

# St. Mark's Messenger

## January 2022

### Reflections of Father John at the Annual Meeting

2021 was a busy, effective, and gratifying year of ministry and outreach for St. Mark's. We survived the truly dreadful year of COVID's early phase when we did not have worship in the church for a few months, and yet we continued our ministries. During Christmas 2020, our worship was on Zoom. Thank God that all of you have been jabbed and boosted so that we could worship in person.

We have been faithful to God's call to worship and to serve our neighbors.

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and Breaking Bread Together have served the community faithfully throughout the year. Our pastoral care committee (Blair, Tracey, Deb, Phyllis, and me) have sustained our shut-ins. Our Outreach ministry has helped people who are in crisis (no fuel, utility shutoff, and other needs).

Our Property Committee (Hal Jenkinson, chair) have worked hard to keep our buildings and grounds in excellent condition.

Thanks to our Cemetery Committee (Blair Hannon, chair), we have improved the appearance of this sacred ground. We have also created a Pet Cemetery for families grieving over the loss of a beloved pet.

The Safety Committee, headed by Hal Jenkinson, has taken steps to make our church safer and more secure, especially in times of emergency or crisis. After our

### FATHER JOHN BY THE NUMBERS FOR 2021

As your half-time priest, I presided at almost 95 services, including two funerals and one wedding. I made 255 pastoral calls, attended 88 meetings, and drove 8,925 miles, which translates into 160 hours in the car.

Active in the Diocese as well as our Ministerium, I chair the Diocesan Evangelism Committee and serve on the Commission on Ministry and the Council of Trustees. I am vice-president of the Area Agency on Aging and president of the board for the Shelter.

I also led and participated in several Zoom classes on Scripture with other Episcopalians in our Convocation.



first trial evacuation, we learned several things that will make future evacuations safer and more efficient. Jim Cherry created this wonderful exit from the sacristy by adding handrails and a step.

I am especially grateful for all who support St. Mark's: our altar guild, treasurer, readers, ECW, vestry, and the many "helping hands" who make St. Mark's so special to this community. St. Mark's has angels who tell me about people who need pastoral care, and they are the first to help with Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and to support the work of the Lewistown Ministerium

Finally, I am deeply grateful to those who so generously support the Church.

Our pledge income remains high; we have

no debt; and we benefit from a healthy endowment.

But God didn't call us to build beautiful buildings or to have balanced budgets – our Lord wants disciples. For me, that is our greatest challenge and opportunity.

**Goals for 2022:** For St. Mark's to thrive, not just survive, we must increase the number of active members. About 22 households support St. Mark's financially, but three of them account for 45% of our pledge income. When those members are no longer with us, we will face a very different financial profile.

We are an aging parish, and we should consider how we can better nurture the spiritual growth of mature Christians. How can we not just strengthen them but learn from them?

For us to be vibrant, we need more members who can support the mission of the church. A small handful of people enable such ministries as Break Bread Together to flourish. Some of our most loyal volunteers are not members of our parish ~ or of any church. How can we share our faith with them?

Most of our congregation are retirees, and we have a “missing generation” in our profile ~ and we need that generation as much as it needs us. **How can we talk with them more effectively?**

What kind of fun, food, or fellowship activities would attract people you know? The Ice Festival drew more than 100 people to our parish house. **What else could we do in 2022 that would not exhaust a tiny handful of our most faithful members but still interest our neighbors?** We are surrounded by senior-living residences, but none of them walk across the street to our church. **How can we reach out to our neighbors?**



**To Know,  
To Show,  
To Grow  
in Christ**

What is the greatest threat to St. Mark’s in 2022? It’s spiritual, not financial. In the past three years, we have offered five opportunities to study Scripture with other Episcopalians. Travel was not an issue because the classes were on Zoom; cost was not a factor because the church bought the materials. Only two parishioners participated. Dear friends, we cannot grow spiritually without investing our own time. How can we foster spiritual growth in our own adult members?

