Our Mission Statement

*St. Mark Catholic Elementary School, with home, Church, and community, is committed to nurturing the growth and future success of faith-centered individuals through the pursuit of academic excellence, Catholic values, and respect for all.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANT DATES</th>
<th>PRINCIPAL’S MESSAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Week of Advent</strong>&lt;br&gt;Week of November 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>It is hard to believe we are [once again] on the doorstep of that wonderful time of the year, <em>Christmas</em>. The English word “Advent” comes from the Latin <em>adventus</em>, which means “coming.” The season of Advent is a time of waiting and anticipation as we prepare to welcome the coming of Christ into our lives.</td>
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<td><strong>Advent Liturgy [Hope] at St. Mark School</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, November 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 12:50 pm</td>
<td>This year our <em>Advent Liturgy (Joy)</em> is on Thursday, December 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 9:30 am at St. Mark Church. In addition, we will be celebrating three virtual Advent Liturgies at the school; our first <em>Advent Liturgy (Hope)</em> is on Monday, November 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 12:50 pm, our second <em>Advent Liturgy (Love)</em> is on Monday, December 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 12:45 pm, and our third Advent Liturgy (Peace) is on Monday, December 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 9:15 am. The Advent Liturgies at the school will be virtual, and students and teachers will remain in their classrooms. Students and staff are encouraged to wear purple on the Mondays of the first two &amp; fourth Advent Liturgies and pink on Thursday, December 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
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<td><strong>School Council Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thursday, December 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; 7:00-8:30 pm</td>
<td><strong>Christmas Adornments</strong> have already begun. Each day an adornment will be included in the morning announcements. Teachers are encouraged to hide the day’s adornment in their classroom. Students search for the hidden adornment, and adornments can be hung up on the classroom Christmas tree.</td>
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<td><strong>Second Week of Advent</strong>&lt;br&gt;Week of December 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>In lieu of a Christmas Concert this year, Student Council will be sharing a variety of 12 different activities to help put everyone in the Christmas spirit – <em>The Twelve Days of Christmas</em>. Classes can participate in Door Decorating to help add to the classroom cheer. Students and staff are invited to wear red, green and their Christmas gear on Friday, December 16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and wear pajamas or cozies for Pajama Day on Friday, December 23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advent Liturgy [Love] at St. Mark School</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, December 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 12:45 pm</td>
<td>Finally, on behalf of all staff members of St. Mark School, I would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas! Sincerely,</td>
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<td><strong>Angel Tree Donations Deadline</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thursday, December 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Mr. Lankowski Principal</td>
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<td><strong>Third Week of Advent</strong>&lt;br&gt;Week of December 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><strong>Advent Mass [Joy]</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thursday, December 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at St. Mark Church 9:30 am</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advent Mass [Joy]</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thursday, December 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at St. Mark Church 9:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Students &amp; Staff Wear Christmas Gear</strong>&lt;br&gt;Friday, December 16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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"Growing in skill, wisdom and strength"
**Grade 3&3/4 Classes**  
*Visiting Benjamin Tree Farm*  
Friday, December 16th  
9:30-11:30 am

**Grade 2&7 Sacramental Masses**  
*At St. Mark Church*  
Saturday, December 17th  
at 5:00 pm  
&  
Sunday, December 18th  
at 9:30 am & 11:30 am

**Fourth Week of Advent**  
Week of December 18th

**Advent Liturgy [Peace]**  
*at St. Mark School*  
Monday, December 19th  
9:00 am

**Christmas Activity Day**  
*at St. Mark School*  
Friday, December 23rd

**Christmas Holidays Begin**  
Friday, December 23rd  
3:25 pm

**CHRISTMAS DAY**  
Saturday, December 25th

**JANUARY AT A GLANCE**

**First Day Back to School**  
Monday, January 9th

**Professional Development Day**  
Friday, January 20th  
Full Day

**First Reconciliation & Communion Prep Session**  
*at St. Mark Church*  
Wednesday, January 18th  
5:45-6:45 pm

**School Council Meeting**  
Thursday, January 26th  
7:00-8:30 am

**FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE**

**First Reconciliation & Communion Prep Session**  
*at St. Mark Church*  
Wednesday, February 1st  
5:45-6:45 pm

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**CHRISTMAS THEME DAY REMINDER**

**Pajama Day** is on Friday, December 23rd and this day is also one of our **Nutritional Free Days**. Your child/children can bring treats to school from home on this day for consumption **not sharing**. Since we have students at the school, who have peanut and nut allergies, we ask you to be extra careful in checking labels and avoid sending any holiday treats to school that may contain peanut or nut products. This is a life-threatening situation for these children. Also, as a reminder, please do not send your child to school with treats for distribution. As mentioned, you are welcomed to send in treats for your own child on this fun-filled day of Christmas colours and activities. Thank you once again by showing your care and concern for all children by helping to provide a safe learning environment.

