



Issue: April 2024



A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

# *The Messenger*

## **A Christmas Letter at Easter**

Each Christmas season I receive a few cards stuffed with Christmas letters that begin something like this: “Our Year in Review”, “This Year’s [so-&so] Family Adventures”, or even a statement about what the sender means, including their anxiety about having to perform said such annual ritual, “Our Obligatory Annual Family Christmas Letter”. I personally have never written a letter such as this and I admit that when I receive one, I don’t always read them thoroughly. Sometimes I simply glance at the picture, the title, the greeting, and the closing lines and with a warmed heart and a smile, then set the letter aside thinking to myself, “I will read that through later.” Funny thing about that is, I don’t often go back and follow through.

As the New Year turns and I take down all the holiday decorations, the Christmas letters get placed in a pile that gets moved from spot to spot before eventually ending up in the recycle bin. Spring arrives and

as the Lent and the Easter season comes into full bloom alongside spring flowers, those Christmas letters of mine are long forgotten. My sights are set on warmer temperatures and the coming summer days I will spend traveling, taking morning walks, and doing a variety of other delightful activities. I will have left behind thoughts of the Christmas miracle and God’s human entry into the world so long ago.

Each year I “trade in” my Christmas letters on the hope that another letter will come. I am hopeful but not many arrive, and there doesn’t seem to be a tradition of sending letters at Easter. I admit that I don’t write many letters myself. However, there is One who wrote a Christmas letter and was faithful to follow up, sending the greatest Easter letter of all time. The God of all creation.

The story of Christmas for us is more than decorations, presents, and letters from friends. The Christmas story is about a Christmas Letter from God and the follow up letter that came as

the ultimate gift at Easter. Year after year we are reminded of the greatest author of all time and place.

God sent us a Christmas letter!  
God sent us an Easter letter!  
God followed through!  
God loves us with a never-ending faithfulness!

May your Easter season be filled with the words sent from God in the greatest letters ever!  
Peace and blessings,  
Pastor MP

## SESSION SNIPPETS

### March 25 Meeting of Session:

Following discussion, Session voted to resume serving communion by the passing of the trays in the pews beginning at the May 5 service. There are many factors impacting the decision: serving everyone equally and safely, the congregation sharing the bread and the cup together at one time, and creating a contemplative time and space.

The extra blue fabric chairs, no longer being used for the Saturday service in Fellowship Hall, will be sold or transferred to other worthy users.

April will be Earth Care Month at St. Mark. Open your ears to hear that theme...in worship, Christian education, the Water Challenge Celebration, during the Wednesday Night Potluck class, and plenty of other places.

## PENTECOST SPECIAL OFFERING

The Pentecost “season” for the Special Offering, begins April 1 and is completed on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, when we will welcome our 2024 Confirmation Class into “membership” at St. Mark. The red paraments, stoles, balloons, and a lot of hoopla appears. It is a time of celebration.

This offering is structured to serve the needs of children at risk and young adults. Forty percent of the offering is retained by St. Mark and will be distributed to Presbyterian Childrens’ Home and Services and to Isaiah 58 for their Back-to-School Backpack program. The remaining portion that goes to the Presbyterian Mission Agency is devoted to ministries with youth and young adults and working with child advocacy for children at risk.

Think of how fortunate our own children and young adults are and the challenges for so many others. Be generous in your gifts. The envelope is in your April packet or just specify “Pentecost” on the memo line of your check to St. Mark Presbyterian. Your generosity is appreciated.

## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GIVE TO ST. MARK

In addition to giving cash and checks, there are many different ways to give to St. Mark. As April 15<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching, we wanted to provide updates on two topics that may be appropriate for your future tax planning on charitable giving.

### 1. Gifting from your IRA:

If you are age 70½ or older at the time of the gift, you may want to consider a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** from your traditional IRA or inherited IRA (other than active SEP-IRAs and active SIMPLE-IRAs). IRAs may be the best asset for you to give to charity as they are loaded with taxes. 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 now exclude up to \$105,000 of QCDs to one or more charitable organizations from your Gross Income each year, thereby avoiding taxation on those amounts. If you file a married filing jointly tax return, each spouse can now exclude up to \$105,000 of QCDs. The exclusion from gross income for QCDs may also provide other tax-efficient ways for taxpayers who don’t itemize deductions to make charitable contributions and may also provide you additional tax benefits, credits and deductions.

