



SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S

The Mission of St. Mark's United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world... a world of justice, love and peace filled with people growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

February 2022

LOVE ISSUE

Do you remember paper Valentine cards?

The celebration of Saint Valentine's Day has evolved from sending letters, poems and homemade paper valentines to one that has become more materialistic. But, we can seize the opportunity to show our love and concern for others through acts of kindness and compassion. While the meaning and celebrations of Valentine's Day has changed, it has remained as a special day to shower with love those we hold close.

Valentine's day can create a variety of emotions for different people. For some, it creates great satisfaction celebrating the love you have between you, your spouse, and your friends & family. For others, it can cause feelings of loneliness. Whether you are single or in a relationship, I have compiled a list (see right column) to get you started. God has unconditional and indescribable love for ALL of us. No matter your age or stage in life, Valentine's Day can be celebrated because of God's great love.

Let's celebrate with affirming words of love and using "love" based Bible verses. Share these "Love Notes" through the month of February and even throughout the year spreading love to everyone!



Affirmations of LOVE...

1. God's "love" thoughts of You are so many, you cannot put a number on them.
2. God is looking at me with eyes of Love.
3. God's listens to me and I trust God.
4. God will NEVER leave you!
5. God's love for You is Personal, he loves you to pieces!
6. God has not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love and self control.
7. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



Love based Bible verses:

1 Corinthians 16:14
"Let all that you do, be done with LOVE"

John 15:13
Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

John 3:16
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1 Corinthians 13:13
And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Luke 6:31
Do to others as you would have them do to you.

I encourage you to find more to share...

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JOE



Dear Church Family,

Greetings, fellow eaglets! As I was having my morning oatmeal, I witnessed quite a show, a livestream of an eagle feeding its baby. Try as I might, I couldn't get a sharp picture of the eaglet. The tiny bird was just too excited about his breakfast to sit still. He was far more excited than I was about my oatmeal!

This text, Isaiah 40:28-31, was read at the service for Jean Bennett and Maryada Millsbaugh, both matriarchs of our church. I have read this text at many memorial services. Whenever I read it, I often picture Jean, Maryada, and others who have passed on, soaring as majestic eagles, looking magnificent against a deep blue sky.

This little guy reminded me that eagles first must begin as eaglets, helpless without their mother and father, who bring nourishment for them, who keep them warm, and who teach them how to fend for themselves.

Jean, Maryada, and others who have passed before us had a lifetime of learning from their Divine Parent, as taught to them by their parents, teachers, and others who loved and cared for them.

It was a joy for me personally to witness Jean's desire to keep learning, even into her 90s. Last summer, through the help of her son-in-law, Jean took part in one of my bible studies, held online via Zoom. She wanted to be a part of this study. She knew she wasn't finished growing yet.

Her witness was a reminder to me that we should never stop learning. We never reach a point where we "know it all." Our Parent Eagle has much yet to teach us, and we have much to learn. Going forward, may we never forget that.

Let's learn to fly together,

Pastor Joe

Looking Ahead in Worship

Love Never Ends: Being the Body of Christ

January 30—Guest Preacher, Rev. Joe Hadley
"The Greatest of These" 1 Cor. 13:1-13

February 6—"Hold Firmly" 1 Cor. 15:1-11

February 13—"First Fruits" 1 Cor. 15:12-20

February 20—"Raised in Glory"

1 Cor. 15:35-38, 42-50

February 27—Transfiguration Sunday

"Seeing the Glory" 2 Cor. 3:12-4:2

*"Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint."
Isaiah 40:28-31*



<https://www.berry.edu/eaglecam/>
Screen shot 1/19/2022

YOUTH GROUP HAPPENINGS

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY JULIE MISLANSKY



Greetings from St. Mark's youth group! Not much to report, as we have "been on break" during the holidays and just resumed confirmation classes on January 16th. Topics for this month's classes are prayer, free will, and the omnipresence of God. Such interesting conversations we have as we explore these complicated topics! I always learn a thing or two from our amazing youth!

I want to thank everyone who provided meals for our group this past fall; Pastor Joe and Linda, Ann Brabbs, Sue Luken, Tonya Leguina, and Kym Nguyen. We are appreciative to be able to take a break between confirmation & youth group to enjoy a meal together. In particular, I am so grateful not having to worry about planning & preparing the meal myself! THANK YOU! The schedule for meals for the winter and spring is on the bulletin board in the narthex if you'd like to sign-up for providing a meal one Sunday. We have 4-6 youth and 2 adults, and we eat around 5:00. It's a great way to support our youth!



"Souper" Bowl Sunday

The youth will be doing a special, one-day collection on Super Bowl Sunday, February 13th. Our focus will be on canned soup, but any non-perishable food item, cleaning supply, hygiene item, or pet food will be greatly appreciated. All donations will be taken to the Fairfield Food Pantry.

Hocking Hills Youth Winter Retreat

We are super excited for our weekend youth retreat, January 28-30th!

We will be staying in a cabin at Hocking Hills, sharing good food, taking winter hikes, playing a variety of games, and having great talks about God's beautiful creations... especially in the winter!