**PARKING REMINDER FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

Thank you to all parents, guardians and caregivers who have been following the rules for dropping your children at school and picking them up at the end of classes. The safety of your children remains the priority for everyone at St. Mark School.

A continued reminder to those who are not following our guidelines:

**PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE NOT TO BE USING THE SCHOOL PARKING LOTS TO PICK UP THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN BETWEEN 8:40 AM AND 3:40 PM; Parents/Guardians who have a child enrolled in the Extended Day Program can use the parking lot from 7:00 am – 8:40 am and 3:40 pm – 6:00 pm.**

Parents/Guardians are not to be parking in the handicapped space unless they have a permit or the principal’s permission to do so.

Parents/Guardians are not to be parking in the school zone on Autumn Hill Crescent; we encourage parents to park on the school side of Autumn Hill Crescent when dropping their child/children off to school again, not in the school zone; a city Bi-Law Officer will issue tickets to those who do not comply.

**PARENT/GUARDIANS ARE ALSO ASKED TO BE RESPECTFUL WHEN PARKING ON AUTUMN HILL CRESCENT; WE ASK THAT YOU DO NOT PARK IN FRONT OF A CITIZEN’S DRIVEWAY, DO NOT PARK, OR DROP OFF YOUR CHILD IN A CITIZEN’S DRIVEWAY, OR USE A DRIVEWAY TO MAKE A 3-POINT TURN – THESE ACTIONS ARE UNSAFE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND OUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURS.**

When students are dropped-off they are not to be walking through the parking lot on their own – students need to use the sidewalks. **Parents are to stay on the city sidewalks when dropping off/picking up their children.**

Together, let’s continue to make our school the safest place for our students.

**NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS**

I would like to extend a **HUGE THANK YOU** for your tremendous support for our annual Scholastic Book Fair in November. We sold over $6000 in books, posters, and novelty items, for which the St Mark
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Valentine’s Day</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 14th</td>
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<td>Red, Pink &amp; White Day</td>
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<td>Kindergarten Vision Screening Program at St. Mark School</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 14th</td>
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<td>Mount Mary Retreat for Grade 8 Students</td>
<td>February 15th – 17th</td>
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<td>Term 1 Report Card Distribution Day</td>
<td>Friday, February 17th</td>
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<td>First Reconciliation &amp; Communion Prep Session at St. Mark Church</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 15th, 5:45-6:45 pm</td>
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<td>Family Day</td>
<td>Monday, February 20th (No School)</td>
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<td>Shrove Tuesday</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 21st</td>
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<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 22nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ash Wednesday Liturgy at St. Mark School</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 22nd, 9:00 am</td>
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<td>Beacons of Hope Breakfast at St. John Church, Kitchener</td>
<td>Friday, February 24th, 7:30-9:00 am</td>
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<td>Revised letters from St. Mark Church</td>
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<td>Library Learning Commons received over $3000 in book fair credit. Once again, you’ve proven that the St Mark Community is amazing! Wishing everyone the Happiest of Holidays and a Wonderful New Year!</td>
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<td>Ms. Najjar</td>
<td>The Library Learning Commons</td>
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<td>MESSAGE RE INTERNET SAFETY</td>
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<td>This past year, the WCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was fortunate to receive funding for parent involvement initiatives in the form of a CPIC grant. SEAC used these funds to have internet safety expert, Paul Davis, present to parents. The committee also used funds to purchase an online safety resource for elementary students. Safety guide brochures have been purchased and are donated to each elementary school. It is requested that they are used as a resource in the library or for teachers to educate students around online safety. Each school will receive copies of this brochure and the Internet Safety posters in the courier. As a part of the safety resource package attached is the electronic document offering parenting strategies for online safety that can be shared with your communities. WCDSB is appreciative to both CPIC and SEAC for this generous contribution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT COUNCIL NEWS</td>
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<td>Our Feed Frank Initiative gathering Halloween candy resulted in 125 bags of candy put together by Student Council members which were donated and greatly appreciated by the St. John’s Soup Kitchen. Our Scare Away Hunger Food Drive collected 924 pounds of food for the Region of Waterloo Food Bank, which translates to 722 meals. Congratulations and thanks to our Student Council for their great work, and a sincere thanks to our school community for your generous donations.</td>
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<td>2023 PRIME MINISTER’S AWARDS</td>
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<td>NOMINATE AN EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATOR TODAY!</td>
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<td>Teaching excellence</td>
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<td>Teaching excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)</td>
<td>Excellence in Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>Nomination Deadline: January 17, 2023, 11:59 AM (Pacific Time)</td>
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Download a nomination form:
- Prime Minister’s Awards for Teaching Excellence and Teaching Excellence in STEM
- Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education

