



# SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S

## FEBRUARY 2021

*THE MISSION OF ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD.*



Dear Friends,

While it's far too late to wish you a "Happy New Year," I do wish the best for you and your loved ones in this year 2021. We are never sure what the future will bring, but we do remember Who holds our future, right?

I am proud of you for your financial, moral, and spiritual support of your church. The giving of your time is most greatly appreciated. It means a great deal to all of us when we are able to stick together.

I want to invite you to take part in a class I am offering, entitled "Faithful and Inclusive: The Bible, Sexuality and The United Methodist Church." I don't want to force anyone to do anything, I am urging our leadership to take it. Honestly, I am urging everyone to take it.

Why? Because there is so much at stake. Currently, it is almost a forgone conclusion that our denomination will not be sticking together much longer. Indeed, for the past couple of years we have been moving toward a formal separation over our belief in the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the church, including marriage and ordination. Ironically, it is this pandemic that has kept us together. Well, actually, it has only delayed it. A formal plan, entitled "Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation and Restructuring" was to be brought before General Conference of 2020; however, that General Conference was postponed until August 29 – September 7 of this year. Now, again because of Covid-19, there is uncertainty whether General Conference will need to be postponed yet again.

It is important for you to know that these delays have not prevented individual churches from moving forward with their own plans. You may know of United Methodist Churches in our area who have already begun this process of separation. I know of two new denominations currently being formed within the United States. Perhaps there are others. This process is going to take years to sort out. It's going to bring financial, structural, emotional strain on the denomination and on our local churches. It is also going to be painful for individual members. It already is painful.

At the same time, this can be a period of growth and vitality for churches and individuals alike. I believe this.

Here at St. Mark's, how can we move toward this growth and vitality? What are we to do? Some might believe it would be in our best interest to try to keep the peace at all costs. "Just don't go there," some would say. Some have suggested that we take the "wait and see" approach. Don't do anything until something formal is decided at General Conference.

So by now, I'm sure you know that I believe a healthier and more just way forward for us is to invest our valuable time in learning more about this divisive life issue, now, and ultimately growing through it. Not only is it healthier, but it is the right thing to do. To ignore it, to brush it aside, would be to disrespect many of our families. I believe that learning as much as we can, and keeping communication open -- quality conversation, including active listening - with those we agree and disagree is the way forward. It's not easy. We may want to do anything but that. However, I believe it is the healthiest and best way forward.

(continued on page 10)

# *St. Mark's Opportunities*

*(Fellowship, Participation, Study, Serve)*



Community  
Blood Center  
*Real Donors. Real Life Heroes.*

Wednesday, March 17th  
3:30 - 7 pm  
St. Mark's Fellowship Hall

Sign up now on our Facebook page.

Contact Erin Theodor, 748-1085, if you have any questions.

## **Bible Study**

**FAITHFUL and INCLUSIVE: The Bible, Sexuality, and The United Methodist Church**

**Thursdays 6:30 - 8:00 pm,  
February 18—March 25**

See Pastor Joe's letter for details.

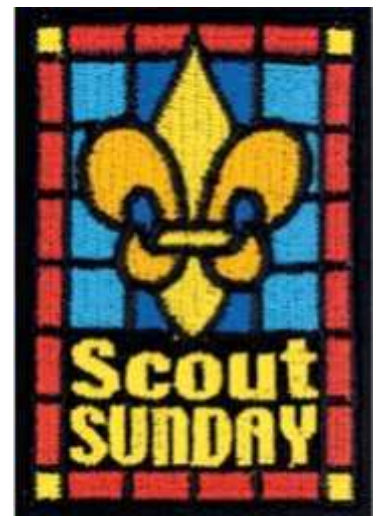


Please call the church office if you would like to have flowers some Sunday on the Altar. The price is \$14.50 each vase.

Orders must be received by end of day on Wednesday.

You can get the flowers after the service, Monday morning, or call the office to arrange a time.

