

## E-Messenger

**Our Mission Statement** To build a family of believers who glorify God and help each other become fully devoted followers of Jesus

# ADVENT 2015 at St. Mark's

# Christ is Here

Nov 29 - "God is . .in Us"

Dec 6 - "God is . .among Us

Dec 13 - "God is . .for Us" (Love)

Dec 20 - "God is . .with Us"

Dec 24 - "God is . .here!"

Christmas Eve Services

3:00 pm 6:00 pm (childcare) 7:30 pm (childcare)

Proceeds of Christmas Eve offering to Health Clinic in Morogoro, Tanzania. Read more page 2



### Jesus Christ becomes Incarnate at Christmas

Advent helps us remember the coming of Jesus Christ.

It is a wonder that the everywhere and always present, all powerful, all knowing God of the universe chose to limit himself as the person Jesus Christ. God restricted himself to the presence, power and knowledge of a person.

God becoming a person is a greater shift than a person becoming an ant, if that were even possible. This analogy does not diminish people but rather expresses the divine awesome otherness of God and the miracle of the incarnation.

God did not hang on to greatness, instead he voluntarily became like us.

Why would God do such a thing? There can be no other explanation but divine love. And where love seems an inadequate explanation, perhaps the inadequacy is in our comprehension of God's love.

Read Philippians 2:5-11 aloud. Then take some time to consider what Paul says to you in those verses.

Jesus came, and is coming again, because he loves.

*Pastor Keith*



# GOD | AT | WORK

One of the privileges I have each year is to write a brief (albeit incomplete) summary of some of our ministries at St. Mark's. I especially try to mention ministries that are newer or changing. Please read, enjoy, and celebrate this sampling of God at work among us....

As we look back over the past year and anticipate the future, we are thankful for God's mercy and grace as he works among and through us.

We continue to be engaged in effective ministries around the world and at home. We are learning and doing as we glorify God and become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Mission and ministry has grown in 2015.

**(Continued on Page 6 God at Work)**

(from page 1)

## Christmas Eve Offering



It's the most wonderful time of the year, and you have probably noticed the display in the Narthex describing this year's Christmas Eve

project. Uмба & Ngoy Kalangwa, our missionaries in Morogoro, Tanzania are dreaming of a renovated clinic and adding a lab and bath-

rooms. We can fulfill that wish and help provide health care in a part of the world where malaria, HIV, TB and other diseases run rampant.

Please give prayerfully, joyfully and generously!



## A FAMILY CHRISTMAS PROGRAM: BETHLEHEM BOUND!

This is a one-of-a-kind, first ever (at St. Mark's) Christmas program for children and their families. In just one afternoon, families will come to church to create props, rehearse, and present a full Christmas production!

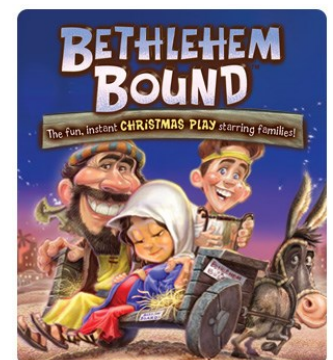
We will join Marty and Ramona, a Bible-times couple, as they lead the way on this journey to Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth. They'll cross paths with Mary and Joseph, a musical caravan, Wise Ones going to meet the baby King, harmonic angels, and shepherds with a flock of inspiring sheep - all played by families decked out with the props they've made!

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this fun and unique Christmas program production.

STEP 1: Families **arrive at 4:00** for scene assignment and rehearsal

STEP 2: Bethlehem Bound **production will begin at 5:30** (CONGREGATION IS INVITED)

STEP 3: A **cast party** will be held immediately following the performance. Everyone will celebrate being a part of this amazing play, and focusing on the true meaning of Christmas.



# NEW LIFE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS CHRISTMAS PARTY

December 12th, 6:00 pm the New Life Class will have their annual Christmas party. The event will be hosted by Frank & Nadine Wilkerson in their home at 1208 Kingsway in Yukon. The party will include a covered dish meal and there will be a gift exchange. For more information contact the Wilkerson's at 494-7928.



