

St. Mark's Messenger

November 2024

ANNUAL GIVING LETTER



From its earliest days, St. Mark's has been blessed by a community that understands the true meaning of generosity. A tiny number of people made pledges in 1823 to build the first Episcopal church in Mifflin County. We have always recognized that our gifts extend far beyond the financial, encompassing the wealth of talents, skills, and dedication that each of you brings to this sacred space.

Our church thrives not only on monetary contributions, but also on the vibrant tapestry of new ideas, creative leadership, and compassionate service.

Whether you share your culinary gifts in the kitchen, your administrative expertise on the vestry, your warm hospitality at Breaking Bread, or your helping hands with Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and Toys for Tots, you contribute to the rich mosaic of St. Mark's.

Kathryn and I tithe to two churches, St. Mark's and St. John's-Bellefonte. We support our churches because we take seriously the words of Jesus about taking care of our neighbors and honoring God's mission in our communities. We give because we know how much we have received from our churches.

Is St. Mark's poor? Hardly. Are we challenged? Yes. **But with an increase in the number and amounts of pledges, we can balance our budget, which includes generous gifts to other charities like the Shelter and Episcopal Relief and Development.**

As we embark on our annual pledge campaign, I invite you to reflect on the abundance of blessings in your life and to consider how you can express your gratitude through your pledge. 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.

Please return your pledge card by Sunday, November 17th.

Father John+

NUTS AND BOLTS ABOUT OUR BUDGET FOR 2025

Our annual income is about \$160,000, and so are our expenses. Twenty-five 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 have lost several large pledges in the past few years because of death or relocation, but we also have new families who pledge.

Even the low increase in inflation (about 3%) challenges us, especially the cost of insuring, heating, and cooling the church (\$37,000). 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, but we will do better in 2025 than we did in the past two years. I am grateful to all of the saints who remember the church in their wills.

The budget for 2025 will be approved by the vestry at its November meeting.

Please turn in your pledge card by Sunday, November 17. We need your faithful attendance in worship and in financial support. God asks for a share of our time, talents, and money.

GETTING YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER



For information about St. Mark's Columbarium contact the church office at 717-248-8327 or by email to rector@stmark-lewistown.org.

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

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

All are welcome

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.

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 16-20.

We will also have a donation box in our church to collect toys.

BIG CHANGE FOR THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

After two years of discernment, our Diocese has voted to reunify with the Diocese of Bethlehem. Following a year of transition in 2025, we will become the Diocese of the Susquehanna in 2026. We will have two bishops until Bishop Scanlan retires in October 2027.



NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

We will celebrate All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day on November 3.

Also on November 3 we will have a marvelous time with Forest Fisher, who will tell ghost stories of Mifflin County in his own inimitable style. We will gather in the church at 2PM and have refreshments in the parish house afterwards. We will take up a collection to benefit victims of the recent hurricanes. Please bring a friend and feel free to wear a costume.

In December we will have two special concerts, a service of choral Evensong on December 1 (the first Sunday of Advent) and a "holiday swing" concert on December 15. The Evensong service will feature eight Penn State students, who will be directed by Dr. Chris Kiver. This service is part of our Episcopal heritage - and will be memorable.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND "BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER"

In September we helped 473 people. We are planning special foods at Thanksgiving. In our "Breaking Bread Together" meals, we continue to try new recipes (thanks, Pete!) that delight our guests.

Our Apple Dumpling Gang baked more than 200 delicious pastries in October: thank you!

PROPERTY UPDATE

The Property Committee has taken a close look at our utility bills (electricity and gas) and has found new ways to sharply lower their costs. Homeowners could do the same thing. We will ask Hal Jenkinson to talk about what we've learned at a coffee hour in November. We continue to research pew cushions, and we'll start on the roof project soon.

We will also install an additional handrail on the steps leading from the church into the parish house.

"Spirits Among Us" - Ghostly Tales with Mifflin County Connections

Presented by Forest K. Fisher, Mifflin County Historical Society, on Sunday, November 3, at 2PM. Feel free to wear a costume since we are continuing the celebration of Halloween.

Stories of spectral hauntings, witchy happenings and a cursed mountain beast, all combine to add spice to the Fall season. Originally featured on local radio during "History is Our Story," Forest Fisher retells three ghostly tales, and more, intertwined with a generous portion of local history.

Hear about a watery Juniata River grave and the horror lurking below in *The Legend of Cotter's Hole*; learn about *The Beast of Bixler's Gap* cursed by witchy connections to roam the local wilderness forever; and the tale of ghostly nighttime happenings, and possible causes, that once disturbed Mifflin County's Historic Courthouse in *Spirits Among Us!*

Oh yes, a bonus tale! Fisher promises he will recall the story of missing bones belong to Revolutionary War General "Mad Anthony" Wayne scattered in the Kishacoquillas Valley. Learn when best to see a ghostly Mad Anthony astride his spectral horse galloping in search of those missing bones!

Enjoy a mix of scary stories and local history. Mark your calendar now. Don't miss this event!

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

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

PRAYER REQUESTS

We pray especially for Myra Bannon, Judy Clare, Mary Daily, Deacon Alex Dyakiw, Shirley Mancino, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Dawn Lowe, Doris McKee, Carole Mease, Lynn Stricker, Patty Wagner, and Evelyn Wilson.