

St. Mark's Messenger

December 2017

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St. Mark's Vestry

The Rev. John T. Harwood, Priest

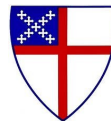
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Saint Mark's Episcopal Church



ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
21 S MAIN STREET
LEWISTOWN, PA 17044

The Mission of St. Mark's

We gather to celebrate as the family of God, that we may be fed spiritually through the Sacraments and teachings of the Holy Scriptures, in order that we serve others in the love of Christ.



FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTION

Advent is a season of preparation, of watching and waiting. It marks the beginning of the new church year, and you would think that we would start with a bang: the story of Christ's birth. Let's get to the point of the story. After all, America is a "now culture": we do not want to wait. We want everything at a time that is convenient for us. Four weeks of waiting seems un-American.

God's calendar is different from ours, and there is no evidence that God wore a wristwatch. The time had to be right for the coming of his kingdom. God could have sent Jesus to be born at any time or in any place, but he chose Palestine while it was under Roman rule – at the height of the Roman empire about 2,000 years ago. The time had to be right, and God would wait until it was.

To prepare the people, he had sent prophets to proclaim the coming of the Lord. We will hear many of them in the next four weeks: Malachi, Micah, Zephaniah –but in the background will be the great voice of Isaiah. When John the Baptist is called to proclaim the way of the Lord, we know that the time is almost here. He is the last of these prophets and that his message repeats the promises of the earlier prophets. His message has one big difference: the Kingdom is almost here. Get ready.

As you listen to the lessons in December, keep track of all the people who were waiting, some in hope and others in dread (Herod comes to mind). Watch how people lived as they were waiting: they were not passive. Think of the magi who had been traveling East for several months to find the newborn baby. Think of Mary and Joseph who were awaiting the birth of a child promised by an angel.

And that is where we come in: preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ.

Advent is not a time of repentance. Instead, we are preparing our heart for Christmas. The most important gift we can give ourselves is to set aside time for prayer. Slow down. Think about the meaning of the words in our beloved hymns for this season: "O come all ye faithful" and "Silent Night" are two that we will hear over and over again. How do these hymns speak to what is in your heart? May you hear these words with new insights and joy.

I am also aware that for some people, Christmas is not a happy time. If you are grieving for a loved one no longer with you, Christmas may be very painful. Or you may not have grown up in a family where the holiday season brought joy and peace, so all of the holiday cheer makes you feel down. If you would like to talk with me, please let me know and we'll find a time to meet. I have no quick fixes, but an honest conversation about this season may help.

UPDATE ON KATHRYN GROSSMAN

I am pleased to report that Kathryn continues to mend. On Thanksgiving Day, we remembered that only four weeks before she received open heart surgery. Since that time she has continued the journey of healing. She won't be able to drive for another few weeks and can't lift anything more than 5 pounds until Christmas. You can guess who is doing the "heavy lifting"! And this lifter is so grateful to be doing it.

We are grateful to the people of St. Mark's for their many acts of kindness.

CONTACTING 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). While I live in State College, I am in Lewistown on Wednesdays and Sundays and frequently on Tuesdays as well. I am happy to come to your home. If you are ill or hospitalized or know some one who needs pastoral support, please call me.



“SEASON’S GREETINGS” BUT WHAT SEASON ARE WE IN?

What we think of as “Christmas Time, the church divides into three different seasons. The first is Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas. The second, Christmas-tide, is when we actually celebrate Christ’s birth, through the span of twelve days. The season after Christmastide is Epiphany when Christ is revealed to the Gentiles. Epiphany lasts until Ash Wednesday, which begins in 2018 on February 14 (Valentine’s Day). If this seems like a crazy day for Ash Wednesday, hang onto your socks: Easter falls on April 1st!!

Advent is a season of preparation, a kind of “Mini-Lent,” according to Father Tim Schenck, Episcopal pastor and author (Diocese of Texas). From the Latin *adventus* meaning “coming,” Advent figures in the church calendar as a time to anticipate Jesus’ first coming and acknowledge in faith His second coming. Father Schenck noted, “To mark Advent faithfully in countercultural, out-of-step with the ‘holiday season.’” For example, the Episcopal Church refrains from singing Christmas carols in Advent. Father Schenck remarked that it is good spiritual practice in how to wait. As you come into the church, you will walk by our new creche (see picture above). We will prepare for the coming of the Lord (in the person of Jesus) by decorating the manger slowly: only a few animals, then more of the, and then on Christmas eve, Joseph and Mary will arrive. Not until January 6 will the Magi (the three kings) arrive. The angel will be there on Christmas eve because we know that the shepherds heard it as they watched their flocks by night.

Families and churches use a wreath to aid in worship and devotionals. Churches commonly elevate the wreath by placing it on a stand or hanging it from the ceiling so everyone can see, but many families like to place theirs on a mantel or even the kitchen table. Each Sunday starting with the first Sunday of Advent a candle is lit. Candles can be lit before dinner, as an evening family devotional, or at any time that’s a good time to talk about what they mean.

