

# 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.

DECEMBER 2023



## What's Inside:

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### DECEMBER 2, SATURDAY

WORK DAY (HELPING HANDS) at 9:00AM  
Contact Marlis Hatton (Trustee Lead)  
(See more details on page 11)

### DECEMBER 3 AND 10, SUNDAY

ADVENT CELEBRATION/POT LUCK at 5:00PM  
FOLLOW THE CHRISTMAS STAR EVENT at 5:30pm  
(See more details on page 9)

### DECEMBER 7, THURSDAY

OHIO MILITARY BAND  
EVENING HOLIDAY CONCERT at 7:30PM  
(See more details on page 5)

### DECEMBER 15, FRIDAY

RUTH CIRCLE LUNCHEON  
FELLOWSHIP HALL  
(See more details on page 5)



### DECEMBER 16, SATURDAY

ANNUAL SENIOR CHRISTMAS PARTY  
FELLOWSHIP HALL  
(See more details on page 5)

### DECEMBER 17, CANTATA SUNDAY

COOKIE DIVA/UGLY SWEATER CONTEST  
SUNDAY WORSHIP  
(See more details on page 6)

### DECEMBER 24, CHRISTMAS SERVICES

TWO SERVICES: 9:30AM AND TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT AT 11PM  
(See more details on page 2)

## MESSAGE FROM PASTOR MARK

*Dear St. Mark's Family,*

I would like to thank you for the many kind words, cards, and gifts given during Pastor Appreciation Month in October. Both Diana and I are blessed by your kind spirits and love. We are thankful for you welcoming us into the St. Mark's community and we are blessed to serve here. Unfortunately, due to a case of COVID and as a result, I was unable to be part of the Pastor Appreciation service. However, rest assured I heard your kind words and am blessed and thankful for them.



We ask and encourage everyone to join us this Advent season as I will be preaching on Joseph. Joseph, was a character who is so important in the Christmas story and yet has no words attributed to him — none!

He is discussed in both Luke and Matthew, but it's very brief. He is an example of steady

faithfulness, quiet service, and a man who listened and acted on God's call under difficult and complicated circumstances. Let's come together as we honor Joseph and his faithful service and consider his example.

During Advent season, be sure to check out many of the special events that we have planned this year. I invite you to fellowship with one another, worship, and praise during this extra special time of the year. Understandably, this is a busy season in and out of the church and I know there is much to do, yet I encourage you to take time to focus on the most important part of the season which is God's incredible gift, His Son, Jesus.



One more thing to note is that Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year and therefore we will be having only one evening service. Much of what we do in the family service will be moved into the morning service at 9:30AM and then we plan to have our traditional service at 11:00PM. Once again, I encourage you to take time on this special day to worship with us and receive the blessing of this sacred and timeless story.

God Bless,

Pastor Mark



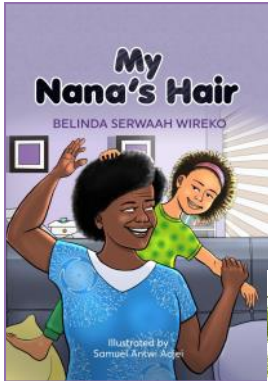
# MESSAGES FROM NEW COVENANT CHURCH

## NEW COVENTANT UMC IN PICTURES...



Photos from author Mrs. Belinda Serwaah Wireko and her book Children's Book Launch on November 18 that was a great success. Congratulations Belinda and thank you to everyone that came out to support her.

Mrs. Belinda Serwaah Wireko is a retired Nurse Practitioner. She developed her love of books at six years old when her father took her to the library for story time. Belinda lives with her husband in Cincinnati, OH. She is mother to five adult children and loves spending time with her eight grandchildren.