If you would like to write a personal note to each of our six youth, a short note of encouragement, perhaps a favorite scripture or quote, we will have a special time planned during our stay where they will receive your notes.

As an alternate idea, you could send a special snack, homemade treat, candy, or some other small "gift" that would be appropriate for teens. (Contact Julie for ideas). Personally, I want them to be surrounded by love from their church family during the weekend!

We will need these items by Jan. 27th
Above all, we ask for your prayers for safety, good weather, and for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Youth Group Members:

Ali Leguina
Jenn Specht
Gunnar Marshall
Ethan Sizemore
Olivia Edmundson
Kayden Dutey-Anderson



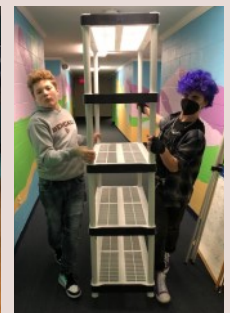
Reorganizing Ministry Rooms

The youth is helping reorganize the Children, Youth, and Family Ministries Room! We bought new shelving and assembled. This room will be so much easier to get into and find what we need! Check out the before and after photos!

BEFORE



BUILDING AND MOVING SHELVING INTO PLACE



FINISHED RESULT, WOW,



GREAT JOB!

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH



February or March 2022

Due to the surge in cases of Covid, Matthew 25 cancelled all of their January volunteering. We were scheduled to serve on 1/22. We hope to get another opportunity on their February or March schedule. Stay tuned!



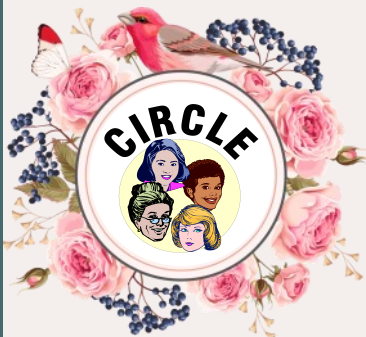
February 11 at 1pm

Calling all cooks and bakers! We will be providing the meal for Serve City on February 11. We will be asking for donations of main dishes, sides, and desserts. The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the narthex.

RUTH'S CIRCLE

February 18 at 1pm

Ruth Circle is meeting in Fellowship Hall on Friday, February 18 at 1pm. Ruth Circle is open to ALL women of the church and we would love to have you join us. For more info, please contact Pam Guynes at (513)779-9162 or Pamguynes2@gmail.com or Charlene Miller at (513)-844-6793 or chardarmiller@gmail.com



ST. MARK'S CARES January/February Mission Project

Fairfield Schools have a special school pantry where students in need can visit. Items stocked in this pantry include snacks, school supplies, hygiene items, clothing, coats and shoes. Our mission will be to collect their most needed items at this time which is, **underwear and shoes**. Remember, we are providing for preschool children through young adults in high school, so we are asking for:

Packs of **new underwear**, boys & girls, men & women, sizes 4T (Toddler)— 3X Adult
New or Gently used shoes, boys & girls, men & women, sizes 10Youth—14 Adult

So that we don't collect an overabundance of one size or age group, we will have Tags available on January 23rd in the narthex with various gender & size of these items to which you choose. However, if you find a good deal and feel led to buy more, please feel free to do so, in addition to what is on your tag. No limits! Also, if you are unable to pick up a tag at church, then buy whatever items of gender or sizes while out shopping. **Deadline to bring items in is Sunday, February 13.** Thank you for your generosity!

Photo-booth coming soon!

Chris and Sue will be setting up another opportunity for fun and/or serious photos to be taken with family, friends or just yourself. More details coming soon.



FAMILY MINISTRY

St. Mark's Children's Ministry
G.L.O.W.

Growing in faith – Loving God and one another – Outward reaching – Worshiping together



Family Ministries is inviting you to join us on "Shrove Tuesday" March 1, from 6-7PM in the Fellowship Hall for a Pancake Supper. We will offer pancakes, sausage and a "toppings bar" for you to pick from a variety of yummy surprises! Walk-ins will be welcome, but in order to give us an idea of numbers to help with our planning, please sign up at the Welcome Center in the narthex or indicate on the back of our attendance sheets beginning in Feb. We hope to see you there!

FYI - Shrove Tuesday (also known in some countries as Pancake Tuesday) is the day immediately preceding Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent), which is celebrated in some countries by consuming pancakes. In others,

especially those where it is called Mardi Gras or some translation thereof, this is a carnival day, and also the last day of "fat eating" or "gorging" before the fasting period of Lent. The expression "Shrove Tuesday" comes from the word shrive, meaning "absolve".

Pancakes are associated with the day because they were a way to use up rich foods such as eggs, milk, and sugar, before the fasting season of the 40 days of Lent. The liturgical fasting emphasized eating plainer food and refraining from food that would give pleasure; in many cultures, this means no meat, dairy products or eggs. "Donations will be accepted" to be used for our summer VBS!

REMINDER FROM TRUSTEES

"WE NEED YOU" Campaign!



