

St. Mark's Messenger

September 2023

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

“What brought you to The Episcopal Church, and why do you stay?”

More than 250 Episcopalians from the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Bethlehem answered this question in a series of “listening sessions” held in June and July as part of our re-unification discussion. Four responses were most frequent.

* Welcome/inclusion/community: “drawn by radical inclusion and welcome,” loving community, acceptance

* Liturgy/theology/spirituality: “I love the Book of Common Prayer,” can go to any Episcopal Church and find common worship, the “beauty of worship,” the focus on the Eucharist and the sacraments, music, “the sacrament got us in, the people kept us here”; *via media*, three-legged stool (Scripture, Tradition, and Reason)

* Social justice positions and efforts

* A theologically “progressive” church

If you were asked this question, what would you say? At our July meeting the vestry had a very rich discussion, and high on our list were music (thanks, Joanne and Kaley!) and the beauty of our sanctuary. “I feel peace when I am in church,” said one person. “I feel closer to God there.”

Having an answer **is really important** as we invite new people to join us not



just in worship on Sundays and Wednesdays but also in our outreach ministries (Breaking Bread Together, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, and even Toys for Tots).

As we approach our 200th anniversary, we are exploring new ways to seek and serve Christ in this community. One of those was our “First Sunday” discussion with Dr. Graham Spanier on

August 6. More than 75 people chose to spend part of a beautiful Sunday afternoon in our church.

We have worked hard to improve Mother Hubbard's Cupboard. In the past month we have renovated the office space, created a new entrance to MHC, installed an additional air conditioner and shelving, and brightened the space with fresh paint.



We are a small parish (2,200 of the 6,300 Episcopal parishes in the United States have an average Sunday attendance of less than 25 – ours is 22). Since 1823 we have been worshipping God and serving our neighbors from our little church on South Main Street. Sustained by faithful men and women for ten generations, we are grateful for all of the blessings showered on this parish and hopeful as we face our current challenges.

Father John+

COLLECT FOR LABOR DAY

Almighty God, you have so linked our lives one with another that all we do affects, for good or ill, all other lives: So guide us in the work we do, that we may do it not self alone, but for the common good; and, as we seek a proper return for our own labor, make us mindful of the rightful aspirations of other workers, and arouse our concern for those who are out of work; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen – Book of Common Prayer, p. 261*

COMING ATTRACTIONS: FAITH, FOOD, AND FELLOWSHIP

The Men's breakfast will be at Vince's in Burnham on Saturday, September 2, at 8AM.

CHURCH PICNIC

On September 10 we will hold our church picnic after our Sunday service. We will meet about 11:30 at the home of Tracey McKee (353 Airport Rd., Reedsville, PA 17084). Please bring a dish to share.

The Adult Forum resumes on Sunday, September 10, at 9AM. We will be studying miracles, and our guide will be Dr. Amy-Jill Levine's new book, *Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus*. Please let Father John know if you want to participate so we can purchase the right number of books.

PROPERTY UPDATES

We will soon begin the renovation of the bathroom in the parish house, making it handicap accessible.

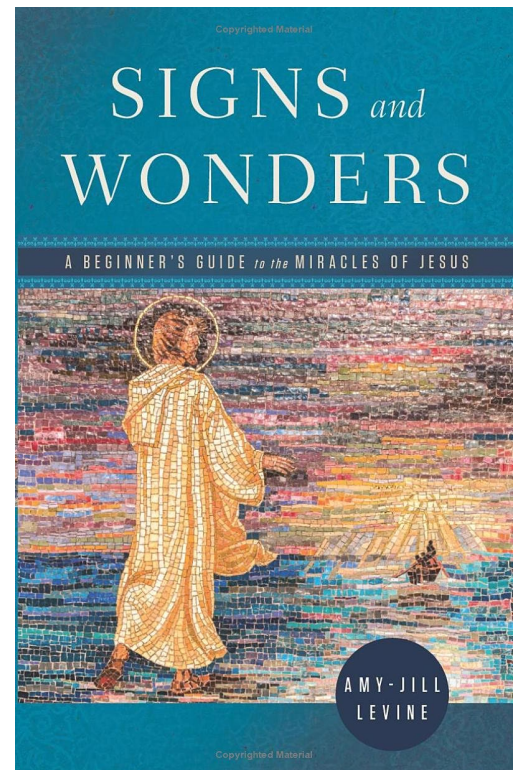
MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD, OUTREACH, AND BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

December	468	individuals
January	535	individuals
February	560	individuals
March	714	individuals
April	851	individuals
May	960	individuals
June	1,034	individuals
July	530	individuals (201 families; 23 new families; 58 new individuals).

Our July total includes 293 adults, 151 children, and 86 seniors. What the statistics tell us is that 28% of the folks helped by MHC are children and youths and 16% are seniors. Our July numbers have returned to where we were in January.

PRAYER LIST

We pray for those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this month; and we pray especially for Ralph Bitner, Sharon Copenhaver, Mary Daily, Ron Diven, Ann



Harwood-Nuss, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Doris McKee, Carole Mease, Steve Myers, Willa Silverman, Lynn Stricker, Patty Wagner, Evelyn Wilson, and Bill Wilson.

Pray also for those serving in the military as well as President Joe Biden and Governor Josh Shapiro. Pray for all members of Congress and our legislature to be guided by respect for the rights of every human being and respect for the common good. Pray for the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom.

Pray for the safety of our teachers and students in our schools this year.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

4—Michele Harden Lasher, 6—Michelle Bitner, 15—Diann Pinkerton, 17—Evelyn Wilson, 18—Theodore Wilson

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