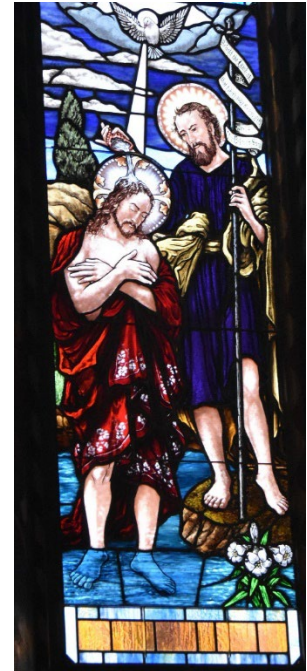
Even more worrisome is attendance. Our parish has about 50 members who could physically worship in church, but except for Christmas and Easter, we seldom have more than 20. On December 5, we had 16. The weather was beautiful. Where were the 30 members not in church? We simply cannot survive, much less thrive, without faithful members supporting the life and ministry of the parish through worship together.

Let next year be a time of discernment and spiritual growth for us as individuals and as a parish.

On our 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2023-24, let us show signs of a restored church, vital in its passion for the coming of God’s kingdom and growing disciples in our community.

We need to listen carefully for what God is calling us to be and to do.

May the peace of the Lord be always with you – and may your holidays be filled with joy and hope! Father John ✠



## CHURCH ENVELOPES

Please pick them up at the back of the church on Sunday, January 2, between 11AM and noon. If you are unable to pick them up, please call me (814-571-0687) to arrange for a different time when the church is open.

### ANNUAL MEETING

We held our annual meeting in December and elected three members of the vestry to another 3-year term (Robin Wilson, Dan Dillon, and Hal Jenkinson). Blair Hannon will be our representative at our Diocesan Convention in October.

### MOTHER GOOSE COMES TO ST. MARK'S



You will find more than 30 geese throughout Lewistown. There is Florence Nightingoose near the hospital and Spruced Goose near the airport. You will see several on South Main Street on Market Street. St. Mark's will be the first one associated with a church community, and we need your ideas for what images tell our story.

Our artist, Karl Leitzel, wants to brainstorm with us early in the new year so that he can begin work. Given the prominence of Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, perhaps we can call ours "Mother Goose," but the committee will make that decision. The idea is to tell our story in pictures, not words.

Please let Father John know if you want to join this committee.

## TOYS FOR TOTS 2021

We helped 170 families bring a brighter Christmas to almost 400 children. We also made significant donations of gifts to other groups that serve needy persons: the Lumina Center, the Shelter's Thrift Shop, the thrift shop at St. Vincent De Paul, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, and the Crossroads Pregnancy Center. Many people from the community helped with the "heavy lifting," including five clergy and members of the Burnham Lions Club. But I give special thanks to Jim Cherry, Wade Colyer, Lynn Conklin, Dan Dillon, Fred and Cynthia McKinley, Blair Hannon, Jane Smith, Deb Vaughn, and Joe Sikorsky.



## MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD & BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

In 2021 Mother Hubbard's Cupboard served 1,268 families, which comes to 2,518 individuals. in 2021. Breaking Bread Together provided a meal to about 600 people. Since the population of Lewistown and surrounding towns in the 2020 census was 8,067, we touched almost 38% of the people in this town. Poverty is real, and it's in our community. We are generously supported by other churches, businesses, organizations, and individuals throughout the community.

One week after Christmas, we served about 50 people a tasty takeout meal (hot turkey sandwich and all the fixings) prepared in the Parish House by our hearty volunteers, the first time we provided a home-cooked meal in 20 months.

## PRAYER LIST

We will start 2022 with a new prayer list! Please let Father John know the names of persons who should be on our list in addition to the following: Shirley Brown, Ralph Bitner, Bob Briar, Ellen Bryant, Lew Copenhaver, Dick Flood, Wayne Hannon, Joyce Hart, Dolores Houser, Judy Kline, Raelene Moore, Willa Silverman, Patty Wagner, Jackie and Henry Walk, Evelyn Wilson, and Bill Wilson.

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

CAROL POTTS (3)

REBECCA GANOE (11)

MARK KALER, JR. (17)

CHARLES CLARE (20)

LEW COPENHAVER (20)

ERIN ANEWALT (30)

A kennel in Dublin put on a nativity play and I think it's the best thing 2017 has produced yet. I mean would you just look at baby Jesus...

