

Gifts according to God's grace



Sitting quietly in the back of church, you'll often see Eric Howlett with his wife Jackie, and their adorable 11-month old daughter Allison. As unassuming as he appears, Eric has played a very important role in our school building project.

Eric is a man whom God has blessed with great skills. Since 2003, he's been co-owner of Midwest Electric, a local contracting company that provides commercial, industrial and residential service throughout Wisconsin. This spring, when the opportunity arose, Eric put his expertise to work for us here at St. Mark's.

Not only has Midwest Electric given St. Mark's excellent service, Eric has also taken extra measure to help us with rebates offered by WE Energies for the purchase of energy efficient technologies to replace older, less efficient technologies. To date, St. Mark's has received \$13,770 in rebates, all of which Eric has applied for and completed the necessary paperwork.

Our thanks to Eric for all he's done for the St. Mark's project. More importantly, our thanks to God for giving Eric these great gifts!

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" I Peter 4:10.

Keeping on track

December is a month full of schedules and our construction project is not exempt. The good news is here's one schedule that's right on track, if not ahead.

"The original plan was to complete the school by January 9," says Maas Brothers superintendent Matt Hollman. "We're now going to turn the school over on January 2."

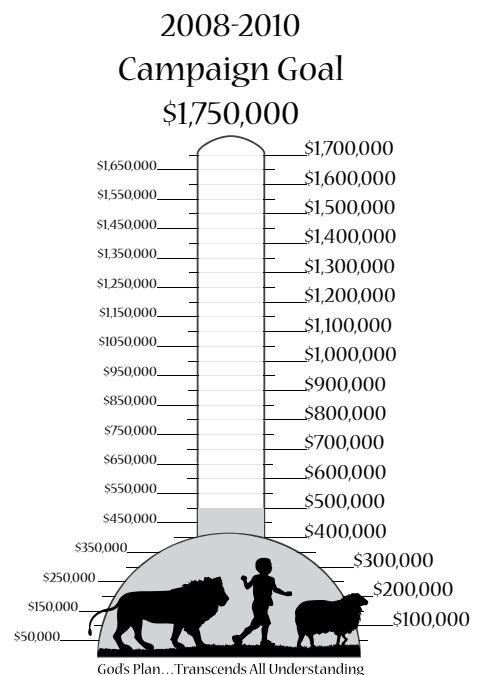
This "turning the school over" means our whole school, including gymnasium, commons area, music room and offices, will be ready for use by the first of the year. This is a phenomenal blessing when you consider we broke ground in June.

"It's amazing, if you think of it," says Matt. "A lot of homes aren't built in six months. Everyone working on this project did a great job."

God has certainly blessed us with wonderful contractors and a safe and successful project. He's blessing us other ways as well; we're well on track with our fund appeal givings.

Our first half million

According to our part-time accountant Larry Schuett, as of December 1, our givings total \$500,016. How exciting to have reached this first half-million mark in only eight months! Thank you to all who have generously given toward this goal!



Check out the progress!

www.lambstolions.com

www.lambstolions.com/constructionblog

Our new building talks—what's it saying to you?

By PASTOR MICHAEL JENSEN

We live in an age when many things talk to us. Technology enables our cars, our computers and even our buildings to talk to us.

Well, our new and renovated school building also talks. No, not by the wonder of technology; we didn't add those bells and whistles. Our school talks in another way—a visual way. By its presence alone, our school tells of St. Mark's commitment to Christ, Christian education, our children and the future of our congregation.

The "talk" people hear when they see our new school

- ✦ As the building nears completion, it says to us and our whole community, "Christian education is here to stay at St. Mark's"
- ✦ In September, we met what some called an impossible deadline and we began school in the new classroom wing. People saw that and heard "St. Mark's is passionate about and commitment to Christian education."
- ✦ Our new school entrance says, "Welcome! St. Mark's is a place where you will always be welcome."
- ✦ When people see the large music room on the southwest corner of the building, they hear "St. Mark's congregation

and children will sing praises to Christ until he returns."

