

A Monthly Insight into St. Mark Presbyterian Church

The Messenger



Reclaiming Anticipation

Christmas seems to have arrived a little early this year. Normally, I encourage you all to refrain from jumping the gun on the holiday and be intentional about observing the four weeks of Advent. I recognize this year has unfurled like no other, and we are all feeling a little adrift right now. Our merriment mixes with melancholy as we continue to find our way through this uncharted sea. I remember reading stories in grade school about sailors who worked without maps and relied on the North Star to gauge their position and guide their ships above the unknown watery abyss. The constant light in the heavens provided a navigational tool, but I believe it also gave a sure comfort on uncertain nights.

Our family has an annual tradition of picking up frozen custard and taking a drive to look at Christmas lights. Normally, we do this in the middle of December, but we could not wait any longer and made the trip the Sunday after Thanksgiving. We needed a little bit of Christmas right that very minute, and, for a short period, all felt right in the world. The darkness still hung heavy, but it was no match for the warm lights twinkling from eaves, sparkling on trees, and shining through the windows. I know it's not the "reason for the season," but it provided a comfort that even though the night was long, the light is still there.

We returned to our home and read the first Sunday Advent scripture, discussed the provided questions, said a prayer, and lit the **Hope** Candle. Sometimes, we need to see a little light in the world before we

can ignite our candles at home. We'll continue to do the Advent liturgy each week and proceed on our journey toward Christmas with **Love, Peace, Joy, and Christ**. I don't know when the long night of this pandemic will end, but I find comfort in the lights that still shine in the world and are waiting for us to light in our homes. It provides a navigational tool through the calendar, but it also comforts us with the truth that God is surely with us. "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3b-5, NRSV.)

I pray you have a wonderful Advent season as we wait on and seek to follow the Great Light of the World.

In Hope and Confidence,
Pastor Dave

Session Snippets

November 16, 2020

- As the virus numbers increase and St. Mark plans for the future, the Session decided the policy of no activity in the building will continue indefinitely. The Re-Entry Task Force is working to establish the guidelines for resuming in-person worship and other activities. This includes analyzing current scientific data about the spread of the virus and developing mandatory safety protocols for when it is prudent to open up the building.
- The Technology Team is working on implementing the live streaming of our worship service for the coming year. When we are able to resume in-person worship, the option to participate in worship remotely will continue.
- Session approved the Emergency Operating Plan (see separate “article” about details). This puts in place processes and plans to handle various types of emergencies, especially during worship.

Christmas Joy Offering – 2020

Our gifts support dedicated pastors, church workers, and retirees who find themselves facing urgent financial needs. This can range from supplements to maintain independent living to emergency funds to meet unexpected expenses.

Additionally, 50% of the offering goes to support Presbyterian-affiliated racial ethnic schools and colleges, enabling students to develop their gifts and find their callings.

The Joy Offering was initiated in the 1930’s and is just as essential today. The need is no less in 2020. Please give generously.

Emergency Operations Plan

The Session approved the Emergency Operations Plan at the November 16, 2020 meeting. This includes plans to identify and recruit members of the congregation to assist with various types of emergencies and processes to follow. There will be training and periodic review of the plan to make changes as needed. Many thanks go to Don York, who spearheaded this initiative, Brian Hostetler, who contributed his legal skills, and the many others who added their experience and expertise.

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Submit articles by Tuesday, Dec. 22 to
newsletter@discoverstmark.org

Christmas Eve Services

You are invited to join us for our socially distanced in-person “Bundled up in Joy” Christmas Eve family service at 3:30 PM in the church parking lot. We’ll have carols, glow sticks, and a brief message on hope. Please dress warmly for this outdoor Cool Yule event. There will also be a virtual traditional Christmas Eve service that will premiere on YouTube at 7:00 PM on December 24. We hope you can join us for these services. Please contact Pastor Dave with any questions.

METHODS FOR CHARITABLE GIFTING TO ST. MARK

As the 2021 Stewardship Campaign is coming to a close and pledges are arriving, the Finance Committee felt it appropriate to share articles over the next few months regarding charitable gifting. These articles may trigger a new idea for your giving to St. Mark.

