

St. Mark's Messenger

November 2022

ANNUAL GIVING LETTER

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. Luke 9:16-17, NRSV

Dear Friend:

Each of our households has had a different financial experience of the pandemic, and this year's terrible inflation has been rough on all of us. Even so, I am inspired by the ways you have financially sustained our church. As we approach our 200th anniversary in 2023, it is time for us to commit ourselves again to God's work.

Our theme this year is *More Than Enough*, which comes from the end of Luke's version of the feeding of the 5,000. Responding to Jesus' call, the people turn their pockets inside out, shake out their blankets, and rummage through their parcels to find enough to take care of the needs of the community. And what do they discover? That by the miracle of faith and their willingness to share, there was more than enough, an abundance of leftovers!

This ancient story reminds me of St. Mark's today: each of us contributing what we can provides enough - enough to pay our bills and an abundance more to take care of our neighbors and plan for the future. As we approach our 200th anniversary, we share a history where ten generations have "stepped up" to the challenge, giving of their time and money to support God's kingdom on earth. It must have been tough to pledge during the depression or during any of the world wars. Fifty years ago the whole community faced the damage of Hurricane Agnes. And yet people continued to honor their pledges.

Every gift is Love, the kind of love that protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres, as St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians but that is also intended for us.

As we launch our annual gathering of pledges, please consider how you thank God for all of your blessings. **I ask that you return your pledge card by Sunday, November 13.**

In the spirit of love,

Father John+

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

The cross below has recently been donated by Father John for use in our chapel. What story does it tell about God's mercy and grace abounding? When we pray "Lord, have mercy," visualize this scene of a helping God, a loving God, one who is constantly reaching out to us.



October ended with a bang: Halloween and a Penn State game against Ohio State. At St. Mark's, we will celebrate All Saints' Day on November 6, a few days after its official date of November 1.

When we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, I will also mark the fifteenth anniversary of my baptism. Yes, I was baptized at the age of 60 – better late than never! All of us will renew our baptismal promises.

November is an important month in the life of this parish and for me personally. I am not talking about Thanksgiving, deer season, Black Friday, or Cyber-Monday sales.

In church, we will conclude the liturgical year on Christ the King Sunday (November 20) followed by the first Sunday in Advent (November 27), the beginning of our new liturgical year. Only

Holy Week has more feast days than November.

On All Saints Day we will first commemorate the faithful who, according to the church, have achieved heavenly status in the previous year. We also remember family and friends, the unsung saints of the world and the lights of our lives. I remember especially my teachers as well as my parents, grandparents, sisters, and in-laws in whose memory I light several candles.

All Saints' Day is for remembering the people we have loved, who were important to us, who made an impact on us.

Celebrating our ancestors in the faith, those men and women, some unknown, some esteemed, who lived and died furthering the Christian faith and nurturing ours, that is the "holy day" the church needs to hold up to the world on All Saints' Day.

NUTS AND BOLTS ABOUT OUR BUDGET FOR 2023

As we prepare to thank God for all of our blessings through our pledges, let me thank all of you who supported St. Mark's in 2022. About twenty households pledge to St. Mark's, and their gifts constitute about 53% of our income; the remainder comes from our endowment and special gifts. I know that all retirees live on fixed incomes (I'm one of them), but I ask



you to be as generous as you can to support the work of our church.

The high rate of inflation (about 8.2%) has really strained our budget, especially the cost of heating and cooling the church. But everything costs more: paper, cleaning supplies, and the food we purchase for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard. Our dollars just don't go as far as they did last year in the grocery store or in our church.

Even worse, our endowment is down about 16% this year, which means that our endowment income will be less next year. **With an increase in the number and amounts of pledges, we will balance our budget.**

St. Mark's is a gift to us from ten generations of parishioners before us. May we bestow a healthy, vibrant church to future generations.

The budget for 2023 will be approved by the vestry at its November meeting.

Please turn in your pledge card by Sunday, November 13. We need your faithful attendance in worship and in financial support. God asks for a share of our time, talents, and money.

EVANGELISM CONFERENCE AND THE 152ND DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Look for a full set of exciting new ideas in early 2023. Blair Hannon, Deb Vaughn, and Father John participated in a fabulous series of workshops on October 14. We were joined by Bishop Audrey, most of the clergy in our diocese, and many parishioners.

