

# ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

## OCTOBER 2022

### FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS



We have welcomed back the statue of St. Francis in our Memorial Garden. After many decades of exposure to the elements, it has been restored to what I think would be its original colors. (The Franciscans wear a distinctive brown robe.)

The Parish Picnic was great fun for the 17 people who attended. I wonder if we should do this monthly in lieu of coffee hours, which have not been successful. Social activities are IMPORTANT for the life of the parish. This is something that we would do for ourselves as opposed to Breaking Bread Together, which we do for other people in the community.

If you have been moved by the mourning for Queen Elizabeth II and the funeral services that have been televised for ten days, I have very good news for you. Your funeral can be very similar to hers since we share similar Books of Common Prayer (they are still using the 1662 edition and the King James translation of the Bible) and similar hymnals. I can't guarantee the choirs that were provided at Westminster Abbey and St. George's Chapel, of course.

Queen Elizabeth planned her service many decades ago. She chose the readings and the hymns. Her oak coffin was built 30 years ago. She also designed the hearse (which was made by Jaguar). The services were especially moving to me because they stressed her common humanity, not her royal status. She was serious about her faith and her service to her country. Princes or paupers, we are all sons and daughters of the same God.



You won't be surprised if I am encouraging everyone at St. Mark's to plan their own funeral

service and provide it to the church office. What's good enough for Queen Elizabeth is good enough for us! The paperwork is surprisingly simple.

October will be filled with highlights. We will host the Chamber of Commerce Leadership group on October 12. I will provide a tour and history of the church and then share a catered lunch in the parish house.

I am very much looking forward to the Evangelism Workshops on October 14 and the Diocesan Convention the next day. Blair and I will represent St. Mark's. I truly hope that many of you will participate in the workshop. You need to register and there is no fee (<https://diocesecpa.org/diocesanconvention/>).

If you want to see St. Mark's grow in numbers and deepen the faith of our current members, then the workshop is for you!

Father John+

## **IS THE PANDEMIC OVER?**

I wish that the President had said: "COVID is now endemic, and we have to protect ourselves and each other by getting vaccinated and following the safe practices that we did during the pandemic." Endemic means "habitually present" - think of pollens in the spring that trigger your allergies. The virus will continue to mutate, and we will likely need frequent booster shots. (When I got my new shot on September 21, the Geisinger pharmacist said "See you in six months or so.") But the virus will NOT disappear, and so we need to be cautious. COVID numbers for Mifflin County remain very worrisome (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/mifflin-pennsylvania-covid-cases.html>).

As a result, the vestry does not want us to host large dinners as we did before COVID. At the Eucharist, we will not yet return to the common chalice. We encourage masks and social distancing in worship as well as at Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and Breaking Bread Together.

## **EVANGELISM WORKSHOP ON OCTOBER 14**

In our baptismal covenant, Episcopalians promise to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through word and action, with God's help. But what does this mean in a world that often sees Christianity through a clouded lens? How can we share Good News in ways that feel authentic and just? You are invited to join Jerusalem Greer, staff officer for evangelism in the office of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, to explore these questions during the



**3:30-5:00 The Art and Practice of Storytelling as Evangelism** ~ Jeremy Tackett (Sr. Manager for Creative Services + Digital Evangelist, Office of Communication | The Episcopal Church) In the practice of Episcopal Evangelism, we recognize that God is at work in each of our lives and in the lives of all we encounter on our journey. We'll focus on how to tell our own stories of faith and how to create an open, safe space for others to do the same.

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**Experiments in Evangelism in Our Diocese: Getting Started Where You Are** (Rev. Sr. Jennifer Mattson, Rev. Amy Welin, Rev. Kyle Murphy, Rev. Rick Bauer, Rev. Grant

Ambrose) We will explore experiments in evangelism in local context, including experiments in art, music, pub theology, Pokémon, creation care and more.

**Growing a Good News Garden** (Rev. Brad Mattson) The mission of the Good News Gardens movement fosters a variety of food and creation care ministries - gardening, farming, beekeeping, composting, gleaning, feeding, food justice advocacy.

**5:30-6:45** Supper

**7:00-8:00** Jerusalem Greer, "Community, Loneliness, and Homecoming" According to a study by Cigna, loneliness and lack of meaningful connection are two of the fastest-growing health concerns in our country (2021). They affect all our congregations and communities in central Pennsylvania. For many of our church members, finding meaningful relational connections amid a busy modern life can be overwhelming. When you compound that reality with the effects of a multi-year global pandemic, churches, communities, and families will likely be experiencing what we call "a crisis of loneliness." This crisis knows no age barrier - it is true for families, young adults, and our oldest parishioners alike.

So what can or should we do about this? Jerusalem Greer will explore the 59 One Anothers of the New Testament and illustrate how they can help us eradicate aloneness and create authentic communities centered on Jesus and his way of love.

