounds like you, please send a quick email indicating your interest to Brenda Catchpole at cognac@shaw.ca

(2) Follow-up email will be sent to adult applicants to collect some follow-up information:

- Name
- Contact email
- Do you have a current vulnerable persons check?
- What pronouns do you use? (e.g. He/him, she/her, they/them)
- Favourite hobbies
- Favourite sports

(3) Confirm youth partners

Letter to confirmation parents:

Dear Parents,

The Youth and Young Adults Team at St. Mark's is launching a new initiative this fall that aims to match confirmation students with adult prayer partners. The expectation is that the partners will pray for each other during the year, and our hope is that this will help strengthen your child's bond with our church, help them understand they are valued and cared for in our congregation, and help to teach them the power of prayer.

With your permission, we will assign an adult volunteer from the congregation to be your child's prayer partner. The partners will meet at a group event this fall. Following that, the partners are asked to pray for each other daily. We hope that when they see each other at church they will exchange a smile or a few words during coffee. However, there will be no private meetings or communication of any kind. We hope to follow up with another group meeting next fall to establish whether your child's partner can continue for another year, or possibly introduce them to their next prayer partner.

While this is a voluntary program, we hope [your child] will participate. If we can match [your child] with an adult prayer partner, please respond to this email with the following information.

Confirmand's Name:

Confirmand's Pronouns: (e.g. He/him, she/her, they/them)

Parent's Name:

Confirmand's Favourite Hobbies:

Confirmand's Favourite Sports:

How many years of confirmation classes have already been completed: 0 1 2

Note: If at any time you have concerns about the program, or suggestions for improvement, please contact Pastor Zsofi (pastor@stmarkslutheran.ca) or Brenda Catchpole (cognac@shaw.ca).

(4) Arrange a social event for everyone to meet their partner. It would be partly social and partly educational:

Written Instructions:

Welcome Prayer Partners! We are very excited to be launching this program with you!

We ask your help with the following instructions:

- While we are all together, take time to get to know your partner a little bit, including communicating the kinds of things you'd like your partner to pray for (e.g. for success at school, for help with peer pressure, for good health, etc.)
- Every day, pray for your prayer partner.
- When you see each other at church, feel free to say hello in public areas. You may even have time in the coffee area to see if your partner has any new prayer requests.
- There won't be any other communication – emails, texts, direct messages, social media connections etc. The only exceptions are messages sent through the confirmand's parent(s).
- If you have any concerns about the program or suggestions for improvements, please contact Pastor Zsofi (pastor@stmarkslutheran.ca) or Brenda Catchpole (cognac@shaw.ca)

- [Copy to parents letting them know who their child's prayer partner is]

I'm hoping Pastor Zsofi can do a short demo on simple prayers that the confirmands can do, and probably also a sample prayer for the adults. Potentially we could film this for anyone who misses the event.

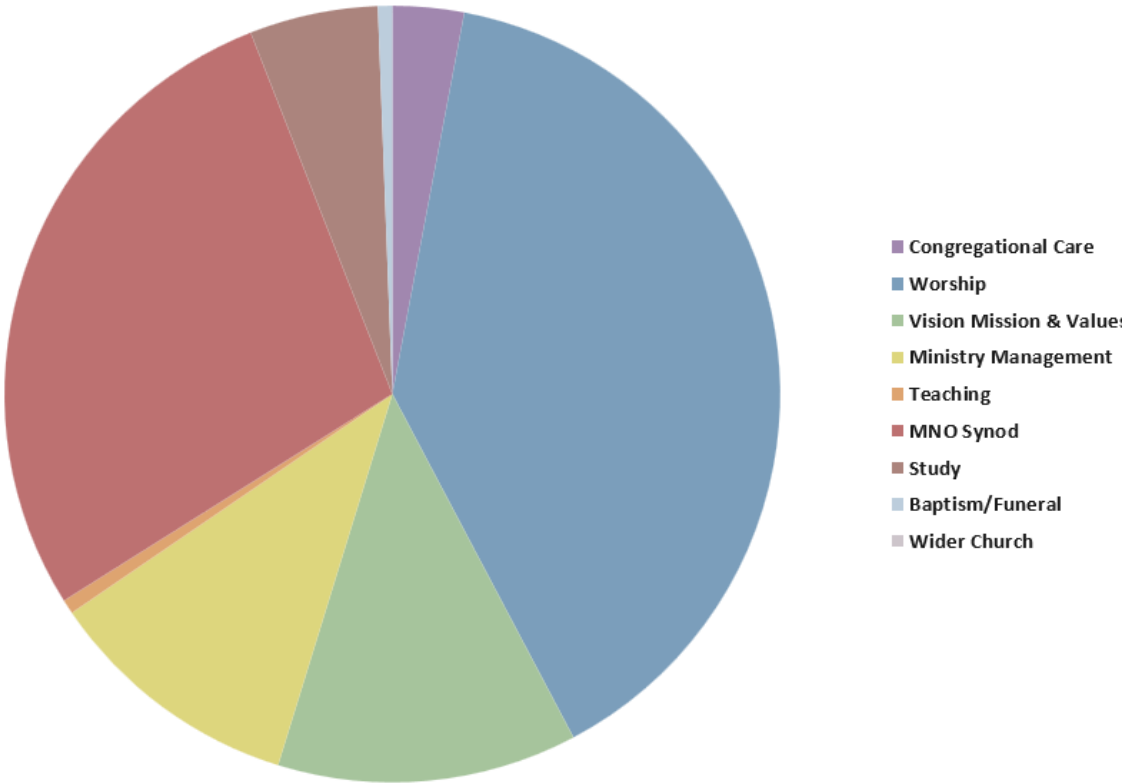
It would also be nice to have some written information on how to pray, the kinds of things to pray for for your partner that participants can take away with them.