Sunday, February 14



**Our 2021  
Lenten  
Journey**  
Ash Wednesday  
Feb. 17, 7pm  
Plus Sundays at  
9:30  
In Person and  
Livestream

# HOLY VESSELS



## A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY



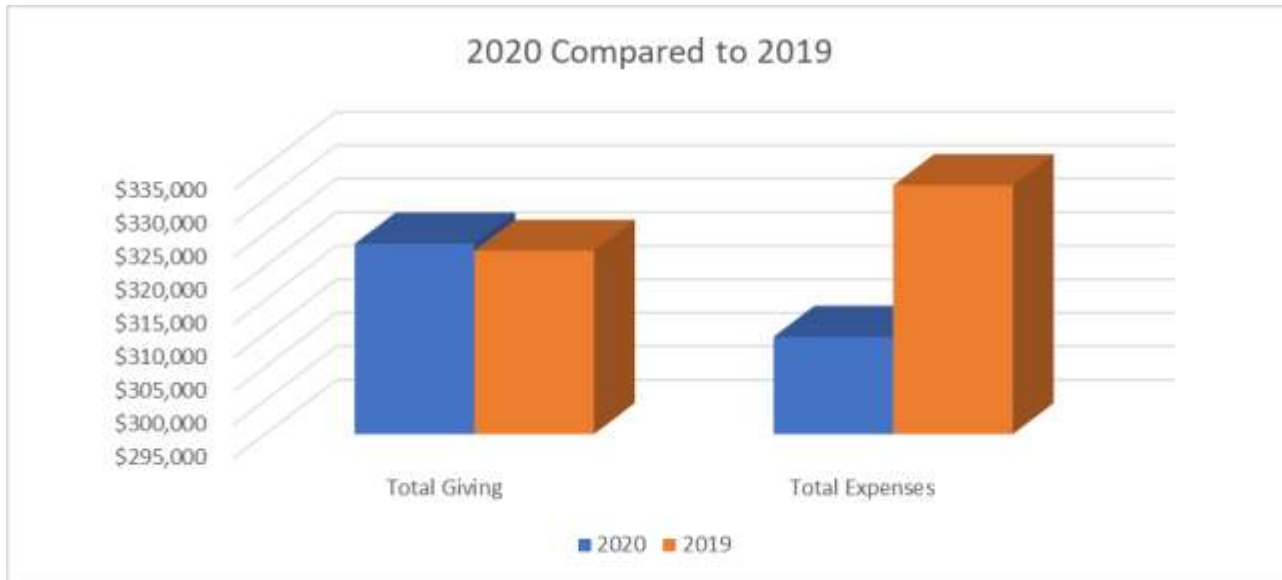
# St. Mark's Financial Update

Tim Mislansky, Treasurer

Greetings St. Mark's Family,

Happy New Year!

As we enter the new year, here is a summary of 2020. Overall, despite the challenges we faced amid the pandemic, St. Mark's had a good financial year!



Our giving for 2020 was just over \$323,000 and about \$1,000 more than 2019. And the 2020 giving was the best year of giving since 2017. Online giving now makes up 23% of our total giving.

Our total expenses for the year were \$310,000 which was down \$23,000 from 2019. The main cause of the decrease was due to lower expenses associated with not having in person service.

Other highlights for the year include:

- Ending 2020 with just over \$63,000 on deposit at the credit union. Of these funds, \$60,000 are designated for various efforts or causes.
- Pay 100% of both our district and conference apportionments AGAIN! That makes four consecutive years.
- Reducing our debt by \$8,200. We now owe \$60,000 .
- We were able to repair both the parking lot and the parsonage driveway as well as other minor maintenance efforts in our buildings.

We should be proud that we are able to meet our needs and support the connectional aspect of the United Methodist Church.

And finally, as we enter the new year, I want to welcome Gale Goodman as our new Finance Chair. I look forward to working with Gale.

So, all in all, our finances are in good shape and we have got a lot to be thankful for. If you have questions about anything related to St. Mark's finances, please do not hesitate to ask either me or Gale.