Your Trustees are stewards of the property God has entrusted to the congregation, but we need you too! In 2022, we continue to look for new ways for all of the congregation to participate in keeping our church beautiful.

Do you have time to dedicate or do you have a particular talent you can share? Is there something you have seen that could be fixed or done? Well, we have a job for you and want to ensure that you can help on your schedule. Contact Jennie Marshall marshall.jenlyn@gmail.com.

Please provide your name & contact information (phone number and/or email). A member of the Trustees will contact you to discuss the job/tasks, the date & time, and if we need to schedule access to the building. We will be looking at mini-projects throughout February 2022. Then in March, we will have a "Church Work Day" on Saturday, details coming soon. Also, we will look at Spring projects that can be scheduled throughout March, April and May.

This is a new approach in participating Church Work Days. We will adapt and adjust pending the responses. For more information contact Jennie Marshall, 2021 Trustee Chair.

MUSIC MINISTRY

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC CHRIS BEISER



And when I'm called I will go gladly. I will not grieve for the past. For I know where I'll be going. For I will be going to see Him at last. I'm going special

delivery wrapped up in love.

Bound by a promise, sealed by a dove, and filled with the Spirit carried by grace. You know where I am going by the look on my face.



I have sung these words many times. Each Christmas Eve for many years, and now sadly more and more for funerals.

The last verse is so powerful and at Jean Bennett's memorial service it was even more so. I have had (and still have) many "mom's" and "grandma's" at St. Mark's who have watched out for me, given me advice, cared for me, and loved me unconditionally. Jean was definitely one of the finest in all of those categories! She was very vocal of her heartfelt appreciation of me, and I held her very close to my heart as well.

Jean loved the choir singing Cornerstone and insisted we start each new season off by singing it. Although I joked about if she wanted me to do something, I did it...I was grateful she asked, honored to do it, and will miss those requests. Jean was my Cornerstone. Her "assigned" seat in church will flood my mind with memories that go back to my childhood. I will hold onto the energetic, opinionated, supportive, amazingly loving woman that I thought would be a part of St. Mark's forever.

Jean, Wilma Jean, Mama Bennett, has done the last verse of Special Delivery proud. She has gone gladly, no grieving for the past, and certain of her destination. You knew where she was going by the look on her face...she was going to finally see Him at last.

POEMS WRITTEN BY LINDA PAYNE

O God... help us to
walk together, pray
together, sing
together, and live
together until that day
when all God's
children, Black,
White, Red, and
Yellow, will rejoice in
one common band of
humanity in the
kingdom of our Lord.
Amen.

Martin Luther King Jr.



DREAM

(Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King's speech)

Many years ago, he had a dream
where all God's children lived in harmony.
Every soul alight with heaven's gleam,
dispelling hatred's coarse cacophony.

Kindness, like a gentle river flowed
to water fertile fields with empathy.
Seeds of understanding then were sowed,
redeeming land from weeds of apathy.

Harvest time produced a fruitful yield
made up of every nation, faith, and race.
Beauty of diversity revealed a testament
to God's abiding grace.

Every person jubilantly voiced
a song of sweet accord and unity.
All creation ardently rejoiced
to see the healing of humanity.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

TIM MISLANSKY, TREASURER
GALE GOODMAN, FINANCE CHAIR



True giving from
the heart is an
expression of
love.
-Cara Stein

Greetings St. Mark's Family,

The administrative board approved the church's 2022 budget. The budget is intended to be a guide or plan for the year. Based on the strong response to pledge cards, we budgeted total giving of \$340,000 for the year. This is an 8% increase from the 2021 giving. We also budget \$340,000 in expenses for the year – so we have a balanced budget. In other words, we will spend what we bring in to run the church and perform our ministries. The biggest categories for our expenses are as follows:

Category	Total Budget	Change from 2021	Description
Our staff	\$187,400	10% increase	Salaries and benefits for our staff
Facilities	\$58,800	8% decrease	Costs for utilities, property taxes, cutting the grass, removing snow, repairs and maintenance (includes the parsonage costs as well)
Administration	\$40,600	15% increase	Costs for running the office, like the copier, office supplies, banking costs, insurance and computer expenses
Apportionments	\$31,600	15% decrease	The district and conference continue to cut their budgets which saves us money
Worship & Ministries	\$15,700	255% increase	Increases are due to low spending in 2021 due to the pandemic and bigger plans for 2022!
Loan payments	\$6,300	61% decrease	We paid off the line of credit last year

We received \$25,000 in December – about \$1,000 more than in November. For the entire year, we received \$314,500 which was down about 3% from the prior year. We spent nearly \$27,600 during the month. For the year, we spent \$312,000 – just \$2,500 more the prior year. The church staff and leaders did a great job in handling our expenses keeping them in check.

There were many positives in 2021 from a financial standpoint. We ended the year with nearly \$60,000 in credit union. We reduced our total debt by about \$14,000 and paid 100% of our apportionments again! We still have \$20,000 left in the parking lot fund. We also spent only about \$2,500 more to “run” the church despite the building being “open” for most of the year compared to the prior year.