The Student Ministry will host a parent meeting on Sunday, December 6th following church. A meal will be provided and we will be discussing upcoming events such as our retreats and spring break mission trip opportunities. We will also have child care for those who need it.

## Choir Christmas Program December 13, 11:00 am

Our chancel choir will be sharing God's love through the sounds of Christmas on Sunday morning, December 13th. We are combining the 8:30 & 11:00 congregations for that one week to allow more people to attend. Join us as we explore the majesty and wonder of Christ's arrival on earth. Chris it Here!



**STEPHEN  
MINISTRY**  
*Christ Caring for People  
through People*

### Stephen Ministers are there to Listen?

A Stephen Minister is available to be there for you. Call Gwen Sears (261-6019), Jan Greve (350-0959), Dorthy Lynch

(789-2556) or Carla Brueggen (203-8555) for more information.

**Faith Promise Stories - If you have a testimony to share about how God made a way for you to fulfill your Faith Promise, please contact Becky Roman or Keith Cressman.**

## Join us as we go Caroling

Everyone is invited to join us on Wednesday, December 16th, at 6:30 as the children, members of the choir and anyone else who would like to spread some Christmas cheer head out and carol. It's always a great time and will truly help you get in the true spirit of Christmas.







**CDO Christmas Program - December 10**

CDO children - 6:00 pm

**Choir Christmas Program - December 13**

11:00 am - Combining 8:30 am & 11:00 am Services

**Christmas Piano Concerts - December 13**

Concerts 4 pm & 6 pm Students of Christy Kiespert

**Church Caroling - December 16**

All Invited 6:30—8:00

**Christmas Eve Services - December 24**

3:30 (No childcare) - 6:00 (childcare) - 7:30 (childcare)

## Second Winders

### Christmas Trip - Dec 10th

Come join us on December 10th, for our Christmas trip. You can sign up on the church office counter or contact Joy Imel.

We will leave St. Mark's at 5 pm to travel to Monterey Jack's Restaurant in Midwest City. After the meal we will go to Johnson Central Park to see 35 professionally painted murals depicting traditional Christmas scenes with a nostalgic view of Christmases past.

Each grouping of pictures will have a recorded story teller or song.

From there we will drive through the Holiday Lights Spectacular at Joe Barnes Park. Cost: Meal on your own plus \$6 for transportation and donations at displays.



This week we are kicking back into full gear in the Student Ministry! Please let me know if you have any questions or need anything regarding these or any other items.

**Wednesday, December 2nd**-As part of a unique ministry experience we will be hosting a home and home with New Covenant UMC Youth. This Wednesday we will travel to Edmond, OK to join them for youth programming. Please be at church no later than 6pm to ride along with the youth group. We will return by 8:30pm.

**Sunday, December 6th**-The Student Ministry will host a parent meeting following church. A meal will be provided and we will be discussing upcoming events such as our retreats and spring break mission trip opportunities. We will also have child care for those who need it.

We will have regular Sunday evening programming. This means we will have small groups at 6pm and finish around 7:30pm. Hope to see you all there!

**PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE**

[www.stmarkssm.com](http://www.stmarkssm.com) as there are new announcements about our upcoming retreats and Christmas party!

*You are invited December 13*

*4:00 pm & 6:00 pm*

## Christmas Concert

*Presented by the students of*

*Christy Kiespert*

**2015**

**2016 SPRING ENROLLMENT NOW OPEN**



Join thousands of believers this Spring on an epic journey into God's story.

Perspectives brings fresh knowledge and understanding of God's unchanging purposes and why they're relevant to your life.

**OPEN ENROLLMENT! INVITE FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND REGISTER TODAY.**

Thursdays 6-9 pm January 7-May 5, 2016 BCM Building (Oklahoma City University)  
For more information contact Emily @ 405-323-8447 or [perspectivesokc@gmail.com](mailto:perspectivesokc@gmail.com)



**MISSION:** St. Mark's Children's Ministry exists to partner with parents to equip, train, and release children to be passionate disciples filled with the heart of Jesus to minister today!

