



# The Evangel

In the heart of the city for ministry to the world

January - February 2009

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## Epiphany Presentation of "Amahl and the Night Visitors"

Wednesday, January 7, 7:00 pm

St. Mark's will present a special production of Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" for the Wednesday Epiphany service in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m., January 7. This one act opera is the story of a handicapped shepherd boy and his mother who find themselves hosting, for one night, the Kings who are following the star to Bethlehem. The story is told through a child's eyes, and children of all ages are especially encouraged to attend.

## Mark your calendar for St. Mark's Annual Meeting January 25 at 12:15 pm

We encourage all members to participate in our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25, following the 11:00 a.m. service. Important actions at the meeting include:

- approval of the 2009 budget
- election of new Council members
- reports by the Pastors and the President
- updates on activities and ministries at St. Mark's.

Please note that the usual Sunday schedule will take place that day.

## Pastor Christian's New Year Reflection

Today I walked with my dog at Pt. Pinole Shoreline, a beautiful park close to my home. It was an unusually nice December afternoon in the Bay. It was amazing to feel the sun and see the sky with some distant winter fog. When I returned to my desk I was surprised that I received an email from the National Weather Service: "Winter-like weather develops over this weekend...an Arctic cold trough will set up over Northern California, it will bring much cooler temperatures with breezy conditions..."

Strange, I thought to myself. Who would have guessed, judging from today, that the weather would change so drastically in just a matter of days? I am impressed with meteorology. While never 100% certain, meteorologists can give us an idea what the weather will be like—most of the time.

Admittedly, don't we wish sometimes to know what life holds? I am not only talking weather here, but what about all the other surprises life throws at us? Imagine there was someone like a "life-meteorologist" who could truly

*(cont. on next page)*



The Nov. 1, 2008 St. Mark's Men's Retreat group pose in front of the church.

predict our future? When I look back to 2008, I would have never guessed what would all happen in my life. Frankly, I am glad that's the way it is. Perhaps that's why one of my favorite services is on New Year's Eve—a sacred opportunity to reflect on how the old year's been, and then looking ahead to what's next. Not that we can tell what the New Year holds, but knowing that it will bring its own surprises, sunny days and cloudy ones. 17<sup>th</sup> century hymn writer Georg Neumark's says it this way:

*If you but trust in God to guide you  
With gentle hand through all your ways,  
You'll find that God is there beside you  
When crosses come, in trying days.  
Trust then in God's unchanging love;  
Built on the rock that will not move.*

ELW 769, verse 1

**G**od is close to us in Christ, to that I cling; knowing that God is always with us and leads us through each new year. Perhaps, more importantly than predicting life's sun or clouds is the fact that God never fails us in times of joy or need. That's all I need to know.

A wonderfully surprising and blessed New Year 2009 to each and all of you!

*Pr. Christian*

## Baptism Information

We will be baptizing many infants during the season of Epiphany in our worship services. If you are interested in knowing more about baptism either for yourself or a family member or would like to schedule a baptism during January, please contact Pastor Ekdale at 415.928.7770, ext. 230.



## SFIC Inauguration Prayer Service

**January 19, 5:00 p.m.  
Grace Cathedral**

San Francisco Interfaith Council and Grace Cathedral are sponsoring an Inauguration Prayer Service Jan. 19. Join others from the Interfaith community for prayer and worship on the eve of the Presidential Inauguration.

## Thank you from St. Mark's

The Staff and Pastors thank the congregation for your generous Christmas gifts, cards and remembrances to us at this time. It is a joy for us to serve St. Mark's in our various roles. Blessings to you in this New Year! Thank you. - Pastors and Staff

## Forward in Faith - Together in Mission update

January 11 is our Celebration Sunday of our stewardship campaign. We hope that everyone will respond by turning in their general fund and building fund pledges no later than **January 9** so our announcement on Jan 11 reflects God's abundance amidst us.

Thank you to those who have already turned in their pledges. We are now in the follow-up phase of the campaign and hope to hear from those who have not yet responded. Please check the weekly announcements for our

## The Evangel is Evolving

Look for a leaner Evangel in 2009 as we work to become a greener, more effective tool of St. Mark's ministries. Beginning with the March-April edition, the standard delivery of the Evangel will be via email. You may still request a mailed hard copy of the newsletter by contacting the church office.