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
Gale Goodman, Finance Chair

PICK ME UP MOMENTS

COMPILED BY CAROL PITTMAN

"Love Moments"

- Feb 01 Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.
—Mother Teresa
- Feb 02 Only God's love can fill the emptiness in your heart.—Anon
- Feb 03 Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them and they bless you, the giver.—Barbara DeAngelis
- Feb 04 No God, no peace. Know God, know peace.—Anon
- Feb 05 God loves you just as you are.—Max Lucado
- Feb 06 You are precious to God and He loves you.—Isaiah 43:4
- Feb 07 I can't brag about my love for God because I fail Him daily, but I can brag about His love for me because it never fails.—Anon
- Feb 08 God loves us too much to answer our prayers any other time than the right time. And He loves us too much to answer our prayers any other way than the right way.—Lysa Terkeurst
- Feb 09 You will find, as you look back upon your life, that the moments when you have really lived are moments you have done things in the spirit of love.—Henry Drummond
- Feb 10 Listening is where love begins.—Fred Rogers
- Feb 11 Know that you are never alone. God is with you, holding you, comforting you, and most of all loving you no matter what.—Anon
- Feb 12 You are loved beyond all measure.—Ephesians 3:19
- Feb 13 Live every moment. Laugh every day. Love with all your heart.—Anon
- Feb 14 True happiness can be found in the love of family and truly accepting God.—Anon
- Feb 15 Love is what allows us to overcome difficulties and obstacles that would otherwise defeat us.—Anon
- Feb 16 Love is like a butterfly: It goes where it pleases and it pleases wherever it goes.—Anon
- Feb 17 Our acts of love honor God.—Anon
- Feb 18 With His love, He will calm all your fears.—Zephaniah 3:17
- Feb 19 Do small things with great love.—Mother Teresa
- Feb 20 Pray hardest when it's hardest to pray.—Anon
- Feb 21 Today, I will celebrate God's love no matter what happens.—Anon
- Feb 22 Love is like the wind, you can't see it but you can feel it.—Nicolas Sparks
- Feb 23 We can't heal the world today, but we can begin with a voice of compassion, a heart of love and an act of kindness.—Mary Lewis
- Feb 24 Let all that you do be done with love.—1Corinthians 16:14
- Feb 25 The Bible, like a love letter, is meant to be read over and over again.—Anon
- Feb 26 You can't make God stop loving you because God's love isn't based on who you are but on who He is.—Rick Warren
- Feb 27 You are loved, you are wonderfully made. You are beautiful, you have purpose. You are a masterpiece. God has a great plan for you.—Anon
- Feb 28 Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is right here and now.—Fred Rogers

2021 Celebration of Giving and Serving

2021 Celebration of Giving

Regular Giving

The Fringe Coffee House:	\$1,040.00
Fairfield Food Pantry:	\$435.00
Hamilton Living Water Ministries:	\$1,100.00
The Broken Bus Ministry:	\$1,680.00
Wesley House at UC:	\$1,825.00
The Benji Sayre Family:	\$825.00
Serve City:	\$1,170.00
Subtotal of Regular Giving:	\$8,075.00

United Methodist Church Giving

UMCOR: **\$2,265.00**

Community Outreach

Dougie and Ray's:	\$975.00
Big Brothers and	
Big Sisters 5K Walk donations:	\$1,164.00
NAMI of Butler County 5K	
Walk donations:	\$1,765.00
Family Promise:	\$300.00
Fairfield Food Pantry/Kid's	
Easter Baskets:	\$100.00
Value of FFFP — Food, Hygiene,	
Garden vegetable donations:	\$3,193.00
Parkside Staff Gift Basket:	\$100.00
St. Mark's Homebound/Easter Baskets:	\$84.00
One Way Farm:	\$150.00

Subtotal of Community Outreach Giving: **\$7,831.00**

Grand Total Giving: **\$18,171.00**

2021 Celebration of Serving

*What an amazing year of giving love and care to others!
Our congregation was offered 34 opportunities to love,
give, and become the hands and feet of Jesus.*

Here is a summary:

5 Fairfield Food Pantry donation drives totaling 2,699 pounds of items and 494 pounds of fresh vegetables from our church garden

50 Easter Baskets donated to FFFP for local children

33 boxes of Valentines for FF school kids

3 large bins full of school supplies for Dougie & Ray's

6 meals prepared for Serve City, with 73 people donating the delicious food

18 sheet sets and blankets given to warm Serve City resident beds

3 Broken Bus serves: 12 riders and 10 persons donating food

28 Hygiene Kits for the youth at Butler County Juvenile Justice Center

16 walkers and \$1164 for the Big Brothers Big Sisters 5K

13 walkers and \$1765 for the NAMI of Butler County 5K

9 volunteers packed boxes at Shared Harvest

138 hygiene items collected for the Caring Closet, serving the kids in Hamilton Schools

