

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
201 N DIVISION AVENUE
POLO, IL 61064
Church Phone: 815-946-2919
Email: stmarkspolo@frontiernet.net
Website: stmarkspolo.com

January
2026

Happy
2026
New Year

January 2026 St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Polo, Illinois (815) 946-2919

E-mail: stmarkspolo@frontiernet.net Website: stmarkspolo.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Work at Second Hand Rose Dec. 30, 31, Jan 2, 3 rd		1 Happy New Year! (No Prayer Partners)	2	3
4 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship	5 Sort clothes for Second Hand Rose	6	7	8 10:00 Prayer Partners	9 Deadline to submit committee reports for Annual Report	10
11 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship 11:30 Church Council Meeting after worship	12 5:00-6:30pm Community Meal at FUM	13	14	15 10:00 Prayer Partners	16	17
18 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship	19	20 9:00am Quilters Deadline to submit articles for February Newsletter	21	22 10:00 Prayer Partners	23	24
25 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship	26	27	28			

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship Assistant</u>	<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Tellers:</u> Julie Hoak, volunteer
January 4	Tracey Anders		
January 11	Julie Hoak		<u>Altar Guild:</u> Cliff & Amy Bardell
January 18	Trish Patterson		<u>Head Usher:</u> Cindy Schryver
January 25	Beth Wiegmann		



**ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**
201 N. Division Avenue, Polo, IL 61064

Email: stmarkspolo@frontiernet.net
Church office: 815-946-2919
Website: stmarkspolo.com
Pastor Scott Ralston

Mission statement: *St. Mark's ELCA is a community of believers who gather to hear God's Word in Christ; worshipping, serving, and proclaiming God's love for all people and the world.*



Annual Reports due!

If you are part of a committee, please make sure to have your annual report submitted to the office ASAP to be included in the annual report.



Save the Date!
Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, February 1st after worship



Pennies from Heaven donations needed!

The Pennies from Heaven fund has been depleted and there are people in Polo in need of help. Any donations are appreciated. Make checks out to St. Mark's and we will send them to the Polo Council of Churches.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, beloved friends,

January finds me driving again — noticing the frost on the trees in the early morning, finishing up visits, settling back into familiar routines — and finally pausing to take a breath and reflect once more on Christmas.

This season brings many things with it. Joy and laughter. Memories and traditions. Long drives that bring us together. Carols sung in familiar places. The work of preparing, giving, receiving, and sharing meals with family and friends. And for many of us, Christmas also carries quieter moments — moments shaped by struggle, loss, or the ache of missing someone who was dearly loved. Often, it's all there at once.

Even though Christmas Day has passed by the time you read this, its impact still lingers. In the church, Christmas is not confined to a single day — it stretches on, reminding us that God's gift does not disappear when the decorations come down. Soon we will move into the season of Epiphany, when we celebrate the revealing of Christ to the world: the star that guided the magi, the waters of baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the quiet miracle at Cana where water was turned into wine. But before we move on too quickly, it is good to linger for a moment longer.

At Christmas, God chose to enter a fragile and broken world — not because we had earned it, and not because we had finally gotten things right, but because we could not save ourselves. So God came near. God came in the flesh. God came with love deep enough to carry our sin, our sorrow, and our hope.

Lamentations 3 says, *“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*

That promise does not belong only to Christmas Day. It meets us again in January. God's mercy greets us in daily lives — in quiet faithfulness, in ordinary routines, and in moments both joyful and difficult.

As we move into this new year and toward Epiphany, remember the gift we have been given and the love surrounding that gift. It is a gift offered freely, with care so deep it cannot be measured — a gift meant not to be stored away, but to be lived out. So as we continue forward, I prayed that we all share that love: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, clothing the naked, showing kindness, and loving one another. Let us be the light in the dark, and carry it boldly. So beloved, go and be amazing. And to you all, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Peace and blessings to you and yours,
Pastor Scott

2026 Offering envelopes are ready for pickup. If you did not receive a box and would like one, let Lori know and she will get you one.

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St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
Nov 2nd, 2025 after Sunday Church Service

Members Present: Steve Sorenson, Trish Patterson, Cindy Schryver, Beth Wiegman, Patty Callahan, Terry Jenkins, Cliff Bardell, Pastor Scott

Attendance and Quorum: Yes

Opening Prayer – by Steve

Secretary's Report – Cliff makes a motion to approve the September secretary's report. Pastor 2nd. Motion passes.

Treasurer's Report – Sept - Cliff makes a motion to approve the treasurers report. Terry 2nd. Motion passes.

****we do not have Oct treasurers report yet so we will approve it next month****

Old Business: Approve last month and current month's meeting minutes and Treasurer's reports

New Business:

Update signers for Church Checking and savings accounts – Merla and Lori will stay on. Steve makes a motion to have Loran Gatz and Sara Thorngren be taken off checking account as signers. Cliff 2nd. Motion passes.

Cindy makes a motion to have Renee Boyle, Lori Christen, Merla Brooks, Tricia Patterson and Patty Callahan be signers on checks. Patty 2nd. Motion passes.

2026 budget and Pastor's salary for the church – Trish shared from Liasian meeting what Pastor's salary is estimated. Pastor is working on getting insurance.

Fill usher positions for Dec 25 and Jan 26 – Terry will do December and all council members to help. Cindy is doing January 2026.

Discuss changing Council meeting from 2nd Wednesday to 3rd Sunday each month after church starting in January 2026. Trish makes a motion. Cindy 2nd. Motion passes.

Selling the parsonage – discussion was done. Steve said he will start to do some comparisons on if we sell it vs. if we keep it.