Our Diocese is exploring a reunion with the Diocese of Bethlehem. We separated in 1904. Both dioceses have about the same number of parishes and face similar issues. In the next year we will discern whether it makes sense to become a single diocese.

VOTING AND CITIZENSHIP 2022

All of us should vote on or before November 8. We will be electing a new governor, senator, and other representatives who serve local and state government. Since we pray every Sunday for our elected leaders, this is the time to choose them.

Let us remember the wise words of the great Anglican priest, John Wesley. He met with his parishioners in October, 1774, and recorded what he said in his diary: “I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them:

1. To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy
2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against, and
3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.”

These are wise words for us in 2022 as well. No election will resolve the real differences we have about the best way ahead for our community, state, or nation, but we are called to recognize and respect all of our citizens regardless of their views and speak civilly to them.

This also means accepting the outcome of the election. None of us can pretend that Penn State beat Michigan or Ohio State. The scoreboard is the final word. Don't be a scoreboard-denier.

Pray especially for *those who influence public opinion* so that they will use their voice responsibly. I could give you numerous examples of people who spread lies and disinformation and thereby harm their neighbors by undermining their trust in our institutions, including the folks who have run elections for 200 years.

Hear the words from our Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices: Direct, in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its



mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

GETTING YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER

November is a good month to take care of some practical matters. Do you have a will? Do you have a health care directive? Have you completed St. Mark's funeral planning guide? And have you made burial arrangements?

If you have made your will, have you remembered St. Mark's? Generous bequests are an important element of our annual budget because these funds are part of our permanent endowment income, a gift to future generations.

Your family and parish will be grateful for your loving attention to these matters. Please see Father John to discuss your plans so that we will have them on record.

If you have not already purchased a niche in our columbarium, now is the time to buy one. For members of our parish, the price is still only \$750. Twenty niches have already been spoken for.

*long-term stays,
free after first night*

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Price \$1,000
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MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND "BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER"



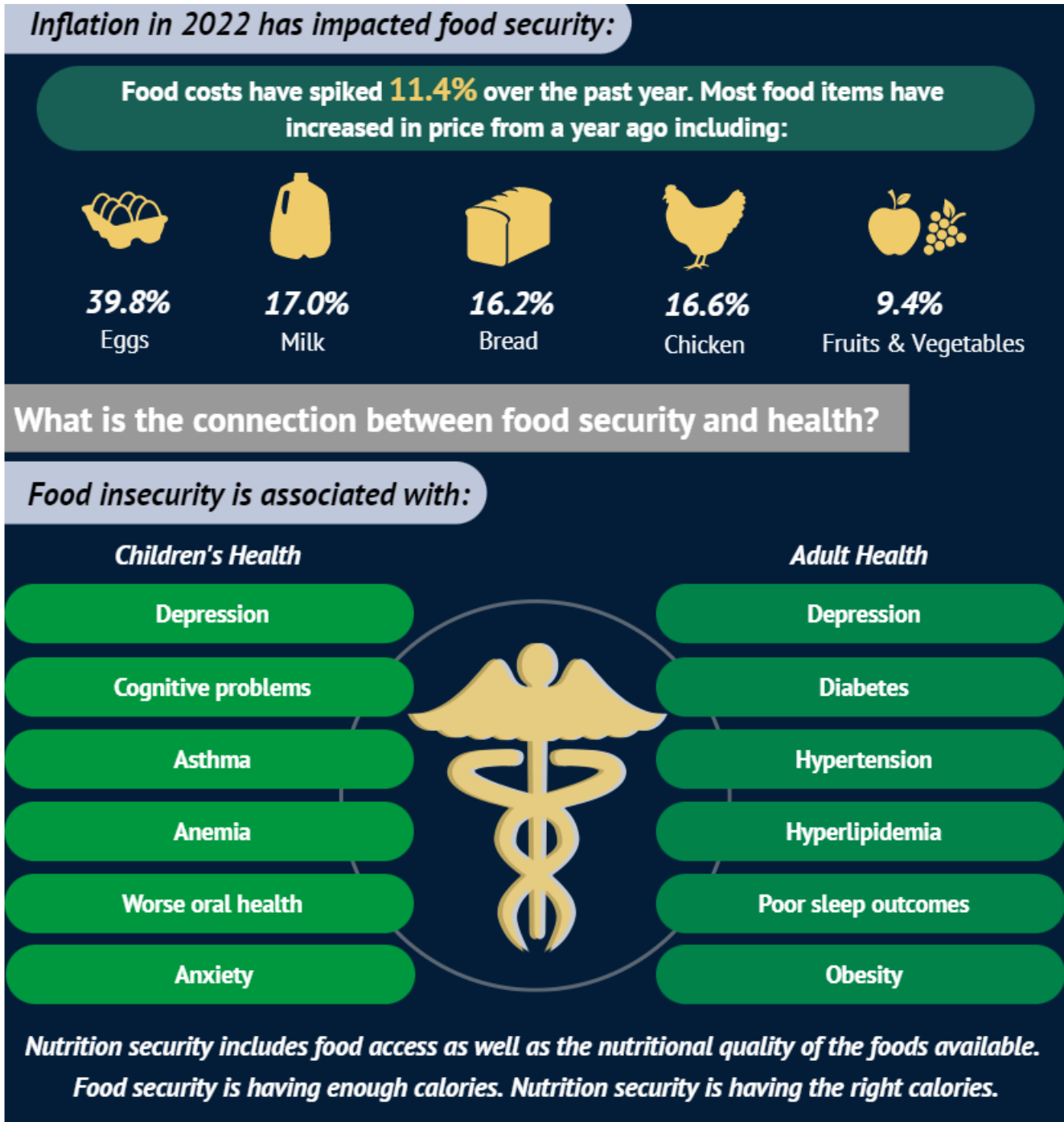
On October 26, we served 45 people a delicious takeout meal of fried chicken from Giant. In October MHC served 477 people: 210 families (15 of them new) and 40 new individuals. Between MHC and Breaking Bread, St. Mark's provided food to about 525+ of our neighbors.

