

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

February  
2026

Ash  
Wednesday



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

**E-mail: [stmarkspolo@frontiernet.net](mailto:stmarkspolo@frontiernet.net) Website: [stmarkspolo.com](http://stmarkspolo.com)**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship <b>11:30 Annual Congregational Meeting after worship</b>	<b>2</b> Sort clothes for Second Hand Rose	<b>3</b> Work at Second Hand Rose Feb 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 10:00 Prayer Partners	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> <b>SOUP-er Bowl Sunday</b> 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship	<b>9</b> 5:00-6:30pm Community Meal at FUM	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 10:00 Prayer Partners	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>Happy Valentine's Day!</b>
<b>15</b> 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship 11:30 Church council meeting	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 9:00am Quilters  Deadline to submit articles for March Newsletter	<b>18</b> 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Service <u>in Forreston</u>	<b>19</b> 10:00 Prayer Partners	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:00 Adult Bible Study 10:00 Social Time 10:30 Worship	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 6:00 meal 6:30 Lent Service <u>in Polo</u>	<b>26</b> 10:00 Prayer Partners	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship Assistant</u>	<u>Altar Flowers</u>		<b><u>Tellers:</u></b> Barb Grobe, Kathy Mitchell, Joan Rienstra
February 1	Julie Hoak			<b><u>Altar Guild:</u></b> Joan Rienstra & Karen Gilbert
February 8	Beth Wiegmann			
February 15	Linda Gall			<b><u>Head Usher:</u></b> Beth Wiegmann
February 22	Amanda Carroll			



# ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL

## LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

201 N. Division Avenue, Polo, IL 61064

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Website: [stmarkspolo.com](http://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 Congregational Meeting Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup> after worship



### SOUP-er Bowl Sunday

February 8<sup>th</sup>

Bring any canned food donations for the Polo Food Pantry between now and Super Bowl Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>.

Also- wear your favorite team jersey to church that day!  
(Any sport)



Our 2026 Lent schedule is below beginning with Ash Wednesday service in Forreston.



### ASH WEDNESDAY

**Readers needed!** If you would like to volunteer to read a short passage at the Lent services in Polo, please let Pastor or Lori know.

Ash Wednesday (February 18th)	6:30 p.m. in Forreston
Wednesdays during Lent ( <b>6:00 p.m. Meal, 6:30 p.m. Service</b> )	
February 25 <sup>th</sup>	in Polo
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	in Forreston
March 11 <sup>th</sup>	in Polo
March 18 <sup>th</sup>	in Forreston
March 25 <sup>th</sup>	in Polo
Maundy Thursday (April 2nd)	6:30 p.m. in Polo
Good Friday (April 3rd)	in Forreston
Easter Sunday (April 5 <sup>th</sup> )	
Faith Lutheran Church	6:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.
St. Mark's Lutheran Church	10:30 a.m.



## **Beloved St. Mark's & Faith Lutheran Churches,**

February invites us into a quieter kind of faithfulness... the rush of Christmas has passed. The new year has begun to settle into its rhythms. And in the church, we continue walking through the season of Epiphany—a season that reminds us that Christ is revealed not only in moments of wonder, but in ordinary days and faithful lives.

Epiphany is about light—about seeing more clearly who Jesus is and who we are called to be. It invites us to notice where God is at work in places we might otherwise overlook: in relationships, in service, in worship, and in care for one another. These weeks remind us that faith is not only about believing, but about living—about reflecting Christ's light in our words and actions.

Scripture promises us, *“The Lord is near to all who call on him”* (Psalm 145:18). That promise does not depend on energy levels, certainty, or strength. God draws near simply because God is faithful. As we move through these winter weeks together, my prayer is that you know this deep truth: you are not alone. You are part of a community rooted in grace, held together by love, and sustained by God's presence.

Throughout February, we remain in Epiphany, hearing stories of Jesus calling disciples, healing the broken, and revealing God's love in the world. Wherever you find yourself on your faith journey—strong, uncertain, weary, or hopeful—you are welcome here.

Later this month, the church year turns toward Lent. The season of Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, February 18**. Ash Wednesday marks a turning point—a day of honesty, humility, and hope—as we remember both our mortality and God's deep mercy. The Sunday following will be the **First Sunday of Lent**, as we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter.

I am deeply grateful for the many ways people in both congregations continue to serve—often quietly and without recognition. From worship leadership to visiting, quilting, preparing meals, cleaning, praying, and offering encouragement or a ride when needed, these acts of care are the heartbeat of the church. Thank you for being the body of Christ in action.

Winter can feel long. Days can feel heavy. And yet, even here, there is light. As the days begin to lengthen, may you notice signs of grace in places you might not expect. May you be reminded that you are not forgotten, not overlooked, and never alone.

You are beloved. You are valued. You are held gently in the loving arms of God. And as always—God loves you, and so do I.

Peace and blessings,  
**Pastor Scott Ralston**

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 6: 30 pm**

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

Attendance and Quorum: Yes

Opening Prayer – by Pastor Scott

Secretary's Report – Pastor noticed Lorin Gatz's first name was misspelled. Cliff makes a motion to approve. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Terry. Motion passes.