92 coats and outerwear collected for those without in our community

54 beautifully wrapped Christmas presents shared with the residents of Parkside

2 large gift baskets shared with the staff of Parkside

UMCOR Sunday donations totaling \$2,265.00

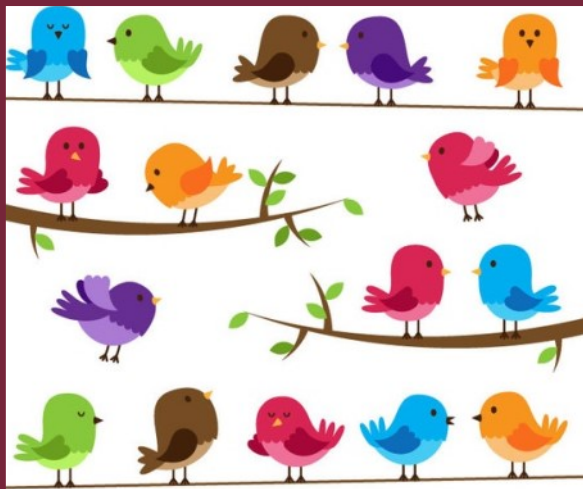
Youth Mission Week – 6 hardworking youth cleaned the courtyard, served at Serve City and the Broken Bus, held a Rock Painting party to brighten our courtyard, and held a Car Wash to support Hamilton Living Water

50 "Don't Give Up" lawn signs purchased to support NAMI of Butler County

Table sponsor for Family Promise of Butler County

BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY

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



February Anniversaries

2/01	Carl & Beth Phillippo	47
2/11	Dick & Darlene Kuertz	61
2/12	Don & Sud McDaniel	50
2/14	Ardean & Pat Pitman	62
2/20	Don & Cheryl Kemen	40
2/28	Jeff & Carol Gering	35



Recipe for Friendship

What you'll need:

- 1/4 cups Kindness
- 2/3 cups Compassion
- 1 Teaspoon speaking your mind
- 2 Tablespoon of Listening
- 3 cup of Laughter

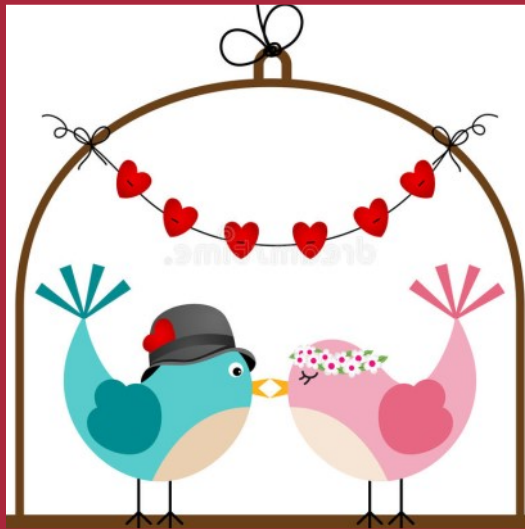
Directions:

- Boil in Challenges
- Simmer with Patience
- Stir in Sensitivity
- Spread over a Lifetime
- Serve Each Other



February Birthday's

2/03	Wade Lewis	
2/03	Elle Nguyen	
2/04	Susan Bunte	
2/04	Alex Robinson	
2/07	Arvilla Brinkmeyer	
2/08	Lauren Leyrer	10
2/11	Julie Dichtl	
2/11	Doug Ewald	
2/11	Owen Mulunda	8
2/11	Jean Stivers	
2/13	Kathleen Lang	
2/17	Rick Marshall	
2/18	Lily Edmundson	9
2/18	Morgan Howard	
2/20	Cindy Booker	
2/21	Alegressa Mulunda	2
2/21	Kyle Robinson	
2/22	Shane Becker	
2/22	Alice becker	5
2/22	Bob Knau	
2/25	Shirley Grant	
2/28	Belinda Peters	
2/28	Bobby Rinker Jr.	



A BIG "Thank you" to the Craft Ladies Group for their recent purchase of knives, knife covers, and tongs for the kitchen. We love our new and much needed kitchen tools and we cannot thank you enough!
—Nurture & Care Committee



THANK YOU!

I enjoyed receiving all of the Christmas & Birthday cards, the presents, sweets and treats and cake!
My favorite part was seeing all of you! Thank you for celebrating the Holidays and my Birthday with me!
With much love and gratitude,
Lyn Bucalo