ANGEL TREE INITIATIVE

This year as part of our Angel Tree initiative we will be working with community partners collecting needed items for Christmas Bags for our Homeless Community members. Many in the Homeless Community do not receive any Christmas gifts. Working together as a school we would like to try and change this and make a difference as there has been an increase in need this Christmas season. Christmas Bags will go to Community members of A Better Tent City, the Weber/Victoria St. Encampment, and the Victoria Park Encampment. Please find below a list of much needed items. Donations can also be made at School Cash Online (Community Christmas Bags) and this money will be used to fill in the gaps to create completed Christmas Bags. This year all items must be at school by Thursday December 8th so they can be packed by Student Council members and ready for pick-up. Thank you in advance for your kindness during this holiday season. We are blessed to have amazing families that make St. Mark School such a great place to be!

- Bear Paws (box)
- Large Sketch Pad (Dollarama or Dollar Tree)
- Crayola Pencil Crayons 24 pack
- Graphite Pencils 20 pack
- Warm adult socks (new)
- Warm adult mitts (new)
- Warm adult hats (new)
- Warm blankets (new)
- $10 Gift Cards from Dollarama, Tim Hortons, Subway or McDonalds

MASKING UPDATE

On Monday, November 14, 2022, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), Dr. Kieran Moore, shared information with Ontarians concerning the rise of cases of influenza, Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 across the province.

Dr. Moore has strongly recommended that Ontarians use the protective strategies available to them, including wearing masks indoors.

There is no provincial mask mandate.
Even prior to the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, it has been the practice of Waterloo Region’s Catholic schools to follow the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer -- as well as that of our own Region of Waterloo Public Health officials -- when it comes to dealing with communicable diseases in schools.

While masking is not mandated, our schools are now, and will remain, mask-friendly spaces, and we encourage students and staff to wear masks indoors during the rise in cases we are currently experiencing. The decision to wear a mask remains a personal choice. However, as Dr. Moore notes, it is a way to support partners in our health care system as they respond to an increase in pressures caused by the current increase in respiratory illnesses in our communities.

**As we move into the winter months, please keep in mind:**

Parents, students, and staff are reminded to stay home if feeling unwell and only return when symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours if you are experiencing nausea, vomiting, or have diarrhea). Those recovering from illness or with symptoms should continue to mask for ten days from onset of symptoms. Please review the daily Ontario School Screening Tool for common symptoms and specific guidance when responding to your individual circumstances. [https://www.ontario.ca/school-screening/](https://www.ontario.ca/school-screening/)

Students and staff are encouraged to wear a mask when indoors -- particularly when in close contact with others -- to reduce the opportunity to spread respiratory illness. The decision to mask remains a personal choice, and all individuals will be afforded the same respect in our classrooms and workspaces.

Staff will continue to have access to personal protective equipment at school.

Masks continue to be available to all students upon request.

Students and staff are asked to continue practicing good hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing, sanitizing) and be sure to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing (e.g., cough/sneeze into your elbow).

Dr. Moore has also suggested that Ontarians consider getting their flu shot and COVID vaccine / booster.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in keeping our schools and communities safe and healthy.

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**UKELELE CLUB AT ST. MARK SCHOOL**

Our group music lessons are an affordable way for students to access music instruction. We provide the program from Grade 1 to Grade 8, and we provide all the ukuleles and materials. Our instructors have vulnerable sector background checks and are experienced working with large groups of children.

The cost for parents is $129.00 per student for 8 weeks of lessons. The lessons will be scheduled during the lunch hour from 12:00-12:40 pm in the school library. Lessons will be offered each Wednesday from January 11th to March 1st. I have attached [below] our program outline, and our template flyer that is customized and sent home to parents.

I can be reached any time at 416-939-9453 or you can email me back with any questions.

Looking forward to bringing Ukulele Kids to St. Mark School.

Patricia Meredith
Program Chordinator, Ukulele Kids
[www.ukulelekids.org](http://www.ukulelekids.org)

*Canada Not-For Profit Organization Act #968361-5*
COUNCIL’S CORNER

Fundraising Made Easy this holiday season!

We are making it so easy to help raise the funds our school needs to support all of our students! Below you’ll find various options to help raise much needed funds for our school and students with things you might already be buying!

FlipGive helps non-profit organizations by allowing them to earn cash rebates every time you shop online at select stores (hotels, restaurants, building supply & clothing stores -- there are 100’s of stores!). You can also invite family members and friends to join and help support out school!

What does this mean for you?
• NO selling of any products!
• NO cost to you at all. It’s a rebate program.
• Earn cash for the school on the things you are already buying!
• Just download the app and log in before you make online purchases. It’s that simple!