(5) Wind-up meeting at the one-year mark – encouraging partners of year 1 and 2 youth to continue the relationship. This is also the start of the match for other partners.

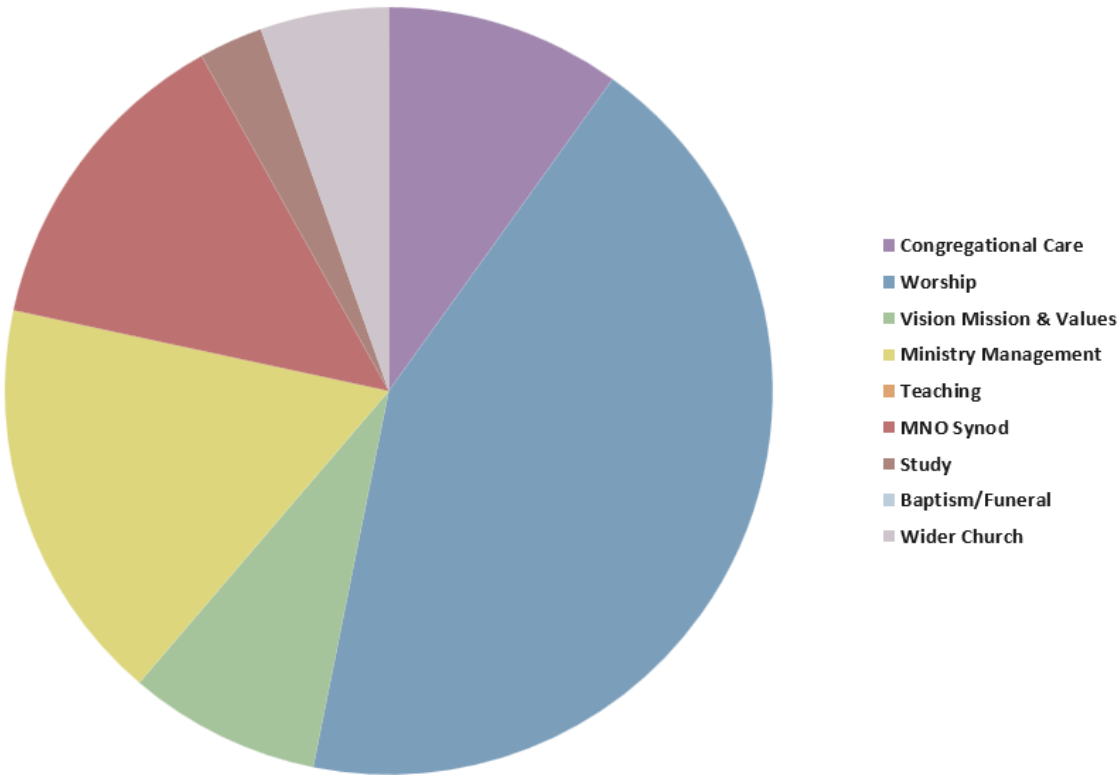
References:

Salvation Army: <https://www.salvationist.org.uk/sites/salvationists/files/resources/2022-07/Prayer%20Partners%20Introduction.pdf>

