

St. Mark's Messenger

June 2026

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

We've almost made it to summer. Because of the cold spring, the berries will be late, and who knows whether the orchards will produce very much. Still, I can hardly wait for the farmers' markets to share God's abundance.

May was full of highlights. The first one for me was a trip to St. Stephen's Cathedral in Harrisburg to hear the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, an expert on church growth, talk about why people don't go to church. While her focus was on young people (under the age of 45), the questions she asked are relevant to everyone in Mifflin County.

1. Tell me about your spiritual journey. What has brought you from childhood to this point?
2. How and where do you experience or connect with God?
3. How and where do you experience community and belonging?
4. What do you wish that churches understood about your generation, the challenges you face, and your relationship to institutions and the sacred?

You can hear her insights and recommendations on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/-InvXRNxCBs>



As a result, our vestry is working on new ways for us not only to be responsive to visitors but to attract them to worship with us. The program involves *all* of us. We'll be joining other parishes in the Diocese of the Susquehanna that are using the *Invite Welcome Connect* approach.

The next highlight was the fantastic concert of two pianists on one piano. How they made the piano come alive with sounds I've never heard before! I

really liked their selections, including the fact that they ended the concert with a showtune: “Edelweiss” from *The Sound of Music*. (I had asked them to play something popular.)

Here is a link to the concert: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi7BV7f0b54>

The third highlight was the completion of the new/old altar. Hal and Jon did a fantastic job of planning, measuring, cutting, and finding the right finish to make the new wood match the old wood; I had no idea that Jon Myers was such a skilled craftsman.

What’s the history of the altar? The one used in our first church (1823) was part of every Eucharist service for a century. Its top surface was a beautiful piece of white marble. In the 1920s and 1930s, the parish changed its appearance considerably, adding a large altar decorated like those found in European churches (e.g., with statues of saints or, in our case, the writers of the four gospels). The marble top became part of the new altar. Alas, we can see it only on Good Friday and Holy Saturday when the altar is stripped.



The base of the altar remained in the church but was unused until COVID. Because we needed an altar for me to use Zoom (remember those days?), Fred McKinley quickly made a functional surface out of plywood.

Why not use the large altar? Because I strongly prefer to face you as I consecrate the elements. In the olden days, the tradition was for priests to “face east” for the consecration, but the liturgical renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s led religious leaders to rethink the symbolism, and most churches pulled their altars out from the wall. In our case, that would be impossible. So we went back to the future and made something very old into something new.

I am grateful to Jeff and Susan for donating the black walnut, which has a special connection to the church because it grew on the farm where Sharon Copenhaver grew up. I will feel Sharon’s presence whenever I serve at the altar. I KNOW that she would beam with pride at her last contribution to her beloved church.

When Bishop William White consecrated the church in 1824, he consecrated all of the building, including the altar that we are now using again. At our All Saints service in November, we will remember Sharon and dedicate the altar in her memory.

On a personal note, I begin my tenth year at St. Mark's on June 1. Is ten years the record? No, your longest-serving rector was Father William Heakes (1910-24), but I'm now in second place. I am so grateful to serve God and the people of St. Mark's. **Father John**✠

PROPERTY UPDATES

We need to repair parts of our slate roof as well as gutters on some parts of our buildings, so don't be surprised by workers on ladders or scaffolding sometime this summer.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS THIS SUMMER

 **Music at St Mark's** 
Sunday, June 7, 2026 at 2pm
21 South Main Street, Lewistown, PA
Nic Stark, tenor; Carolyn Barr, accompanist



<i>The Lord's Prayer</i>	Albert Hay Malotte
<i>8 Gedichte aus Letzte Blätter</i>	Richard Strauss
<i>Che gelida manina</i> , from <i>La bohème</i>	Giacomo Puccini
<i>Pourquoi me réveiller</i> , from <i>Werther</i>	Jules Massenet
<i>Intermezzo in A major</i> , Op. 18, No. 2 ...	Johannes Brahms
<i>The Banjo</i> Op. 15	Louis-Moreau Gottschalk
<i>Come Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing</i> arr.	Danielle Isaacson
<i>Love Lifted Me</i>	arr. Dr. Louima Lilite
<i>Corner of the Sky</i> , from <i>Pippin</i>	Stephen Schwartz
<i>I'm Alive</i> , from <i>Next to Normal</i> ..	Tom Kitt & Brian Yorkey
<i>Santa Fe</i> , from <i>Newsies</i>	Alan Menken
<i>Blue</i>	Joni Mitchell
<i>Returning to Myself</i>	Brandi Carlile
<i>Space Oddity</i>	David Bowie

After the concert there will be refreshments in the Parish House.
We will take up a collection to benefit our Shelter.

Questions?
rector@stmark-lewistown.org
or 814-571-0687

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

Since Joanne Yang will visit her family in Taiwan, we will have three guest pianists and sing many of your favorite hymns. If you have requests, please let Father John know. I have already received Jane Smith's playlist!

On June 7, a superb tenor, Nic Stark, will sing a broad range of songs: religious, classical, and pop. Truly, there will be something for everyone.

He will be travelling to Austria later this summer to sing in an opera, and the donations from this concert will help pay his expenses. His accompanist, Carolyn Barr, played for us last summer. Next year she will begin her master's degree in piano at Carnegie Mellon University.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD AND BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

In January 2025, we helped 440 people at MHC; a year later we helped 540. The impact of tariffs, inflation, and the cost of energy has hit many people very hard this year.

Merf radio/Rocco Pallotto had the Cantucky derby donation at Weis Market for MHC again this year. We received \$190 and a large donation of food. Again this summer we will provide extra food to families with school-age children because these kids will not be receiving breakfasts and lunches at school. On May 26, we fed 48 guests a tasty picnic meal of fried chicken, two salads, rolls, and dessert.

PRAYER LIST

We pray for Myra Bannon, Lillah Cherry, Judy Clare, Wade Colyer, Larry Lasher, Shirley Mancino, Tony Hatfield-Nicholson, Deacon Carole Mease, Susan Morse, Sandy Stelts, Lynn Stricker, Nancy Vickers, Bob Welham, and Evelyn Wilson.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

10: Joe Sikorsky; 20: 55th Anniversary of Charles and Dawn Phillips; 20: Anniversary of Jeff and Susan Baumgardner 22: John Michael Aitkin; 30: Susan Beers

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
21 South Main Street
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