

St. Mark's Messenger

August 2017

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," wrote Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). "It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." In 1859 Dickens was writing about the French Revolution (1789-1792), but he was really talking about England in his own age.

Is this the worst of times? We hear today so many heart-wrenching stories. This week we saw the horrific scene of human trafficking in San Antonio, Texas. A truck driver had been paid to transport 40 people – men, women, and children – in a semi-trailer that had no workable air conditioning and only one air vent. 10 people died, and 20 remain in very serious condition. The temperature was over 100 degrees outside and hotter inside. The driver said that he didn't know what was in the truck, but the truth is that an organized ring of criminals arranged for the transportation at a cost of \$5,000 per person. Such trafficking is a worldwide problem. Experts estimate more than 21 million people are currently victims

As horrific as this scene is, we can find similar examples of wanton cruelty right here in our area. My heart grieves for the family of 19-year-old Timothy Piazza, who died in State College at a fraternity house on February 2. He died because nobody had the courage to step forward and say "stop." Eighteen people are now on trial, and I'll bet that nearly all of them had gone to church as they were growing up. What part of God's Word did not take root? Where and when did they lose their moral compass?

The statistics for fatal drug overdoses in Pennsylvania have just been released for 2016: 4,642. That's 12 per day or 89 per week. How many will die in Mifflin county?

Best of times and worst of times? Jesus knew a thing or two about good times and bad, and he proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was near – very near – and we should prepare ourselves for it. In July he used agricultural metaphors (seeds and weeds) as parables. These stories invite us to find the meaning of his stories in our own lives – and to apply them to how we live today. As we hear Matthew's Gospel, let us know that these words apply very personally to us, our community, our state, and our nation. We must be God's hands and feet in a very troubled world. Let us be freed from our hearts of stone and let the right spirit be within us.

John+

BACKPACK SUNDAY AND PRAYER FOR THE START OF SCHOOL

On Sunday, August 27, we will distribute backpacks to children who need them for school. We will celebrate the start of the school year at the church with a picnic from 11:00-noon in the Parish House. Please join us for coffee hour after our service and stay for the picnic.

This is a prayer for every child who begins school this year. You can adapt it to any grade – or year of college. Pray for our

young people. Pray for our teachers. Pray for our schools.

“Dear God, today is N’s first day of classes this year. We pray that N’s teachers will be generous, wise, and gracious. We pray for N’s classmates, so that true friendships may be found for all. Especially we pray for N. Keep her safe and well. Open her heart and mind to a world of learning and may this be the first of thousands of days in which she knows the depth of your love and the constancy of your care. We pray in Jesus’s name.” *Amen.*

HOW TO CONTACT FATHER JOHN

The best way is by phone: home (814-235-1198) or cell (814-571-0687). Another way is by email (jtharwood@comcast.net). I live in State College and will be in Lewistown on Wednesdays and Sundays, and at least one other day during the week. I am happy to come to your home. I want to have a meal with every member of the parish before the end of 2017, so please invite me!

Do not worry that you are “bothering me” if you call me. I want to know if you or a family member is in need – or if you have a concern about the parish.

THE MINISTRY OF MOTHER HUBBARD’S CUPBOARD: FEED MY SHEEP

Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard is a resource that provides supplemental food to families in the Lewistown area. In partnership with the Central PA Food Bank we are able to purchase high-quality food items at great prices. Each month a handful of volunteers gather at the church to unload, pack, and distribute food.



In July we served more than 100 families, representing nearly 300 people.

The Cupboard remains deeply grateful to our donors, both large and small, who enable our increasingly important work to be done. We are proud to say that every penny donated to The Cupboard goes to direct help. The generosity of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church covers all over-head and administrative costs associated with The Cupboard’s operation; the time, talents, and unflagging energy of our volunteers provide the human power necessary to carry out its mission.

