



SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S

August 2019

*The Mission of St. Mark's United Methodist Church is to make
Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

This Sunday, August 11

Blessing of the Backpacks

School starts next week! To help our young students begin their school year, we want to bless them. Children and youth, bring your backpacks to church this Sunday for the Blessing of the Backpacks. During worship, we will bless our students & their backpacks, our school workers, parents, guardians, and all of us.
See you this Sunday!

FAMILY MINISTRY EVENT

BRING OUT THE POPCORN!

MOVIE AT THE MARK

ST. MARKS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

AUG. 23, 2019 - 8 PM
THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

Bring your lawn chairs and
Join us for an evening on the lawn
St. Marks UMC - 4601 Fairfield Ave.
Popcorn and drinks provided
Movie to begin at dusk



A Note from Pastor Joe

“Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? — John Wesley

Dear St. Mark’s Family,

This letter comes from my heart to yours.

The long-awaited results of the “Attitudes Toward Difference” surveys are finally revealed in this newsletter. I don’t think anyone will be surprised by what the survey results reveal. The purpose of this survey was not to provide answers or direction; it was to serve as a conversation starter about human sexuality. Your Administrative Council believed it to be a good idea to have this conversation. I agreed with them.

Well, it worked. We are talking!

These past few weeks, I have engaged in some deep and thoughtful conversations with members of the church family, folks who come to this subject from all different angles. I deeply admire and respect all who have shared with me, and I am so grateful to hear from them. Some have spoken with hope and optimism. Others have spoken with a sense of weariness. Some are saying that it’s about time and we need to speed things up. Others are just tired.

I wondered why some seemed so worn out (for lack of a better term), so I listened. They shared their concern about the amount of time devoted to this one matter. I agreed with them. There are so many needs. They shared their irritation about the specially called General Conversation that seemed to bring this on. This was beyond our control; if nothing else, it shows that this is a matter of global concern. It’s also our church family’s concern. They also shared feelings of being coerced into agreeing with something that goes against their will.

I was surprised to hear this last concern, but I appreciate their honesty. It helped to explain their sense of weariness. Kelley Bryson, author of *Don’t Be Nice, Be Real: Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others*, writes, “It is the very use of coercion, positive or negative, that breaks or deadens the spirit, which is the source of motivation.” The Indonesian author, Toba Beta simply stated it this way: “Coercing attitude drains your strength.”

I get it. Coercion *can* be draining. I don’t believe in “twisting arms,” or in wearing someone down by talking about something over and over again. It is counter-productive. It is also impossible to pull off successfully. I’m reminded of the exasperated mother speaking to her whining kids: “We are going to [fill in the blank here], and we are all going to have a good time!” Riiiiiiight. It doesn’t work that way! People have to be inwardly convinced, deep in their bones, on their own terms and in their own time.

“Coercing attitude drains your strength.” — Toba Beta

All the same, we can’t just stop the conversation altogether. We can’t silence those with differing views simply because they do not align with our own, can we? We have to be able to share from our hearts. People should not ever seek to coerce, but people should be able to share.

It isn’t easy to hear views that go against our own beliefs. Sometimes, it’s downright painful. But, we know that we can listen for understanding, if not actual agreement. Listening keeps our minds fresh. It allows our minds to be open to confirm our present beliefs, or to consider something we haven’t considered before.

I like the quote from John Wesley at the top of this letter. The longer quote is this:

“Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.”

I have this hope that our congregation can love one another, and be united in ministry with and for others, even when we do not agree on everything.

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I suppose some may be concerned about the possibility that their minds might be changed after all. Some believe that changing one's mind is a sign of weakness. I believe the opposite is true. It is one of the hardest things we will ever do. Changing one's mind may require going against how we were raised by our parents, or taught in Sunday School long ago. Seriously considering compelling testimony that counters deeply imbedded beliefs can cause real headaches! Changing one's mind is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength. It just can't be coerced.

In the last 20-plus years, I have changed. I never would have dreamed that I would arrive at the beliefs I now hold. Years of study, of considering the context of the scriptures, and of getting to know people more fully have brought me to this place.

I have decided that if a family member, a member of our church family, or community citizen comes to me with a request that I officiate their marriage, my decision will be based on my discernment of their fitness for marriage, and not because of their sexuality. I have also decided to offer my full support to persons who desire ordination and are being denied their vocation simply because of their sexuality.

