

# 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



**JANUARY 2024**

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### **JANUARY 3, WEDNESDAY at 2PM**

BIBLE STUDY GROUP MEETING  
Contact Sue McDaniel (Fellowship Hall)

### **JANUARY 8, MONDAY at 6:30PM**

MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY MEETING  
Contact Kym Nguyen (In-person Fellowship Hall)

### **JANUARY 12, FRIDAY, 7-9PM**

LADIES FELLOWSHIP GAME NIGHT  
Contact Sue Luken (Fellowship Hall)

### **JANUARY 16, TUESDAY**

SHARED HARVEST VOLUNTEERING  
(See more details on page 4)

### **JANUARY 19, FRIDAY, 1-2:30PM**

RUTH CIRCLE  
Contact Pam Guynes (Fellowship Hall)

### **JANUARY 23, TUESDAY 12PM**

LUNCH BUNCH  
Contact Brenda Smoot

### **FEBRUARY 3, SATURDAY 9-11AM**

MATTHEW 25 MINISTRIES VOLUNTEER  
(See more details on page 4)

## MESSAGE FROM PASTOR MARK

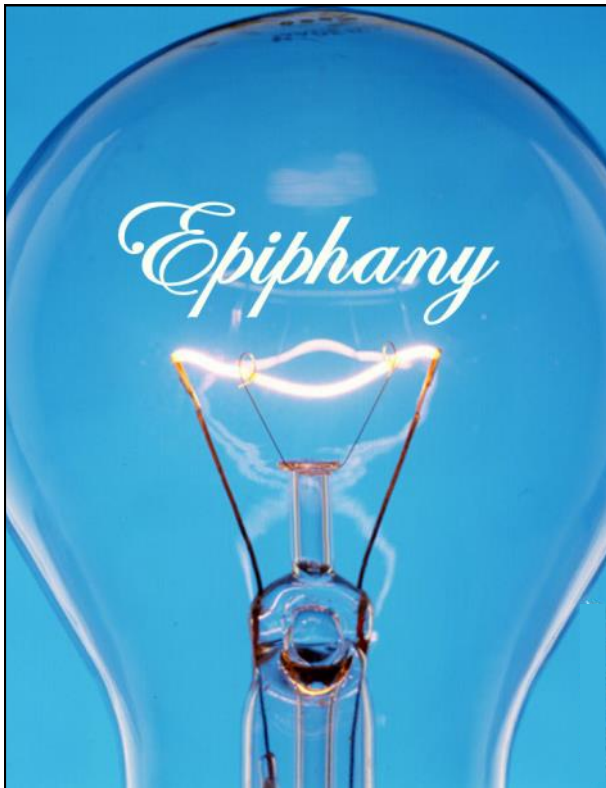
### "A New Year..."

As we begin the New Year, we enter the liturgical season of Epiphany.

#### So, what is Epiphany?

Remember watching Tom and Jerry and Tom would get a bright idea of how to catch Jerry, and a light bulb would appear above his head?

That is an epiphany. It is a realization, an "a-ha" moment. The light bulb goes off and we see something we had not seen before.



This describes the stories of the early life of Jesus. We don't have many stories of the young Jesus, and the ones we do have been carefully selected to communicate something, and that is what the season of Epiphany is all about.

They are stories about Mary and Joseph realizing something about who Jesus really was, and what He would do. Like most parents, they were learning as they went and discovering just what this journey would look like.

The most famous of Epiphany stories is the story of the Wise Men. Now we know we tend to include them in the Christmas story, however they were not there that night. Most likely years after Jesus' birth. They say a lot about who Jesus is, and the scope of His ministry to the world. The first people to proclaim Christ as King were not from His people, but foreign astrologers who traveled years to worship Him.

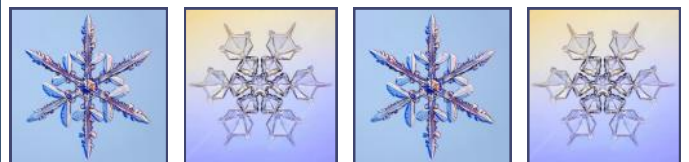
It was a bold statement of the scope of the Gospel.



Join us this Epiphany season as we take a look at the Wise Men, and in particular the gifts they bring to the young King. We often joke that they seem to be odd gifts to bring a baby or a young child, however the gifts were each a foretelling of who He was and what He would do for us all.

Join us in worship as we proclaim Christ as King, Priest, and Savior.

God Bless,  
Pastor Mark



# MESSAGES FROM NEW COVENANT CHURCH

## NEW COVENANT UMC IN PICTURES...

### Congratulatory Message to Graduates

As the academic year closed, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the incredible Class of 2023.



