

St. Mark's Messenger

November 2023

ANNUAL GIVING LETTER



Our giving tradition at St. Mark's has always been focused on how we share all of our gifts – not just our financial gifts. A church needs new ideas, creative people to lead, individuals who know how to solve complex problems, volunteers to keep our ministries focused on our neighbors. We usually talk about this in a three-fold way: wealth, works, and wisdom. If any one of these areas is missing from our community, we are diminished.

Each of us has a gift, and some have many. For some it is cooking and baking; we praise those who have an administrative gift of balancing books or counting the collection; we admire those who offer hospitality, who serve at the altar, who help us find a seat as the service begins. Some are carpenters, and others are cleaners. Our Outreach ministries include Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and Toys for Tots. Truly, we give with our hands, hearts, and talents. Whatever your ministries are, we couldn't be who we are without you.

I have witnessed the ways in which you communicate with each other to get things done. Potlucks, community events, pastoral care, it all happens so wonderfully because you are each deeply connected to each other through your roots of faith and service.

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

Father John+

NUTS AND BOLTS ABOUT OUR BUDGET FOR 2024

Our annual income is about \$150,000, and so are our expenses. Twenty-two households pledge to St. Mark's, and their gifts constitute about 51% of our income; the remainder comes from our endowment and special gifts. We lost two large pledges this year when one parishioner died and another moved away, so our pledge income has been reduced by \$30,000. Those are large pledges to replace.

The moderate rate of inflation (about 4%) challenges us as well, especially the cost of heating and cooling the church (\$20,000). 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. You know that from your own household.

Our endowment income fluctuates with the state of the stock market. Last year was awful; this year has been better, but we're still not where we want to be. This means that our endowment income next year will be less than this year's.

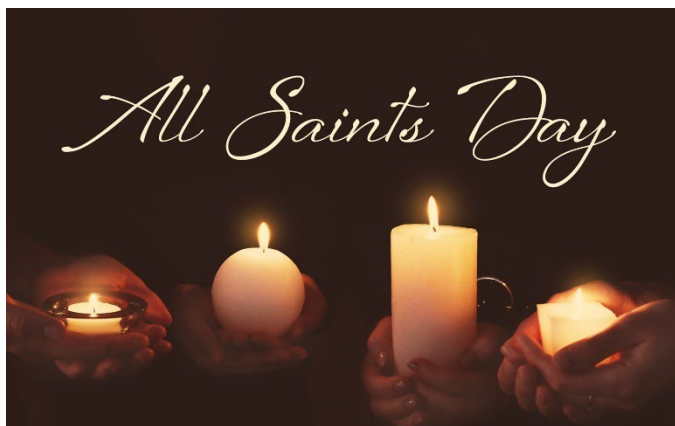
Are we poor? Hardly. Are we challenged? Yes. **With an increase in the number and amounts of pledges, we can balance our budget.**

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 2024 will be approved by the vestry at its November meeting.

Please turn in your pledge card by Sunday, November 12. We need your faithful attendance in worship and in financial support. God asks for a share of our time, talents, and money.

NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



We will celebrate All Saints' Day on November 5, a few days after its official date of November 1.

On All Saints Day we will first commemorate the faithful who, according to the church, have achieved heavenly status in the previous year. We 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. I will think especially of my sister Ann and my friend Willa. **I ask that you bring to the service a picture or pictures of people you wish to remember.**

All Saints' Day is for remembering the people we have loved, who were important to us, who made an impact on us, the "small" saints rather than the famous ones like St. Mark.

On November 9, St. Mark's will host the annual clergy day with Bishop Audrey and about 50 Episcopal clergy. It will be a great time to show off the beauty of our church, the beautifully renovated space for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, and even our new bathroom.

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.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND "BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER"

On October 24, we served people a delicious meal of spaghetti and meatballs along with home-made bread.

In September Mother Hubbard helped 621 people.

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. And yes, we are also giving away winter coats, thanks to a gift from a generous person who wanted us to purchase them.

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?


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-five niches have already been spoken for.

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free after first night*

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NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

6—Beth Birch, 17—Mark Kaler, 27—Tracey McKee, 29—Charles Phillips, 30—Debra Diven

PRAYER REQUESTS

We ask your prayers for Ralph Bitner, Sharon Copenhaver, Mary Daily, Ron Diven, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Doris McKee, Carole Mease, Steve Myers, Lynn Stricker, Patty Wagner, Evelyn Wilson, and Bill Wilson.

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 again this year at the Recreation Building (108 Montgomery Avenue).

We'll need help unloading the toys and distributing them during the week of December 9-16.

PROPERTY UPDATE

With the completion of our new bathroom and the renovation of Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, the Property Committee will do an inventory of our other most urgent property needs. We have heard suggestions about the floors in the parish house and kitchen; others have noted the need for a handrail at the entrance to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and perhaps safer steps. Since we will now be using the parish house for community gatherings again, we should look at the appearance of the space, including the stage, and the lighting for the room.