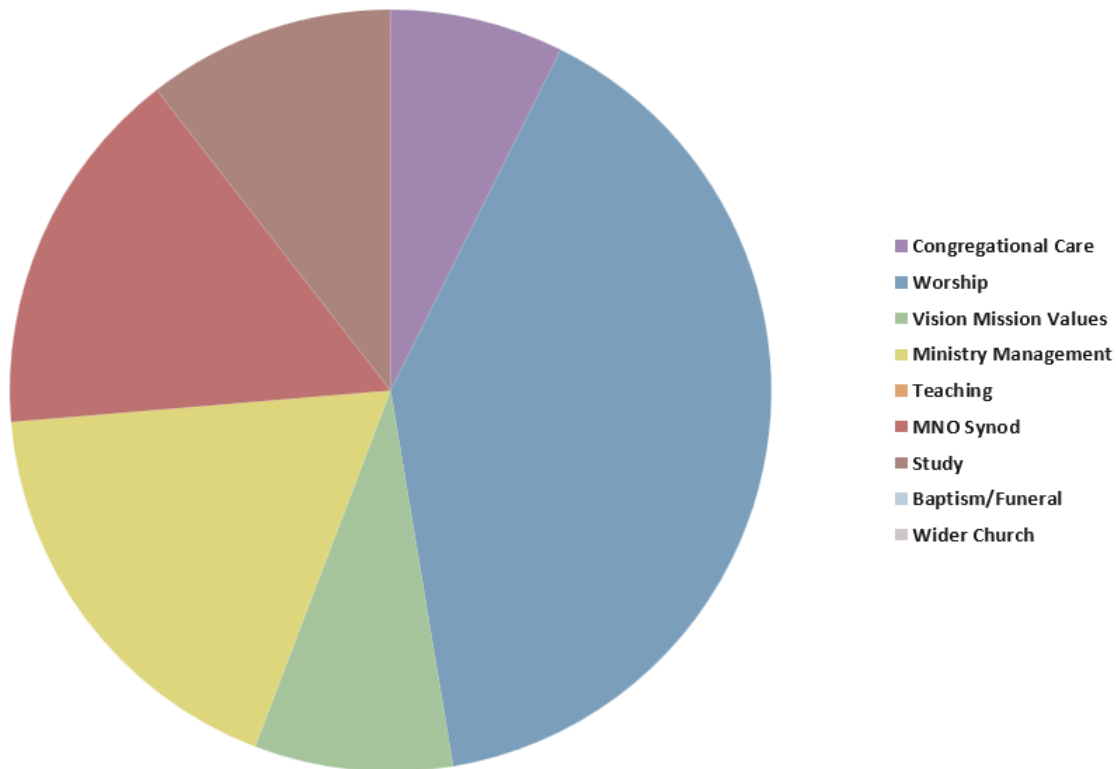
JUNE



JULY



AUGUST



Where've We Been, Where We Are, Where We're Going

Ministries of St Marks – In June, my attention was focused on Children's Ministry, though I was also attentive to the office staffing and the need for supervision once we've hired someone. I sent out an invitation to the graduate families for our worship service on June 23rd. And I worked on a poster and announcement for the July Shared worship summer series with Gloria Dei and Messiah to be shared across congregations. In July, I began visits to a few of our elderly members as it seemed to be a good time health wise for extended care facilities. Season of Creation worship resources were made available for the year, so I began planning those services soon as most of the summer has already been worked out. Also in July, plans were made for a basement cleanup, which began in earnest and continued through July and August. The Worship Committee made plans for the summer weeks: which weeks staff would be away - where we would make use of the ELCIC's Summer Sermon Series, and where we would need supply.

The month of September has already begun with some ministries in full swing: Music Ministry is actively preparing for eventful worship. Alisha and I have met to plan out the Sunday School program rollout, which began with the gifting of Bibles and blessing of Backpacks and Children's Worship Service on September 1st. Sunday School Registration will commence on the 8th, and I am in the finalization stages of building the new Children's Ministry WebApp. Soon after finishing that I will put together the Confirmation one. Confirmation will begin at the end of the month and is taking place on Sunday afternoons in the city-wide program. Youth & Young Adult Committee in meeting in early September to finalize the program year and ideas – it's going to be a busy Youth and Young Adult year with many opportunities to gather and have fun! I've been invited to celebrate Christina Taylor's birthday later in September, and I am hopeful that a couple of Pastor Parties are going to happen now that autumn is upon us.

Ministry Management – Alison was hired in June as our new Office Admin and began work on July 24th. She is using the quieter time over the summer to familiarize herself with the workspace and how she would like to work in the St Mark's office. I made a point of checking in with Wei-An and Melissa a couple of times through the summer to get a sense of how the previous year's programming went for each of them, how I

can continue to improve for them, and how they would envision this coming year's programming going for each of them. I look forward to the wonderful ministry they are each bringing to St Mark's this year. Melissa and I spoke about vacation time and began planning what needed to be in place for September.

The office staff will be having a meeting in early September to discuss supportive collaboration and workflow. I am planning a staff check in with all staff for October, as it coincides with the 90-day review for the new Office Administrator.