As you make your way in the world, never lose sight of the things that matter most. Congratulations!

This moment marks the culmination of years of dedication, hard work, and determination, and we are immensely proud of each one of you.

Throughout your time as undergraduates, you have faced challenges head-on, embraced new ideas, and forged lasting connections. Your achievements go beyond the classroom, reflecting the unique strengths and talents that make each of you exceptional.

In the face of unprecedented global challenges, you have demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to excellence. Your journey has not only prepared you for the next chapter but has also equipped you with the skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the world. As you stand on the threshold of new opportunities, remember that the journey doesn't end here—it transforms. Carry the lessons learned, the friendships made, and the memories cherished as you venture into the next phase of your lives.

May the future hold endless possibilities for success, fulfillment, and continued growth. Your accomplishments are not just a testament to your academic prowess but also to the remarkable individuals you have become.

Congratulations, Class of 2023! We celebrate your achievements and look forward to witnessing the incredible impact you will undoubtedly make on the world. Wishing you success, joy, and endless possibilities!

Please take a moment to congratulate the following:

Priscella Manu—Registered Nurse

Stephanie Darkoh—B/A International Studies with specialties in International Relations and Diplomacy (Ohio State University)

Barbara Tsitey—B/SC Computer Science (Miami University)



# MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

## ANNUAL GIVING TREE MEMORIES

St. Mark's Church wrapped up another successful year of its annual Christmas Giving Tree benefiting Parkside Nursing Home and marking another significant chapter as well as making a meaningful impact at Parkside.



The tradition involved the church community adorning a festive tree with paper ornaments bearing the holiday wishes of the residents at Parkside. Congregants generously fulfilled these wishes, creating a heartwarming connection between the church and the nursing home.



Residents eagerly anticipated the thoughtful 70+ gifts that symbolized the spirit of the season, fostering a sense of joy and unity. While this particular holiday chapter has concluded, the legacy of St. Mark's generosity and the memories created during the Giving Tree tradition will undoubtedly endure, continuing to embody the true essence of community and holiday spirit. Thank you to everyone who made this possible!



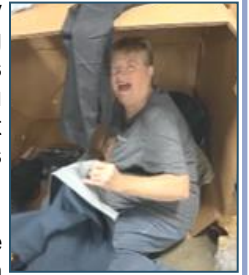
## SERVE CITY DINNER GRATITUDE

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who generously contributed to Serve City. Your donations played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of our recent dinner event, where we had the privilege of serving 65-70 individuals in need. Your support has not only provided a warm and nourishing meal but has also made a positive impact on the lives of those we serve. Thank you for being a beacon of compassion and making a difference in our community!



## SHARED HARVEST VOLUNTEERS—JAN 16

Join us for a noteworthy opportunity to make a positive impact by packing boxes at Shared Harvest! This rewarding experience awaits you and we never know what we will get into but, signing up is as easy as checking the Narthex bulletin board. For more information and details, contact Debbie Bryant. Let's come together to contribute and make a difference in our community at Shared Harvest on January 16, and we look forward to having you on board!



## MATTHEW 25 MINISTRIES: FEB 3, 9-11AM

Join us at Matthew 25 Ministries to bring hope to the less fortunate. St. Mark's has upcoming volunteer opportunities at the Blue Ash facility. Donations of time, talent, or finances are equally crucial and make a significant difference in the lives of the poorest and disaster victims. Be part of the change; your involvement helps to support this amazing ministry.



## LASAGNA LOVE, FEBRUARY 23 10AM-5PM

Lasagna Love, a nationwide non-profit organization, mobilizes volunteer chefs to prepare and deliver lasagnas to individuals facing challenges in providing meals for their families. This inclusive initiative accommodates a variety of family situations without judgment.

Our greater Fairfield community is currently facing a significant backlog of families in need of lasagna. The St. Mark's Cares committee aims to help alleviate this backlog by utilizing the church kitchen to craft homemade lasagnas. To achieve this, we seek donations of lasagna ingredients, volunteers to assist in the preparation, and individuals willing to deliver the meals. Plans are underway for St. Mark's Lasagna Love with more details to be provided soon. For additional information, please reach out to Cindy Miller. To learn more about the group, request a lasagna, and other information go to : [www.lasagnalove.org](http://www.lasagnalove.org).



