

# St. Mark's Messenger

## January 2023

### Reflections of Father John



Despite the frigid temperatures, the church was quite full for our Christmas Eve service. After four weeks of preparation in Advent, the creche was full. Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus were greeted by the shepherds and the angels, singing Gloria in excelsis (glory to God in the highest), the same song we sing at the beginning of our service. I hope that we sensed that all of God's angels were also singing it with us.

Christmas marks a moment in time when God chose to enter our world in a new way. God's prophets had been bringing messages for centuries, but sending Jesus, his own son, is something new, a gift of love and hope and a promise of peace and justice. Jesus will preach the Good News to a world broken by sin and injustice. He will seek to make earth much more like heaven and gives specific visions for how

this will happen in Matthew 25:45-46 (“the least of these”) or in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12).

January is a month for looking back and looking forward, for being honest with ourselves and making resolutions. The world has been saddened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has brought war again to Europe. Let us pray for justice.

The world economy, not just ours, has been shaken by inflation, the uncertainties of the energy markets, and climate change. Yes, the summers are hotter, the winters colder, the hurricanes more numerous, and precipitation more extreme – either drought or floods. All of these challenges will require thoughtful people to work together for the common good. When we say the “Lord’s Prayer,” we pray to “our father,” not “my father.” We are all in this together. Let us do so in the name of our Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the light of the world.

May the peace of the Lord be always with you – and may your holidays be filled with joy, peace, and hope! P.S. Happy New Year! January marks the beginning of St. Mark’s bicentenary. Look for historical notes from our archives.

Father John ✠

## CHURCH ENVELOPES

We have all heard about “supply chain” issues, but who could dream that it would affect our church envelopes? The company that has produced our envelopes for many years ran into a “production problem” in December and hasn’t caught up with their orders. We will distribute the envelopes as soon as we receive them. For now, please put your check into a plain envelope, and we’ll faithfully record your gifts to the church.

## ANNUAL MEETING

We will hold our annual meeting on January 8 immediately after our service. While we have no new vestry members to elect, we will elect our delegate and alternate delegate to the Diocesan Convention in October. Blair Hannon and Deb Vaughn are nominees. We will distribute the reports from our committees and ministries and review the budget for 2023.

## CHRISTMAS GRATITUDE – PLEASE ACCEPT MY THANKS

I am grateful for your many cards and gifts at Christmas. My heart was warmed by your generosity. Because I have put on a few extra pounds over the holidays, I will work to shed them in the new year, but my heart was filled with joy at your kindness and affection.

## THANKS FROM FATHER TED CHRISTOPHER



This note comes very belatedly to thank you all for the generous gift at the occasion of my ordination to the sacred order of Priests. I appreciate it greatly – it has gone to help support expenses surrounding the commencement of my priestly vocation (a friend joked that being ordained is akin to a wedding and should feature a registry!). Father John has been generous as well, including presenting me with a beautiful cross that I can wear while vested and celebrating liturgy – a constant reminder of St. Mark’s and my time there.

I am particularly grateful for my time with you all, during my transitional diaconate. I learned a great deal about your liturgical practices, about your deep commitment to your faith, about your moving and beautiful history, and about the ways you serve, witness, and minister to the local and regional community.

I hope that I was a helpful and inspiring presence to you as well. Father John is a good and faithful pastor to you all, and he has been a good mentor to me – particularly in the last months of my process towards ordination. I was honored to have him stand as a presenter for my ordination. You are all lucky to be served by him – I know you know this – and I look forward to exploring ways that my emerging ministry can help to support and bolster his and yours.

As we rejoice in the season of the Nativity of our Lord, I am mindful of God's surprising nature, almost a prankster or jokester, coming into the world amidst such a motley cast of characters – Magi, shepherds, angels, frightened teenagers, despotic kings. It reminds me that God can fashion breathtaking work with just about any material, and thank God for that, because I am no great shakes! The great gift you have given me was space to explore and grow in our beautiful Episcopal liturgy and our deep Scriptural heritage – thank you for that.

I wish you all warmth this Christmastide and a Happy New Year.



## TOYS FOR TOTS 2022

We helped 210 families bring a brighter Christmas to almost 600 children, which is a sharp increase from last year.

We distributed at least five toys to every child. Thanks to generous donors both in Lewistown and outside our

area, the tables in the Recreation Building were full of wonderful gifts.



We have reserved the building for the same week next December and hope to increase the number of volunteers and contributors.

More than half of the physically able members of St. Mark's were part of the Toys for Tots program this year, which is an astonishingly high percentage. What does this say about us to the community?

## MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD & BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

In December Mother Hubbard's Cupboard was busy. We distributed turkeys and hams at Thanksgiving as well as at Christmas. Here are our numbers.

November numbers  
Total individuals- 427

Total families- 201  
New individuals- 26  
New families- 12

December numbers so far  
Total individuals- 260  
Total families- 93  
New individuals- 27  
New families- 8

Donations have been plentiful. We received 79 bags from the police “fill a cruiser” program. We received 20 hams from Shelter Services, plus a few more from private individuals. We were able to give out Christmas bags with everything needed for a nice holiday dinner. We had toys donated to MHC, so we have helped 4 families that did not sign up for Toys for Tots. We are expecting a new winter coat donation next week from Maines Roofing. We are also receiving 800 pounds of hamburger this week.

We have been exploring new sources of free and lower-cost food. We are generously supported by other churches, businesses, organizations, and individuals throughout the community.

On Tuesday after Christmas, we served about 30 people a tasty takeout meal (meatballs from Wilsons plus mac ‘n’ cheese).

### **JANUARY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES**

CAROL POTTS (3),  
REBECCA GANOE (11)  
MARK KAKEL, JR. (17)  
CHARLES CLARE (20)  
ERIN ANEWALT (30)

### **PROPERTY UPDATE**

We continue to make improvements in our use of space both for Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard and for our fully accessible bathroom. We are working with an architect on

designs. Our Cub Scout troop is delighted with the enhancements that we have made to their space in our basement.

We are working with the vendor of our smoke alarm system to remediate some chronic problems we have had with the sensors.

### **PRAYER LIST**

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

Please send a card to Joyce Hart at Brookline Manor (2 Manor Boulevard, Mifflintown PA 17059).