



St. Mark Connection

9999 Ferguson Road

Dallas, TX 75228

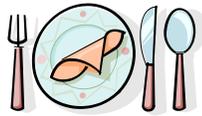
214-321-6437



Volume 60, Issue 12

saintmarkchurch.org

December 2013



St. Mark Christmas Dinner and Choir Program Sunday, December 15th at 6:00 p.m. "Appalachian Winter"



We must have your reservation by Sunday, December 8th

The cost of the dinner is \$10 for adults, \$7 for children ages 6 -12 and free for children 5 and under. Reservations can be made in the parlor on Sunday, December 1st or you can call Pat in the church office and make reservations. Following dinner we will move to the Sanctuary where the Handbell and Sanctuary Choirs will present a special Christmas program.

Childcare will be provided for children 5 and under during the program.

Special Christmas Offering

St. Mark members are asked to open their hearts for our Special Christmas Offering. Half of the funds collected will go to the Joy Offering and half will go to the Ministry of Hope in Malawi, Africa.

The **Joy Offering** provides support for retired and active pastors and church workers and their families, as well as support for the racial-ethnic schools and colleges of the PC(USA).

The **Ministry of Hope** serves orphans, infants and widows in rural Malawi, Africa. Our offering this year will be used to provide scholarship support for children from the villages served by the Ministry of Hope attending high school, college and vocational trade schools.

The Session has set a goal of \$5,000 for this year's offering. Please prayerfully consider your gift to the offering as a reflection of your gratitude for the multitude of blessings that you have received.



Don't Miss This!

Rick & Teri Brooks invite you to their annual Open House on Sunday, December 8th from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
2305 Primrose Dr. Richardson, Texas



Hanging of the Greens Sunday, December 1st at 4:00 p.m.

Come join in the fun of getting the church ready for the Christmas season. This first Sunday in Advent, starting at 4:00, we will begin decorating the outside of the building, the sanctuary, narthex and parlor.

The Fellowship Committee will be providing cookies, coffee and hot chocolate. Later we will have a short worship service and carol singing.

Sandwich Sunday - December 29th

Each 5th Sunday we prepare and serve sandwiches at the **Austin Street Center**.

Volunteers are asked to prepare **two or three dozen** sandwiches, **individually bagged** with the sack labeled as to the contents, and bring them to the church on that Sunday.



Cookies and snack cakes are also welcome.

Sign-up sheets are on the glass table in the hallway.

Volunteers are also needed to help serve the sandwiches at the Center on that Sunday evening.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

*Tuesday, December 24th at 6:00 p.m.
Reception and Fellowship in the parlor at 5:30 p.m.*



PASTOR'S CORNER

"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isaiah 40:1-5

It should come as no surprise that John the Baptist would recite from the prophet Isaiah as he called people to enter a new relationship with God. He is saying: "Time is of the essence. Come quickly! Receive forgiveness! Meet God in a whole new way!" For centuries, the church—especially at Advent—has

recalled John the Baptist's quoting of the prophet. And it makes sense to do so at Advent, because we indeed are preparing to receive the promised Messiah as the one who will save us sin, especially that of—self-preoccupation.

During all of our preparations of the season, though, it's fairly easy to find us in a spiritual desert of sorts. Hearts can become parched as instead we nourish plans for celebrations, the gifts we need to buy, the cards to be mailed, the food to be prepared.

These things are not unimportant, even to God. The problem is that we lose energy and begin to miss the reason for the season. I know - that's an old cliché but it still rings true because it strikes at the core of Advent. Jesus *is* coming, calling the church out of the wilderness, the spiritual desert.

I'm going to attempt to redirect my too-often divided attention during Advent. And while I have no idea if this is the time of the Lord's second coming—Jesus did not speculate on that date nor did he encourage his followers to pursue the subject. (Mt. 24:36)—I intend to live as though Jesus is returning during *this* season of Advent. Want to make the pathway straight together?

Blessings, *Pastor Rick*

Thank You

Dear Family and Friends of St. Mark Presbyterian Church,
A special thank you for all the prayers, kind thoughts and cards. You are a strength and comfort to me.
With love and appreciation,
Vickie Lall

Mini Work Days

The Property and Maintenance Committee would like to offer you an opportunity to help with upkeep and repairs of our church building and property. Starting in January, mini work days will occur every other month on the 2nd Saturday of the month, from 9:00 am - noon. There will be fewer projects than on our big work days. But there are always projects, tasks, and odd jobs available.