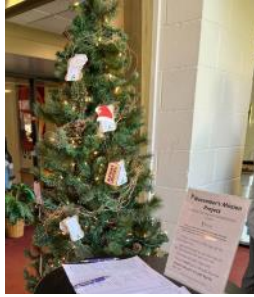
A little about the children's book called, "My Nana's Hair" is that Nana's grandchildren are fascinated with her hair. They wonder why their hair remains the same while Nana's hair changes. Join Vera as she shows some of the different hairstyles Nana wears and to all who read the book. A great Christmas gift for someone special.



# MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

## BRING WRAPPED GIFTS IN BY DECEMBER 16 PARKSIDE GIVING TREE MISSION PROJECT:

The Christmas Tree is up, names have been selected and now all we will need your wrapped gift returned by DECEMBER 16, please. We will deliver to Parkside during the week of December 17. For information, contact Tari Randall. Thank you for another spectacular year of giving!



## SHARE THE WARMTH COAT DRIVE

We will be donating to coats again this year. More details to come but place your coats in the [bins located in the Narthex](#). For details contact Tari Randall.



## THANK YOU, FROM WESLEY HOUSE



The Wesley House students very much enjoyed the "Breakfast for Dinner." Especially the donuts!



## SERVE CITY, DECEMBER 8

We are looking for volunteers to help with a hot meals. Meat consisting of turkey and ham is provided. Sign up for sides and desserts on the Narthex bulletin board. Contact Tari Randall.



## THANK YOU from Matthew 25 Ministries!

We had 10 fantastic volunteers help sort clothes at Matthew 25 Ministries. Such an amazing ministry to help all in need!



**THANK YOU** to our generous congregation for donating 78 pounds of canned goods to Fairfield Food Pantry as well as stocking the St. Mark's mini-pantry in our neighborhood.



# FELLOWSHIP and GATHERINGS



## "Special Christmas Concert on December 7" by the Ohio Military Band

Please join us on **December 7 at 7:30 PM** as St. Mark's welcomes the Ohio Military Band for an evening holiday concert. Mark Hensler has been the director of the group for nearly 30 years. The band will be joined by Sue Combs, the St. Mark's Choir, Chris Beiser, and other guest soloists. Start off your holiday season with festive music such as "Sleigh Ride", "The Christmas Song", and "Christmas from the '50s".

You can find out more about the band on their website at <https://ohiomilitaryband.com> or their Facebook page.

We hope to see you there! (Free admission)



## **ANNUAL SENIOR PARTY** **DECEMBER 16, SATURDAY at 1PM** (FELLOWSHIP HALL)

Chris Beiser will be singing and Sue Combs playing the piano. Please bring a Potluck/Covered Dish to share. Let's celebrate together. Contact Shirley Aydlett at (513)894-5209



## **RUTH CIRCLE LUNCHEON** **DECEMBER 15, FRIDAY, 12PM**

(FELLOWSHIP HALL)

**ALL WOMEN ARE WELCOME!**



**WHITE ELEPHANT GIFT!**

Join us this month for a Luncheon and bring a \$1 dollar-ish white elephant gift for grab bag'gin! Also, please bring a side to share with everyone.

If you have questions, please contact Pam Guynes at (513) 313-5092 or email at Pamguynes2@gmail.com



*Thank you for your canned donations for St. Mark's mini-pantry, we had more come in after the meeting.*

## **COOKIE DIVA AND** **UGLY SWEATER CONTEST** **DECEMBER 17, SUNDAY**

(FELLOWSHIP HALL, AFTER WORSHIP)

**COOKIE DIVA:** Have a favorite Christmas cookie?

Enter it into our Cookie Diva Christmas Cookie Contest. Bake 2 dozen of your best recipe and leave them in the Fellowship hall that morning, with your name on them. We will handle the rest!!!



**UGLY SWEATER:**

Is there an "unfortunate" holiday sweater? We are having an ugly sweater contest, same day, break out that most unfortunate holiday sweater and be ready to model it for the chance to be the UGLY Sweater Champion!