Sincerely,  
Tim Mislansky, Treasurer

# 2020 Celebration of Outreach

7 volunteers provided a meal for the students at [UC Wesley House](#).

14 volunteers served at [Matthew 25](#) & pill bottles donations continued all year.

8 volunteers packed food boxes at [Shared Harvest Foodbank](#).

10 St. Marks families stepped up to be 1<sup>st</sup> year supporters for [The Fringe Coffeehouse](#) totaling **\$3,335**.

A team of 17 walkers raised **\$1,158** for [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#) in their Virtual 5K.

8 riders on 2 different rides on [The Broken Bus](#) cared for the homeless of downtown Cincy.

Winter supplies for [The Broken Bus](#) were collected.

3 meals, made by St. Mark's cooks, were served from [The Broken Bus](#) along with a summer snack drive that filled the pantry shelves of [The Broken Bus](#).

8 volunteers served a home cooked meal to our friends at [Serve City](#) in January and over 30 people donated to 5 more delicious meals were delivered to Serve City when we could no longer serve in person.

3 donation drives were held for [Fairfield Food Pantry](#) totaling **1,470 pounds** of food and personal care items and close to **\$500** in cash donations.

St. Mark's was a bronze sponsor of the [FFFP](#) 5K, for the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

Loads of school supplies were collected for [Dougie & Ray's](#) for the Fairfield Schools.

Our [UMCOR](#) Sunday offering was **\$1,855**.

Our first [Good Neighbor Week](#) was a huge success;

33 donors for our Blood Drive.

14 Snack and PPE Baskets delivered to each Fairfield school, District Office, Transportation, and Maintenance buildings - all put together from St. Mark's donations.

Flooded Facebook with positivity and thanks to our frontline heroes.

39 care visits, along with a porch mum, were made to our members & 6 of those visits included outdoor chores and yard work.

35 Covid Hygiene Kits were collected for the [West Ohio "All in Community"](#) program.

117 coats and 103 hats, scarves, and gloves were collected for local missions in our [annual Coat Drive](#).

[Community Blood Center Blood Drives](#) were brought back to St. Mark's for the first time in 12 years. 66 people registered to donate at 2 drives with almost half of them being first-time donors.

The children at [One Way Farm](#) were blessed with a vanload of toys, games, craft supplies, books, and clothes at Christmas; plus **\$450** in cash and gift cards.

[Christmas Amaryllis Flowers](#) were delivered to 52 of our members during Advent.

# 2020 Celebration of Giving

## Regular Giving

The Fringe Coffee House	\$4,160.46
Fairfield Food Pantry	\$1,250.00
Hamilton Living Water Ministries	\$1,200.00
The Broken Bus Ministry	\$975.00
Wesley House at UC	\$910.00
Serve City	\$610.00
Serve City Meals	\$794.54
CRU: Jose Luis & Christy Sanchez	\$450.00
UMC Missionaries: Brian & Tara Vinson	\$351.00
The Caring Closet	\$325.00
Dougie and Ray's	\$325.00
YWCA Dove House Shelter	\$300.00
One Way Farm	\$50.00
<i>Subtotal of Regular Giving</i>	<i>\$11,701.00</i>

## United Methodist Church Giving

UMCOR

\$1,965.00

## Community Outreach

(comes from St. Mark's Cares operating budget)

Fairfield Food Pantry 5K sponsor	\$200.00
Good Neighbor Week school baskets/mum	\$296.71
Christmas flowers	\$264.65
<i>Subtotal of Community Outreach Giving</i>	<i>\$761.36</i>

**Grand Total Giving** **\$14,427.36**





# ST. MARK'S MISSIONS and OUTREACH

## Julie Mislansky, chair



This year we focused our Christmas giving on the newly re-opened One Way Farm Children's Home in Fairfield. We asked for donations of clothes, toys, games, arts and crafts supplies, books, and sports equipment and, as always, our church family came through! We delivered a Van load of items, plus \$450

worth of gift cards and cash, to One Way Farm. Your generous contributions helped to provide a merry Christmas for many children.