Treasurer's Report – October - Trish makes a motion to approve. Cliff 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passes.

Treasurer's Report - November - Cliff makes a motion to approve. Cindy 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passes.

**Old Business:**

Approve Letter of Agreement with Faith Lutheran - Discussion was done. Terry makes a motion to approve the LOA. Beth 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passes. Trish will let Faith Lutheran know that it has been approved by our council.

**New Business:**

Request all committee annual reports be turned into Lori by the second Sunday in January for the annual report.

2026 Budget review for St Mark's – Trish to check with Renee

Set the Annual meeting for St Mark's – set for February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Pastor talked about taking a sabbatical for 2 weeks. He would be gone from both churches.

Steve's term is up in on council in January.

**Committee Reports:**

Pastor – Raising money in both churches to feed hungry families. He has been doing visits. He will do double visits in December. He does take communion when he visits. Met and talked about what is happening with Christmas services. Christmas day brunch from 10-12 at Faith Lutheran. St. Mark's is invited.

Finance - Renee - Trish to check with Renee

Worship N Music- Beth – Talked about Christmas Eve service. It will be song heavy. Hymn sing is the first Sunday of Christmas.

Fellowship/Hospitality – Marilyn – nothing to report.

Education – Pastor – nothing to report.

Memorial – Cindy – get a list from Lori so council members have it with memorial money given for the past 5 years. 2020-2025

Property - Steve – Talked about selling vs renting the church parsonage.

Property committee weekly tasks discussed.

Polo Council of Churches – Suzanne or Merla -nothing to report.

Liaison - Trish – We met on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at St. Mark's and went over some numbers. The next meeting is May 3, 2026 at Faith Lutheran.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Trish. Cindy 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm

Closing prayer – by Pastor Scott

Next Meeting January 11<sup>th</sup> 2026 after church service.

December Finance Report

Income	Expenses	Net Income
\$16,816	\$8,866	\$7,950

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**Polo Council of Churches Meeting Minutes 11/25/25**

Vice president David Poole called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm at Crossroads Church. Those in attendance were: Suzanne Stout, Marilyn Schwartz, Marla Buskohl, Don Hay, John Barry, Jon Schwartz and Calvin Carver.

Pastor Suzanne Stout led devotions with 10 gems and bits of wisdom from her mom.

Secretary's report was approved as read.

Treasurer's report showed a payment was made to the State of Illinois and currently has a balance of \$3112.44.

**Reports:**

Second Hand Rose is currently doing well and happy to have faithful volunteers.

Polo food pantry is servicing more families each week and is seeking monetary donations and food donations as well.

Our Table meals will resume in January with Pine Creek and Faith Discovery churches serving.

**New business:**

Christmas baskets through the food pantry will be distributed December 6 and 9. Please ask your church for volunteers and monetary donations. Each basket has a cost of \$19.00.

Christmas Star program will be organized by Pine Creek Church with stars available at Polo/Shannon Bank and the Polo Senior Center. Gifts will be distributed on December 15.

Serenity Hospice will be presenting a grief service on December 16 and Pinecrest Theatre.

Next meeting will be held at the Church of the Brethren on January 27 at 6:00 pm.

Secretary, Marla Buskohl

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**Pennies from Heaven donations continue to be 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.



### **Polo Community Meal**

The next community meal will be held on  
February 9<sup>th</sup> 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 February, March please let the office know. One will be sent or dropped off at your home.**

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*Sympathies to the family of Shelby Hose who passed away January 10<sup>th</sup>. Graveside services were held.*

### ***Thank you!***

- ~ Thank you to Tracey Anders for preparing the candles for Christmas Eve Service.
- ~ Thank you to Melody Reap, Trish Patterson, the Boyle family and all others who helped take down Christmas decorations.
- ~ Thank you to all committee members for doing your annual reports and getting them to Lori in a timely manner.

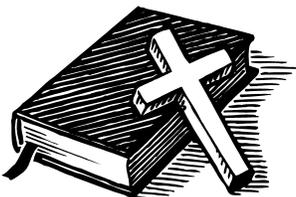
“Dear St. Mark’s Lutheran Church,

The staff and board of HOPE of Ogle County thank you for your support of survivors of domestic abuse. Your generous donation of 10 quilts, which we received in December 2025, is greatly appreciated.

Community support such as yours makes it possible for us to provide services that will help our clients and their children have a brighter and safer future.

Rebecca Laudati, Executive Director”

*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, 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.

## February Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

### Anniversaries

- 1 Sandy Stahler  
Kaci Hall
- 2 Abigail Yingling  
Karen Fetterman
- 4 Cory Nelson
- 5 Pam Jenkins  
Connor Lincoln
- 6 Kim Bowman  
Deborah Slager
- 9 Alicia Garrett  
Merla Brooks

- 11 Harold Folkers  
Tim Rienstra  
Amy Sikyta
- 15 Oran Wilder
- 16 Amanda Carroll
- 18 Alek Slager
- 19 Amy Schmidt
- 23 Mark Rienstra  
Casey Thacker
- 24 Carter Merdian

- 5 Jay & Amy Schmidt
- 14 Stacy & Sara Morrison

# Lent is For Loving