# FELLOWSHIP and GATHERINGS

## **LADIES FELLOWSHIP GAME NIGHT JANUARY 12, FRIDAY, 7-9PM**

(FELLOWSHIP HALL)

All women are welcome to join us for a night of fun and fellowship. We will provide a variety of games, but feel free to bring your favorite with you! Bring a snack to share, drinks are provided. Sign up at the Welcome Center and please let us know if you like a ride to and from so we can arrange that. Note that we will enter from the back kitchen door and into Fellowship Hall so that we do not disturb New Covenant Prayer sessions in the sanctuary.



## **RUTH CIRCLE JANUARY 19, FRIDAY, 1-2PM**

(FELLOWSHIP HALL)

Ruth Circle is open to all women. Every gathering is a delightful mix of camaraderie, shared snacks, and meaningful devotions. The ladies group is dedicated to fostering a sense of community and sisterhood, creating a space where women can come together to connect, support, and grow. Ruth Circle is not just a gathering; it's a place where friendships are nurtured, faith is strengthened, and women are encouraged to thrive.



## **MONTHLY LUNCH BUNCH (SHOOTERS SPORTS GRILL) JANUARY 23, TUESDAY, 12PM**

Join us for this month's Lunch Bunch gathering at **Shooters Sports Grill**, situated at **4481 Winners Circle Drive in Liberty Township**, (off Princeton-Glendale Road). Indulge in a diverse menu featuring appetizers, soups, salads, sandwiches, pizza, and pasta dishes. To secure your spot, please make reservations by Sunday, January 21, 2024 with Brenda Smoot. We look forward to sharing a delightful meal together!

Contact Brenda Smoot at (513) 316-1807 for details and placing reservations.



## **RECALLING THE ANNUAL SENIOR CHRISTMAS PARTY: SPECIAL GUESTS, JOYFUL MUSIC AND POTLUCK DELIGHTS**

The Annual Senior Christmas Party was a festive affair with attendees coming together to celebrate the season of joy. The event was marked by lively conversations, heartwarming visits, and a wonderful sense of fellowship over a delightful Potluck/Covered Dish lunch, making the celebration a true community effort. In addition to the joyous festivities, the party was made even more special with the cheerful tunes of Chris Beiser, who graced us with solo Christmas carols. The enchanting melodies filled the air, creating a magical atmosphere that added to the festive merriment. Accompanied by the talented Sue Combs on the piano, their musical collaboration added an extra layer of joy to the celebration. A heartfelt thank you to Chris Beiser and Sue Combs for contributing their musical talents.



# MUSIC MINISTRY

## DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

### CHRIS BEISER

#### Music Department End of Year Roundup

Well another Advent/Christmas season has come and gone and we find ourselves already moving through 2024. What an amazing end of the year we had at St. Mark's within the music ministry!



A delightful holiday concert was presented by Mark Hensler and the Ohio Military Band featuring musicians and singers from St. Mark's.



The Christmas Cantata "All Is Well" was well received by the congregation. Thank you all so much for the kind words of thanks and appreciation to all involved. I was so pleased with the God honoring performance that morning. The handbells have brought great joy to our services several times throughout December. Sue and the Handbell choir do such an awesome job, it's always a treat when they play.



Christmas Eve was filled to the brim with music presented by so many talented musicians and singers, we are so very blessed to have these wonderfully talented people as a part of our congregation.



I was honored to be asked to sing for the Senior's Christmas Party. Sue and I love to always give back a little to all those who support us and the music ministry throughout the year.

I wanted to once again say a thank you to the craft ladies for their generous gift of 8 music stands which were used for the first time the morning of the cantata. The stands were purchased over 6 months ago to use for the Easter cantata but that didn't work out so it was nice to finally show them off. These



ladies do so much for the church with their earnings from all of their hand-made crafts. I urge you to give the craft tables a look when on display, the ladies always have wonderful items that would be perfect for that extra something special for someone or yourself!

I look forward to an exciting 2024 with all of you. I know it won't be long before we're announcing thoughts and plans for Lent and Easter...but until then, I hope your hearts are still warmed from the music, sermons, children, decorations, and fellowship we all shared this Christmas!

❄️ ❄️ **Happy New Year!** ❄️ ❄️

# FINANCIAL UPDATE

GALE GOODMAN, FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR  
BILL SCHUMACKER, TREASURER

## Happy New Year, St. Mark's Family, 2024 is here!

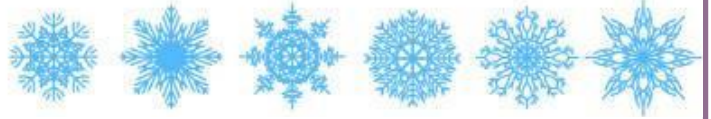
New Year means a new slate for everyone and everything. We are hoping for a good start to 2024 from the prospective of the finances of St. Mark's.



