



A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

# The Messenger

## Is Our Vision 2020?

While it hardly seems possible that another year is in the rear-view mirror, it is indeed past.

I'm sure that this past year held many victories as well as many challenges. If your life is anything like mine, it can seem like you're on an intense roller coaster ride. Which, by the way, I usually am a fan. Cedar Point back in Sandusky Ohio is one of my favorite places. But as life goes, we would prefer that it be less like a roller coaster and more like the paddle boat ride where we can enjoy the cruise while staying far away from the plastic actors on the shore making scary animal sounds or shooting fake guns and arrows. With a roller coaster ride sort of life, we might feel like we didn't even sign up for the trip but we're on it anyway.

I think back to March and the COVID-19 shutdowns, the move to virtual church, the closing of businesses and the

back and forth about whether schools will be open or not or go hybrid. I look back to May and the death of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement and the social justice protests, the political unrest of a presidential election year, and the daily infection and death toll numbers of the novel Coronavirus and the continued separation from our friends and families.

This past year was 20/20. No, not that 20/20. The year 2020! I know it's not quite the same as physical vision, but the number of the year gives us an excellent opportunity to take our own "spiritual eye exam. How's your vision? Many of us would love to be able to answer that question with a response like, "my vision is 20/20". And while many of us would like to answer that way, we may need glasses or contacts to get us to that point.

Ephesians 1:8 says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what the hope of His calling is, what

are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

There is a song we often hear with the title "Open the Eyes of My Heart." This song builds on the idea from Ephesians that God wants us to see with the eyes of faith! The eyes of faith go far beyond where our physical or sensory eyes will take us.

Though 2020 the year isn't exactly the IDEAL as it is when it comes to eye exams, the question is, can we come to appreciate all the things that God blessed us with in the midst of the less than 20/20 of 2020?

My hope is that in 2021, whatever bumpy or smooth ride you find yourself on, you will notice that you are sitting next to a God that rides it out with you and is there in the ups and the downs. Our hope as Christians is in Christ in each new day and each new year; Christ who serves as the lens through which we look to the now and to the future.

Peace and blessings,  
Pastor MP

# Session Snippets

December 14, 2020 Meeting

Traditionally the Session and Deacons meet together in December. In the past we have shared food and drink while we visit before the meeting begins. This year was different, as we gathered on Zoom spending time with the **new officers**, in preparation for their **ordination and installation on January 10, 2021** at the virtual church service. It was great to see many faces we have missed these last months.

Business items covered in the separate Session meeting:

- The “Back-to-Church” group will be meeting in the new year to firm up guidelines and process for returning to worship when that is appropriate, based on factors outside St. Mark.
- Terms of Call for the pastors were presented for review and were accepted. They will be presented to the Congregation for approval at the **Annual Congregational Meeting January 31, 2021** held on Zoom.
- It was noted that the congregation has been faithful in 2020 in meeting the financial needs of St. Mark. This has allowed full support of the Preschool, even with reduced enrollment, major expenses for the HVAC work in that wing of the building, and enhancement of technology capabilities.

Many thanks for the dedication and work of the retiring 2020 Class of Elders: Shelley Lester, Loren Polak, Judy Vroman, Cathy York, and Kate Dolson.

Next Newsletter – February Messenger  
Submittal deadline – January 20, 2021  
Email to: [newsletter@discoverstmark.org](mailto:newsletter@discoverstmark.org)  
Publishing on January 29



## Another Method For Charitable Gifting

Last month’s article discussed traditional giving to St. Mark by writing a check, paying by credit card, direct deposit or by making an outright gift of stock or investment securities. We appreciate everyone’s ongoing support of St. Mark as we begin 2021.

Another way of charitable contributions to St. Mark is from **your IRAs**:

You must be age 70½ or older at the time of the gift to make Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) from your IRA (other than SEP-IRAs and SIMPLE-IRAs). You must direct your IRA custodian to make a distribution *directly* from your IRA to a qualified charity (i.e. St. Mark), and the distribution must be one that would otherwise be taxable to you.

You can exclude up to \$100,000 of QCDs from your Gross Income each year, thereby avoiding taxation on those amounts. If you file a married filing jointly tax return, each spouse can exclude up to \$100,000 of QCDs. The exclusion from gross income for QCDs also provides a tax-efficient way for taxpayers who don’t itemize deductions to make charitable contributions. Note: You don’t get to deduct QCDs as a charitable

contribution on your federal income tax return-no double-dipping. These contributions will count toward satisfying any Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), which now start at age 72, that you would otherwise have to receive from your IRA, just as if you had received an actual distribution from the plan.

Always consult your financial planner or tax professional to confirm that a Qualified Charitable Distribution is appropriate for you.

The St. Mark Finance Committee members

**Next Month: Giving from Your Will or Trust Bequests and Beneficiary Designations.**

### **Thank You's**

**Dear St. Mark Congregation and Staff,**  
Thank you for the prayers, cards, caring conversations and remembrance gifts on the passing of my Mom. They have meant so much. I have certainly felt the comfort of God's loving arms, through you. I am so grateful to be part of our caring congregation.  
With Appreciation,  
Lynne

**To all members of St. Mark,**  
I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the cards, phone calls, flowers, kindness and compassion you have so generously given during these past months.