*(Be sure to let Pastor Mark know you are competing!)*

# MUSIC MINISTRY

## DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

CHRIS BEISER

### Ever since I was a young child...

I can remember the family tradition of going to my mom's side of the family's get together first on Christmas Eve afternoon. This was always a potluck carry-in with "drawn name" gift exchange. My mother had 3 brothers and 3 sisters, each with children, who even had children. The number of attendees could easily get up to 100 people. We would eat an amazing buffet of delicious food, then anxiously await our name to be called as all the presents were passed out.



This party would end around 4:00-5:00 in the late afternoon and we'd pack up and head to my dad's parents' house. Now my dad had one sister who had 2 kids, so all together there was 11 people, but it was just as grand. A huge dinner once again and then presents, presents, presents. Once everything had been opened we headed to St. Marks for the 11:00 candlelight service. As years progressed and I got older and my participation in the service became more involved. This service still remains a highlight of things I love about the holidays.

Then things change, people leave us, families separate, and those wonderful traditions begin to fade away. All the brothers and sisters on my mom's side are gone. The cousins have said again and again we should get together like we used too, but it's never happened. When my dad's parents passed we still did family Christmas together, and although different it was; still a wonderful time. Then my parents passed and we tried that first Christmas to do our get together and it was the most emotionally draining get together I had been too. Now we don't even get together anymore.



Sue and I have fun traditions of our own now. First being excited to share with all of you Christmas Eve service, then going to the live nativity down the street, finally home to hot chocolate and opening all our Christmas cards from friends and family. Christmas morning we meet to eat (we choose a different place each year) then open presents... sometimes. We have been known not to open our gifts to each other 'til around Valentine's Day!! But we enjoy the time together no matter what.

Times change, people change, traditions change, but the constant is the wonderful birth of the baby Jesus and by trusting in Him with all our hearts and leaning not on our own understanding, if in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will make straight our path. That's the best gift ever!

### Remember...

Thursday November 30, Friday December 1, and Saturday December 2 at 7:30PM, and Sunday December 3 at 2:00PM at Parrish Auditorium, Greater Hamilton Civic Theater presents "**All Wrapped Up For Christmas**", a revue of over 50 holiday favorites! The show is directed by Sue Combs, choreographed by Chris Beiser and features 20 amazingly talented performers.

Call (513) 737-PLAY for tickets.



On Thursday December 7, the Ohio Military Band Concert featuring, Sue, myself, and the choir. This wonderful concert is directed by Mark Hensler.

Sunday December 17 the choir will be presenting the cantata "**All Is Well**" at the 9:30 worship service. Live orchestra, narration, familiar carols, and new songs combine together to make this a truly blessed experience to carry us all, right into the middle of the Christmas holiday.

From the Music Ministry, Sue and myself,  
Merry Christmas and a Terrific New Year!

# FINANCIAL UPDATE

## GALE GOODMAN, FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR BILL AND LYNNE SCHUMACKER, CO-TREASURERS

### Dear St. Mark's Family,

MERRY CHRISTMAS! It is hard to believe that Christmas is upon us. HAPPY NEW YEAR! It is even harder to believe that 2023 is nearly over.

First and foremost, let me thank everyone who has been able to respond to our challenge to help with a little extra to get us closer to paying the apportionments and year-end expenses. We are still hopeful that we will be able to obtain our goal of paying 100% of our 2023 apportionments. With that in mind, we still have a little more work to do to get there. We want to thank Pam Brockfield for bringing us the good news that our apportionments will not be increasing in 2024. This is good news going into setting the budget for 2024.

We ended October with \$30,691 in the checking account. While we ended with \$70,575 in our savings account. Please keep in mind that we can only use \$25,000 in the Savings Account for operating the Church. The remaining balance of the savings account can only be used for capital improvements to the St Mark's campus. I think it is important to mention that recently we have had some repairs to the roof and various HVAC issues that had to be addressed. Even though those expenditures had to do with the building, they were repairs and not considered improvements. Meaning those had to be paid out of the General Fund and not the amount set aside for capital improvements.