As of the writing of this article, we are still hoping to pay the final \$10,000 that are due for apportionments. We still have two more Sundays, as of the writing of this article, to get closer and hopefully reach the amount we need to pay 100% of the apportionments. We will let you know how that turns out.



We ended November with \$29,183 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.



Our loan at Park National Bank is now down to \$30,187. All payments are current and have been paid on a timely basis. Giving Statements will be coming out in January. Ruth and Cheryl will be working on getting those out on a timely basis so they can be used in the preparation of your personal tax returns. If you notice any problems with your statement, please notify Ruth and/or Cheryl immediately. They are the only ones who can address any issues that you may have with your statement. If you do see a problem, please reach out to them as soon as possible. The deeper into January and February we get, problems are more difficult to fix.

Please continue to pay attention to the "Record of Faithfulness" in the bulletin. We hope that this weekly update on the previous week helps to keep you, the congregation, informed on where we are financially.

As always, if you have any questions, please see Bill or I. We will be happy to address them for you. May we all have a good start to the new year, and may we continue to worship God with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Warm Regards,  
Gale Goodman, Finance Committee Chair  
Bill Schumacker, Treasurer



# STUDY GROUPS/REHEARSALS/GATHERINGS

## LADIES MONDAY NIGHT GROUP STUDY JANUARY 8, 6:45PM

(MEET IN PERSON THIS DAY IN FELLOWSHIP HALL)

Join us in exploring the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy throughout January! We gather every first Monday of the month in person in Fellowship Hall, with the rest of the month's sessions conducted over Zoom. No worries if you can't keep up every week – this is an ongoing Bible study, and you're welcome to join at any time. There are no requirements or obligations; simply participate when you're able to. Kym Nguyen shares weekly Bible study questions for us to discuss and learn together. For additional details, feel free to reach out to Kym Nguyen.



## CHANCEL CHOIR—WEDNESDAY, 7:30PM

After the Handbell rehearsal, the Chancel Choir gathers every Wednesday at 7:30 pm. We warmly welcome new members anytime – it's never too late! Joining the choir is a joyful experience; no prior experience or sheet music reading skills are necessary. Just come prepared to make a joyful noise! Contact Chris Beiser for more information.



## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER FEBRUARY 13, 5:00-6:30PM

Celebrate the spirit of St. Mark's community and embark on a delicious journey at our Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner! Join us for an evening filled with fun and fellowship as we kick off the Lenten season with a feast of fabulous pancakes. Customize your culinary adventure with our delightful toppings bar, savory sausages, and enjoy a warm cup of coffee or refreshing juice. Pre-order takeout options are available for those on the go, and gluten-free pancake alternatives ensure everyone can partake in the festivities. Your generosity makes a difference, as all donations from this event contribute to our 2024 VBS, fostering a sense of unity and support within our church community. Come one, come all, and let's make this 2024 Shrove Tuesday a memorable start to our Lenten journey together! For details contact, Peggy Smith.

## WEDNESDAY GROUP BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS 2-3PM

The Wednesday Group Bible study is expanding! Join us at your convenience in Fellowship Hall to delve into the Bible through group discussions, historical insights, and the exploration of scriptures.



We will be finishing up Gospel of John and move into the Book of Acts. Whether you're seeking fellowship, eager to learn something new, or have valuable knowledge to share, everyone is welcome to engage in our discussions. For further information, contact Sue McDaniel.

## HANDBELL CHOIR—WEDNESDAY, 6:30PM



Join the Handbell Choir every Wednesday at 6:30pm for a delightful musical experience – no prior experience or sheet music reading skills required! Reach out to Sue Combs for more details.





# CHILDREN and FAMILY MINISTRY

## **ADVENT CELEBRATION**

As we look back on these precious Advent memories of 2023, we are grateful for the traditions that have woven the fabric of our church community. The advent season not only brought us closer together but also deepened our connection to the celebration of the birth of Christ. In the glow of candlelight and the resonance of joyous hymns, our church embraced the advent season with open hearts, creating enduring memories that continue to illuminate our collective spirit. These celebrations have not only enriched our faith but have also become an integral part of our shared history, reminding us of the enduring power of love, hope, peace, and joy that Christmas brings.



## **FOLLOW THAT STAR EVENT**

The “Follow that Star” family event was a celestial quest in search of the Christmas star this past December. The participants embarked on a unique adventure to discover hidden stars throughout the church premises. The event was like attending a cosmic treasure hunt, collecting various stars and turning them in for small prizes. Afterward, they listened to the story of the Christmas star as they savored cookies and sipped hot chocolate.