Mickey appreciated the calls from Pastor Dave and church friends in the weeks before his passing. This was very comforting for him and for me.

May God bless each of you,  
Linda

## **St. Mark and Red Cross Blood Drives for Year 2021**



For many years St. Mark has participated in this very valuable community service. For those who regularly give blood you're your calendar with these 2021 dates:

- **February 28**
- **April 25,**
- **August 15**
- **October 24**

Blood drives are on Sundays from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm in Gleason Hall.

Never given blood? Think about giving for the first time. A member of your community may be the one who receives your blood because of cancer, transplant surgery, other life-saving surgeries, genetic blood disorders, various illnesses and a multitude of various accidents. Let this year be the beginning of a new habit in your life.

**BE THE ONE WHO BRINGS HOPE AND HEALING TO THOSE PATIENTS IN NEED.**

The Deacon's Health and Wellness Committee looks forward to seeing our past donors, renewing old friendships, hopefully, meeting new donors and making new friendships in this coming new year.

## Parking Lot Drive-thru Drop-offs Monthly Donations in 2021

The Deacons' Mission Committee will continue to coordinate and host drive-through donation drop-offs **once a month** in the St. Mark parking lot. Our mission partners are incredibly grateful for St. Mark's ongoing generosity and have been good stewards of our donations. Behind our masks we are smiling with the joy of being in service to others, and our gloved hands are warmed by your generosity! Next Drop-off is:

### Sunday, January 17, 1-3PM Personal Care Products

We will collect deodorant, bar soap, shampoo, lotion, and laundry detergent.

Did you know that Food stamps - SNAP/EBT/WIC - *cannot* be used for personal care products?



### Sunday, February 7, 1-3 PM Food Collection – Youth Sponsored

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a youth-inspired movement working across the nation to tackle hunger in their local communities. Mobilizing grassroots resources, The Souper Bowl of Caring has created over \$160 million worth of support that stays completely local. Once again, St. Mark Youth will be collecting canned goods for our local mission partners, Circle of Concern, and Isaiah 58 Ministries.

We look forward to seeing you before kickoff on Sunday, February 7th!

### Circle of Concern Headquarters Drop-offs

Circle of Concern is **NOW** accepting curbside drop-off donations on Mondays and Tuesdays (9 am to 3 pm) and Thursdays (9 am to noon). Their headquarters are at 112 St. Louis Avenue, Valley Park, MO 63088.

Current needs include:

- \*Cereal
- \*Dinner Helpers
- \*Snack Items
- \*Dish Soap
- \*Women's Incontinence Briefs, Size L/XL
- \*Canned Pasta
- \*Peanut Butter
- \*Canned Fruit
- \*Laundry Detergent

Monetary contributions may be made through St. Mark by designating Circle of Concern on the memo line of your check.

### Christmas Alternatives – Our 20<sup>th</sup> Year!

Thank you for your continued support of Christmas Alternatives! Donations are in the process of being tabulated and results will be shared early next year.

## Results for 2020 ABC Sale



Drum roll please..... over **\$13,000** was raised for our local mission partners!!! This year, the Attic Basement Closet sale moved from the physical church building to two “digital” platforms.

ONE: St. Mark members generously donated to the Virtual ABC Sale.

TWO: Jackie Morgan selflessly gave her time and talents all year long to sell small items donated by members of our congregation, netting over \$6,000 in online sales.

Your giving has meant that we have been able to continue to meet the financial needs of our mission partners during a most challenging year – thank you! Missions partners include: BBJ, Isaiah 58, Lafayette Industries, Mound Ridge, Peace Meal, Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services, and UKirk.

### “60 Gifts for 60 Children”

“60 Gifts for 60 Children” was a huge success thanks to the generosity of St. Mark members. This year Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services requested specific gifts for the children they service. St. Mark and other congregations responded. Each church was given lists of the children’s requested items. Our St. Mark Presbyterian Women Circles and the Mission Committee worked together on this project.

St. Mark members not only fulfilled the 60 specific requests, but donated more gifts, which was extremely welcome, because the number of children being served by PHCAS increased after the gift lists were distributed. Thank you, St. Mark, for the more than 60 gifts that you so generously selected and donated! The gifts in the photograph were collected from St. Mark

members for PCHAS and will be distributed to the deserving children.

Christine Polak,  
Mission Committee member



## SCOUT CORNER

Unfortunately, Troop 631 is forced to break a tradition that dates back over 50 years -- Spaghetti Supper is officially canceled!



As a socially distanced alternative for the largest fundraiser for the scouts every year, the scouts are offering gift certificates to Waterway Carwash.

Here's what you get:

- A certificate for a FULL SERVICE carwash at the regular walk-in price of \$20. You don't pay anything extra for the fundraiser!
- Redeemable at any Waterway Carwash in St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, Cleveland, or Chicago.
- The coupons do not expire! Use them whenever you wish.
- Upgradeable - This card can be used toward a more expensive service.
- For large SUVs, etc., large vehicle upcharges are waived if you are using this coupon.
- Fully transferable. Makes a great gift throughout the year.