What do the candles mean? Traditionally there are three blue candles and one pink. Some churches use purple, as in Lent, because it is a penitent color, but St. Mark’s will, use blue, which symbolizes hope. A white candle is added on Christmas Day. You can guess what that signifies (Jesus is the light of the world).

The first candle to be lit represents hope. It reminds us that we have a faithful God who will fulfill his promise to send a savior. The second candle to be lit represents peace or preparation. We are reminded to make room in our hearts, in our lives and the lives of others. To allow the Holy Spirit to bring us His peace and awareness of our savior.

The third candle (pink) represents joy. We have cause to celebrate! The coming of a savior means that we will be reconciled with our creator. That although we live in a broken world that still suffers from sin, we are not alone!

We have a savior, protector, who frees our hearts to happiness. The fourth candle represents love. Our creator sent a savior because he didn’t want to be separated from us. He loved us. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but has eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but save the world through Him” (John 3:16-17). Some may also place a plain white candle, known as the Christ Candle, in the center of the Advent wreath. Jesus was the pure sacrifice sent to wash away our sins. God’s literal life on earth is the hope of our salvation and we honor this event on Christmas Day.



Epiphany is the time from The Feast of the Epiphany (January 6th) to the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday which leads into Lent. At the same time, Epiphany is the twelfth day after Christmas in the Gregorian Calendar, but also marks the beginning of the Carnival season which ends with Mardi Gras. The Epiphany season is a very festive time in the Roman Catholic and the High Anglican Church.

Commonly known as Three Kings Day or Feast of the Epiphany, the gospels tell us stories that describe various events which manifest the divinity of Jesus. The coming of the Magi (three wise men) is celebrated on Epiphany (January 6th). Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River is celebrated the Sunday after Epiphany (January 14th). For the following Sundays of Epiphany, the gospels describe the wedding at Cana, the calling of the disciples, and other miracles and teachings of Jesus. The last Sunday after Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration. We are called to respond to Christ in faith through the showings of his divinity during the Epiphany season.

People around the world have different ways of celebrating Epiphany.

- The Chalking of the Doors—People dress as the three kings and with chalk, mark the lintels above the door with 20*c*m*b*18. The letters are the initials of the three wise men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. The numbers are the year@2018.
- After the Chalking of the Doors, some people have a King Cake. That is a cake with a small plastic baby baked inside. Whoever gets the baby is the first wise man the next year. It doesn’t matter if it’s an adult or child.
- The Hallowing of Home—The blessing of the home usually begins with the whole family standing outside. A priest isn’t required to be present; it’s usually the head of the family who does the blessing. Father John will be delighted to come to your home for a house blessing. Please ask.

MOTHER HUBBARD’S CUPBOARD, “BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER,” AND FOLKS OF A SEASONED AGE

Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard continues to provide food and a few household items to families in our community who find themselves in a difficult situation. In November, MHC served 115 families (9 which were first-time clients) and 315 individuals (29 which were first-time persons).

MHC is grateful to our donors, both large and small, who enable our increasingly important work to be done. In November a total of \$6,645 was donated by individuals and organizations.

Two days before Thanksgiving the people of St. Mark’s invited about 55 people to share a delicious meal of ham, potatoes, and green beans at their monthly **Breaking Bread Together Meal**. We were gathered together and gave thanks to God for this chance to share food and fellowship.

Hopefully, our exercise instructor, Michele Lasher will soon be recuperated from her recent eye surgery and **Exercise Classes** which are held Tuesday afternoon will be able to resume.



PROPERTY AND BUDGET UPDATES



The new roof on the rectory is now completed, and we are well prepared for winter.

Twenty-one individuals or households have made a formal pledge to St. Mark’s (the total is about \$61,430). We are grateful for your support not just in treasure but in your time and talents.

OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR BUDGET

Do you shop at *Amazon.com*? If so, you can financially benefit St. Mark’s Church? It will not cost you anything;

Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchase to a charity you select. To do this, you need to select St. Mark’s Episcopal Church through *Smile.Amazon.com* – and you need to make your purchase through *Smile.Amazon.com*.

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 *Smile.Amazon.com*, we may get 6 or even 8%!!

There is no added cost to you. Simply go to <https://Smile.amazon.com> and click the link to select St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (note: there are 80 of them in the US so be sure to scroll down to the one in Lewistown, PA!). 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. The pavers that have already been purchased have been placed in the Memorial Garden.