Our loan at Park National Bank is now down to \$30,908. All payments are current and have been paid on a timely basis.

I know we included this next piece of information in the last newsletter, but I thought it was worth repeating in the event someone may have missed it in November. "Since year-end is just around the corner, I wanted to make sure everyone understands how year-end giving needs to be

received and recorded. We, in the finance area of St Mark's, had some issues last year-end with giving at the end of December. So together, we have decided on the following to mirror what is required by IRS regulations. All year-end electronic gifts must be received by the St Mark's bank by Friday, December 29, 2023. The last date to give a gift to St Mark's in person will be Sunday, December 31, 2023, by the end of worship. If you plan on mailing a year-end gift to the Church, please mail in time to be received by St Mark's on Saturday, December 30, 2023. Any gifts received after the end of worship on 12/31/2023, will be received and recorded as 2024 giving. We are hopeful that by having a definitive plan for year-end, things will be easier for everyone."

### Committee



Now that new committee members have been announced, I want to take a few lines and Thank Bob Pittman and Don Menke for their service on the Finance Committee. We have appreciated their thoughts, comments, and suggestions.

I hope everyone has had an opportunity to see the "RECORD OF FAITHFULNESS" in the weekly bulletin. Make sure you glance at it each week to see how we are doing. As always, if you have any questions regarding the finances of St Mark's, please ask. Bill and I will be happy to provide the answers to your questions.

### Happy Christmas to All!



# WEEKLY STUDY GROUP and GATHERINGS

## **WEDNESDAY GROUP BIBLE STUDY** **WEDNESDAYS 2-3PM** **(FELLOWSHIP HALL)**

The Wednesday Group Bible study is growing! Come when you can and learn about the Bible through group conversation, history, and using Bible scriptures.

*We are studying the Gospel of John*

Come fellowship, learn something new, or maybe you have knowledge to share with the group!  
We are open to everyone for discussion.  
For more details, contact Sue McDaniel.



## **MEN'S PRAYER GROUP** **WEDNESDAYS AT 7:30AM** **(PRAYER ROOM)**

Join the men in the prayer room/zoom each Wednesday at 7:30am. Followed by Breakfast.  
For more details, contact Jeff Gering.



## **LADIES CRAFTS FOR SALE!** **DECEMBER 7 AND 10** **(NARTHEX HALLWAY)**

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR HANDMADE HOLIDAY CRAFTS FOR SALE SOON!



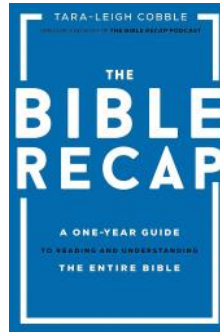
## **LADIES MONDAY NIGHT GROUP STUDY** **DECEMBER 4 at 6:30PM** **(FELLOWSHIP HALL)**

**\*IN-PERSON THIS DAY\***

We are studying the book of Leviticus and would love to have you join! This is an ongoing bible study where you can attend at any time. There are no rules nor obligations here, just join when you are able to. Kym posts the study questions each week and we simply discuss and learn. We are using this study guide book, "The Bible Recap" by Tara-Leigh Cobble, well into 2024!

For more information, contact Kym Nguyen.

**(Even Santa's got time!)**



## **HANDBELL CHOIR** **WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30PM**

Every Wednesday, make a little "RING" at 6:30pm with the Handbell Choir.

This is such a fun group to be a part of!  
NO prior experience and ok if you can't read sheet music, you can still ring.

Contact Sue Combs for details.



## **CANTATA — "ALL IS WELL"**

**DECEMBER 17, SUNDAY SERVICE**

The choir will be presenting the cantata "All Is Well" at the 9:30AM worship service. Live orchestra, narration, familiar carols, and new songs combine together to make this a truly blessed experience to carry us all, right into the middle of the Christmas holiday.