The Apostle Paul states that a sign of a disciple is one who bears good fruit. I have gotten to know many LGBTQ+ persons who bear good fruit. The Rev. David Meredith is one such person. He is a pastor who is also a gay person and who has been with the same partner – now spouse – for over twenty years. David was the officiant at our son's memorial service. He ministered to my family with love and grace, and led an eloquent service. He was our pastor during our time of need. This is what I mean when I say this is personal. Because I know David and other LGBTQ+ persons with similar gifts and graces, I no longer understand being gay as being incompatible with Christian teaching. The few Bible verses that have traditionally condemned such behavior do not describe persons such as David, in my opinion. I have known David for over ten years. He has been my clergy cluster leader since my appointment to the Ohio River Valley District. I do not believe David is a false prophet in sheep's clothing. David is a "good tree that does not bear bad fruit." (Matthew 7:18)



In fact, knowing what I know now, it would be sinful of me to turn against David and declare that his ordination was not valid. Likewise, it would be hypocritical of me to deny his marriage to his life partner, who he has been faithful to for over 20 years.

I share this testimony with the hope that you will receive it, even if you can't agree with it. I share not to coerce, but to let you know where I am, and with the hope that we can continue to minister and serve together.

Again, I'm going to step back from speaking publicly about it. I don't want to force this belief on you, but I thought you needed to know. Feel free to speak with me about this or anything else. I want to hear what you have to say. Ultimately, this conversation needs to be led by you, our laity.

For now, I am looking forward to being a part of the mission team being sent to southwest Virginia this September. One week after that mission trip, I look forward to gathering in the sanctuary with you for a brief time of worship, and then doing any number of projects together to do kind things for our neighbors around us. I look forward to giving of my finances and time with you, working together, side by side, to be Christ's hands and feet. We live in a broken world, in need Christ. I am thankful to be a part of a congregation who believes so strongly in mission, in extending the love and grace of Christ to others.

"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?" I believe we can.

Jesus loves you, and so do I, your partner in ministry,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'J' and a simple 'oe'.

“Our Attitudes Toward Difference”

St. Mark’s UMC Survey On Human Sexuality.

Num. of persons who agreed with the statement.	Statement Number	87 individuals completed the survey. Survey takers were to put a "check" next to each statement with which they agreed. Persons could agree with as many statements as they desired. The number at the far left of each statement represents the number of persons who placed a "check" by that statement. (For example, of the 87 surveys received, four of the surveys had a "check" by statement number 1.
4	1	Homosexuality is unnatural and immoral. LGBT people are emotionally or psychologically ill.
3	2	LGBT people should participate in reparative therapy or any other treatment available to help them change their sexual orientation.
34	3	We should have compassion for LGBT people. They can't be blamed for how they were born.
17	4	LGBT people didn't choose to be the way they are. If they could somehow become heterosexual, they would surely do so.
0	5	Homosexuality is a phase that many people go through and most grow out of.
47	6	LGBT people need our support and guidance as they wrestle with the many difficult issues associated with their lifestyle.
40	7	I have no problem with LGBT people, but see no need for them to flaunt their sexual orientation publicly.
53	8	What LGBT people do in the privacy of their own bedroom is their business.
73	9	LGBT people deserve the same rights and privileges as everybody else.
42	10	Homophobia is wrong. Society needs to take a stand against anti-LGBT bias.
65	11	It takes strength and courage for LGBT people to be themselves in today's world.
43	12	It is important for me to examine my own attitudes so that I can actively support the struggle for equality that LGBT people have undertaken.
57	13	There is great value in our human diversity. LGBT people are an important part of that diversity.
37	14	It is important for me to stand up to those who demonstrate homophobic attitudes.
48	15	LGBT people are an indispensable part of our society. They have contributed much to our world and there is much to be learned from their experiences.
23	16	I would be proud to be part of an LGBT organization, and to openly advocate for the full and equal inclusion of LGBT people at all levels of our society.

St. Mark's Opportunities

(Fellowship, Participation, Study, Serve)

Happy 101 Birthday, Russ Carr!

Russ will be recognized during the 7:00 PM Red's game at Great American Ball Park on August 16. While no group tickets have been purchased, some of the St Mark's Church family will be there for this occasion. Join us if you can!