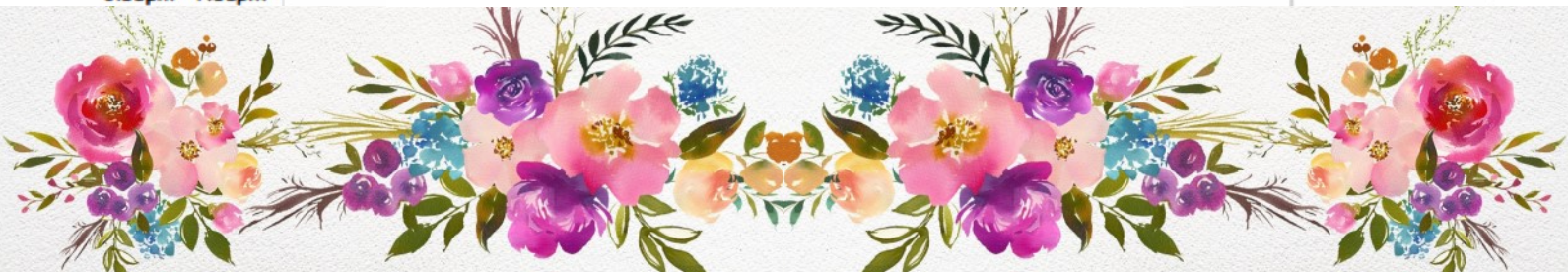
ST. MARK'S UMC CALENDAR

February 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY</p>		1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CYFM Team 6:45pm ● Boy Scouts Tr. 960 7:00pm - 8:30pm ● Trustees 7:00pm 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Men's Prayer Group 7:30am ● Bible Study 2:00pm - 3:00pm ● Handbell Choir 6:00pm - 7:00pm 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Book Club 1:00pm - 2:00pm ● Small group Bible study 7:00pm - 9:00pm ● Narcotics Anon. 7:30pm - 9:00pm 	4	5
	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Holy Communion 9:30am - 10:30am ● Worship & G.L.O.W. 9:30am - 10:30am ● Room at the Table 11:00am - 12:30pm 	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crafters Group 10:00am ● Zoom Bible Study 6:30pm - 8:00pm 	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrative Board 7:00pm ● Boy Scouts Tr. 960 7:00pm - 8:30pm 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Men's Prayer Group 7:30am ● Bible Study 2:00pm - 3:00pm ● Handbell Choir 6:00pm - 7:00pm 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narcotics Anon. 7:30pm - 9:00pm 	11
13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship & G.L.O.W. 9:30am - 10:30am ● Confirmation Class and lunch 10:45am - 12:45pm ● Youth Group 1:00pm - 2:00pm 	14 Valentine's Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crafters Group 10:00am ● Zoom Bible Study 6:30pm - 8:00pm 	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boy Scouts Tr. 960 7:00pm - 8:30pm 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Men's Prayer Group 7:30am ● Bible Study 2:00pm - 3:00pm ● Handbell Choir 6:00pm - 7:00pm ● Room at the Table 6:30pm - 8:00pm 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narcotics Anon. 7:30pm - 9:00pm 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ruth's Circle 1:00pm - 2:00pm 	19
20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship & G.L.O.W. 9:30am - 10:30am 	21 President's Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crafters Group 10:00am ● Zoom Bible Study 6:30pm - 8:00pm 	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boy Scouts Tr. 960 7:00pm - 8:30pm 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Men's Prayer Group 7:30am ● Bible Study 2:00pm - 3:00pm ● Handbell Choir 6:00pm - 7:00pm 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narcotics Anon. 7:30pm - 9:00pm 	25	26
27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship & G.L.O.W. 9:30am - 10:30am ● Room at the Table 11:00am - 12:30pm ● Confirmation Class 3:30pm - 5:00pm ● Dinner 5:00pm - 6:00pm ● Youth Group 6:00pm - 7:00pm 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crafters Group 10:00am ● Zoom Bible Study 6:30pm - 8:00pm 					

Access the church calendar on our website at

<https://www.fairfieldstmarks.com/calendar/>



ROOM AT THE TABLE UPDATE



I am writing this on behalf of the Room at the Table committee, a group of dedicated St. Mark's folks who are advocating for St. Mark's to become a Reconciling Ministries church.

What is a Reconciling ministries church? In case you don't know or need your memory refreshed...currently the United Methodist Church Book of Discipline states that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christ's teaching." Becoming a reconciling church would be making the public statement that we DO NOT agree with that statement. We would affirm that all are children of God, beloved, and celebrated as their authentic selves. We DO NOT believe that homosexuality is a sin. We DO NOT think anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, or asexual is a sinner. Further, we believe that there should be full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the life and ministry of the United Methodist Church, both in policy and practice, to include both

ordination and same-sex marriage. If our church would vote to become a Reconciling ministry church, we would also adopt this welcoming statement for St. Mark's.

We celebrate God's gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community equally shared and shepherded by all. We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status, and so much more. We acknowledge that we live in a world of profound social, economic, and political inequities. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and pledge to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.

As a reminder, our group began meeting in 2019, hit a little snag in 2020 like the rest of the world, but began working earnestly in 2021. We were recognized by the Admin Board in May of 2021 as an official committee of St. Mark's, which basically means we were given permission to officially explore this idea for St. Marks. And that is what we have been doing! Our group has been working its way through the steps in "Building an Inclusive Church," an amazing welcoming toolkit that has been used for many years by various denominations to help lead their congregation or group through this journey. We've followed the steps in the toolkit thus far by using their overall guiding principle, graceful engagement and honest conversation.

We've had one-on-one visits and held open educational events all with the hope of building relationships and leading our church toward this common goal of becoming an all affirming church, welcoming and celebrating persons of any sexual identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Our group met with the Rev. Dr. Suzanne Allen, our district assistant superintendent, who provided valuable leadership guidance for this journey.