Cliff talked about All Saints Sunday today and how we use to have bigger candles for the ones that passed away this year and then a bunch of little candles for anyone who wants to come up and light one in memory of a loved one.

Beth brought up that Marla has been coming to Worship N Music committee meetings. Marla is planning to stay on after this year and play the piano. Terry makes a motion to hire Marla Bukohl at the current rate. Trish 2nd. Motion passes.

Committee Reports:

Pastor's Report - Pastor Scott – helped at Trunk and Treat in Forreston.

Finance -Renee – nothing new.

Worship N Music - Beth – talked about this earlier in new business.
 Fellowship/Hospitality – Marilyn- Fall supper on Nov 15th from 5-7 pm.
 Education – Pastor Scott – nothing to report.
 Memorial - Cindy – nothing to report.
 Property – Steve - nothing to report
 Polo Council of Churches – Suzanne – nothing new to report

Liaison – Trish – we met on Oct 26th. Lisa, Trish, Pastor Scott, Dave Gesin, and Jane Koeller met at St. Mark’s after church. Discussed new LOA. Pastor Scott will be getting prices for his insurance. Both councils will need to vote on this LOA once it is final. Dates for 2026 for joint service were set. 2 services at each place. Pastor Scott will be at Faith Lutheran for the start of our January Congregational meeting so we will need to have someone lead first thing until Pastor Scott arrives. Next meeting is December 14th at 11:30 am. Then we should have the Letter of Agreement finished and we can go over this at our December 16th council meeting and approve it.

Closing prayer by Pastor Scott

Motion by Trish to adjourn meeting. Cliff 2nd. Meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm

Next Meeting Dec 16th, 2025, at 6pm

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November Finance Report

Income	Expenses	Net Income
\$10,454	\$7,402	\$3,052

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Polo Community Meal

The next community meal will be held on
 January 12th at Faith United Methodist
 5:00-6:30pm.

Polo Lifeline Food Pantry

Needs:

Mayonnaise, miracle whip, sugar,
 eggs, cheese slices, monetary
 donations.

If you would like a Devotional book for January, February, March please let the office know. One will be sent or dropped off at your home.

Sympathies to the family of John Engel who passed away on December 19th.

Thank you!

- ~ Thank you to all that donated toward the food pantry Christmas Baskets. St. Mark's was able to raise \$680!
- ~ Thank you to Betty Obendorf's daughter for donating homemade greeting cards! There is a box in the fellowship hall for free. Grab what you need!
- ~ Thank you to all (you know who you are) for preparation of Advent and Christmas decorating and serving at this most holiest season of worship – the birth of Jesus.

Please let us know if someone needs a thank you.



Prayers for those in need of healing: Darlene Barnhart, Patty Callahan, Karen Fetterman, Mike Hecathorn, Shelby Hose, Pat McPherson, Mary Ann Olson, Ken Smith and Laurel Smith. **Those in care facilities:** Ron Bardell, Tammy Karrow, Evelyn Meyer and Beulah Nelson. **Those in Military service:** Nathaniel Yingling.

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Anniversaries

2 David Shuman
4 Sara Thorngren
Anderson Carroll
5 Michael Smith
6 Pastor Terrie Wilder
7 Larry Slager
11 Mark Stahler
Gabriele Booth
12 Sydney Gunder
13 Linda Hose
Emily Gabaldon
14 Tess Kurschner
19 John White
Alan Wiegmann

20 Wyatt Patterson
Drew Benner
21 Teresa Barnhart
22 Tyler Merdian
Tom Rienstra
24 Melody Reap
26 Laurel Smith
27 Zachary Grobe
Brent Shipman
28 Matthew Sullivan
Theresa Rogers
29 Stephanie Gilbert
Nancy Grossnickle
30 Amy Merdian

20 Bob & Kathy Mitchell



*The beautiful poinsettias decorating the sanctuary
this year have been given by:*

Presented in loving memory of JoDee Bardell by Jeff & Mendy Bardell.

Presented in loving memory of JoDee Bardell, Edward Grossnickle, Aunt Vonda and Aunt Nancy by Cliff, Amy, Tommy & Joey Bardell.

Presented in loving memory of Dave Boyle by Mark & Renee Boyle.

Presented to the Glory of the newborn King by Merla Brooks.

Presented in loving memory of Phyllis & Arlyn Bryson by Lenny Bryson, Becky Patterson & family.

Presented in loving memory of Lorene & Ambrose Reuter by Lenny Bryson, Becky Patterson & family.

Presented in loving memory of Cheryl Goeking by Angela Goeking.

Presented in loving memory of Lynn Queckboerner and Arlyn Lee Hinrichs by Andy, Lisa and AJ Hinrichs.

Presented in loving memory of Larry Hackbarth by Elsie Hackbarth and Dave, Pam & Eli Lotz.

Presented in loving memory of Lyle & Chad Reap by Melody, Trish, Carly and Mallory.

Presented in loving memory of Dave & Ruth Mickley, Susie Wade, Gale & Ruth Rienstra, and Rose Rienstra by Leo & Joan Rienstra & family.

Presented in loving memory of Jerry Schwingel and David Schwingel by Priscilla Schwingel.

Presented in loving memory of Francis & Millie Sorenson by Steve & Suzanne Sorenson.

Presented in loving memory of Alva & Margaret Robertson by Steve & Suzanne Sorenson.

Presented in loving memory of our mother and grandmother, Connie Stahler, by Allison & Andrea Stahler, Brittan & Brinley Mullens and Henry & Harper Hickerson.

Presented in loving memory of Joyce Wiegmann by Alan & Beth Wiegmann.