Time and time again, we hear amazement about the quality and quantity of The Cupboard’s work. None of it would be possible without the generosity of the people that have designated The Cupboard as their opportunity to make a difference in our community.

Jesus was very specific: If you love me, feed my sheep.

As always, financial and in-kind donations are welcome. If you would like to make a donation, please contact us at 717 248-9383 or the parish office at 717 248-8237.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC: ST. MARK’S NEEDS YOU!

On Sunday, July 23, you saw a new face at the altar: Alexis Kuhns. She was our chalice, and in the months ahead you will see her in other roles, including lector (reader of the lessons). I invite you to participate in worship by joining the

choir, volunteering to host a coffee hour before or after our service, by answering the phone in the church office, by helping to water and weed our garden, and by inviting ONE friend or neighbor to worship with us in August.

Jesus did not use a “hard sell” as he gathered his disciples. He said: “Come and see.” Let us also practice “friendship evangelism.”

JOYCE HART’S WEEK AT THE SEWANEE CHURCH MUSIC CONFERENCE

On Sunday, July 9, I went to the University of the South, Sewanee, TN, for the 2017 Sewanee Church Music Conference! This was the fourth time I attended this event so it seemed like a reunion of friends gathered to enjoy yet another spirit-renewing, music-enlightening week, and we would not be disappointed!

Imagine St. Mark’s if we had a choir of 118 singers. In effect all of the musicians (music directors, organists, and choir directors from churches large and small) formed a choir and learned music used at an Evensong Service and Sunday Eucharist Service at All Saints’ Chapel at the University. Do not be surprised if we make some changes in how we use music in our services in the next few months. We have a glorious heritage!

The week was filled with daily worship services, work shops where we learned more of Anglican liturgy, organ repertoire, choir literature, and this year a yoga session was added to the schedule. A local music store “set up shop” on the premises and we could peruse and purchase music. A “frolic” held on Friday evening was a time for us to look back on the week with good-natured humor and fun. Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, an author of inspirational books and an Episcopal priest, served as Chaplain of the Conference. She provided us with uplifting messages at the daily worship services.

I want to thank St. Mark’s for allowing me the opportunity to attend this Conference. A special thank you goes to Phyllis Sikorsky who filled in for me on Sunday, July 16 at the piano bench. Information of the Conference can be found at <http://www.sewaneeconf.com>. You can hear the music we learned and used at the Worship Services. For images of the beautiful campus in the Smoky Mountains, see <http://www.sewanee.edu/>.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

1: HEIDI WELHAM 3: EMILY COZBY 7: ALEXIS KUHN 8: BENJAMIN HARWOOD 15: MARK REMY 25: ROBERT PINKERTON 27: BRUCE BITNER	O GOD, OUR TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND: LOOK WITH FAVOR, WE PRAY, ON YOUR SERVANT N. AS (S)HE BEGINS ANOTHER YEAR. GRANT THAT (S)HE MAY GROW IN WISDOM AND GRACE, AND STRENGTHEN OUR TRUST IN YOUR GOODNESS ; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.
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PASTORAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES: COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS

If you find yourself in need of a pastoral visit at home or in a hospital, please let me know. I am always happy to visit you in your home. But are there shut-ins I do not know about? Who else in our community needs a visit or is facing a hard time? Please let me know.

Are there other pastoral needs? Would you like to renew your marriage vows? Would you like to talk with me about baptism or confirmation? There are many adults who “missed” this chance when they were young, but as I know from personal experience (I was baptized at the age of 60!), it is never too late. Please invite me to talk with you or someone you know.

How about celebrating your next anniversary with a renewal of vows? We can do this privately in your house, or we can do it more publicly.

The church has developed special prayers and services for all of the occasions of life.

Would you like to have a house blessing in 2017? Do you want to have a blessing before you start a medical procedure? Do you want a blessing as you make a transition in your life? We should be especially joyful to celebrate “significant” dates in your life (the ones that end in 5 or 0). Please give to Joyce or Father John the important dates you want the Church to celebrate with you.