### 2. Using a Donor-Advised Fund:

Established as a separate account, a **Donor Advised Fund (DAF)** allows you to make irrevocable contributions and possibly take an itemized tax deduction from your federal tax return. This can work extremely well should you have investments (outside of your retirement accounts) that have increased significantly in value, creating an opportunity for a suitable charitable contribution. You may be able to contribute cash, current stock and other securities, privately held business interests, and other non-publicly traded assets. Your contribution is then invested in the DAF as you desire and has the potential to grow. Many DAFs provide a variety of investment options from which you can select an investment strategy for your charitable dollars. At that point you can request grants over time to any IRS-qualified public charity. DAFs can be used to support your individual strategic giving and continue to strengthen a philanthropic legacy, which might include St. Mark.

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

## DEACONS IN ACTION AT ST. MARK

### DEACONS SPONSOR CIRCLE OF CONCERN 18<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Saint Mark Deacons will once again serve as the Sponsor for the Circle of Concern Golf Tournament to be held May 20, 2024, at the Aberdeen Golf Club, Eureka, Missouri. Enjoy 18 holes of golf on a beautiful links style course with a picturesque backdrop of the Meramec River bluffs. Complete with a light breakfast, assorted beverages, hot dogs, and a catered meal following golf with awards and auction. Last year's tournament raised \$35,000 with all proceeds directly benefiting Circle Orthopedic Specialists is again the Presenting Sponsor. Additionally, other Saint Mark families through the years have been leading financial sponsors.

Circle of Concern located in Valley Park, Missouri assists 650 low-income families monthly within the footprint of the Parkway, Rockwood and Valley Park school districts and parts of Fenton and Kirkwood. Primarily a food pantry, Circle shares wholesome foods, personal care items, and other necessities, as well as short-term emergency financial assistance to eligible households. Circle also invests in the future of its clients through coaching, counseling, career mentorship programs, college and trade school scholarships, and children's programs. Hopefully, you may be asking, "What can I do to help?" Please consider the following options:

- Register to play golf as an individual or organize a group
- Become or help identify sponsors (hole sponsors start at \$150)
- Donate items for the silent auction
- Make a direct monetary contribution
- Day of Tournament assistance (no golf skills needed): register golfers, serve coffee and breakfast sandwiches, prepare hot dogs, beverage distribution, Hole-in-One monitors, post tournament cleanup, etc.

Tournament information pamphlets are available in the Narthex and Church Office.

For the Deacons: Bob Stewart, Tournament Coordinator

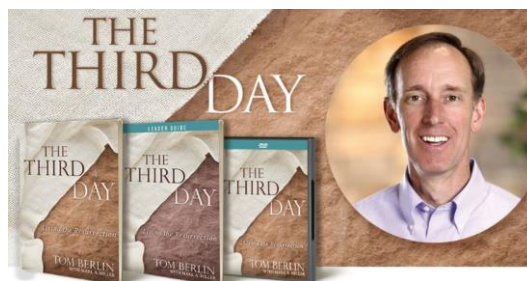
## PER CAPITA 2024

In 2024 each congregation's Per Capita fee, based on membership numbers as of December 31, 2022, is \$36.00. St. Mark uses General Funds to cover that expense and encourages members to assist with that via an extra donation. A designated envelope is in the April envelope packet or just mark your check for Per Capita.

## ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ST. MARK



St. Mark will focus on Earth Care during the month of April. As we move through the Easter Season, we will explore theological themes of environmental stewardship and look at practical ways we can live, work, and play in God's creation. Please plan on joining us in worship and our adult Sunday school class as we seek to live into the resurrection promise.