Due to Covid, we are still not able to serve our friends at Serve City in person, but we continue to deliver home-cooked meals to them at least every other month.

On New Years Eve, thirteen of our church family prepared a feast of appetizers and desserts. They absolutely loved it! Another fourteen individuals are slated to provide a full "ham and sides" meal on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. We are thrilled with the response to help with these meals! Thank you!



Our latest Fairfield Food Pantry donation drive focused on personal care products and pet food! These are items that are rarely donated, but always asked for! We know this will make a big difference for a lot of people (and their pets!) Thank you for your generosity!

The Broken Bus Ministry is once again allowing volunteers on their rides downtown to serve the homeless! They do ask that a group that serves be family members, or those that live in the same household. Masks and other safety procedures will be in place. We have reserved two upcoming dates to ride and/or provide the meal: **February 20<sup>th</sup> and April 10<sup>th</sup>**. If you are interested in either date, to ride or to cook, or if you have questions, please contact Julie at 505-4061.





# MUSIC MINISTRY

Chris Beiser - Director of Music

January is here and almost gone already and I hope everyone is staying warm and more importantly healthy and well!

I wanted to take time in my article this month to thank an awesome group of people who helped provide music in December for our holiday services. You've heard it before and I'll say it again, St. Mark's UMC is so very blessed with wonderful talent that comes in many forms.

Our Christmas Eve service was different for 2020, but didn't fall short in being filled to the brim with terrific musical selections. Thank you to Mark Hensler, Hannah Hensler, Sue Luken, Heather Chambers, Ben Hartwig, Kayla Goodman, Penny Dole, and Sue Combs for making the service a truly memorable one. Mark Hensler's addition of beautiful videography added a professional touch to a blessed service. I think the addition of scripture passages read by families of our congregation helped make us feel like we were together as we all so wish we could've been!

The Top 10 Christmas Carol countdown service on December 27th was fun, fun, fun! Thank you to Mark Hensler, Penny Dole, Dick Roemer, Kayla Goodman, Sue Combs, good friend Mark Engel, and Hannah Hensler for sharing their talents. Another special thank you to Hannah for also being a wonderful Vanna during the service. The congregation is to be applauded as well because the service would've never even been possible without your votes!

A suggestion was made, and I think it's a great idea, in the spring we will do a Top Ten Countdown of the 10 favorite hymns that the congregation enjoys that are not Christmas carols. So start thinking now about what your favorites might be!

As always, it is an honor and a pleasure to serve this wonderful, loving congregation as your Music Director. We made it through the challenges of 2020, and I look forward to the musical opportunities we will share together in 2021.