What the scouts get:

- The scouts get to keep 50% of sales for their fundraiser!!!
- Purchase by January 31, last day of fundraiser.

Due to the unusual circumstances, for sales and more information please contact the chairs of this event, **Eric and Jessica Bachman**. They will arrange payment and either mail or deliver your certificates personally!

The scouts appreciate your continued support and look forward to seeing everyone again at Spaghetti Supper 2022!!!!

Chuck Livesay, Chartered Organization Representative

## Get your STAR-WORDS! NO...not Star Wars. Star-WORDS!

Select a number ranging from 1 to 265.

Send me an email, [mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org), call or text me, or send me a message on Social Media with the number you selected (each person gets their own word). Close to Epiphany Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, I will send you a 2021 STAR-word.



**What is a Star-word, you say with glee, surprise, and unbridled anticipation?!?!?!**

“Have you heard of the practice of passing out ‘Star Words’ on the Sunday closest to Epiphany? On the day that we remember the star that led the magi to Jesus, pieces of paper cut into star shapes with a printed word are passed out to all. These words hopefully will give people a different way to approach their prayer life. Is God, perhaps, speaking to them through the particular word they got when they grabbed their star?

[Starting now, you are invited to request a] star word. These star words can either be received with joy or hesitation. Sometimes they are discarded or forgotten. Sometimes the words don’t appear bright like a star and we have to look for them showing up in our daily lives. The hope of this practice is that we are reminded of God’s presence breaking through to shine as light in the darkness.” \*

Peace and blessings,  
Pastor MP

*“Epiphany is the celebration of God’s manifestation or self-revelation to the world in Jesus Christ. In particular, we celebrate the revelation of God’s promise and purpose to the nations of the world, as the magi came from the East to worship to the Christ child, and God’s covenant of grace is extended to all who believe the good news of Christ Jesus. The symbolism of light is important: not only because of the star that guided the magi, but as it relates to the bright dawning of God’s self-revelation in Christ”- An excerpt from the Companion to the Book of Common Worship (Geneva Press, 2003, 94-95)*

\* <https://apcenet.org/2020/01/06/epiphany-stars/>



# Presbyterian Women's Annual Tea

Wednesday, January 27 1:30 pm - Virtually

The teakettle is on and we are waiting  
for you to join us!

Presbyterian Women's Annual Tea  
(Virtually this year!)

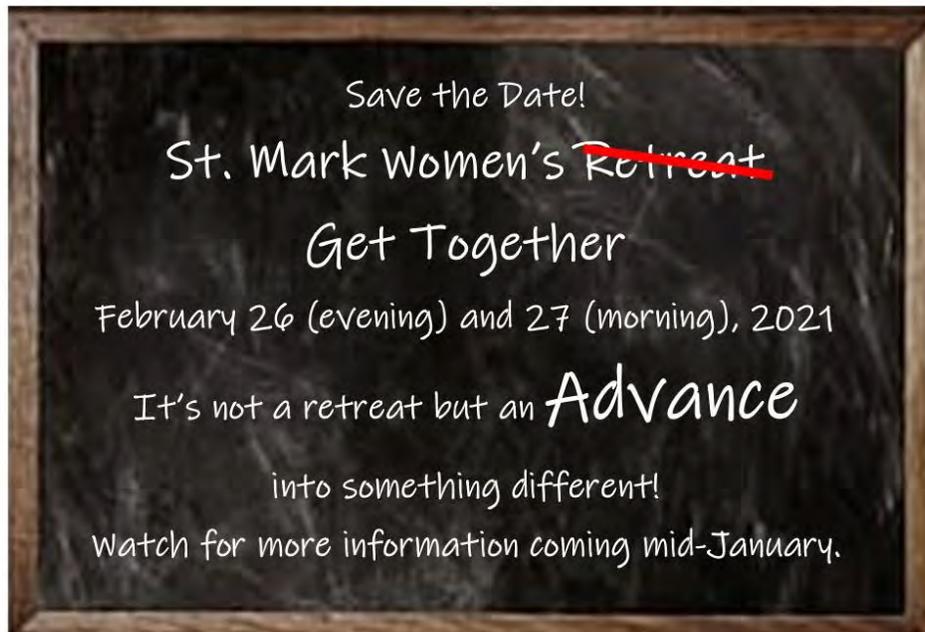
Wednesday, January 27, 2021 1:30 p.m.

***Little House on Rocky Ridge Farm***

Laura Ingalls Wilders' home in Mansfield, Missouri



## Save the Dates St. Mark Women!



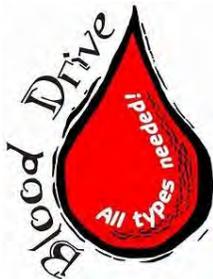


ST. MARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
601 CLAYMONT DRIVE  
BALLWIN, MO 63011



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