Upcoming Friday morning Bible study April 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Third Day: Living the Resurrection**

On the third day, he rose again. In "*The Third Day: Living the Resurrection*", Tom Berlin uses his gifts of storytelling and understanding the Scriptures to connect the reader to the experiences of several individuals around Jesus in his final days, focusing on new life and redemption rather than loss. Join Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas as they feel the despair of losing Jesus and the surprise and joy that awaits them in the resurrection. This study traces events around these characters, along with Paul and the disciples at Emmaus, and how the resurrection transforms their lives.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

### CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

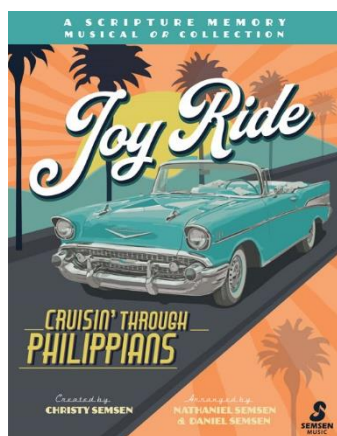
Sunday school for children PreK – 5<sup>th</sup> grade takes place during Sunday worship, immediately following the Children's Message.

### NURSERY

Nursery Care, for ages 0 - 2yrs, is available Sunday mornings from 8:30 – 11:00 am.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL SIGN IN

Please be sure to sign in your student(s) for Sunday School! Parents will receive a card after Time With Children with a QR code for access to the sign in. We ask that you have your student(s) registered so that we can contact you via text in the event that you are needed.



### ST. MARK CHILDREN'S MUSICAL - JOY RIDE

The St. Mark Children's choirs meet each week - Pre-K (ages 3-4) from 5 - 5:25 pm and Elementary choir (grades K-5) from 5:30 - 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. We will share our journey with you

on April 21<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm followed by a beach "hang-out" reception for all. Contact Latisha Gilliland for more information.



### VBS SAVE THE DATE! JULY 15-19

Go to [discoverstmark.org](http://discoverstmark.org) to register your family and register as a volunteer!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH

Join us for...

### YOUTH WEDNESDAYS

April 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th



Youth 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up meet Wednesdays from 6:00 – 7:00 pm for food, fun, fellowship, and faith! If you have any questions, contact Pastor MP or call the church office.



If you have a youth 7<sup>th</sup> grade or older who would like to explore more about what it means to be a Christian, this is the place! Students will meet weekly along with their mentors and talk about their faith and what they believe about Jesus, religion, the church, and more! Never too late to join in!

### Youth Music Ensemble

Upcoming Rehearsals

April 7th, 14th, 21st

Contact Pastor MP

[mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org)

# YOUTH HANGOUT



April 28th 11:15am - 2:30 pm

Join up at the church immediately following worship. We will drive to Union Station for lunch and activities. Details on cost are yet to be determined. Contact Pastor MP for more information.

[mpanco@discoverstmark.org](mailto:mpanco@discoverstmark.org)

**YOUTH mission**  
Moss Point, Mississippi

Total Per Person <b>\$250</b> Due May 1st	Deposit <b>\$100</b> Due April 1st	2024 <b>June</b> 9th-15th	ASAP <b>RSVP</b> To Pastor MP
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## MISSION AT ST. MARK

**Lenten Water Challenge  
Celebration Sunday  
April 7**

## APRIL FOOD PANTRY MOST WANTED

- Pasta Sauce
- Dry Pasta
- Condiments  
ketchup, BBQ saouce, salad dressings, mayonnaise, salsa
- Toddler pull-ups\*



All year long, we collect food and hygiene items for Circle of Concern and Isaiah 58 Ministries. \*Non-food products cannot be purchased with food stamps. Please place donations on the table in the entryway by the office.



## EQUAL EXCHANGE FAIRLY TRADED

**In the Narthex on April 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Through fair trade, small-scale farmers are better able to support their families and stay on their land with better income and support from their co-operatives. St. Mark supports this mission to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just,

environmentally sustainable, and to foster mutually beneficial relationships between small farmers and consumers (that's us!).

*Cash, Credit, Debit, Mobile, and Tap Payments Accepted.*

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



Book club will meet Wednesday, April 24 at 9:30 am. The book for this month's discussion is **The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store** by James McBride. There is an option to participate virtually as well as in person. Please contact Judy Richardson for a Zoom invite to participate virtually.