Pastor Joe has led 5 sessions of the "Faithful and Inclusive" study that looks to the bible for guidance in this journey. Almost 50 people have participated in that class. Our group led 2 sessions where we watched and discussed the documentary "Through Our Eyes," which follows several young adults' journey of coming out to their church, which is often very painful and harmful in the current context. We led sessions watching and discussing "An Act of Love," the story of a UMC pastor who performed the same-sex marriage for his son, and the subsequent charges that were brought upon him by the church and the trials that followed. We've led events viewing and discussing "How a Community of Faith can Respond to its LGBTQ Members," where loving, helpful advice was shared, particularly about how we can respond to and support our youth and young adult LGBTQ friends. If anyone was not able to attend any of these sessions, we have the DVDs available and would be happy to lend them to you.

ROOM AT THE TABLE UPDATE (continued)

Continuing to follow the steps of the journey, our goal is to conduct an “exploratory survey” as early as May of 2022, where we will do an informal straw poll of the congregation. This will help to assess where we are, what information or education is still needed or wanted, and to help us discern if we should continue our efforts toward an official congregational vote, or to cease our efforts. If we move to an official vote, it will occur very soon after this exploratory survey.

In the meantime, we will continue to offer informational events and provide space for honest, graceful conversation. We’ve had good response to these events, but it is important to us to hear from all of our congregation. We want to be able to respond to all joys and concerns around the reconciling process. We understand that this may be something that is uncomfortable for you to talk about. We understand that you may have strong feelings one way or the other. We understand that you may be conflicted and not sure how you feel. To that end, we are providing the opportunity for you to share those joys and concerns anonymously.

There are only 2 simple questions we are asking.

If our congregation voted to become a reconciling church,

1)What would excite you the most? and

2)What would concern you the most?

We would like your responses back by February 6th. This gives you the chance to share your thoughts and it gives our group much needed insight about what informational events and discussions we should plan for the future. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PUT YOUR NAME ON THE CARD.** There are cards with these two questions, and they are available in the church office, or you can simply answer the 2 questions on a sheet of paper. You can put the cards or paper in the stewardship box in the narthex, mail them to church, turn them into the office in person, or put them in the mailbox of anyone in our group.

This would be a good time to remind everyone who our group members are. Every one of them is willing and available to talk to you. Please seek them out if you have questions, concerns or even ideas.

Tim and Julie Mislansky
Pastor Joe
John and Peggy Smith
Kyle and Alex Robinson
Sue Luken
Bob Hamp
Jennie Marshall

Pam Brockfield
Lois Hill
Debbie Hill
Julie Dichtl
Zach Dichtl
Charlotte Tierney

Finally, our group has also begun the next step in the journey, “public storytelling,” where we share our personal story of the how and why our hearts, minds, and views were changed. We practice with each other at our meetings as this can sometimes be a very emotional talk to share.

After these persons share their story in worship, we will also print the story in the newsletter. On January 16th, Sue Luken shared her story with the congregation of why it is important to her for St. Mark’s to become a Reconciling church. There will be more stories to be shared. **If you have a story you’d like to share, please reach out to one of our group members**

In His Service,
Julie Mislansky

PUBLIC STORYTELLING—SUE LUKEN STORY

Growing up as a "Preacher's Kid" came with certain expectations! How to behave, how to present yourself, and even what you're taught to believe. And as a young person I never really realized it or questioned that. It was simply a part of my life and who I was. "I didn't know any better!" Truthfully there were subjects that we really didn't discuss at home. One of those being human sexuality. I was both pretty naive and uninformed about that subject probably until around the time I began high school in 1976 when I started to get curious and learned more about it from my peers than my parents! That's when I started to first realize that some of my classmates may have been a little different than myself as far as who they were "crushing on". It began to dawn on me when I heard rumors fly that Todd who was not only very cute and tall but had an amazing singing voice and always landed the lead role in all of the theater productions, and who I saw as a potential boyfriend, might be gay. He never actually came out in H.S. and at the time I never really questioned why that might be. That he may have feared what the reaction would be, what people might say, or worse DO to him! My own reaction to the rumor itself was "darn, what a waste.... he likes guys!" Again, "I didn't know any better!"