And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

Chris Beiser



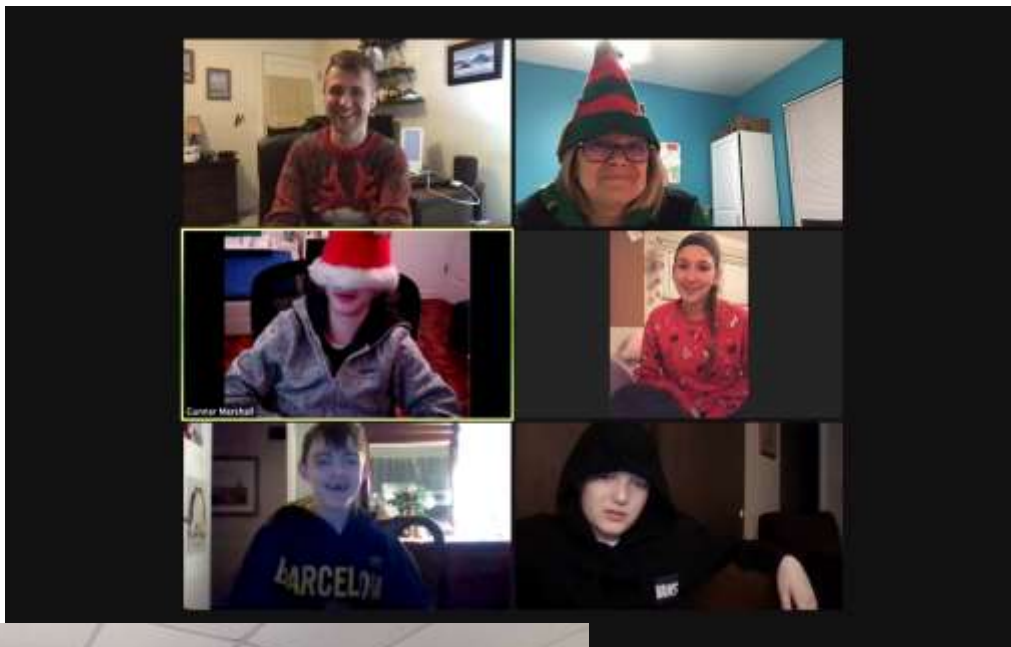
# YOUTH GROUP HAPPENINGS

**JULIE MISLANSKY, YOUTH DIRECTOR**



Youth Group continues to meet - Covid style! A core group of 6 to 8 youth, along with my co-leader, Zach Dichtl, gather weekly by Zoom. In December, we shared Advent devotions on hope, peace, love, and joy, along with fun Christmas scavenger hunts and other Christmas games. A couple of our youth made “random acts of cookies” and gifted someone with some cookie “love.”

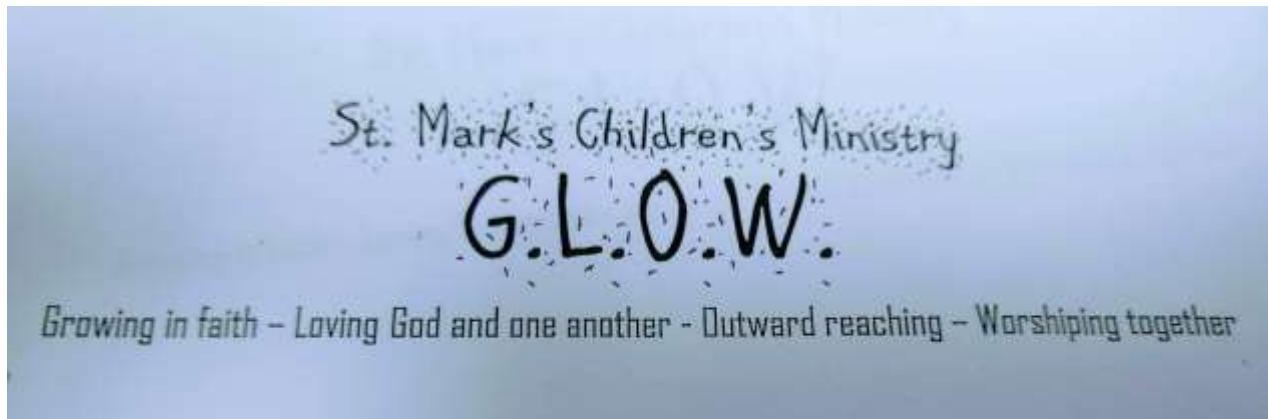
In January, we began studying a new devotional together, The Real Jesus, by Jen Bradbury. These 50 short readings help to bring the reality of Jesus to our lives, helping us answer the same question Jesus asked his friend, Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” We also had a great time serving at the Broken Bus, bagging Halloween candy, laughing, and being TOGETHER. I pray for the day we can do this on a regular basis, in our newly re-decorated youth room. These youth bring much joy to my life. Our church is blessed to have them as a part of our church family!





# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

PEGGY SMITH, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRIES



It is hard to believe that Lent is almost upon us, and that it has been a year since the Covid 19 virus has been impacting our lives. We have been the church through it all, and will continue sharing God's love with your children and community as safely as we can.

We will continue to pause Sunday School through February and update everyone as soon as we can.