**W**e're also discussing ways to keep it brief (and user-friendly) with less repetition of information from the Sunday announcements and the website. We'll keep you posted! In the meantime, if you wish to continue to receive a mailed hard copy, please contact the church office (415.928.7770) and leave your name with the front desk, or email me at [dayton@stmarks-sf.org](mailto:dayton@stmarks-sf.org). Have a happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

*Ann Dayton*

current totals towards both the general and building funds.

*Thank you, The Capital Campaign Leadership Team*



Women of St. Mark's at the November 15 Congregational Retreat participate in an "ice-breaker" exercise organized by Pastor Christian.

## What is Epiphany?

“When [the wise men] saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child [Jesus] with Mary his mother; and they knelt down to pay him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:10-11)

**T**he Feast of the Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, is the tradition festival on which the church remembers the visit of the wise men and their subsequent evangelization of the East. Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus was probably two years old when the wise men visited him (Matt. 2:16), so one might wonder why Epiphany is 12 days after Christmas and its story merged with the birth narrative from Luke's Gospel.

The origins of Christmas and Epiphany share a similar story. Most people are familiar with the “history of religions” hypothesis, which states that Christians placed the Feast of Christmas on the pagan festival of the birth of the sun god as a way to counteract pagan religion in the Roman Empire. Liturgical scholars have found that this hypothesis lacks substantial evidence. Many scholars now subscribe to the “computation” hypothesis, which states that Christmas and Epiphany were placed on the calendar as an attempt to date the birth of Jesus based on his crucifixion.

**E**arly Christians believed that Jesus must have lived on earth for an exact number of years, so his date of conception and crucifixion must be the same.

Based on the Passion story narrated in the Gospels, Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan (according to the Jewish calendar). In the Western Julian calendar this date was March 25, which we still celebrate as the Feast of the Annunciation; in the Eastern Julian calendar this date was April 6. Thus, placing the birth nine months after conception, Jesus' birth was computed to be December 25 in the West and January 6 in the East.

**S**pecific Gospels were popular in different Christian communities. The communities in the East read Mark's Gospel, which starts with Jesus' baptism; thus, the date computed to be his birth became a festival of his baptism. The communities in the West, including Jerusalem, read Matthew's Gospel, so the date computed for Jesus' birth was celebrated as such. When Eastern and Western Christians began to come into contact with one another in the fourth century, the January 6 date became associated with the different themes of manifestation found in the Gospels, including the star which showed the wise men where to find the child Jesus, and the wise men's journey back to their home with the knowledge of the newborn king.

**I**n the West we separate out the manifestations chronologically: the wise men and the star on Epiphany, Jesus' baptism on the first Sunday after Epiphany, and the wedding miracle at Cana on the second Sunday after Epiphany. The season after Epiphany ends with the Feast of the Transfiguration, which also commemorates a manifestation of Jesus as God's Son. *Kyle Shiefelbein*



*St. Mark's became familiar with earthquakes early, experiencing its first quake during the dedication service in 1895. Through the years the church refused to crumble during many quakes, including major ones in 1906 and 1989. In 1949 the pastor of St. Mark's, Dr. George Dorn, remarked, "They built better than they knew." Today, St. Mark's is stronger than ever after an extensive renovation and retrofit for earthquake safety during 2005-06.*

*Note: This is the first in a series of historical tales from the archives.*

## Ash Wednesday February 25



**Eucharist and imposition of ashes will be offered at 12:00 noon and 7:00 pm**



St. Mark's kids display their Halloween best at the Parents with Kidlettes party on Oct. 30, 2008.