## NEW PRICE FOR A COLUMBARIUM

A year ago we placed our first advertisement in the *Sentinel* for our Community Columbarium. We now have commitments for 16 of our 140 niches. The usual cost for members is \$1,000 and for non-members it is \$1,500.

To encourage you to make your preparations, **we are temporarily reducing the price for members to \$750 and for non-members to \$1,000.** While cost should not be the deciding factor, you should consider that at a local cemetery the cost may be more than \$3,000, not including the urn, the burial marker, and the burial cost. The total cost could be \$5,000 or more.



Or find a niche for a loved one. The price for a columbarium and urn is \$1,500. If interested, contact the church office at 717-248-8327.

We are *St. Mark's Episcopal Church*  
21 South Main Street  
Lewistown, PA  
*All are welcome*

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

Burials with caskets are even more expensive. Our cost at St. Mark's is far, far less, and we include the cost of the engraving of the person's name and dates.

I can't put a dollar value on being close to your church or the beauty and tranquility of the Memorial Garden. When we celebrate All Saints Sunday on November 6, we will be sure to remember all those whose final resting place is on church grounds.

Please see Father John if you are interested in purchasing a niche. You will need to select your location, and it will also be a good time to be sure that you've updated your will and to plan your funeral. Your family will be so grateful that you expressed your wishes.

## UPDATES ON PROPERTY AND SAFETY

We continue to make improvements in safety as well as perform routine maintenance. When we have downpours, we have mild to moderate flooding in the basement. We are confident that new sump pumps will help to mitigate this problem. We are also making the basement more attractive for the Cub Scout troop that meets weekly in this space. Finally, we are taking a fresh look at how we can best use our space for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, the Parish House, and even a janitor's closet. The challenge for us is that we have three separate buildings (church, rectory, and parish house) built at different times and for a very different kind of parish. Nobody worried about navigating from one building to the other, nor did

folks consider the needs for an accessible bathroom.

## **PLANNED GIVING: STEWARDSHIP FOR THE FUTURE**

When we celebrate All Saints Day on November 6, we are reminded of the continuing presence of the saints in our lives. Look around at the beauty of our church and the richness of our ministries. What we have is a gift from those who came before us and loved this church deeply. Now imagine our church in 2122, a mere century from now. We'll never know the congregation or priest or bishop personally, but they will be part of us if we support them now.

Remember that no living member paid a dollar for the construction of our first church (1824), the parish house, the rectory or our current church (1895). Nor did we pay for the beautiful windows or organ. All of these are gifts from our ancestors, and we have an obligation to preserve and sustain them for future generations. A significant portion of our annual budget comes from our endowment funds – the collective gifts of ten generations of St. Mark's members.

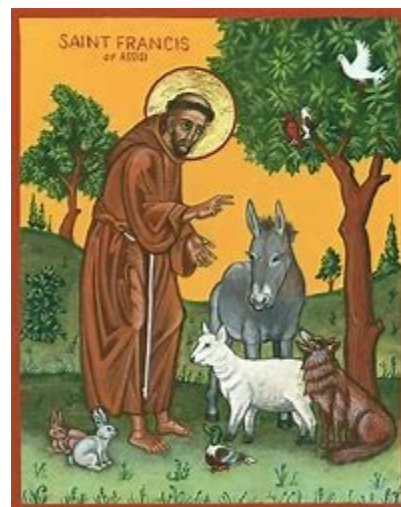
The best way to express your love for the Church is simple: remember St. Mark's in YOUR WILL! Be assured that Kathryn and I have already done so.

I am a priest, not a lawyer, accountant, or certified financial planner, but I know that there are many ways of making gifts. Please talk with me if you have some idea of what you'd like to do but are uncertain about how to do it; I can refer you to someone who can help. If you have not made your will, please do so this month. Ditto for creating a health-care proxy and a health-care directive.

## **THE BLESSING OF OUR PETS**

We will mark the feast of St. Francis of Assisi with a service of blessing and thanksgiving for pets following our service on October 5. I will also bless our newly restored statue of St. Francis.

Bring your pets to our St. Francis Memorial Garden at noon. If you prefer for me to visit with you and your pet at home, please let me know. If the weather is bad, we'll hold our brief service in the parish house.



## **OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES**

2—Connie Knepp, 3—Virginia Banks, 7—Cynthia McKinley and Emily Zylstra  
10—Sharon Copenhaver, 11—Alice Woodring, 18—Catherine Pinkerton, 19—Anniversary of  
Father John's ordination to the priesthood, 21—Maxwell Remy, 22—Billie Gay Snook, 27—  
Dee Calhoun, 31—Bill Wilson

## **RENEWAL OF WEDDING VOWS OR BAPTISM OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

On February 26, 2023, Kathryn and I will celebrate forty years of marriage. Will we renew our wedding vows? Certainly – and it will be a joyful day. Please let Father John know if you would like to renew your vows in the next year in the church or in your home.