In the meantime this is what you can look forward to!

## Lenten Kits

The Children and Family Ministry Team will be making Family Lenten Kits for families. These are geared for kids, but would be great for any age. Please let Peggy know (this week) if you would like one. (Families on our Sunday school registration will automatically get one)

They will include: Devotions, Bible readings, Activities, and Crafts

## Egg Hunt

The team has decided that we can safely have an Easter Egg Hunt this year. It will be outdoors, (rain will cancel) and limited to children related to our St. Mark's families. Date TBA

## VBS

We are planning to have VBS this year. We will decide exactly how that will look as the year progresses. Look for updates, and how you might join the fun!

(Continued from page 1)

I believe the vast majority of us love all people and want to welcome all people to St. Mark's. At the same time, some of us have difficulty reconciling our desire to be inclusive of all people with our belief in the Bible as having ultimate authority. And, some of us are uncomfortable sharing about it. We feel it is a private matter, so we shy away from discussing it. Some may say, "We welcome everyone! We just don't want to know their sexual orientation." But, in saying this, we don't realize that such an attitude is demeaning to people. Imagine not being able to share about your life partner or your kids openly with your church family....

I don't have to tell you where I am on this. But, please understand: my hope is not to "force anything down anyone's throat." My hope is not to coerce anyone. I am fully aware that the only one in charge of your mind and heart is you. No, my hope is that this class will be a safe place to learn and to grow so that you can make up your own mind and heart. I know from my own experience that this one class may not move you to a new place. Personally, it took me many years of remaining open to the Spirit's voice, and let's face it – many years of internal wrestling and struggle -- for the eventual change that awakened within me. But, it was worth it. As a result, my admiration and appreciation for the Holy Bible has grown, and my awareness of God and God's grace has grown and grown. It has helped me to understand and apply the whole Bible to my life, not just bits and pieces.

This class is more than just a class on the Bible and human sexuality. This class will give you a solid foundation on the Wesleyan understanding of biblical interpretation. It will teach you how we bring our whole selves to the study of scripture. We will discuss how culture influences our reading of the Bible. It will help us to what to do with those passages that we find troubling or confusing. I don't promise you that this study will answer all of your questions, but it will offer a solid beginning.

It's only six weeks. Plus, there is no prerequisite to taking this class. Besides a Bible, the only other requirement I request of you is an open mind and heart. I won't force you to talk during discussions. You may simply come and listen (at the same time, I hope there are enough who are able to discuss so you won't have to listen to me the whole time. I wouldn't wish that on anyone!). Our goal is that these classes will be a safe place no matter where you are. I hope it will be a place where we can laugh and enjoy one another, and to respect each other.

Currently, the classes are held on Zoom. Zoom is not ideal, but it does have its advantages. There is no need to travel on a cold winter's night to attend. Attend class in the comfort of your own home. And don't be intimidated by this technology. There are many who can help you get started. There is no steep learning curve. Before you know it, you will be as comfortable doing this as watching tv. Well, almost.

Currently, there are two classes being held. The next class begins February 18 and end on March 25. The classes run from 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Please sign up now if you can. If these dates and times are inconvenient, there will be other classes offered. I am open to suggestions on different days and times. Just call Brenda at 844-1818 to sign up.

I feel honored and blessed to be a part of this church called St. Mark's United Methodist.

