

St. Mark's Messenger

January 2026

Reflections of Father John

After four weeks of patient preparation during Advent, the creche was finally 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 sang at the beginning of our Christmas Eve service. I hope that we sensed that all of God's angels were also singing along with us. This was my 9th Christmas Eve at St. Mark's and was especially memorable because of the people who were there.



Advent 2025 was especially rich for me because of three activities. In early December we had two wonderful concerts in our parish house. From December 15-19, a small army of volunteers "lived" in the Recreation Building, preparing gifts for 270+ needy families (700+ kids). Of the 50 volunteers, 20 were from St. Mark's. Ranging in age from their 20s to 90, we had the best team ever.

A highlight was meeting the families and hearing their stories. If you want to understand joy, ask Georgia Olson about calling the winners of our five raffles.

And then came Christmas. With ~50 people at our Christmas Eve service, the church was fully and beautifully decorated. Worshippers, young and old, came from near and far



(Dallas, TX). Kaley's beautiful offertory was magnificent, and she's recorded a version of "Silent Night" for a forthcoming drone video of the church decorated for Christmas.

Christmas marks the moment when God chose to enter our world in a new way. The prophets had been bringing God's messages for centuries, but sending Jesus, his own son, is unique, a gift of love and hope as well as a promise of peace and justice.

Jesus goes on to preach the Good News to a world broken by sin and injustice, war and exploitation. He will seek to make earth much more like heaven and will give

specific directions for how this will happen: Matthew 25:45-46 (“the least of these”) and the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12).

May 2026 be filled with joy, peace, and hope!

Father John ✠

FIRST SUNDAY CONCERT




Yuletide Echoes


FEATURING WORKS BY FAURÉ, LISZT, & BRAHMS,
AND YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROLS



MADELEINE
CHRISTOPHER,
MEZZO-SOPRANO




MAEVE BERRY,
PIANO



ABI
LIEBEGOTT,
SOPRANO

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2PM
ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
21 S. MAIN ST, LEWISTOWN, PA



On Sunday, January 4, at 2PM, we are delighted to feature two soloists from the Eastman School of Music, Madeline Christopher and Abi Leibgott (a Lewistown native). You will be astonished by their talent, and yes, we'll all get to sing some Christmas carols. You may remember that Madi Christopher sang at St. Mark's when she was 16 (she's a State College High School graduate). Since then she's starred in numerous musicals, plays, operas, and concerts, including a recent performance of *The Messiah*.

Likewise, Abi has performed widely, not only at the Eastman Opera Theatre but also at the Berlin Opera Academy.

Their accompanist, Dr. Maeve Berry, received her Ph.D. from Eastman and is the resident artist pianist at the Pittsburgh Opera and has performed recitals in many cities. In the Fall 2026, she will become the

accompanist of the Houston Grand Opera.

Mark your calendar for future concerts as well:

February 1: Organ recital by Mark Ferraguto (Penn State professor)

March 1: Barbershop Quartet

April 12: Kaley Yeager (yay!!)

May 3: Piano duets by two Penn State doctoral students in piano

ANNUAL MEETING

We will hold our annual meeting on January 18 immediately after our service. After a light lunch, we will review our accomplishments in 2025, identify challenges for 2026, and elect new vestry members as well our delegate and an alternate to the Diocesan Convention in October. The reports from our committees will remind you of the breadth and vitality of our ministries and of our hopes for the future.



CHURCH ENVELOPES AND GIVING STATEMENT FOR 2025

The church envelopes are now available at the back of the church. Giving statements will be distributed in mid-January.

TOYS FOR TOTS 2025

We helped 270+ families bring a brighter Christmas to almost 700 children. We distributed at least three toys and a book to every child, and through a raffle, two kids got new bicycles as well.

Thanks to generous donors both in Lewistown and outside our area, the tables in the Rec Building were full of wonderful gifts.



More than half of the physically able members of our parish 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? In this picture you'll see our Bishop, Audrey Scanlan, cheering us on.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD & BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

In November we helped 676 people, which includes 208 children and 120 seniors. At Thanksgiving we gave away approximately 40 turkeys to families of 4 or more. Families with 3 or less were offered a choice of pork chops or ham slice. Everyone received a Thanksgiving bag with other items to complete their Thanksgiving meal. Donations started coming fast and furious in the beginning of November and continued through December. At Breaking Bread Together on December 23, we served 60 delicious meals of home-made goulash, rolls, salad, and dessert. We are grateful to Chef Pete and to all of the kitchen helpers as well as to Jeff, our baker-in-chief.

PRAYER LIST

We pray for Myra Bannon, Judy Clare, Wade Colyer, Larry Lasher, Shirley Mancino, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Doris McKee, Deacon Carole Mease, Lynn Stricker, Bob Welham, and Evelyn Wilson. We also pray for those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this month: Carol Potts (3), Rebecca Ganoe (11), Mark Kaler, Jr. (17), Charles Clare (20), and Erin Anewalt (30).

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
21 South Main Street
Lewistown, PA 17044