# 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)

# JANUARY

## BIRTHDAYS

01/04	<b>Jerry Jones</b>	<b>88</b>
01/05	<b>Helen Brown</b>	<b>86</b>
01/05	<b>Ron Hamblin</b>	
01/05	<b>Kai Sines</b>	<b>18</b>
01/06	<b>Lyn Bucalo</b>	
01/07	<b>David Brockfield</b>	
01/08	<b>Donal McDaniel</b>	
01/08	<b>Kallie Theiss</b>	<b>10</b>
01/12	<b>Brooke Becker</b>	
01/18	<b>Jim Howell</b>	<b>70</b>
01/20	<b>Bud Aydlett</b>	<b>90</b>
01/22	<b>Pat Pitman</b>	<b>85</b>
01/22	<b>Terri Roemer</b>	
01/26	<b>Betty Roark</b>	<b>80</b>
01/28	<b>Ciara Menke</b>	
01/28	<b>Caitlin Menke</b>	
01/29	<b>Betty Jones</b>	<b>89</b>
01/30	<b>Bob Hamp</b>	<b>80</b>
01/31	<b>Eric Leyrer</b>	



January 7  
Mike & Dianne Aiken  
57 years

### IN LOVING MEMORY OF...

In loving memory of Greg Pullem (Nov. 20, 2023) and Joyce Zugelter (Nov. 29, 2023), cherished members of our church family, whose unwavering faith, warmth, and kindness continue to illuminate our hearts with the enduring light of their spirit.



## More images from our Festivities



# CHURCH EVENT FESTIVITY: A Festive Feast of Contests!

## COOKIE DIVA/UGLY SWEATER CONTEST

### **A SWEET TRIUMPH FOR THE COOKIE DIVA**

In a delightful display of holiday spirit, the 2023 Cookie Diva Contest brought together a few baking enthusiasts to showcase their culinary prowess. The event featured an array of delectable treats that captured the essence of the festive season.



Pastor Mark, Bob Ratliff, and Alethea LaMar, with their discerning palates, took on the esteemed role of cookie judges, overseeing the competition and carefully sampling each contender's creation. The competition was fierce, as the bakers competed for the coveted, "The Cookie Diva Champion."



While the judges tastefully deliberated, contestants anxiously anticipated the verdict. The amiable suspense in the room was palpable, yet the festive decorations infused a feeling of warmth, joy, and camaraderie into the atmosphere.

After much consideration, cookie judges made their decisions. The winner's with a masterpiece of flavor and presentation was declared. "The 2023 Cookie Diva Champion"—Penny Dole! The triumphant baker beamed with pride as she received the applause and admiration of her peers. There were 3 other categories with winners too; The Best use of Chocolate (Helen Brown), The Junior Division (Bob Hamp), and Best Looking (Sue Luken).



The event not only celebrated the art of baking but also brought everyone together during the holiday season. Participants and onlookers alike shared in the joy of sweet triumphs and delicious discoveries, leaving all with a taste of the magic that comes with combining passion, creativity, and the spirit of Christmas. *(Until next year...!)*

See more images from festivities on previous page—10.

### **THE TALE OF THE MOST UNFORTUNATE HOLIDAY SWEATER**

'Twas the eve of St. Mark's holiday party, a buzz of excitement filled the air as participants eagerly gathered sweaters, hats and adorned themselves with accessories for the much-anticipated ugly sweater contest. For weeks, whispers of extravagant and outrageous sweater choices circulated, creating an air of suspense and curiosity.



Among the participants was our protagonist, Marlis Hatton, who took the challenge to heart and searched for the most eye-catching, jaw-dropping holiday sweater she could find. Little did she know that her quest for the perfect ugly sweater would lead her to the embodiment of the most unfortunate fashion choices. Nevertheless, she felt secure in her victory with a perfectly matched light up twinkle hat and a hee-haw!



As the day of the party arrived, Marlis proudly donned her creation, parading around from room to room with a confidence that was both commendable and misplaced. Gasps and stifled laughter filled the room as onlookers laid eyes on the spectacle as she pranced around the makeshift runway. She struck poses that showcased every angle of the unfortunate masterpiece, confident that her creation was destined for glory.

Alas, in a nail biting tie-breaker the people hooted and hollered her into an unfortunate holiday sweater victory!

### **Marlis secured the 2023 UGLY Sweater Championship!**

And just like that, she became a legend of unfortunate sweater history, forever etched in the memories of those who bore witness to its chaotic splendor.





4601 Fairfield Avenue  
Fairfield, OH 45014

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FAIRFIELD, OH  
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## SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S JANUARY 2024



### **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

### **Church Office Hours :**

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

### **Worship Service:**

Sundays 9:30 am