Your pastor and friend,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

## FEBRUARY PICK ME UP MOMENTS

Thanks to Carol Pittman

- Feb. 01 The best curve on your body its your smile. Anon
- Feb. 02 You are a child of God, you are wonderfully made, dearly loved,  
and precious in His sight. Psalm 139: 13-14
- Feb. 03 Let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. John Wesley
- Feb. 04 We must deliberately take time each day to disconnect from the  
world and connect with heaven. Elder Stephan W. Owen
- Feb. 05 Don't let your circumstances change your view of God. Let God  
change your view of your circumstances. Anon
- Feb. 06 Knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the  
best opportunities for growing into the healthiest of people. Mr. Rogers
- Feb. 07 You can learn something new everyday if you listen. Anon
- Feb. 08 Clothe yourself in love. Love is what holds you all together in  
perfect unity. Colossians 3:14
- Feb. 09 Treat people with kindness, because behind every face is a story  
that could use a little more love. Cheryl Richardson
- Feb. 10 You may not know your impact, the lives you have touched, the feeling you have  
given someone on a day when he or she really needed it. Marisa Donnell
- Feb. 11 There is a reason that God didn't put eyes in the back of our heads.  
Stop turning around, continue moving forward and have faith  
that God has your back. Anon.
- Feb. 12 The only meaningful thing we can offer one another is love. Not  
advice, not questions about our choices, not suggestions for the  
future-----just love. Glennon Melton
- Feb. 13 We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19
- Feb. 14 Love is the secret password to every soul. Anthony D. Williams
- Feb. 15 Attitude is the difference between an ordeal and an adventure. Bob Bitchin
- Feb. 16 Be someone who makes someone else look forward to tomorrow. Anon
- Feb. 17 Be the reason someone smiles. Be the reason someone feels  
loved and believes in the goodness of people. Roy T. Bennett
- Feb. 18 The enemy will try to limit your praying because he knows your  
praying will limit him. Benjamin Daniel Kidari
- Feb. 19 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one commandment:  
"Love your neighbor as yourself". Galatians 5:14
- Feb. 20 Discussions are always better than arguments, because an  
argument is to find out who is right, and a discussion is to find  
out what is right. Anon.
- Feb. 21 Remember whatever you do behind someone's back, you are  
also doing it in front of God's eyes. Anon
- Feb. 22 You are loved beyond measure. Ephesians 3:19
- Feb. 23 As the Lord holds you and comforts you, may His presence give  
you the strength that you need during this time. Anon
- Feb. 24 Don't let the hurt of today blind you to the hope of tomorrow. Lysa Ter KerKeurst
- Feb. 25 Train your mind to hear what God whispers and not what the  
enemy may be shouting. Anon
- Feb. 26 Let all that you do be done in love. 1 Corinthians 16:14
- Feb. 27 Whenever you do not understand what's happening in your life,  
just close your eyes, take a deep breath and say "God I know  
it's your plan. Just help me through it." Anon
- Feb. 28 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12

# February Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 3 - Wade Lewis
- 3 - Elle Nguyen
- 4 - Susan Bunte
- 7 - Arvilla Brinkmeyer
- 8 - Lauren Leyrer - 9 yrs.
- 9 - Shirley Cowden
- 11 - Julie Dichtl
- 11 - Doug Ewald
- 11 - Laura Spahn
- 11 - Pat Stivers
- 15 - Erin Theodor
- 17 - Rick Marshall
- 18 - Lily Edmundson - 8 yrs.
- 20 - Cindy Booker
- 22 - Alice Becker - 4 yrs.
- 22 - Shane Becker
- 22 - Bob Knau
- 25 - Shirley Grant
- 28 - Belinda Peters
- 28 - Robert Rinker, Jr.



## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 - John & Linda Prohaska
- 11 - Dick & Darlene Kuertz
- 12 - Don & Sue McDaniel
- 14 - Ardean & Pat Pitman
- 20 - Don & Cheryl Kemen
- 28 - Jeff & Carol Gering
- 28 - Steve & Diana Griffith



### St. Mark's Family,

Thank you to everyone for the cards, phone calls, planter and flowers, food, thoughts and prayers. All were greatly appreciated in the passing of George. We certainly felt the love and caring of St. Mark's.

Belinda Peters and Family

**THANKS** - Paul Schutte thanks everyone for their cards and notes. They helped to brighten his Advent season.

### 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  
Youth Director, Julie Mislansky

St. Mark's UMC  
4601 Fairfield Ave.  
(513) 844-1818  
Fax: (513) 844-2828  
fairfieldstmarks.com

Worship Service:  
Sundays 9:30 am  
Live Streamed