

# the saint mark messenger

the newsletter of Saint Mark Presbyterian Church

March 2014

Worship 9:30 and 11:00 AM

Church School for all ages 9:30 AM

[www.saintmarkpresby.org](http://www.saintmarkpresby.org)

## *Saying Grace....from Roy*

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday March 5. It's a season in which the Church prepares with intention to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Traditionally, Christians have chosen to take up particular disciplines during these weeks of preparation or to abstain from some practice. The unintended consequence of this is often a focus on ourselves more than on God. That's why historically the earlier Reformed church frowned upon Lent and abandoned it in their tradition. It has been recovered in recent years and is now a common discipline of the Church to help us enter more deeply into reflection of the cross and resurrection.

This year during the Wednesdays of Lent at Saint Mark we will focus our reflection of Vulnerability; God's vulnerability and our own practice of vulnerability in our relationships. Many people have looked at one side of this combination, either God's vulnerability or our vulnerability, but few have considered the two together and how each informs the other.

So it's with great excitement that I invite you to join the conversation during the weeks of Lent. Shelby and I will look at particular biblical scriptures that express the vulnerability of God with us. (eg. Philippians 2; John 1) We will pair the scriptures with a close look at Brene Brown's best selling book, *Daring Greatly*. Brown is not a theologian and doesn't speak directly as a Christian. Yet, her work on uncovering the roots of shame within us and countering shame with a positive practice of vulnerability is a great companion to the Gospel. She speaks of the goal of wholehearted living, which sounds much like a paraphrase of Jesus' invitation to



"abundant life" (John 10.10) This will be a great opportunity to join in conversation with others who are seeking to grow in the Christian life - be wholehearted persons. We'll gather for a simple meal at 6:30 PM and conversation following until 8:30 PM. I hope you will join us Wednesdays March 12-April 9.

### Worship and Lectionary For March

#### **March 2: Spirit and Service Sunday;**

One service of Worship with Communion at 9:30

#### **Transfiguration Sunday**

Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2 or Psalm 99;  
2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

**March 5: Ash Wednesday** Service at 7:30 PM

#### **March 9: First Sunday in Lent**

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32;  
Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

#### **March 16: Second Sunday in Lent Forum on Gun Violence Prevention 9:30 AM**

followed by one worship service at 11:00 AM.

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121;  
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17  
or Matthew 17:1-9

#### **March 23: Third Sunday in Lent**

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95;  
Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

#### **March 30: Fourth Sunday in Lent**

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23;  
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

### Holy Week Preview

**April 17: Maundy Thursday** Worship 7:30 PM

**April 18: Good Friday** Service Faith United  
Methodist Church 7:30 PM

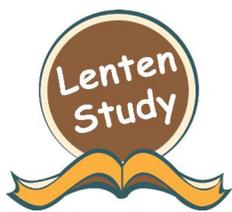
**April 20: Easter Sunday** Worship  
9:30 (possible baptism) and 11:00 with Holy  
Communion

## Adult Education

### **A Renaissance of Wonder! March 9 and 23**

Over a few months, the Adult Ed class has been investigating the communion of science and faith using the DVD "Painting the Stars" from Living the Questions. Painting the Stars gets its name from a quote of Van Gogh, who said, "When I have a terrible need of – dare I say, 'religion'? – then I go outside at night and paint the stars." On Sunday March 9, we will look at "A Renaissance of Wonder," which helps us get back in touch with the spirituality of awe and wonder to find our way back to an "enchanted cosmos" --what the ancients called the soul of the world. Rather than diminish our sense of awe and wonder, science can deepen our spiritual feeling for mystery.

On March 23, we will study "Getting Genesis Wrong," which challenges us to confront our destructiveness as a species, all the while leading us to an understanding of our place in the nested evolving universe. We will explore the difference between dominion and stewardship. "The evolving cosmos builds itself up, from the inside out, by using its evolutionary achievements as a platform for the emergence of new, and more complex life forms and consciousness." Please join us an engaging, thought-provoking conversation.