If you like to have a good time, meet people and eat, the Lunch Bunch would like to invite you to join us for lunch and socializing once a month at various restaurants around the area (we are always open to suggestions of places to eat too!). The Lunch Bunch is a group made up of adults age 55 and older.

We will be meeting on **Wednesday, August 21st** at Berd's Grill & Bar, 500 Wessel Drive, Fairfield **at noon**. Please see Bob or Carol Pittman or call 829-4548 for reservations by noon, Monday, August 19th.



The Ruth Circle, after the summer break, will be meeting on Friday, September 20th at 1 pm in Fellowship Hall. Please put this on your calendar.

More information will be in the September newsletter. All ladies are invited.



The St. Mark's Chancel Choir, after the summer break, will start rehearsals on **Wednesday, August 28th**.

Welcome back to everyone in the choir.

If you haven't been in the choir, in the past, this would be a great time to join this wonderful fellowship. Rehearsals are held each Wednesday at 7:30 pm.

Coming September 15:
SUNDAY SCHOOL KICK-OFF
Blessing and consecration of servant leaders.

August Birthdays and Anniversaries

If your birthday or anniversary is not listed or is incorrect,
please contact the church office (513-844-1818)



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

1 - Dianne Aiken
1 - Chelsey Cavender
2 - Peggie Wyatt
3 - Lois Hill
4 - Russ Carr - **101 yrs.**
4 - Maddie Hensler
6 - Cherie Kuertz
9 - Dollie Gallihugh
10 - Janis Kiefer
12 - Donna Hughes
12 - Carl Phillippo
12 - Nancy Starkie
14 - Dick Davis
14 - Corey Gross (17 yrs.)
15 - Jennifer Specht (15 yrs.)
16 - Miriam Chupka
16 - Jeff Gering
18 - Chris Gering
18 - Danny Roark
19 - Bill Schumacker
22 - Nicole Specht
24 - Freida Hawkins
25 - Olivia Edmundson (13 yrs.)
25 - Maxwell Moser
27 - Debbie Bryant
29 - Betsy Jones
30 - Shelby Cavender
30 - Joe Specht (18 yrs.)
31 - Betty Stover



AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

11 - Devin & Gale Goodman
14 - Gary & Cindy Miller
14 - Randy & Nancy Starkie
15 - Dick & Debi Brewer
18 - Pastor Joe & Linda Payne
28 - Mike & Kathy Fitzpatrick

ST. MARK'S CARES MISSION MOMENT

We hope you are having a fun, relaxing and renewing summer! Yes, many of us have been busy traveling and enjoying summer sports and pool time, but we didn't slow down in our service to others! A group of 17 volunteered at Matthew 25 Ministries, served a meal at Serve City and offered a meal and love to the homeless via the Broken Bus. In June we collected over \$600 worth of games, Lego and craft kits, markers and sporting supplies for the Butler County Big Brothers Big Sisters after school programs. Currently, we are collecting school supplies that will be given to students in the Fairfield schools via Dougie and Ray's mission. In August, we will be collecting monetary donations for UMCOR disaster relief, particularly for our Dayton neighbors who are recovering from recent tornado damage. In addition to all of that, the St. Mark's Cares committee, along with fourteen amazing youth and adult volunteers, spent 4 afternoons at Living Water Ministries sharing the VBS program "Polar Blast."

We will be collecting monetary donations for UMCOR during the month of August. Contributions can be made through the offering plate. Please specify "UMCOR" in the memo line of your check or on your offering envelope. All donations will be sent to our West Ohio Conference to help those in our area, including our Dayton friends who recently experienced devastating tornado damage.



We are excited to announce that we have a team who will be going on a mission trip to Jonesville, Virginia, September 19-22. We will be serving through the Appalachian Service Project. ASP brings thousands of volunteers from around the country to rural Central Appalachia to help make homes warmer, safer and drier for low-income families. This ministry has been providing structured service opportunities for 50 years. Please keep our team and the families we will partner with in your prayers.



NOTE: We now have 3 - 4 new openings for this amazing mission opportunity. Please contact Karen Smith (ksmith0654@yahoo.com) or Julie Mislansky (knauffj@fuse.net) for more information.

ASP Mission Team Members:

Ray Smith, Karen Smith, Julie Mislansky,
Sue Luken, Susan Bunte, Joe Payne,
Gale Goodman, Devin Goodman, George Peters

A volunteer time at Shared Harvest is scheduled for Wednesday, August 14th from 1:00-3:00. Watch for a sign-up sheet on the St. Mark's Cares bulletin board.