## *Journeys in Faith* Continues

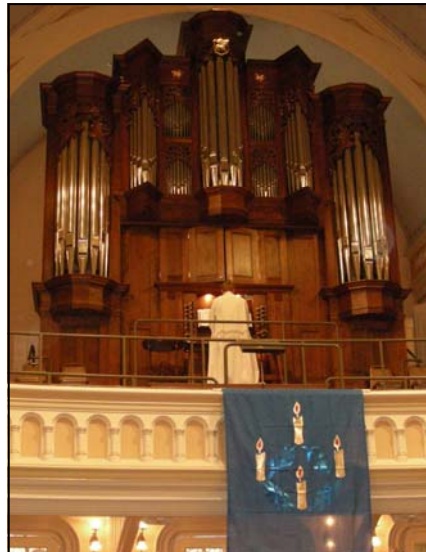
The first public rite for the Catechumenate happened on Sunday, December 7, when we officially welcomed one catechumen (preparing for baptism) and five affirmers (preparing for Affirmation of Baptism) into this journey. We will be having another rite of welcome on Sunday, January 18, at both liturgies. Because of Christmas and Epiphany, our next Wednesday gathering will be on January 14 at 7:30 pm, and continue until the Wednesday of Holy Week (April 8).

This month we have been discussing the Old Testament and its three parts: Pentateuch, Wisdom, and Prophets. One of the struggles of the early church was to figure out what to do with the Old Testament, and that struggle continues for contemporary Christians today. Starting in January we will be discussing the Gospels and the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ.

The next public rite to accompany the Catechumenate will be at the 11:00 am liturgy on Sunday, January 25 – Anointing of Catechumens. Anointing with oil is an ancient practice that symbolizes God's healing and protection.

In this rite the anointing symbolizes the catechumens need for God's help and strength so that they will be able to profess their faith and hold fast to it throughout their lives. Since the affirmers were anointed at their baptism, they do not participate in this rite.

Anyone interested in participating in *Journeys in Faith* should email [catechumenate@stmarks-sf.org](mailto:catechumenate@stmarks-sf.org) or talk with the pastors.



David Auerbach making beautiful music on the organ.



Welcoming Catechumens and Affirmers at the 11:00 a.m. worship on the Second Sunday of Advent.

## Needed: Guides for a Spiritual Journey

Most of you have probably heard of the Catechumenate ministry (*Journeys in Faith*) here at St. Mark's – in fact, some of you probably were at the Rite of Welcome on Sunday, December 7. During one part of the rite, the members of the congregation were asked if they would support and pray for our catechumens and affirmers. If you feel called to participate more directly, keep reading.

We will be having an information gathering for potential sponsors on Saturday, January 24, starting at 9:30 am in the Fireside Room (lunch is provided). Sponsors walk along side the catechumens and affirmers during their faith journey by standing beside them at the liturgical rites, gathering with them on Wednesday nights and at other times, and being someone who can help nurture them here at St. Mark's. No experience is needed, and you do not need an advanced degree in theology to help. If you would like more information, please e-mail [catechumenate@stmarks-sf.org](mailto:catechumenate@stmarks-sf.org).

## Adult Forums

*Members and friends of St. Mark's meet Sunday mornings at 10:00 in the Fireside Room of the Urban Life Center. We welcome all to join in learning and exploring together. Our forums for the coming Sundays are:*

### Understanding Fundamentalism

**January 4 & 11**

*Pastor Christian Jennert*

The influence of fundamentalist Christianity is felt in every walk of American life. Many of the nation's fastest growing churches hold to conservative Christian theologies. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians influence the debate surrounding prayer in public schools, abortion and homosexuality. Conservative Christian authors dominate the Christian publishing industry. Come to this Adult Forum to better understand the story behind the rise of fundamentalism, learn the meaning of "evangelical" versus "fundamental" and discover what Lutherans have to offer in this debate.

### ELCA Genetics Study

**January 18**

*Dr. Margaret McLean*

The ELCA is preparing a social statement to address issues in genetics and biotechnology. The ELCA's Genetics Task Force was formed in 2007 to lead this process and to write a proposed social statement to be considered by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. Join Dr. Margaret McLean for an overview of genetics, a discussion of the work of the Task Force, and how St. Mark's might participate in this important moral deliberation.

### Iraq: A Lutheran Study on the Future Role of the U.S.

**January 25, February 8 & 15**

*Suzanne Smith*

Come and deliberate on the U.S. role in Iraq and the Middle East as called for by Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson. Come if you are interested in exploring such questions as: What should the role of the U.S. in Iraq be today, and in 10 years? As people of faith how can we respond to the reality of terrorism and its challenge for Iraq, the U.S. and the world? What has our country learned about its role in an increasingly interconnected world in the 21st century?