**"Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."**

**~Matthew 19:14**

**SUNDAY MORNINGS:** Time: 9:30 am - 12:00 pm  
Room: Brown Room

Age: Kind. - 4th grade  
Program: The Adventure

Sunday morning, our goal is to teach the Bible, plain and simple. We believe the Word of God is essential to study and learn in order to grow in faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. Children are encouraged to bring their personal Bibles from home in order to practice looking up Scripture. If a child does not have a Bible, we will give one to the child for them to take home and keep.

During Hour 1, 9:45-10:45, children get an overview of the day's Bible lesson and do a craft, game, or activity related to that Bible story.

During Hour 2, 11:00-Noon, children spend 25-30 minutes in a large group lesson time, then split into small groups for the last half hour. Small groups are divided according to grade.

## **WEDNESDAY EVENING:**

**Dates:** Aug. 26 - Dec. 9

**Time:** 6:30-8:00 p.m.

**Age:** 4-4th grade

**Room:** Brown Room

**Program:** Discipleship Junction

# **Happy Birthday, Jesus!**

For hundreds of years, people waited for the Savior to arrive. But who would it be? And what would he be like? In Happy Birthday Jesus!, kids embark on a journey through the Bible to discover God's plan for salvation. From the early prophecies to the angels' joyful announcement, children will learn about the character, the name, and the person of Jesus. Then it's time for the ultimate birthday celebration!

Throughout the series, children will find that:

- We need a Savior
- God had a wonderful plan
- God keeps His promises
- Christ is our hope

Dec. 9: Happy Birthday, Jesus Memory Verse: John 1:14

Dec. 16: Caroling

Dec. 23 & 30 - NO DJ Christmas Break



### (Continued From page 2—God at Work)

**Missions.** We began supporting three new missionaries this year. We hosted *Perspectives*, which is a world/local mission course. Those who attended gained a deeper understanding of God's desire to reach the lost and are motivated to be involved in ministry and mission. A team ministered again on the streets of *Mexico City* through *MEFI*. A student ministries team ministered among the poor in Memphis through *Street Reach*. Closer to home, we participate in *Project Transformation*, a reading program at *Council Grove* elementary, a service project at *Overholser Elementary*, the *Food Bank*, *Skyline Urban* ministry, *Youth and Family Service* at Yukon, and packed food to send around the world through *Stop Hunger Now*. *Faith Promise* continues to be a successful and significant funding mechanism to support mission work. This year we are able to increase *UM apportionment* support as we move back toward 100%. Additionally, *UMW* participates in several mission projects and involves the congregation in several fundraisers to support various *UMW* global mission efforts. *Kings & Queens* ministry with families who have special needs children has taken root. Attendance and volunteer participation is growing. We have already reached our 2015-2016 goal and are looking beyond it. We are thankful for the *NPNP conference grant* that helps us launch and staff this caring ministry with talented people with specialized training.

**Stephen Ministry** continues to wonderfully share Jesus' love with people during transitional times of life. We have hosted city-wide and regional events. Ministry recipients include people outside our membership. SM trained servants also assist by making hospital visits.

**Outreach** efforts are broad and diverse. We have held open-to-neighbors *picnics/parties* at a nearby park and on our lawn. A guest recently shared that while dining at a local restaurant, some of our members introduced themselves and invited them to attend again. We moved a VBS style event, *Bible Club*, to the local park so that neighborhood children could attend without needing transportation. We continue to bring children from nearby apartment complexes to church onboard *church vans*. This summer we started a *Sunday morning breakfast* for hungry kids who arrive on the vans. We held multiple *movie nights* on the lawn and invited the neighborhood. *Second Winders* continues to attract friends for fellowship and fun. Our most effective outreach efforts continue to be *members personally inviting un-churched* acquaintances and friends to worship services and other events.