There are many options to give to charity, specifically to St. Mark. You can make gifts during your lifetime or at your death; make gifts outright or use a trust; name St. Mark as a beneficiary in your will or trust or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy; or make a contribution to the St. Mark Endowment Fund.

Outright Financial Gifts:

Historically, financial support to St. Mark has been made by writing a check, paying by credit card, or making a direct deposit. In addition to supporting our church’s ministry, this may provide you an immediate income tax deduction should you itemize deductions on your federal tax return.

You may also want to consider making an outright gift of stock or investment securities to St. Mark. You may have investments (outside of your retirement plans) that have increased significantly in value, creating an opportunity for a suitable charitable contribution. Again, this may create an immediate income tax benefit. Our church office can assist you with this investment transfer and credit your pledge.

Always consult your financial planner or tax professional to review the most appropriate way for you to give to St. Mark.

The St. Mark Finance Committee is happy to answer your questions: Glenn Knoff, chair; Joyce Blackwell, Mark Caplinger, Scott Collier, Cay Noble, Hugh Smith, Bob Snyder, Brian Sprague, and Carl Tenpas.

Next Month: Charitable Contributions from Your IRA

Light-Hearted Fun Brought to Us by the Fellowship Committee

“Smile Please”

Dust off those funky fun sweaters for an **“Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest”** at St. Mark!! The contest begins **Friday, November 27th** and ends **Sunday, December 6th**. Please take a photo of your family wearing their Christmas Best and upload it to the St. Mark Congregational Bulletin Board Facebook page to participate in the contest. There will be a prize for the Best/Worst Sweater and also a prize for the Runner Up! So, let's snap a pic of those fabulous sweaters and see who wore it best!!

Jingle (without the) Mingle Recipes

Fellowship is also hard at work preparing a fun little cookbook filled with appetizer and dessert favorites from the Jingle Mingle event that is usually held in early December. The cookbook will be available on the church website (www.discoverstmark.org) for you to download, just in time to try a few new recipes with your family! We hope that you can safely gather for a little festive Jingle Mingle of your own this holiday season! So, keep an eye out for our first, and we hope only, edition of the ***Jingle (without the) Mingle Recipes for your 2020 Pandemic Holiday*** cookbook!

Mission Committee Activities

Results of November Drop-Off

Thank you for your generosity!

Over 50 Christmas gifts for Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services as well as Circle of Concern were collected on November 15th. Presbyterian Women and Children's Ministry coordinated these collections.

The 20th Year

For St. Mark Christmas Alternatives

Sunday, December 13, 1-3 PM Drop Off

We are offering a **drive-through-drop-off** for your completed Christmas Alternatives shopping list and check. As a bonus, complimentary Christmas cards with artwork from our St. Mark children will be available for you to select from the warmth of the front seat of your vehicle.

Personal Care Products

Sunday, January 17, 1-3 PM Drop Off

Oh my, the harsh weather and economic struggles make it incredibly challenging for many to afford basic personal care products. Did you know that SNAP/EBT/WIC Food stamps cannot be used for personal care products? During January we will collect deodorant, bar soap, shampoo, lotion, and laundry detergent **at the drive-through-drop-off**.

Presbyterian Women Events for December 2020

PW Board Meeting: No meeting in December

Eve Circle – Time & Place TBA – Contact Laura Adams-Wentling

Martha Circle – 3rd Wednesday 12:30 pm Contact Shirley Weir

Rachel Circle – 3rd Wednesday 9:30 am – Contact Susan Peters

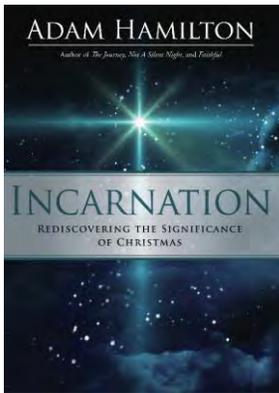
Ruth Circle – 3rd Thursday 10:30 am– Contact Diana Johanning

Hannah Circle – Thurs., Dec. 16, 7:00 PM via Zoom – Contact Carol Weber

Judith Circle – 3rd Thursday 7:00 pm– Contact Lynn Laux

Book Club –Wed., Dec. 9, 9:30 am Zoom: “My Life in France” by Julia Child –
Contact Judy Richardson