### Wednesday Evening Study during Lent

Lent is an opportunity to explore spiritual disciplines and deepen our relationships with God. Join us as we explore what the vulnerability of God coming in Christ can teach us about being vulnerable. We will be combining the insights of Brene Brown in her book "Daring Greatly" with passages of scripture. The discussion will be led by Pastors Roy and Shelby.

We will share dinner together in the Fellowship Hall from 6:30-7:15, and we will move to the sanctuary for our study, which will be 7:15-8:30. The Lenten Study will be every Wednesday from March 12-April 9.

## Participate in the Legacy Continues Campaign II and...

### INVEST IN OUR FUTURE!!!

In May 2010 when the heating and air conditioning system broke and could no longer be fixed, the Saint Mark congregation made the decision to renovate the sanctuary. The extensive renovations were necessary to replace the heating and cooling system, roof, glass windows, insulation, fixed seating, and sound system, upgrade the lighting and electrical systems, permanently fix the leaking windows, and generally modernize the building for more flexible uses and bring the building up to the current building code. The renovations also included an investment in the world around by using environmentally friendly products and low-energy systems. The renovations were completed in the summer of 2012 and I think we can all agree that we enjoy being back in a warm sanctuary particularly over these last few months.

When I walk into the sanctuary, I am in awe. I feel God all around as I hear his message, sing his praises, and view the wildlife and greenery he has provided. The wide window view of nature truly provides a remarkable setting for all God provides. My children refer to Saint Mark as the church in the forest. And I have to agree that there is serenity in the "church in the forest" away from the busy highways and traffic congestion. We are all at peace at Saint Mark. My children sometimes feel too comfortable as they run through the hallways just as they do at home. This is the place they were baptized, nurtured, and first learned about God. It's also the place where I want to see them develop a deeper relationship with God by participating in church education programs, local missions, youth activities, and maybe even global missions one day. I want them to experience the breadth and depth of the growing opportunities afforded to our members to learn about God and serve others.

Saint Mark has a longstanding history of financial stability but maintaining that strength comes at a price. Hard decisions are made to ensure we can pay off our debts. Currently, we still owe Eagle Bank approximately \$700,000 on the sanctuary renovation. (This doesn't include the internal reserve funds Saint Mark also contributed toward the renovation.) In order to pay off our bank debt

(Legacy II con't)

without sacrificing the quality of our many valued programs, we will be asking for your help. Take some time to pray about your investment in the future of Saint Mark. We hope everyone can find a way to support our efforts to remove the renovation debt so we can all get back to doing what Saint Mark members do best...building a stronger community through spirit and service.

For any questions about the Campaigns, please email **Alison Bennett** at Alison.bennett72@gmail.com (email address in the Saint Mark directory is incorrect).

**Stacia Fleisher**, Saint Mark member

## Pancake Breakfast



### Pancake Breakfast

Come one, Come All! Mark your Calendars Now! Immediately following the March 2 Spirit and Service Sunday Worship, at 10:45 a.m., the Youth Group would like to invite the Saint Mark Congregation to attend the ANNUAL LENTEN/MARDI GRAS

PANCAKE Breakfast. Listen to Dixie-land music! Feast on scrumptious breakfast fare! Enjoy the colorful Mardi Gras décor! Support the Saint Mark Youth Group!

Organized, cooked and staffed by Middle School/High School Youth; free-will offering for 2014 Youth Group Mission Trips.

Ledo Pizza Youth Fundraiser  
March 10 5:00 - 9:00 PM



We are confirmed for a Youth Mission trip fundraiser dinner on Monday March 10, 5:00-9:00 PM at Ledo's Pizza, 10301 Westlake Drive, Bethesda, Westlake Crossing Shopping Center. We will receive 20% of the total restaurant sales that night. If people do carryout, they must mention Saint Mark for us to get those sales, too.