Any questions? See Debbie Bryant

Our second annual GOOD NEIGHBOR SUNDAY will be Sunday, September 29. .

This was a huge success last year and many expressed interest in making this a regular occurrence!

Our morning will begin with twenty minutes of worship: singing, prayer, and praise. We will then continue our worship "beyond the walls!"

Opportunities will include visiting and singing at local nursing homes, taking meals to our homebound St. Mark's friends, and taking treats and notes to local Fire, Police, National Guard armory and ER departments. You may also choose to stay at St. Mark's to write notes and prayers for shut-ins, those in need and those experiencing homelessness.

Lunch will be provided this month by Staff Parish Relations Committee. Please make plans to be a part of this very special Sunday.

Please make plans to be a part of this very special Sunday.



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

Serve City

622 East Avenue, Hamilton

I am grateful to have found a way to help Serve City through St. Mark's Cares. Tom and I have donated clothes and food items since we met fifteen years ago. He researched area missions and found their low overhead and help for families in need in our area appealing.

We saw the mission at work personally through my nephew John. John was one of God's lost children who turned to drugs at an early age. My family had tried to help John through rehab many times over the years. Serve City provided food and clothing for him through the pantry at various intervals. Three years ago, in his early forties, John was homeless and supposedly working on abstinence. He was accepted into the shelter for counseling and assistance, but he died of an accidental Fentanyl overdose before he got to spend a night in the shelter.

Addiction is a very real disease that affects not only the addicted person, but it affects their spouses, their children, their parents, their siblings, their aunts and uncles, their grandparents, and their friends.

Charlotte Tierney

SERVE CITY, a ministry of area churches, is a place where low-income and homeless individuals and families can receive groceries, clothing, personal care items and Christian materials and support.

* **THE LORD'S CUPBOARD** food pantry serves nearly 1,000 persons each month.

* **CHOSEN** is their 52-bed emergency shelter, providing and meals.

* **SHEKINAH PLACE**, provides permanent single tenant housing that is affordable and drug and alcohol free, helping those who are recovering from addiction.

* **CHOICES** provides transitional housing for homeless residents working to get back on their feet and permanent housing for those who do not qualify for existing services but in need of a supporting housing environment.



refuge

In 2018, almost 21,000 individuals were served a meal at Serve City. Fourteen thousand nights of shelter were provided to 450 individuals. Serve City estimates a cost of \$13 a day to provide food, clothing, shelter, case management services and referrals.

St. Mark's supports Serve City with regular monetary donations and by making and serving a meal to the residents, usually every other month. Watch the bulletin, newsletter and bulletin board for opportunities to help with these meals. There are other ways to get involved as well. The pantry is open for volunteers Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10-12:00 pm. Donation drop off is Monday – Saturday from 10-3:00 pm. They accept gently used clothing items, in-date food items and personal care items. Their most needed items currently are laundry detergent, socks, toilet paper and deodorant.

If you are interested in preparing a lunch for the residents at the shelter, please call 737-8900 to schedule a time. St. Mark's Cares will continue to offer opportunities to serve dinners.

ST. MARK'S PACK 969 NEWS

Pack 969, has been busy with service projects. They have done great helping with yard work and landscaping projects throughout our community. If anyone at St. Mark's has yard work that needs to be done, please reach out via email to cubscout969ff@gmail.com, and one of our leaders will get back to you about scheduling the boys to come out.

This weekend kicked off the annual Cub Scout camp for pack 969. Below is an attached picture of a few of our Webelos as they meet up for camp. Each den goes swimming and hiking. They will have camp fires and learn fire safety. The AOL's will be camping under the stars in preparation of becoming boy scouts in March. We will be meeting soon to discuss our calendar for the rest of the year. I will be able to provide more fundraiser information and dates for upcoming events in my next email.

Below are pictures of the Rain Gutter Ragatta early summer. The boys had to build their boats out of aluminum foil, tape and an index card. Then they race them down to rain gutters.



St. Mark's Financial Update

Tim Mislansky, Finance Committee Chairperson

Greeting St. Mark's Family,

There are many exciting things happening in ministry at St. Mark's that are fueled by the giving of the church. Your giving supports these faith-based initiatives and make a difference in people's lives.