**Financials:** St. Mark's enjoys a history of strong and committed financial support from a broad base of congregational donors. The past 30 months have witnessed a significant decrease in donations. It appears this is the result of macro-economic factors, expensive government policies, and a weakening employment market. The greatest impact of the change in financial support was absorbed by reducing staff size, salary freezes/decreases, cutting benefits, and reducing the percentage of apportionments we paid. While the global conditions may or may not be improving, St. Mark's appears to have bottomed out and we are beginning to show signs of renewed stability. At this time, we are making service and financial commitments for 2016. The level of giving to St. Mark's appears to be increasing for 2016. As each member is involved are ministries are better funded.

**Discipleship** is a strong root at St. Mark's. Sunday and Wednesday classes and studies are the backbone. They include all ages and a wide range of topics. *Bible Study Fellowship* has a positive impact on the lives of members.

**Mission Strategy.** We tweaked our mission statement to read "*To build a family of believers who glorify God and help each other become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.*" Our mission strategy may undergo refinement. In 2016, we will participate in the *SHIFT consulting process* with other churches in the district to better define, target and revise our mission strategy.

I am looking forward to ministry with each of you in 2016 as we serve Jesus Christ together.

Your Brother in Christ,  
Pastor Keith

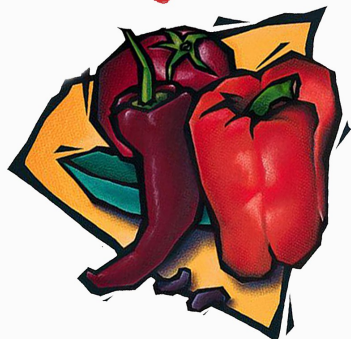


# St. Mark's UMC - December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 Christ is Here		1	2 6 pm Youth travel to have joint meeting with New Covenant	3 6 pm Stephen Ministry Cont. Ed. 6 pm Good News Christmas Party	4	5
6 Communion 9:45 Family Worship 12 Parent Meeting 2 Charge Conference 4 Bethlehem Bound	7 	8	9	10  5pm Second Winder Holiday Trip 6 pm CDO Christmas Program	11 6:00 pm Kings and Queens 	12 2 & 7 pm Oklahoma Chorale 6 pm New Life Class Christmas Party
13  11 am Choir Program 4 & 6 Kiespert student Piano Concerts	14  9:45 am - J.I.M. Circle	15  7:00 pm Bertha Circle	16 6:30 pm Church Caroling 	17 5:00 pm TOPS Christmas Party	18	19
20 11 Children BD Party for Jesus 2 Youth Progressive Christmas Dinner	21  For Unto Us a Child is Born	22	23	24 3:30, 6:00, 7:30 Christmas Eve Services 	25  Celebrating the Birth of Christ	26
27 10:00 am Combined Worship Sunday Weekly 8:30 am - Worship 9:45 am - Sunday School 9:45 am - Family Worship 9:45 am - Children's Adventure 11:00 am - Worship 11:00 am - Wee Worship 11:00 am - J.U. (youth) 11:00 am - Discipleship 4:30 pm - Student Leadership	28 Monday Weekly 9:30 am - CDO 1:00 pm - Bridge 2:00 pm - Bible Study 6:00 pm - Girls Scouts 6:30 pm - Cub Scouts 7:30 pm - Boy Scouts	29 Tuesday Weekly 9:30 am - CDO	30 Wednesday Weekly 6:00 pm - Strength Class 6:30 pm - Discipleship Junction 6:30 pm - Student Ministry 6:30 pm - Adult Studies 6:30 pm - Prayer Team 7:30 pm - Choir	31 Thursday Weekly 9:30 am - CDO 5:30 pm - TOPS 6:30 pm - Worship Team	 Christ is Here	

Mark your calendar and get working on your special recipes

ST. MARK'S UMC 1ST ANNUAL  
**CHILI COOKOFF**  
 + SECOND ANNUAL  
**DESSERT COOKOFF**



**JANUARY 10, 2016**  
**5:00 PM**  
 REGISTER AT CHURCH OR  
 at [STMARKSBETHANY.COM](http://STMARKSBETHANY.COM)

## A Very Merry A Cappella Christmas

Saturday, December 12, 2015 at 2:00pm and 7:00pm  
 St. Mark's United Methodist Church



The OK Chorale will entertain everyone of all ages during our annual Christmas show this year. The show features the entire OK Chorale plus several of our outstanding barbershop quartets. It's a family show you won't want to miss.