Newsletter Staff:

Pat Bilger office@saintmarkchurch.org
Cecilia Grayson

Articles and information for the newsletter can be e-mailed to these addresses.

May God Bless You On Your Birthday

- December 12**
Phyllis Miller
Helen Rose
Steven Whitney
- December 3**
Trey Curry
Collin Stephen
- December 6**
Voni Robinson
- December 7**
Leigh Taylor
- December 9**
Pam McGuire
- December 10**
Randall McGee
- December 11**
Mary Moffit

- December 13**
Alex Crawley
- December 14**
Becky Page
- December 15**
Ron McMahon
- December 21**
Jana McIntosh
- December 27**
Clint Taylor
- December 29**
Sheila Wahl
- December 31**
Julia Holloway
Diane Thornton



Our Sympathy to . . .

Leon and Trisha Johnson upon the death of Leon's father, Flavel Leon Johnson, Sr.



Sunday Sermons, Scriptures and Events

December 1

"The Hardest Part"

Jeremiah 33:14-16; James 5:7-11

1st Sunday of Advent

Celebration of the Lord's Supper



December 8

"Infant from Infinity...and Beyond"

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Matthew 1:18-25

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 15

"He'll Leave the Light On for Ya"

Micah 5: 2-5a; Matthew 2:1-12

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 22

Service of Lessons & Carols

4th Sunday of Advent

December 24

"Delivered First Class"

Luke 2:8-20

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Service at 6:00

December 29

"Prize Fight"

Joshua 3:1-6; Luke 18:18-30



Second Sunday at Six Service
will not be held in December.

White Rock Center of Hope is Sunday December 8th



Bring your donations and place them in the baskets in the hallway.

Food Needs

Tuna, Macaroni & Cheese, Yams & Marshmallows, Stuffing Mixes, Hamburger Helper, Tuna Helper, Chicken Helper, Cake Mixes & Icings, Canned Meats & Fruits, Canned Vegetables & Soups, Suddenly Salad and any other items that would help put together a holiday meal.

Other Needs

Men's jeans & pants, socks & underwear, winter coats & jackets, sweats, pajamas, belts & shoes;

Women's robes, sleepwear, underwear, socks & shoes in all sizes, winter coats & jackets;

Children's clothing (all kinds, all sizes), underwear, shoes, coats & jackets

Linens - blankets, sheets, towels, pillows, comforters



The Million Penny Fund

A goal of \$1,000,000 pennies was set and to date we have received \$670,320. All donations benefit the Camps and Conferences fund and the Landscape fund.

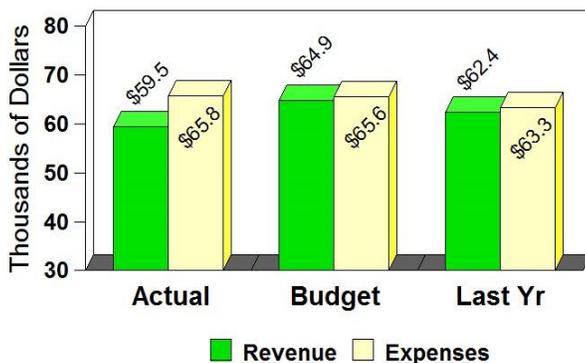
Movie Night is "on Holiday"

Movie Night will not take place in December, but should resume in January.

Newsletter Deadline is December 15th

Operating Fund

4 Months Through Oct 31, 2013



Treasurer's Report

for the four months ending 10/31/13

⇒ Operating Fund contributions are \$5,000 below budget and \$3,000 less than last year. Expenses are on budget and \$2,500 above last year.

⇒ Capital and Facilities Fund income is \$400 below budget and expenditures are \$600 below budget.

Please carefully review your Faith Promise statement that will be mailed (or emailed) in the next week.

More detailed financial statements are available for any member to review. Please contact the Treasurer, Bill Grayson, if you would like to see more information.

*Merry
Christmas*



Randall's Pen



It's the December newsletter so it is that time of year when my article usually focuses on the season of Advent and preparation for the celebration of Christmas. I have noted before that this is always a bit funny because the newsletter schedule requires that I complete this article before Thanksgiving.