As I entered my college years, I attended a small college in Zanesville, Ohio Muskingum Area Technical College that actually shared the campus with a branch of Ohio University. When my 6'2" self stepped foot onto the campus, I was immediately swooped upon and asked if I played basketball. I replied that I had only played for fun never on an organized team other than intramurals. Well, they didn't care. They begged me to "try out" for the women's basketball team telling me that they would work with me and coach me along! I think they really just wanted to have a 6'2" player listed on the team roster, you know... an intimidation factor! Well, it wouldn't be long however before the other teams realized that I was a different kind of player and didn't pose much of a threat regardless of my height. Soon it was evident to me that some of my teammates were different than myself in other ways as well. And I began to hear talk about all the "lesbians", (well maybe not in that exact wording) on the women's basketball team. I didn't know quite how to deal with that. All I knew is that I didn't want to be labeled and lumped into that category. It made me... uncomfortable, and I wondered what had I gotten myself into! I for sure knew that I didn't want my team mates to "hit on me" or try to do anything to "persuade" me to be like them. So, the way I handled it was to make sure I came across "extra girly"! I always made sure my nails were painted, and I wore full make up everywhere I went, even to practices. I didn't care if I sweat it off. My hair was always curled or put up into a ponytail or bun with a cute ribbon. And when we were told we had to dress up for away games, yep, I put on dresses and heels. I had assumed that all lesbians dressed and presented themselves in a more masculine way. After all, "I didn't know any better!" Well, after a short while it finally dawned on me that I should not assume but begin to educate myself and begin to "know better"! I mean these were some really fabulous, funny, and talented young women from a variety of backgrounds, and they were my friends! They had never once "hit on me" or tried to change me. They knew I liked and dated guys and they totally accepted me for who I was and would affectionately yell out "Its 6-2 Sue" whenever they saw me around campus! I became very comfortable around them and got to know them even better and listened to their stories and accepted them for who they were! This was the first time I really heard that who they were, their sexual orientation, was not a choice but that who they were was how they were born! Now none of them ever mentioned God or declared that it was God who created them this way, and it made me sad to hear that some of them had been told by "the church and people in it" that they were not of God, again remembering that it was the early 1980's now. I just wanted them to know that none of that mattered to me, and that I accepted them and yes, I can even say I loved some of these women as great friends, and that I was sorry that they had been treated so poorly by people who claimed to be Christians! I maybe didn't still fully understand all of it, as I myself couldn't imagine being attracted to another female, it was just unnatural to me. But for the first time I really opened my mind to begin to listen and understand that it was natural for them! And I knew I had to continue to learn to "know better"!

PUBLIC STORYTELLING—SUE LUKEN STORY (continued)

As I continued my journey into adulthood and graduated, I moved to Cincinnati to job hunt. I found a church that I began to attend. It was a pretty conservative church I guess you would say. I began to get involved with a singles group, and then began to volunteer with the youth group on occasion. One Sunday evening a guest speaker came to talk with our youth. It was a young adult man late 20's early 30's probably and he spoke about how he had "come out" to his parents, again, in the 1970's, and they had sent him to "Conversion Therapy" to help him overcome being gay. Honestly, I don't remember all of the details, but he claimed that therapy taught him to just ignore or put aside and not act on his desires and to adjust his behavior to live out a normal heterosexual relationship in order to be right with God. Something within me just felt very uncomfortable with this as he was telling us all of this and how he was now married to a wonderful woman and building a family with her. I felt a certain uneasiness about him. It felt like he wasn't being truthful or genuinely authentic, but rather that it was like he was playing a role that he had been told to portray. It is really hard to explain the discomfort I felt. This again made me feel very uninformed and naive because I had never heard of this Conversion Therapy previously. It also concerned me that he was speaking these words to our young people when quite possibly this was something one of them could be trying to figure out for themselves! I also felt great sadness that this young man had not been accepted and seemed to not really accept his authentic self but was told or even forced to change to what others thought was normal or acceptable! Once again, it was another sign that made me want to learn more to "know better", that NOT knowing better could no longer be an excuse for my ignorance about this subject.

I myself do not have a family member who is part of the LGBTQ+ community, but over the years have had many acquaintances and friends who are. Including in my church family here at St. Mark's. In fact, several years ago there was one person in particular that I began to have some authentic communication with and started to ask them questions and have meaningful open conversations with to try and overcome my ignorance or misinformation on the subject of being transgender, to better understand and embrace who they were as the person they truly believe God created them to be! In the years since, I have tried to learn and grow and to connect with opportunities such as in-depth seminars and various speakers that our West Ohio Conference has sponsored, as well as reading several books by Christian authors. My own ignorance or lack of theological knowledge has been slowly evolving over the last 20 years, but especially growing over the last 5-10 years. I have been evolving in this with the help of both our last Pastor, and currently with Pastor Joe and working and exploring together, side by side with some amazing church family members and leaders right here at St. Mark's! I am still continuing to "Know Better" and "Do Better" to hopefully show everyone that I may connect with that I fully accept them for who they are and to help them to believe that they are a beloved child of God, created by HIM, just as they are to BE and to DO great things in HIS Kingdom! To show them that they too deserve to live a full and authentic life of love and to be fully included, valued, accepted and celebrated for who they are, just as you or I long for that in our lives. It is my hope and dream that we here as the faith family of St. Mark's can come fully alongside of each other on this continuing journey to fully love and care for all of God's people!

Sue Luken

St. Mark's United Methodist Church
4601 Fairfield Avenue
Fairfield, OH 45014

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SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S FEBRUARY 2022



St. Mark's Staff :

Pastor, Rev. Joseph M. Payne
Joe's cell #614-531-2373
Pastor Emeritus, Bob Klingel
Admin. Assistant, Lyn Bucalo
Director of Music, Chris Beiser
Organist, Sue Combs
Director of Children & Family Ministries, Peggy Smith
Director of Youth Ministries, Julie Mislansky

Church Office Hours :

Monday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday
9:30 - Noon, 1:00 - 3:00 pm
Tuesday - (Office Closed)

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

Worship Service:
Sundays 9:30 am