St. Mark's Prayer List

Peg Alexander, Patty Attivo, Leslie Auxer, Jacqueline Benevento, Michelle Bitner, Ralph Bitner, Dennis Bossinger, Bob Briar, Lisa Briar, Linda Burger, Peggy Collins, Christie Colon, Deb Ergler, Marcia Folk, Kathryn Grossman, Dolores Houser, Sara John, James Krepps, Martie Marquez, Marsha Lynch-Mock, Cynthia McKinley, Barbara McPhee, Austine James Moore, Gabriel Newman, Leslie Pitzer, Carol Potts, Vicky Shoemaker, Joseph Smith, Gwen Swisher, Jim Switzer, Laura Tate, Joe Ughetto, and Robert Wilson, Jr.

Pray for Lloyd A. Gessaman and Max Wilson who are serving out Country.

God of everlasting love, who provides all things, we pray for all people: make your way known to them, your saving power among all nations. We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are afflicted or distressed in body, mind or circumstances.; relieve them according to their needs, giving them patience in their sufferings, and deliverance from their afflictions. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

RALPH BITNER—5TH

JOYCE HART—6TH

DAMIEN YOUNG—7TH

MICHAEL WOODRING—11TH

BARBARA GREGORY—12TH

THOMAS REMY—19TH

TONY HATFIELD-NICHOLSON—28TH

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.

DECEMBER SCHEDULE

With Christmas being on a Monday this year, we find ourselves having to revamp our schedule from what we do in other years.

Hanging of the Greens will be on December 17 immediately following the Worship Service with soup and sandwiches.

Christmas Eve

9:30 a.m.—Morning Prayer

7:00 p.m.—Family Christmas Eve Service

11:00 p.m.—Traditional Christmas Eve



LOOKING AHEAD IN JANUARY

DUE TO THE UNFORTUNATE CARDIAC EVENT THAT FR. HARWOOD'S WIFE, KATHRYN, EXPERIENCED IN LATE OCTOBER, WE FELT IT NECESSARY TO POSTPONE OUR SERVICE FOR THE

CELEBRATION OF A NEW MINISTRY. IT WILL NOW BE HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 16 AT 7:00 P.M. PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL SERVICE WHICH WILL INCLUDE BISHOP SCANLAN AND SEVERAL OTHER PRIESTS FROM THE DIOCESE. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS SERVICE, A TIME OF FELLOWSHIP WILL BE HELD IN THE PARISH HALL.

NOW — THAT CONFLICTS WITH THE VESTRY MEETING SO THE VESTRY WILL MEET THE FOLLOWING TUESDAY. THIS CREATES A CONFLICT WITH THE BREAK BREAD TOGETHER MEAL. THEREFORE, THE VESTRY WILL MEET JANUARY 23 AT 7:00 P.M.

DANCING IN THE NEW YEAR!

When we are in the grip of winter – the nights are long and the days are short – wouldn't it be fun either to practice ballroom dancing or learn to dance the all-American classics like the waltz, foxtrot, rumba, and maybe a little salsa or swing? Kevin Fee, who is the owner of a dance studio in Pleasant Gap, would be willing to offer classes in January if there are enough people interested. Here's what he proposes. He has offered similar classes at the Lewistown Country Club.

A series of four one-hour classes in the parish house from 2-3pm on Sunday afternoons. We will meet in St. Mark's Parish Hall(21 South Main Street).

Lewistown Church Dance Invitation

- Teacher - Kevin Fee - Dance Harmony - Certified Ballroom Dance Teacher with over 20 years experience
- What - Beginner Waltz - All Dancers Welcome! No experience necessary!
- Where - St Mark's Episcopal Church – Parish House - 21 South Main Street
- When - Sundays - January 7, 14, 21, 28 - 2-3:00 PM
- Cost - \$100 per couple (\$25 per couple, per lesson)
- Attire - Nice Casual
- Couples only
- Minimum 8 couples - Maximum 12 couples - If demand is high, we can add a second session...
- Payment In full - check or cash at the first lesson



HISTORY OF ST. MARK'S FROM THE ARCHITECT'S PERSPECTIVE



Father John has been contacted by Eleanor Congdon about helping us with a history of our church. Her great-grandfather, Henry Martyn Congdon, was the architect for our church, which was reconstructed on its current site in 1893. Mr. Congdon and his son (Eleanor's grandfather) designed many of the most beautiful churches in our diocese as well as in New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio – several

hundred in all – and Eleanor is writing a book about their work. She will be visiting us in early January to take pictures and share documents that she has. She would like to know if you have pictures of the church from the early days that you can share – we'll make copies and return to you. Please contact Father John if you can share materials.

NEW ALTAR FLOWER SCHEDULE

Seeing as how we have not revised our calendar for altar flowers for quite a few years, we will be making a new schedule for 2018. There is a **sign-up sheet on Parish Hall bulletin board** for you to indicate when you would like to place flowers on the altar in memory of, in honor of, or “just because”. Even if you have “always had” a certain time of the year to place flowers on the altar, it is important that you sign-up.

If it is inconvenient for you to sign-up at the Church, please call Joyce at the Church Office at 717-248-8327 or 717-315-1967.