Women's Bible Study



BOOK: *Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas* by Adam Hamilton
WHEN: December 3rd, 10th, and 17th at 9:00 AM
MEETING LINK: To get your Zoom link and join the virtual meeting, contact pastor MP at mpanco@discoverstmark.org

Children's Ministry

SSZoom: Sunday mornings @ 9:30 a.m. K-5 -"The real meaning of Christmas is simple: we celebrate Jesus, God's greatest gift. We can find hope, joy, love, and peace when we remember that God sent Jesus to be our Savior." (see attachment "Simply Christmas - no assembly required")

Thank you! Your giving to Circle of Concern is so appreciated. With the COVID challenges, giving looked a bit different this season. However, with the help of our Missions committee and our PW circles, Children's Ministries and our St. Mark family continue to move forward in helping our home missions communities.

Live Nativity! Sunday, December 20 * 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. -Petting zoo, beautiful music, wassail, and Christmas activity/treat bags (tentative schedule)

Family Advent Activities- visit www.discoverstmark.org for online advent calendar, family advent bingo, and Family Holiday Challenge! Starts November 29th!

Drive-thru Advent Packets - If you missed the drive-thru pickup date on 11/22, packets are still available. If you and your family would like to participate in your "in-home" advent candle lighting, contact Latisha, Christian Educator Director. Included are instructions, weekly advent readings/prayer, and a template with candles for your own advent lighting. You can also use these packets in conjunction with our Sunday online services.

CHRISTMAS ALTERNATIVES MISSION PARTNER SUMMARY

Marion Medical Mission

1412 Shawnee Drive, Marion, IL 62959

Kimberly Richey, Director of Development (Clarice Hutchens and Chris Polak, St. Mark Liaisons)

mmmwater.org

- Since 1990, MMM has helped over 38,000 villages in rural Africa gain a sustainable source of safe drinking water. Each well costs \$450 and supports 125 people, reducing disease, increasing productivity, and allowing children to attend school. MMM is a PCUSA mission partner and the beneficiary of the annual St. Mark Lent Water Challenge.

Medical Benevolence Foundation

9555 W. Sam Houston Pkwy South, Suite 170, Houston, TX 77099

PCUSA Mission Coordinates Relationship with MBF (Chris Polak, St. Mark Liaison)

www.MBFoundation.org

- Medical Benevolence Foundation has supported healing ministries and programs in over 100 hospitals and clinics throughout the world since 1964. Funds continue to be needed to support medical ministries in developing countries. MBF works in partnership with PCUSA, congregations, and mission networks.

Nicaragua Plan Grande 2

c/o Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, 1001 Craig Rd., Suite 170, St. Louis, MO 63146

Harriet Hall, Coordinator (Clarice Hutchens, St. Mark Liaison)

<https://glpby.org/ministry-teams/mission-connections/nicaragua-community-partnership/>

- 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of this long-term covenant partnership between our presbytery and the rural community of Plan Grande 2, Nicaragua. The primary focus is on providing funding for a Secondary School Scholarship Program. In addition, travelers from GLPBY have built pilas to improve access to water, hosted Vacation Bible Schools, visited schools, played games, read books, learned to make tortillas, strategized regarding Jenga, built relationships and worked to follow Christ's example of love and care.

PCUSA International Agricultural Missions

Presbyterian Mission Agency, PCUSA, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202

PCUSA Coordinates with International Mission Partners (Clarice Hutchens, St. Mark Liaison)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/102/>

- Gifts to these selected mission partners enable the Presbyterian Hunger Program to respond to support requests from partner churches and from secular groups for their community activities dealing with food security, sustainable agriculture, food processing and small income generating activities for women.