SIGN UP TODAY!
go to: https://app.flipgive.com/teams/join?_branch_match_id=705531803515950135&_branch_referrer=H4siAAAAABsoKSkottLXT8v[LE]PLEvVSywo0Myv2zMvWL0INzC3Wz8rPzLMHEcn5Kam2Xm6BIU7uAMfmMvw0AAAA&joincode=JFQTBG&utm_medium=marketing

and enter Team Invite Code: JFQTBG

FlipGive is a free funding app that makes raising money a breeze. Families can earn cash back for St. Mark by buying the things they already need. Funds will be raised whenever you shop, dine out, book hotels or activities! For more details please visit https://www.flipgive.com/how-it-works

MABEL’S LABELS:
go here: https://mabelslabellens.ca/en_CA/fundraising/support/

and select “St. Mark Catholic Elementary School (Kitchener)” from the drop down list to support the school when you buy labels through Mabel’s Labels!

OLIVER’S LABELS:
go here: https://www.oliverslabels.com/

support the school when you buy labels through Oliver’s Labels!

Thank you for your support!

You can help support the school ALL YEAR long using the links above! All funds raised help support the students at St. Mark School.
WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU!!!

Please consider joining upcoming council meetings, all are at 7pm at St. Mark School dates below:
Jan 26, 2023
Mar 30, 2023
May 11, 2023

Thank you
School Council

EQAO PARENT OUTREACH WEBINAR | Jan. 17, 2023

Parents and Guardians will gain an understanding of EQAO and the Primary and Junior division assessments.

Learn about EQAO assessment results and Ontario’s large-scale assessment program at the elementary-school level by registering for a webinar.

The session is approximately 45 minutes, followed by a live question-and-answer session with EQAO staff. See the flyer for details | EQAO_Parent_Event_Outreach.pdf

IMMUNIZATION OF SCHOOL PUPILS ACT (ISPA) UPDATE

Public Health is ready to begin enforcement of all mandatory ISPA vaccines for the 2022/2023 school year for students in grades 7 to 12.

Due to COVID-19, the enforcement of the Immunization of School Pupils Act was put on hold and the ability for families to access vaccine decreased.
Despite recent catch-up clinics, approximately 25,000 students in grade 7-12 are missing one or more vaccines
Enforcement of the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) for 2022/23 will focus on grades 7 to 12 students.
This is to catch students prior to entering Post-Secondary School when they are at a higher risk for certain vaccine preventable diseases such as meningococcal disease.
Notices will be sent home between November to January on a rolling basis with notices for approximately 17 schools sent each week
Following that, suspension orders will be mailed directly to parents/students at least three weeks before the suspension date.
Principals will receive a copy of the suspension orders one week prior to suspension day, with a request to provide a written reminder to students/parents (outlining our clinic dates) who still have incomplete records.
Suspension day for elementary school students (Grade 7 and 8 only) will be March 29, 2023. Suspension day for secondary school students will be May 3, 2023
Public Health will continue to provide on-site clinics before and during the suspension dates. The clinic schedule will be posted at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph and tear-off pads with the website and Public Health contact number will be delivered to your school shortly.
Implementation details about the official suspension process will be sent to principals in early 2023
Schools **should not** be collecting immunization information from parents or students and submitting it to Public Health; parents/students should be submitting this information **directly to Public Health.** If a parent/student sends immunization information to the school office, they should be re-directed to submit the information to Public Health via:

- **Online:** [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/updateimmunizations](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/updateimmunizations) (anytime and preferred)
- **Email:** Immunizationservices@regionofwaterloo.ca
- **Phone:** 519-575-4400 ext. 5001 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Public Health will provide you with an updated tear-off sheet that school staff can use during the Immunization of School Pupils Act enforcement process. This sheet can be given to parents/students who try to submit immunization information to the schools. It will direct parents to visit the Public Health website or to contact Public Health via telephone or email to report immunizations or find out when immunization clinics are available.

Parents with questions about medical or non-medical (statement of conscience) exemptions should be directed to call Public Health at 519-575-4400 or to visit our website.

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**NEWS FROM ST. MARK CHURCH**

If your family was unable to attend one of the Enrollment Masses this past weekend (Nov. 19/20), please plan to attend one of the following Masses to submit your child’s enrollment form for First Communion (grade 2) or Confirmation (grade 7):

- **Saturday, Dec. 17 (5:00 p.m.) OR Sunday, Dec. 18 (9:30 OR 11:30 a.m.)**

Father Roque will be calling the children up as a group near the end of the Mass to collect their enrollment forms, and to pray over the children as they begin this period of sacramental preparation. Additional information regarding sacramental preparation sessions and the sacramental dates have been provided to you in the revised letters below.

If you have any questions, please contact St. Mark’s Parish office at stmark@rogers.com or 519-571-9200.