# CHILDREN and FAMILY MINISTRY



JOIN US FOR  
**Advent Celebration**  
Sunday, December 3

**5:00-6:30PM**  
(FELLOWSHIP HALL)  
MAIN DISH & DRINKS PROVIDED. PLEASE  
BRING A DISH TO SHARE. THEN,  
PROGRAM & DEDICATION  
AT THE CRECHE.

## December 3, Advent Celebration Sunday at 5:00-6:30PM

Join our church family as we begin the season of Advent. Main dish and drinks are provided. We ask that you bring a dish to share. Program and dedication at the crèche to follow dinner.



**"Follow the Christmas Star"**  
**December 10 at 6:00-7:00PM**

Free indoor/outdoor event. Children will hunt for **\*Glow in the Dark Stars\***. Hear the story of the Christmas Star and enjoy cookies and hot chocolate. \*Stars will be traded for small gifts and candy! Come enjoy the fun. Contact Peggy Smith.



## THE LADIES FELLOWSHIP LUNCH at PERKIN'S *(in November)*

There were (15) ladies who attended the Ladies Fellowship Lunch at Perkin's in November. We had fun time visiting, chatting and in fellowship over lunch.

We are planning to meet in January 2024 for a fun Game Night theme. More details to come! See you at the next Ladies Fellowship event.



# BIRTHDAYS and ANNIVERSARIES and THANK YOU

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



## BIRTHDAYS

<b>12/02 Paul Schutte</b>	
<b>12/06 Bob Mendenhall</b>	
<b>12/07 Lana Loos</b>	
<b>12/08 Charlie Bryant</b>	
<b>12/08 Cheryl Creach</b>	
<b>12/08 Larry Loos</b>	
<b>12/09 Michele Leyrer</b>	
<b>12/09 Kenzie Meyer</b>	<b>10*</b>
<b>12/13 Matt Snyder</b>	
<b>12/14 Ben Gallihugh</b>	
<b>12/14 Flo Moore</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>12/14 Jennifer Rinker</b>	
<b>12/14 Joyce Zugelter</b>	
<b>12/15 Ali Leguina</b>	<b>17*</b>
<b>12/17 Linda Prohaska</b>	
<b>12/21 Pam Finrock</b>	
<b>12/24 Marlis Hatton</b>	
<b>12/24 Charlene Miller</b>	
<b>12/25 Sarah Hard</b>	
<b>12/29 Pat Sena</b>	
<b>12/29 Tom Tierney</b>	
<b>12/30 Ira Begley</b>	
<b>12/30 Katie Weiss</b>	

## Thank you St. Mark's Volunteers

for "hanging the greens" and decorating the church beautifully for the Christmas season.

The "Youth Post Office" is set up. Please bring your Christmas cards and they will sort for you. A donation to the Youth is greatly appreciated but not required.



## Thank you St. Mark's



For lovin' our Wesley Foundation students by filling their belly's. The students absolutely loved the "breakfast for dinner" meal and especially those donuts!" Your kindness helped us to fill their souls with community and conversation.

We are so grateful for your partnership!

With much gratitude,  
Pastor Becky (Executive Director)



## ANNIVERSARIES

<b>12/14 Bud and Shirley Aydlett</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>12/15 David and Pam Brockfield</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>12/15 Pastor Mark and Diana Gregory</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>12/28 Marty and Gay Kubik</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>12/29 Tom &amp; Charlotte Tierney</b>	

# TRUSTEES CORNER AND CONFERENCE REPORT

## LETTER FROM THE TRUSTEES CHAIR, JENNIE MARSHALL

**THE ADVENT SEASON** is a season of preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As a youth growing up in our church, I have fond memories of how we've prepared and celebrated over the years. This time of year also reminds me of family. My mother and grandmother very much loved all the hustle and bustle of the season and some of their traditions became my own. My Christmas decorations come out on the first Sunday of Advent and are taken down on Epiphany, like clockwork and how Ruby Kemp did.