PW is collecting for Newborns in Need during the month of April. Newborns In

Need is a charity that specializes in the needs of babies facing health or economic crisis in St. Louis. It is a local and national nonprofit organization.

**New and gently used baby items** such as bibs, booties, burp cloths, hats, onesies, socks, sweaters, and undershirts, sleepers, blankets, baby wash, wipes and diapers are accepted and may be placed in the Play by the PW table.

**Monetary donations are greatly appreciated.** Make checks out to Newborns In Need and ask for a tax receipt. Mail to: **Newborns In Need** c/o Judy Giovanoni, 310 Oxford Ridge Ct., Ellisville, MO 63021. For more information, call Shirley Boeker or Louis Grothe.

### LITTLE DRESSES

215 little dresses and 16 pair of shorts were delivered to Convoy of Hope in March. Our total over the ten years we have been participating in this ministry is 3,243 dresses and 51 pairs of shorts. Thank you to all who have made garments and those who have provided funds. Kits are available on the shelf in the office workroom. Questions, call Sherry Naylor.

## Go Getter Luncheon

### April 9 at 12 pm

The luncheon will be held at  
Firefly Grill

101 Chesterfield Town Center

Please invite a friend and join us for food,  
fun, and fellowship.

Please let Jan Graves or Judy Richardson  
know of your plans to attend.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

**St Mark Presbyterian Church** is proud to partner with the American Red Cross and be a part of all they do for our community.

### From a blood supply standpoint:

- The Red Cross – **needs to collect** more than 13,000 blood donations and more than 2,500 platelet donations each day.
- The blood collected by the Red Cross helps millions of patients in over 2,500 hospitals and other facilities across the country.
- 84 percent of blood donations are given at blood drives - hosted by generous sponsoring organizations like ours.

At **St Mark Presbyterian Church**, we are proud to hold blood drives every **quarter** in partnership with the Red Cross, giving us all an opportunity to make a difference.

Our next drive is coming up on **April 28th from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm**. We have many **open appointment slots** to fill. We hope you come out to donate and help spread the word by promoting our drive to family, friends and on social media.



### ST. MARK GAME NIGHT!

On Saturday, April 20, the Fellowship Committee is hosting a GAME NIGHT at 7:00 p.m. in Gleason Hall, with the featured attraction being Mexican Train! Whether you're a "seasoned pro" or a "newbie" who's never played the game, we can assure you that the evening will be filled with plenty of laughter and fellowship. Instruction will be provided, so there's no excuse to not join in on the fun! Mark your calendars and we'll see you at the station!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CLAYMONT PRESCHOOL



March brought one of our most beloved days in the PreK Classroom: Hospital Day!

Students bring a "patient" from home to get checked out by the Doctors at Claymont Preschool Hospital. We practice caring for our sick friends and teachers with many different types of doctor

instruments. Our students also get to explore using crutches, casts, and riding in a wheelchair!



### MOUND RIDGE ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISER

Saturday, April 13, Mound Ridge will host their annual silent auction fundraiser. Join

them for an afternoon of great food, fun, raffles, auction items, and games. The cost is \$60 per ticket with lunch included. All proceeds help Mound Ridge provide a discounted or cost-free camp experience to all children and youth. Go to [moundridge.org](http://moundridge.org) for more information.



### SAVE THE DATE: ST. MARK OUTING TO MOUND RIDGE, MAY 3-4

Everyone is invited! Come for both days or just Saturday. We will build on environmental themes from April's adult education series and will plant a native edible garden. Contact Clarice Hutchens for more information or to help with planning.

## Midweek Church Potluck April 17 – 5:00 PM



### CIRCLE OF CONCERN 18TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

SAVE THE DATE!  
MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024  
ABERDEEN GOLF CLUB

Hosted by St. Mark Presbyterian Church  
Benefitting the programs of Circle of Concern  
Contact Bob Steward if you'd like to volunteer!



Interested in Discovering  
More about St. Mark?

Membership Exploration  
Class Begins Sunday, May 5