If you know people who would like to be baptized, send them my way.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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

Pray also for those serving in the military as well as President Joe Biden and Governor Tom Wolf.

Pray for all members of Congress and our state legislature to be guided by respect for the rights of every human being and respect for the common good.

Pray that candidates for public office will be truthful and courageous in defending the principles of justice, our tradition of democratic values, and commitment to free and fair elections.

Pray for the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom.

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

**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.**

## **MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER**

September numbers

Total individuals- 516 Total families- 212 New individuals- 34 New families- 14

MHC just received from the Maines family a donation of 212 pounds of sausage and 262 pounds of hamburger.

We continue to provide a tasty meal for about 40-50 neighbors at our monthly Breaking Bread Together event. In September the highlight was delicious fried chicken from Giant.

## **TIME TO BE GENEROUS TO OTHER CHARITABLE GROUPS IN LEWISTOWN**

I ask you to be GENEROUS to the Homeless Shelter. It is a 501(c)3 non-profit; your gifts are tax deductible.

In Matthew 25, our Lord asks, “where were you when I was homeless or in jail?” Some said to him, “we didn’t know that was you.”



Let us support the Shelter. The address is 13 Depot Street, Lewistown, PA 17044 – less than a half-mile from St. Mark’s. The Executive Director is Jane Jeff.

## **ALL SAINTS DAY (NOVEMBER 1 BUT CELEBRATED ON NOVEMBER 6)**

On this day we remember all those whose souls are now with God. Unlike Memorial Day or Veterans Day, this date has been observed for centuries as a time to remember that all of us are mortal but have been promised that we shall rise in glory. Christ has conquered death and the all the principalities of darkness.

It is a time to remember with gratitude the lives of all people who have loved us and shaped us – parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers and neighbors. All the windows in our church are memorials to a loved one.

Please let Father John or the Church Office know if you would like to remember your loved ones by name with a gift to the Flower Fund (please make out your checks to St. Mark’s with “All Saints Remembrance” on the subject line before Sunday, October 30. Just give the names of the loved ones to the church office before **Sunday, October 30**. If you prefer to use the same list as last year, just tell me that, too.

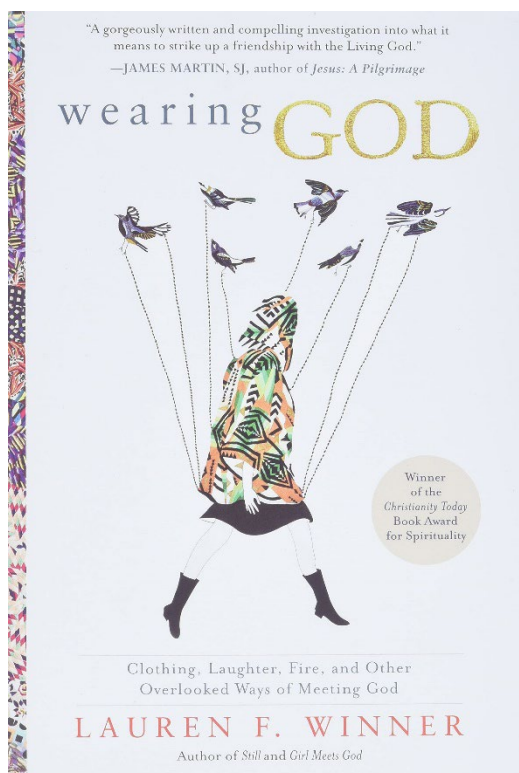
Your Name	Loved Ones' Names

## TOYS FOR TOTS: CHRISTMAS IS COMING SOON (DECEMBER 10-17)

Here's a shocker: Christmas is eleven weeks away. We will distribute toys this year at the Community Recreation Building, which will make it far easier for helpers and for families. Thanks to the generosity of the borough manager, we have the building for a whole week and will not be charged a fee.

Please put in your calendar the week of **December 10-17**. I suspect even larger number of people will need our assistance this year than in the past, so we will need lots of volunteers to make the event special.

## ADULT FORUM FOR OCTOBER-NOVEMBER: HOW WE SEE GOD



In October we will begin an award-winning book by Lauren F. Winner, *Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God*. How do you imagine, visualize, and represent the Divine? There are hundreds of metaphors for God, but the church only uses a few familiar images: creator, judge, savior, father. Some of the visual images (God as an old man with a white beard) say more about us than about God. What images MIGHT enrich our spiritual lives?

You have two options. The first is to discuss the book on Sunday mornings from 9-10 in the parish house. The second is to join Episcopalians from Altoona, Bellefonte, and State College on Wednesdays at 7PM via Zoom. You can even do both!

The Zoom sessions will run from October 19 to November 16. Please let Father John know if you want to participate so we can buy enough books for our class.