### Anointing of Catechumens

**February 1**

Dale Loepp from the Catechumenate Team will be discussing the use of oil to prepare catechumens for baptism.

### Meet Valerie Taft

**February 22**

Get to know St. Mark's new Teaching Parish Student Valerie Taft. Valerie is a first year student from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and will be with us for the next year and a half. Welcome, Valerie!



Learn Together

## Sunday School

"Forward in Faith, Together in Mission" campaign, kept the kids busy this Fall. The older children made drawings of St. Mark's, which we included in the Prayer Book. All ages created "Folk Crosses" which were displayed at the Contemporary Jewish Museum and in St. Mark's Heritage Hall. Chapel leaders Susan and Jeff Sall taught the children one of their favorite songs in Spanish, which the children performed at worship services. Their performance was delightful. We appreciated the opportunity to allow the children to reach out to the whole congregation.

**R**eformation Sunday was observed by a special visit from Katie Luther (Donna Dindia) and a return visit by "Dead Fred". It was a wild one!

Fall Big Group lessons included: Prayer with Pastor Christian, followed by Advent Banners.

Preschool News: Lisa Gray is very happy with the new "Witness" curriculum. She is appreciative of the parent volunteers that help out most Sundays in her class.

K-6 Grades News: Gail and Jenny have been team-teaching for part of each Sunday. This allows them to maximize the lessons that they have prepared and reach out to all the children with special activities.

**S**unday School is still collecting toiletries for the homeless stocking project. Please drop off donations in Heritage Hall until January 4th.

*Jenny Hart*

## Senior Trip to Cathedral of Christ the Light

**Wednesday, February 4**

Tour of the new Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland. Join us for an exciting tour of the newly -built Cathedral and enjoy refreshments afterwards at Paul Cruce and Yuna Ono's newly opened French café "Saint Honore" in Albany. Departure is at 12 noon.



Irene Williams pauses in front of Old Faithful on the Senior trip to Calistoga on December 4.

## Senior Luncheons

Look for Senior Luncheons on the following days:

**Thursday, January 15**

*and*

**Thursday, February 19**



Watch for posted menus in the MLT Lobby!

**P**lease sign up for Senior Trips and Senior Luncheons in the MLT Office, or contact Pastor Jennert at 415.928.7770 or at [jennert@stmarks-sf.org](mailto:jennert@stmarks-sf.org).

## Senior Shopping Trip on Wednesday, January 7

Seniors are invited to a scenic drive to the town of American Canyon, which offers a wide variety of brand new stores and restaurants as well as a Wal-Mart Super Center. We will have an inexpensive lunch there. Depart 10:30 a.m./Return 3:00 p.m. Please sign up at the MLT Office.

## The St. Olaf Band at St. Mark's

St. Mark's hosts The St. Olaf Band in concert on Monday, February 2 at 7:30 p.m. in our sanctuary. The band's 2009 Winter Tour includes their first visit to San Francisco. Advance tickets are available for \$18 adults at [stolaftickets.com](http://stolaftickets.com) (\$10 students.) Come hear this symphonic band fill our sanctuary with music! This is a wonderful band that member Greg Jahnke played with for several years, and he's thrilled to host them here at St. Mark's!

**A** pre-concert alumni dinner will be served in the Urban Life Center auditorium. St. Olaf alumni will receive a dinner invitation by mail. Prospective students are welcome to attend the dinner, to learn more about St. Olaf College; please contact the St. Olaf College Admissions Office for your invitation.

If you have questions about The St. Olaf Band concert or the alumni dinner, please contact St. Mark's members Greg Jahnke or Barbara McCormick.



Allana Helland and Jim Bridgman hop off the St. Mark's Trolley Car during the SMART Progressive Dinner in December.

Watch the Sunday Announcements for info on the next SMART event, coming in early spring!

To join the SMART Evite List, email Allana at [allanahelland@yahoo.com](mailto:allanahelland@yahoo.com).

## Homeless Shelter January 4 - 17, 2009

Beginning Sunday, January 4th, St Marks will host the SF Interfaith Council Homeless Shelter for two weeks. Overnight housing, breakfasts and dinners will be provided for approximately 60 men each morning and evening in the Urban Life Center Auditorium.