PCUSA Mission Co-workers

Presbyterian Mission Agency, PCUSA, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202

PCUSA Coordinates with Mission Co-Workers (Chris Polak and Clarice Hutchens, St. Mark Liaisons)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/mark-hare-and-jenny-bent/>

- From their base in the Dominican Republic, Mark Bent and Jenny Hare work with Haitian farmers to develop systems that produce more food with minimal labor. In the Dominican Republic they lead a critical community health program.
- <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/the-rev-jed-and-jenny-koball/>
- Jed Koball connects PCUSA and the Joining Hands network in Peru as they identify and interpret root causes of poverty in Peru, such as mining contamination, global warming, and unfair trade agreements. Jenny Koball coordinates the Young Adult Volunteers (YAV) program in Peru, organizing volunteer and cultural immersion experiences in Peru for US young adults.

Presbyterian Children's Home & Services

1220 North Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132

Debra Paulus, Development Director (Sharon Cardwell, St. Mark Liaison)

pchas.org

- Established in 1914; gives kids a safe, loving place to heal and to grow when their families cannot provide that along with extra support like therapeutic mentoring; foster care case management and in-home family therapy. Recently when the needs of the Farmington community and St. Francois county changed, PCHAS responded with several new programs and methods of treatment to give each child and family the opportunity to find their strengths, overcome obstacles and build futures.

CHRISTMAS ALTERNATIVES 2020 -- OUR 20th YEAR!

Because we are blessed with many material possessions, when Christmas comes around, we encounter a huge challenge selecting gifts for family and friends. Finding the perfect gift for someone who has many wonderful possessions is a difficult task! With this in mind, in 2001 the newly formed Mission Committee at St. Mark created "Christmas Alternatives."

Purchasing a gift through Christmas Alternatives not only honors the recipient, but also aids other deserving people who have so little, but need so much.

Thank you for your support during the past 19 years.

Your generosity has transformed lives and had a lasting impact around the world!

PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW

NAME:
ADDRESS:
CITY, STATE, ZIP:
PHONE:
Do you want Christmas Cards ? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
St. Mark Member ? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<i>If Yes, contributions will be included on your annual giving statement.</i>
<i>If No, would you like us to mail you a receipt ?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

DEADLINE: December 25th, 2020

Please include payment with form.

Place in Mission Committee Mailslot in Church office or Mail to:

St. Mark Presbyterian Church
ATTN: Christmas Alternatives
601 Claymont Drive
Ballwin, MO 63011

NEW FOR 2020: Drive through Donation Drop Off
Sunday December 13, 1-3PM in the St. Mark Parking Lot

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

DATE SUBMITTED:

PAID?

Shopping List for 2020 Christmas Alternatives

Marion Medical Mission (Africa)	Price	Qty	Total
Contribute to Build a Well (\$450/well)	\$ 25.00		
	Total		

Medical Benevolence Foundation	Price	Qty	Total
Nursing school scholarships: Malawi, Haiti, Dr Congo, Kenya	\$ 30.00		
Life Saver Clinics: Dr. Congo, Malawi, Kenya and Haiti	\$ 25.00		
Share for Greatest Needs (e.g., vaccinations, malaria nets)	\$ 15.00		
	Total		

Nicaragua Community Partnership with Presbytery of Giddings Lovejoy Scholarships for Children of Plan Grande Dos	Price	Qty	Total
Contribute to a Scholarship (full scholarship \$200)	\$ 25.00		
	Total		

PCUSA International Agricultural Missions	Price	Qty	Total
Family of Chickens	\$ 25.00		
Share of Cow (\$450/cow)	\$ 50.00		
Share of Goat (\$90/goat)	\$ 30.00		
Piglet	\$ 40.00		
Share of Bee Hive (\$240/hive)	\$ 20.00		
Bag of Moringa Seeds (food for human consumption)	\$ 5.00		
	Total		

PCUSA Mission Co-workers	Price	Qty	Total
Rev. Jed and Jenny Koball, Peru	\$ 25.00		
Mark Hare and Jenny Bent, Haiti and Dominican Republic	\$ 25.00		
	Total		

Presbyterian Childrens Homes and Services	Price	Qty	Total
Support Farmington Service Center community, family, and youth therapeutic programs	\$ 25.00		
	Total		

General Gift to Christmas Alternatives (St. Mark Mission Committee to Designate Recipients)	Total		\$

SHOPPING LIST GRAND TOTAL	Qty	Total
Checks to: St. Mark Presbyterian Church Memo Line: Christmas Alternatives		