### Vacation Bible School, June 23-27, 2014:

Please mark your calendar for this year's VBS. Registration will soon be open for children in pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Older youth are encouraged to volunteer, and will have the opportunity to earn SSL hours. The VBS planning committee will be meeting every Spirit and Service Sunday starting in February. If you would like to join the planning committee or have any questions, please contact Pastor Shelby, **Heather Karakashian** (hkara@comcast.net) or **Stephanie Lai** (stephedmondson@yahoo.com).

## News From the Session

### Help Prevent Gun Violence

The session of Saint Mark made a commitment to help prevent gun violence in our country. This commitment is grounded in Jesus' call to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:1-12) and Saint Paul's instruction to make peace with everyone whenever possible (Romans 12:18-21). It also grows out of our deep sadness at the continuing deaths in our country due to gun violence. We have committed to prayer but also actions that will move us closer to laws that will better ensure the well being of society and prevent innocent people from being killed. To that end Saint Mark is joining with over 50 denominations on March 14-16 for a Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath sponsored by Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence.

What could be more precious than the life of a child? Their innocence gives us hope and their purity of spirit brings us joy. We pass our hopes and dreams along to them, not just from parent to child but, collectively, from one generation to the next. So when the most pure and innocent among us suffer a completely preventable death, it's on all of us to examine how such a thing could come to pass. Our current reality is that eight children are lost to gun violence every single day in America. With no new federal legislation and with only a handful of states having comprehensive gun violence prevention laws that number will not be decreasing anytime soon.

### Gun Violence (con't)

Together, we must carry the message that many lives are being saved in states where the most comprehensive gun violence prevention laws exist. We need to recommit ourselves to educating our friends and peers that this is not about taking guns away, but keeping guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.

### On Sunday March 16, the Saint Mark session will host a congregation and community forum at 9:30 AM on Gun Violence Prevention followed by worship at 11:00 AM.

There will be Sunday School on that day for children so that parents can join us. I hope you will plan to be present and help us make our witness to be the fruit of the gospel that is peace.

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### Saint Mark Book Lovers

Book Lovers, our Saint Mark book discussion group, meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at 7:00 PM in the parlor at Saint Mark. Everyone is welcome! The entire list is on our website.



**March 10:** The Orphan Master's Son: A Novel (Pulitzer Prize for Fiction) by Adam Johnson

**April 14:** Secret Daughter: A Novel by Shilpi Somaya Gowda

**May 12:** Flora: A Novel by Gail Godwin

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### Spirit and Service Sunday, March 2

One Service of Worship at 9:30

Congregational Meeting at 10:30

Pancake Breakfast following

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### Saint Mark Needs a Butterfly Garden



For its February book, the Saint Mark Book Lovers read Barbara Kingsolver's, *Flight Behavior* about a disruption in the Monarch butterfly migration. We agreed it is an excellent piece of fiction and recommend it to you. At the same time, the stunning and little understood migration of the Monarchs to Mexico is in danger of ending. The butterflies that leave Mexico in the spring are not the same ones that fly back in the fall. In fact, they are generations younger – a mystery of evolutionary passing down of knowledge. The numbers of butterflies arriving in Mexico dropped to their lowest level since record keeping began in 1993. At their peak in 1996, they covered 44.5 acres, and this year only 1.6 acres. There are many reasons for this including habitat destruction in Mexico where their trees are being cut down. Drought in Texas and the southwest where they need to stop to drink and other weather extremes have played a role. Also the use of Roundup, a pesticide, which is increasingly being added to plants through genetic modification kills butterflies and bees, contributing to the crisis in that population. Another cause is the price of corn that has increased due to biofuel production. People are plowing up every available patch of weeds to grow millions of acres of corn – even median strips in the roads. Where once there were great patches of butterfly food and places to lay their eggs on the essential milkweed, there are now acres of corn. Iowa has lost 60-90 percent of its milkweed, essential for butterfly larvae.