Ticket prices if purchased **before** Monday, December 6:

\$13 for adults

\$8 for students and seniors

Ticket prices if purchased **on/after** Monday, December 6:

\$15 for adults

\$10 for students and seniors

Get your tickets from David Roman, any OK Chorale member or call 405-848-SING (7464)

# December HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Bruce	Barajas	Mary	Holliday	Kelli	Pavelko
Laura	Brown	Devonte	House	Sharon	Payne
Angel	Bushey	Gabrielle	Jones	Megan	Pedigo
Selah Grace	Cassidy	Brian	Kiespert	Wyatt	Pedigo
Jamarion	Collins	Christine	Kiespert	Betty	Pope
Kirsten	Collins	Michael	Kilby	Beverly	Ray
Don	Deal	J.B.	King	Becky	Roman
Mildred	Dix	Donna	Lautzenhiser	Stevi	Ryan
Billy	Fallon	Ashley	Lusk	Robert	Sample
Jamie	Fallon	Jarrel	Lyon	Steven	Shenold
Joelle	Ferguson	Sara	McLain	Ginger	Shull
Josie	Ferguson	Avery	Meisenburg	Jay	Skinner
Matt	Ferguson	Tate	Miller	Kaylyn	Skinner
Deloris	Freeland	Draven	Montesano	Kylie	Snapp
Gabriel	Freeland	Evelyn	Moore	Analiese	Steffin
Christine	Funk	Casey	Morford	Sandy	Tull
Don	Greve	Elizabeth	Morford	Margaret	Turner
Donna	Harder	Grayson	Mumme	Patricia	Vasquez
Logan	Harrison	Charlie	Parker	Bella	Vinson
Evy	Hickman	Alexa	Patterson	Zuri	Vinson
Miller	Hines	Chris	Pavelko	Elaine	Webster

## Facts and Figures

2015 Budget .....	615,000.00
Rec'd toward Operating 11/29/2015 .....	5,597.45
<b><u>Year to Date</u></b>	
Rec'd toward Operating 11/29/2015 ....	512,712.70
Expenditures 11/29/2015 .....	494,442.67
<b><u>Sunday, November 29, 2015</u></b>	
Sunday School .....	132
Worship .....	128

## Prayer Box

### Members, Active others known Ill or Hospitalized

#### Members, others needing prayer

Michelle Funk	Beverly Bevins	Talbot Family
Lois Ballard	Bonifield Family	Brehm Family
Billie Blake	Bill Rosenthal	Jamie Wright
Shull Family	Don Greve	Romona McKibben
Helen Freeman	Hudson Haws	Josh Hayden
Jean Schneider	Steve & Beverly Clark	
Margaret Turner	Katheryn Hutchison	
J..R. Cornelison Family	(Cheryl Andrews, Funks, Young's)	



8140 NW 36th, Bethany, OK 73008  
405-789-9033

### **St. Mark's Staff**

**Keith Cressman, Pastor**  
**Becky Roman, Mission & Music Director**  
**Sharon Hunt, Early Childhood Ministries Director**  
**Alicia Schneider, Children's Minister**  
**Kings & Queens Director, Amanda Peters**  
**John Hollon, Student Minister**  
**Austin Miller, 5th & 6th Grade Minister**  
**Pat Morford, Administrator, Communications**  
**Christy Kiespert, 8:30 Keyboardist**  
**Kevin & Jackie Swedlow, 9:45 Leaders of Worship**  
**Kaleb Siler, 9:45 Leaders of Worship**  
**Roger Pautsch, 11:00 Organist**  
**Phillip Bond, Accountant**