Even though I was away for most of the early beginnings of Alison's start in the office, I have been impressed with how quickly she has absorbed information, identified significant areas for improvement, and brought her own expertise and wisdom to conversations about efficiency, congregational stewardship of time, money, and abilities, confidentiality and care. We have had multiple conversations about reclaiming space and submitting a proposal to council about issues that will need to be addressed going forward for the sake of good ministry.

Wider Church – For most of the summer, there was a nice break from the wider church responsibilities. But there were a few shared ministry opportunities throughout the summer months. July had terrific success with the Shared Summer Worship Series with Gloria Dei and Messiah Lutheran churches – with almost 100 people at each service, well and evenly represented by each congregation. It was a true delight to have such vibrant times of worship with each other. I do hope we consider other opportunities like that to try again. I even got an email from the Canada Lutheran asking for some of the photos that Cyan Gargol took of the worship at St Marks for the next publication!

I am a member of the Joint Diocesan/Synod 2SLGBTQIA+ Committee, and have been actively meeting with that group over the summer. We recently debriefed the Pride Parade Event, and have made plans for moving forward with other elements of Education, Advocacy, and Policy. This committee will meet sparingly over the rest of the year.

As part of the MultiFaith Forum connections and idea-sharing, I met with an Architect from the Shared Ground Research Project that pairs with non-profit organizations to study property viability and grant application for development. I am currently enlisting a small number of congregation members who've reached out to me previously about future plans for the congregation and church building to gather and begin conversations about the future of St Marks and what kinds of possibility lay with our Vision, Mission, and Values. I do not know what this group will determine, or present to Council or the congregation, but I do hope that Council will pray that they are open to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that God grows something from the conversations.

Personally – I was able to take some time away from work to be with family and close friends who all seemed to want to visit us in Winnipeg at the same time! First Paul's sister and family, then his parents, then we took some time for holidays from July 29th through August 12th and to spend some of that time visiting my parents and sisters in Victoria. And then a visit from our goddaughter and parent all before our small one begins school for the first time. Pastoral Care was in place in case of emergencies as necessary at that time.

The trip to visit my parents brought up some tough conversations and a time of deeper discernment for my siblings and I, as well as for Paul and me. Please pray that God continues to support us as we all work towards the best life options for our aging parents.

STATISTICS

HR Reporting

SYNOD GUIDELINES		June (Guidelines)	YEAR TO DATE (Guidelines)
Days of the Year	366	30	182
Workdays (<i>5-day work week</i>)	251	21 (21)	115 (126)
Days Off	104	09 (09)	49 (52)
Statutory Holidays	011	00 (00)	04 (04)
Vacation Days	D-26	--	04
(<i>incl. days off + D-02 rollover</i>)	S-04	--	01
Study Days	014	--	05
(<i>incl. days off</i>)			
Sick Leave	018	--	04
SYNOD GUIDELINES		July (Guidelines)	YEAR TO DATE (Guidelines)
Days of the Year	366	31	213
Workdays (<i>5-day work week</i>)	251	16 (21)	131 (147)
Days Off	104	09 (09)	58 (61)
Statutory Holidays	011	01 (01)	05 (05)
Vacation Days	D-26	04	08
(<i>incl. days off + D-02 rollover</i>)	S-04	--	01
Study Days	014	--	05
(<i>incl. days off</i>)			
Sick Leave	018	01	05
SYNOD GUIDELINES		August (Guidelines)	YEAR TO DATE (Guidelines)
Days of the Year	366	31	244
Workdays (<i>5-day work week</i>)	251	12 (21)	143 (168)
Days Off	104	06 (09)	64 (70)
Statutory Holidays	011	01 (01)	06 (06)
Vacation Days	D-26	09	17
(<i>incl. days off + D-02 rollover</i>)	S-04	02	03
Study Days	014	--	05
(<i>incl. days off</i>)			
Sick Leave	018	01	06

Congregational Reporting

Baptism – n/a

Reception by Transfer, Confirmation/Affirmation – n/a

Death – 01

2024-08-13 YAGER, Joanne

Removal by Request - n/a

Pastoral Acts(year to date)

Baptisms	00	Confirmations	00
Weddings	00	Funerals	01

Congregation Activities (year to date)

Worship Services	10 (43)	Communion Services	09 (32)
Baptismal Counselling	-- (--)	Wedding Counselling	-- (--)
Visitation/Family Prayer	10 (28)	Council Meetings	01 (07)
Meetings	05 (22)	"Home" Communions	02 (07)
Confirmation Classes	-- (08)	Other Events	04 (13)
Hospital Visits	02 (07)	Staff Meetings	02 (07)

Wider Church Responsibilities (year to date)

MNO Meetings/Events	04 (10)	Mentorship & Collegiality	02 (13)
Other Meetings/Events	01 (10)	MNO Synod Leadership Conference	☺