In November we will also do a special Thanksgiving distribution of food. We'll be distributing quite a few turkeys that have been recently donated.

MHC is grateful to our donors, both large and small, who enable our increasingly important work to be done.

Jesus was very specific: If you love me, feed my sheep. If you have two coats, give one away to someone who has none. Quite a few parishioners have made gifts to help MHC.

Food insecurity hits poor people especially hard, as you can see in the following graphic.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- 6—Beth Birch
- 8—Cam Auxer
- 25—Mary Beth Pietropaulo
- 27—Tracey McKee

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.

WE ASK YOUR PRAYERS

We ask your prayers for Shirley Brown, Ralph Bitner, Bob Briar, Richard Flood, Joyce Hart, Ann Harwood-Nuss, Carol Mease, Steve Myers, Willa Silverman, Patty Wagner, Henry Walk, Jackie Walk, Evelyn Wilson, and Bill Wilson.

Please send cards to Joyce Hart in care of her daughter, Lydia Pauchnik. The address is 1001 Mountain Springs Lane, McClure, PA 17841.



TOYS FOR TOTS
2022

Register before November 15 at
<http://www.facebook.com/stmarkseiscopalchurchlewistownpa>
Distribution on December 15-16, 2022 at
Recreation Building (108 Montgomery Avenue)
Questions? rector@stmark-lewistown.org or 717-248-8327

At the end of prayer, it's time to move your feet. If you want to help the people of Puerto Rico and Ukraine, I recommend donations to Episcopal Relief and Development.

TOYS FOR TOTS

Christmas is just around the corner, and for many families in Lewistown, it will be a tough time because of the economy and difficult family circumstances.

We will hold the distribution this year at the Recreation Building (108 Montgomery Avenue), not the Salvation Army. The new site will be wonderful because there are no steps!

We'll need help unloading the toys and distributing them during the week of December 10-17.

MEN'S BREAKFAST AT A NEW LOCATION

We will meet at 8AM on Saturday, November 5, at the OIP in Burnham. Come and join us - and bring a friend.

PROPERTY UPDATE



Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. If you have a slate roof, you will seldom need to repair it, but when you do, it's an adventure.

This repair was to fix a spot where the slate had come loose, causing a leak in the roof.

To help reduce our utilities costs this winter, we are lowering the temperature in church from 72 degrees to 70 degrees. We will also look for other ways to be good stewards.

We have made many small improvements in the basement to support our ever-growing Cub Scout troop, which meets on Tuesday evenings.

We continue to review ideas for equipping the church with an accessible bathroom as well as a janitor's closet. We believe that the addition of a new sump pump should reduce

our problem with flooding in the basement.

We have made many improvements this year and are well prepared for winter.