Of course many stores have had Christmas items out since they cleared away the Halloween displays. Many of us complain every year about how early businesses start with the Christmas focus. But the displays and along with Christmas music marathons must inspire at least some of us to spend money or else those businesses would abandon the practices.

It's easy to either get caught up in that hoopla or get so annoyed by it that we lose the real focus of Advent and Christmas.

Once again this year I am going to share some suggestions for Advent and Christmas that may help keep things focused. I have shared versions of these with several times in the past.

None of these are particularly complicated. I think these can work in most any household whether that household consists of one person or a house full of people.

1. Make it point to take some time to give to others beyond your household. Try sharing small gifts or acts of kindness with other people. You may want to focus on folks who rarely experience such things. It could be as simple as a card, phone call, or even an e-mail. (And don't forget to allow others to share acts of

kindness with you. Sometimes it is more challenging to receive than to give.)

2. Here's something to try if you decorate your home. Since Advent is a time of waiting and preparation try putting your decorations up in deliberate stages all through the season instead of doing it all at one time. If some of your decorations are connected to very special people and memories pause and say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of those times and people.

3. Use an Advent wreath, calendar, or devotional. These are old standbys but many folks find these practices to be very meaningful and helpful as they prepare for Christmas.

4. Read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke before you open any presents. It only takes a few minutes and gives us a chance to pause for a moment before we tear into the wrapping paper.

5. Pick up your church directory. Each day during Advent pray for a couple of the households in the directory. Pay particular attention to those folks you have not seen in a while and to those households that you know have undergone major changes in the last year or so.

If you try any of these things let me know how it went. If you have other practices that you find helpful I'd like to hear about those as well.

And don't forget to check out the "Randall's Odds and Ends" bulletin board across from the parlor. I post items related to church, ministry, culture and such. I try to change it up every few weeks.

Randall McGee, Director of Christian Education

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services

Did you know that you can support Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services every time you shop for groceries at Tom Thumb? Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services participates in the Tom Thumb **Good Neighbor Program**, which has generated more than \$12,600 for PCHAS ministries!

Here's How it Works

When you use your Tom Thumb Remarkable Card, 1% of your purchases will be donated to PCHAS.

Here's How to Sign Up

If you already have a Tom Thumb Remarkable card, just print and fill out a [Good Neighbor Charity Addition/Deletion Form](#), indicate PCHAS' number (410) on the form and return it to the Courtesy Booth.

Flower Calendar for 2014



Thanks to Ellen Roberts for our new Flower Calendar. If you wish to donate flowers for the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, please sign up. The calendar is on the wall outside of Pat's office.



St. Mark Women of the Church

Friday, December 6th at 6:00 p.m. in the parlor

followed by: "Women of Faith Christmas "

A Live Simulcast from Prestonwood Baptist Church

at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary



Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join the Women of St. Mark to view a live simulcast event of "Women of Faith Christmas" at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 6, 2013.

Gather your family and friends and celebrate the birth of Christ with Women of Faith. Join Sheila Walsh, Lisa Harper and Pastor Max Lucado for timeless messages that focus on the true meaning of Christmas. And hear a story of hope and purpose from pastor Rick Warren.

Enjoy music from Francesca Battistelli that will bring the wonder of Christmas to life. Bring new meaning to your Christmas season and celebrate the birth of Christ with an event everyone will enjoy!

Fellowship in the parlor at 6:00 p.m. precedes the program. Refreshments will be provided.

The live telecast will begin in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.

The Women's Group will be collecting items for college students who lived in a Presbyterian Children's Home and Services facility. A list of items can be found on the bulletin board in the hallway. Wal-Mart & Target gift cards are the most practical as they can be used for food, medicine, clothing, toiletries, etc. Also gift cards to restaurants are a treat for these students. Other suggestions include candy, chewing gum, flash drives, daily devotional books, and razors. There will be a basket in the hallway marked "college students" if you want to bring your "gifts" early. Please consider joining us in "adopting" these young adults while they are in college. We hope to start a relationship with them that will continue throughout their lives.



St. Mark Presbyterian Church

9999 Ferguson Road

Dallas, TX 75228

Non-Profit Organization