This year, I am reflecting on my time as your Trustee chair and thank my fellow trustees past and present for entrusting me to manage and care for our church and grounds. My prayer is that this congregation continues to lift up your 2024 trustees and chair in prayer, and offer your helping hands when possible, to keep our church beautiful.

During December, we know everyone is busy but hope you can spend a few hours on [Saturday, December 2 at 9am](#) to ensure the inside of church is picked up, wiped down, and small projects (WD-40 doors, clean windows and/or replace lights where needed).



[Marlis Hatten will be your Trustee point of contact for our final Helping Hands of 2023.](#) If you see or know of areas needing attention please note on the back of the Sunday Attendance sheet.

And my final plug, please consider when at the church; our thermostats (nursery, fellowship hall and our sanctuary) are programmable and preset for the current season. If they are changed at any time from the programmed temperature, they should be set back after the area's use. Additionally, everyone can check for lights left on, if you turn a light on, turn it off after use or if you see a light that can be turned off, please do so.

A small way that each of us can help!  
Signing out and God Bless,  
In HIS Service,  
Jennie Marshall



### SPECIAL SESSION ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT!

The West Ohio Annual Conference Special Session was held on 10/28/23 at Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, OH. Bishop Gregory Palmer presided over the conference with nearly 800 clergy and lay members in attendance.

The day began with a worship service. Rev. Dr. Tim Bias, Olentangy River District Superintendent presented the sermon. His message, "When you leave this place, you will be entering the mission field where people need hope. Don't give up, keep going!"

There was Conference business to be handled:

—96 churches in our conference requested disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church. This was supported by the conference members.

—A report on the Strategic Plan for the West Ohio Conference. The focus areas for the next three years are: Strengthen the ministry pipeline, develop an approach to engage younger populations, and to Revise, Prioritize, and Align conference resources to focus on helping churches be missional.

Legislation:

The budget was postponed from June in order to deal with the result of disaffiliating churches. The recommendation for the budget was affirmed. Some of the highlights were:  
—The probability of sharing a Bishop with the East Ohio Conference effective September 1, 2024.

—Strategic use of funds from closed churches to support new churches and emerging ministries and invest in the same purpose via endowment.

—No increase in apportionments for next year. We are a congregation that pays our apportionments in full. Refer to the November Newsletter from Gale Goodman and the Schumacker's regarding paying our apportionments. It's a simple way that we continue to support our church.

—The disposition of West Ohio Camps and Retreat Ministry Property: Due to declining enrollment and increasing costs and maintenance, the recommendation was to sell Camp Widewater and Camp Otterbein, but to keep Camp Wesley. The proceeds from the sale are restricted for current and future camping and retreat ministries for children, youth and young adult ministries. The recommendation passed.

The 2020 General Conference and the Jurisdiction Conference will be held in 2024. The delegates elected at that time will be the ones attending. It was necessary to elect additional delegates due to some people not being able to serve.

The 2024 West Ohio Annual Conference will be held on May 29 to June 1, 2024 at Capital University in Bexley, OH with theme, "God is Able"

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Brockfield, At large Member Annual Conference



4601 Fairfield Avenue  
Fairfield, OH 45014

PRST MKTG  
POSTAGE AND  
FEES PAID  
ST MARK'S UMC  
FAIRFIELD, OH  
PERMIT NO. 62

## SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S DECEMBER 2023



### **St. Mark's Staff:**

Pastor Mark Gregory  
Admin. Assistant, Lyn Bucalo  
Director of Music, Chris Beiser  
Pianist & Bells, Sue Combs  
Director of Children & Family Ministries, Peggy Smith  
Pastor Emeritus, Bob Klingel

*Access the church calendar on our website at  
<https://www.fairfieldstmarks.com/calendar/>*

### **Church Office Hours:**

Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday  
9:30am - 3:00 pm  
Monday - (Office Closed)  
Phone (513) 844-1818  
[www.fairfieldstmarks.com](http://www.fairfieldstmarks.com)

### **Worship Service:**

Sundays 9:30 am  
*(In person & Livestream)*