NEW WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR BUDGET

Do you shop at *Amazon.com*? If so, do you realize that by logging on through St. Mark’s website link (<http://www.stmark-lewistown.org/>), you can financially benefit St. Mark’s Church?

If you log onto your Amazon account through the special link on the parish homepage, a percentage of your purchase (excluding taxes and shipping) will be donated to St. Mark’s. Right now our earnings rate is 4% BUT if we can increase the traffic to Amazon.com we may get 6 or even 8%!!

There is no added cost to you. Simply go to our website at www.stmark-lewistown.org and click the link to Amazon.com. You will be taken directly to the site and everything you purchase (including Kindle books!) will be credited toward helping St. Mark’s. Easy and painless and all at no cost to you!

Another way to give back to the parish is to purchase a paver (\$95). What a wonderful way to honor or remember someone important in your life. We are all restricted in the number of words: 3 lines of engraving with maximum of 14 characters (including spaces) per line. Please see Father John or Joyce Hart if you are interested.

Finally, our beautiful columbarium is now ready for you to purchase a niche. I assure you that there is no rush to occupy the niche just because you have purchased it! The cost is \$650, and while cost should not be the deciding factor, please consider these advantages over traditional interment in a cemetery.

1. No need for separate urns (self-contained urn/niche construction).
2. Above ground burial of cremated remains.
3. Sacred context of church’s memorial garden.
4. Public space in a notable and historic location within the borough.

Please see Father John if you are interested in purchasing a niche.

BUDGET UPDATE

Part of stewardship is accounting for our time, treasure, and talents. Because St. Mark's has not had a priest-in-charge or rector for many months, the budget for the first half of the year is unusual. The Vestry will develop a realistic budget for the last half of 2017 and we will present that in the September newsletter.

On July 26, the Investments Committee (Jeff Wilson, Joe Sikorsky, Joyce Hart, and John Harwood – Jane Smith was on vacation) met to review the budget plans and to implement our investment guidelines already approved by the vestry. The goal is to help us increase income to the parish from the Saints –those wonderful people who have remembered the Church in their wills in the years gone by. This is a gift that keeps on giving and helps sustain the mission of this church for future generations.

UPDATE ON “FOLKS OF A SEASONED AGE” AND “KNIT AND KNOT”

Now in its sixth year, our exercise class is on vacation this summer but will resume in September (the date will be announced soon). Michele Lasher is the leader, and the class meets on TUEdays from 3:30 to 4:30 in the Parish Hall.

The “Knit and Knot” folks have continued their charity work through the summer. We continue to make hats and other needed items for the pediatrics unit at the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, the Adult Oncology unit, and fingerless gloves for the Lewistown and Danville Dialysis units. Father John has also received three prayer shawls that he will distribute to persons in need in our community.

We invite new people who would like to learn to knit to join us in this quiet, contemplative ministry. Please call 953-6158 if you would like more information.

UPDATE ON THE STEPHEN MINISTRY

If you would like to know more about the Stephen Ministry, please talk with Deb Vaughn. The following page is a one-page overview. How would you like to get involved?

Stephen Ministers: The After People

People often ask, "What exactly is a Stephen Minister?" One way to put it is that Stephen Ministers are the *After People*.

Stephen Ministers are there:

... *after* the phone call you hoped you'd never get.

... *after* the funeral, when everyone has left and the emotions you've held at bay come crashing in on you.

... *after* the relationship falls apart and the bottom falls out of your life.

... *after* the doctor says, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing more we can do."

... *after* the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, "Welcome to your new home."

... *after* the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away—and the house suddenly seems empty.

... *after* the gavel comes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.

... *after* the baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible.

... *after* you find a pink slip with your final paycheck.

... *after* your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.

Stephen Ministers are the After People. They are ready to come alongside you—or your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or relatives—and provide comfort and support for as long *after* as needed.

www.stephenministries.org

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