**W**e still have a few open slots. Please contact Mary Ritter or Pam Ruh if you can help. Be a part of St. Mark's Social Ministry... we look forward to serving with you!

## Knit for the Streets

### Letter to the Knitters of St. Mark's:

Please let the knitters know that Saturday I came across one of the regulars on the street. Her name is Lynn and she had her backpack stolen and was curled up in a ball sitting on the sidewalk. I offered her one of the hats and scarves. She said, "God had sent her an angel." I told her that the women who make the scarves say prayers for the people who will receive them. She was touched and asked me what prayers she could say for you women. I told her that she could say prayers that God's will is done in your lives and that you feel God's presence in your lives. She will be praying for you.

**T**hank you and the others for the ministry you provide.

Shalom,  
Sylvia Mueller  
Assistant Night Minister

## Sacred Acts at St. Mark's

Join us in commemorating the recent sacred events in our parish:

### Baptisms

**Amelia Anna Haller**  
on November 2, 2008

**Peter Hugh Semonian**  
on November 23, 2008

**William Marion Fligor**  
on November 23, 2008

**Teddy John Irvin**  
on December 21, 2008



Read the latest letter from Pastor Strasser in Zambia at our website. Go to [www.stmarks-sf.org](http://www.stmarks-sf.org) and click on **News & Events** to get to **Missionary News!**

## Safe Congregation Training

Please mark your calendars for the next Safe Congregation Training, which will take place on Sunday, February 8 from 12:30 to 2:30 pm in the Fireside Room. For more information about the training, please contact Mary Ritter at [mlrpeds@aol.com](mailto:mlrpeds@aol.com).

## Council Highlights from the November Council meeting:

- Discussed the successful November congregational gathering and possible plans for a follow-up gathering
- Adopted a new policy governing the use of St. Mark's organ by members and non-members
- Appointed Matt Helland to the HR Committee and Brad Hubert to the Endowment Committee

## Stewardship Financial Summary

	Oct. 2008	Year to date
Income	37,003	438,258
Expense	47,098	454,510
Net	(10,095)	(16,252)

	Nov. 2008	Year to date
Income	41,421	479,680
Expense	44,783	499,293
Net	(3,362)	(19,613)

### Forward in Faith Update

Pledged to FIF:	971,368
Received:	807,838
Shortage:	163,530

*Thank you for your continued support!*

## Church Office Closures

Please note that the Church Office will be closed on **Monday, January 19** for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and **Monday, February 16** for Presidents' Day.



# The Evangel

January - February 2009

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church**  
 1111 O'Farrell Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94109

**Church Office Hours**

9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Mon-Fri  
 Phone: 415.928.7770  
 Fax: 415.928.8534  
[www.stmarks-sf.org](http://www.stmarks-sf.org)

St. Mark's is a "Reconciling in Christ" Congregation. St. Mark's is one of over 315 congregations, 22 synods and 12 organizations across the ELCA and the ELCIC (Canada) which have declared that lesbian and gay people are equally welcome to join fully in the worship and life of this Christ-centered community. For more information, please contact Steve Krefting at [krefting@stmarks-sf.org](mailto:krefting@stmarks-sf.org) or 415.826.3124 or speak to one of the pastors.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
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**Staff**

The Rev. Elizabeth E. Ekdale, Lead Pastor  
 The Rev. Christian Jennert, Associate Pastor  
 Jun Ranches, Director of Church Admin. and Ops.  
 Ann Dayton, Administrative Assistant  
 Tina Haner, Facilities Coordinator  
 Cheryl Garcia, Bookkeeper  
 David Auerbach, Interim Organist/Choir Director  
 The Rev. Chuck Lewis, Visitation Pastor  
 Stacy Cullison, 9:00 am Pianist/Organist  
 Duc Huynh, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor  
 Carl Storey, Security  
 Elvira Markov and Tanya Chanthavong, Nursery Assistants  
 Jenny Hart, Sunday School Coordinator

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**415-928-7770**

x. 230  
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 x. 229

**St. Mark's is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop  
 The Rev. Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop, Sierra Pacific Synod  
 The Rev. Steve Sabin, Dean, San Francisco Conference

**Sister Parish**

Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God) Lutheran Church in Soyapango, El Salvador