Our recent report to the district highlighted many of these including:

- *Mission outreach to Shared Harvest, the Broken Bus, Serve City and Matthew 25 – all great examples of spreading God's love outside the four walls of St. Mark's
- *Donation drives from the Heifer project, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Dougie and Ray's, and UMCOR
- *Two Vacation Bible Schools – one for Living Waters and another for St. Mark's where we taught over 100 children about Christ
- *Bringing four new confirmands into the membership of the church
- *The welcoming of several new members into St. Mark's
- *A resurgence in our Youth Group under new leadership

All of this is made possible through the giving of your time and money.

In June we received just over \$29,000 for the five-week month. Our June expenses were just over \$30,000.

The good news is despite June being a lackluster month, we remain about \$23,000 ahead of last year's giving. We have spent \$20,000 less than we budgeted for the year. In addition, we continue to pay our monthly apportionments, and our loans of just under \$75,000 remain current.

The not-so-good news is we continue to borrow from ourselves to fund our church ministry, cleaning, and utilities. This so-called borrowing was \$5,500 in June (up from \$4,000 at the end of April). This is not a good trend.

So, if giving is ahead of last year and our expenses are down, why are we borrowing from ourselves?

Great Question! We should remember:

- * Last year, our giving was down dramatically in May & June due to the turmoil we were experiencing. While this year's giving is up from last year, it's about even with 2017. So, we've returned giving to about its historical level.
- * Last year, we went several months without key staff, meaning we weren't paying a pastor or a discipleship director. Since about March of this year, we've been fully staffed and had extra salary expense.
- * In addition, we've put a fair amount of money to bring the parsonage up to a better standard. We've replaced the appliances, repaired the floors and done a lot of painting for about \$7,500. In the long run, using the parsonage for the Pastor's home will be a cost savings for us as we should get our \$2,000 per year property tax bill exempted and save the housing allowance we provide the pastor. But in the short run, it's a drain on our cash position.

Should you have questions about opportunities to increase giving or about anything related to St. Mark's finances, please do not hesitate to ask me at church or to email me at tmislansky@fuse.net or call me at 513-759-0581.

Thank you,
Tim Mislansky

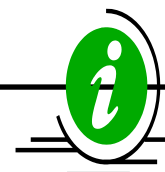
A Personal Note and Invitation

Over the past year, Julie and I have felt called to increase our giving. We are encouraged about the growth in ministry at St. Mark's and the opportunity for new and exciting growth. There's lots to be excited about and I hope you are excited as well. We see how our giving is personally impacting others and the potential for even more impact. As you examine your giving, I would invite you to join us in prayerful consideration.

Tim and Julie Mislansky



Sympathy to the family
and friends of
St. Mark's member,
Juanita Pool,
who passed away on July
12th at the age of 103.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION NURTURE and CARE

This committee sends out a "We miss you" card to all those absent from worship for 3 weeks. We rely on the attendance sheets to let us know who has been and has not been here.

Once in a while, there could be a slip-up and you will get a card even though you did not miss three weeks.

We are asking that if this happens, just smile, knowing that your church cares and sends blessings. Thank You.

Dear St. Mark's Family,

Thank you for the beautiful flowers in honor of my father's passing. I am so grateful for your love and support during this difficult time. You are a blessing to me and my family.



Love & prayers,
Marla George & Family

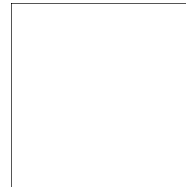


Appreciation to Ruth Ritenbaugh
for working in the Church office
while Brenda was on vacation.

Thanks to Betty Jones and Linda Fenzel who have each volunteered a day to answer the phone when Brenda could not be in the office.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

4601 Fairfield Avenue
Fairfield, OH 45014

**St. Mark's Staff**

Pastor, Rev. Joseph M. Payne -
Joe's cell #614-531-2373
Pastor Emeritus, Bob Klingel
Admin. Assistant, Brenda Smoot
Director of Music, Chris Beiser
Organist, Sue Combs
Director of Children & Family Ministries, Peggy Smith
Interim Youth Director, Erin Theodor
Nursery Director, Lauren Dichtl

Church Office Hours :

Monday — Thursday
9:00 - Noon, 1:00 - 3:00 pm
Friday - Office Closed

(513) 844-1818
Fax: (513) 844-2828
fairfieldstmarks.com

Worship Service:
Sundays 9:30 am