- ✦ Our project contractors and workers look at the building and hear, "This is a caring place. You are welcome here." We know this because many of them have told us this was the best project they've ever worked on because of the people.
- ✦ During these difficult economic times, some may look at the school as it nears completion and laughingly say, "How are they ever going to pay for it?" But we began this project in faith; we see it as opportunity to make our building confess even more. Our ongoing regular offerings and capital fund commitments even during difficult times will make the school's cornerstone say, "We began this project and paid for this project during tough times. Why? Because Christ is our Savior. His Word is our passion. Proclaiming that Word is life's greatest purpose. That's our mission as individual Christians. That's our mission as a congregation."
- ✦ And just think what our building would say to our community about Christ if, even now, we were to pay the project off in record time. It would say, "Nothing is impossible to God. Come, and hear this amazing news of Christ that has the people at St. Mark's so on fire for the work of their church and school."

St. Mark's Pre-K is a wonderful outreach tool

One of the blessings our new school has brought St. Mark's is the addition of 3-year-olds to the Pre-K program.

"Having 3-K helps build our program, especially with the Hispanic children," says LaShawn Smith, director of the Pre-K. "Seven of the 10 children in our 3-K are Hispanic and this allows for a mission outreach. It's a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn God's truths and take them home and share them with their parents."

In addition to the 10 children in 3-K, there are also 19 enrolled in 4-K. St. Mark's welcomes members and non-members to both programs. Parents of non-members are asked to take a Bible informational class.

"This policy is so parents are aware of what we're teaching their children. We want to share this with them so they can be in agreement with what we teach," says LaShawn. "We can have a home and school relationship."



St. Mark's Pre-K program incorporates math and literacy concepts, ChristLight Bible stories, snacks, recess and gross and fine motor development. The 3-K meets three mornings a week and the 4-K meets five mornings.

"Our program helps children to grow socially and emotionally," says LaShawn. "We focus on introducing as many activities as we can so they feel comfortable going into kindergarten."

Blending Spanish-speaking children into an English-speaking classroom is enriching for both the children and the teachers. Kari Deglow, who teaches 3-K, says it's also challenging.

"I didn't study Spanish in high school, I studied German," says Kari. "But now I've learned key Spanish phrases. Dale Hella (our Spanish deacon) is a big help and he communicates well with parents. We practice an English immersion in our classroom and it's amazing how fast the children are learning. Their improvement is awesome."



Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Watertown, WI
Permit No. 98

St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran Church
615 Jones St. Watertown, WI 53094

Return Service Requested

Remembering Christmas Eve 1967, cont. from pg. 1

It's time to return to the church basement. We walk out to the cloak room and gather jackets, hats and mittens. Everyone lines up and we stomp down the wooden steps. Cold, fresh air greets us as we walk across the dark playground. The janitor's house is bright with Christmas lights. The old church is dark and lonely looking. I've never been inside that building. It's where the Ladies' Aid gathered once a month. I don't know who the Ladies' Aids are or what they do in that dark building, but it must be okay because my grandma used to be one of them.

We enter the church through the doors on Jones Street. We walk down the cement steps to the musty smelling basement. The musty smell gets stronger as we walk past huge brick columns. We snake through the basement until we are in the correct place. The organ music begins. It's time!

As we enter the church the strong smell of pine from the Christmas makes us forget the musty smell. The bright lights



Large, real trees decorated our church through the 1900's. Many students might actually remember sitting underneath the tree during Christmas Eve services, as shown here in this photo from 1951.

from the huge Christmas tree makes us forget the dark corners of the basement. The huge tree still overwhelms us even though we just saw it in the last service.

The service begins. I won't remember my lines! What song are we singing? Which class is next? I'm so nervous! But all goes well and the service seems to go faster the second time. We file out of the church and back to the dark musty basement. We wait in line to receive our bag of goodies. Someone hands me a medium brown paper bag. I can still feel the heavy paper bag in

my hand. The opening is twisted tightly shut. I slowly untwist it. I smell peanuts! I see an orange, an apple and a smaller paper bag. That's the bag I want to open. I place the large bag on the floor and take out the smaller bag. It too is tightly twisted shut. I untwist it and smell dark chocolate. It's the angle food candy!

Today, many years later, I don't remember meeting my parents or going home from the service. But I remember the smells and sounds of Christmas Eve 1967. I was in fourth grade that year.