We can help. First, do not buy plants for your own gardens that have pesticide bred into them. It is difficult to make that determination at garden centers and big box stores, so when possible seek out native plant sales and cuttings from friends who practice organic gardening. Second, Saint Mark has a huge property that can certainly support a garden with insect friendly plants. We need a member, a family, or a group to step up and take on the creation and sustenance of a Monarch Way Station. Perhaps an Eagle Scout project? Information about how to do this is at [www.MonarchWatch.org/ws](http://www.MonarchWatch.org/ws). We also have access to a certified butterfly teacher at Bradley Hills Presbyterian who is in our Earth Care Congregations network. If your heart is called to this work, please contact **Alison Bennett** at [Alison.bennett72@gmail.com](mailto:Alison.bennett72@gmail.com) (the email in the directory is incorrect)

## Welcome New Members



**Carmen Alexander** was born in LaPaz, Bolivia, but has called the US home for most of her life. She has been a special education para educator for Montgomery County Public Schools for

24 years, working with families and their children with special needs from birth through the age of three. Carmen is the mother of two adult sons, Nicholas and Chris, as well as a very playful cat, and loves reading and playing electronic word games. Her sister Dorothy Alexander, Dorothy's partner Denise Moak, and their son Lucas are also members of Saint Mark! Carmen says she loves our church community because of our size and welcoming atmosphere. Since she likes helping people in need, we are grateful for her addition to our spirit and service community!



**LaQueta Moore** is originally from Tennessee, but this Southern girl calls Rockville, Maryland home now! A fourth grade teacher at the McLean School, also in Rockville, she was invited to Saint Mark by a

friend about two years ago, and has been a regular at worship services ever since. Now that she's a member, we look forward to getting to know her better and seeing her at more fellowship events. LaQueta calls Saint Mark "a beacon of light in the community that welcomes, cares for, and responds to the needs of the world." In her spare time, she enjoys reading, listening to music, and cooking.



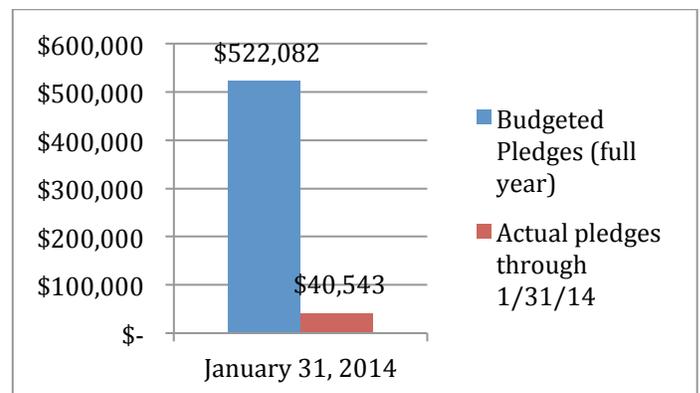
**Jacquelyn Lockhart** is a senior at Walter Johnson High School, right down the road. This young lady recently moved to the area with her parents from Richmond, Virginia, where she was a member of Chester Presbyterian

Church. Last summer Jackie volunteered in Eritrea, an experience that really touched her heart, and is interested in service work here with our youth before she goes off to college in the fall. We are proud to have Jackie join our Saint Mark family, and will be glad to welcome her back on her visits home from school in the near future!

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## Finance Update

Through January 31, we have received \$40,543 (or 8% of the amounts pledged for 2014). That is about on target with the straight line monthly plan. Please continue to fulfill your 2014 pledges. The Finance Ministry Team will provide monthly updates in the bulletin and Messenger.



### Scotland Scholarship Fund

Last year there was not enough money in the fund to give scholarships. All funds go to the college of choice so it is not wasted!

This is a chance to give students living in difficult circumstances a chance that they might otherwise not have to go to college!

I help them obtain as much funding as possible from other sources, but sometimes family circumstances make that difficult. Please help.

Send or bring checks to Saint Mark and put into the treasurer's box. Your money will be well spent!

Thanks, **Caroline Touchton**

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### Planned Giving

Luke 6:38: Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

Preparing an estate plan is good Christian stewardship—saying thanks to God, expressing your love and concern for family, and showing charity towards others.

Did you know that there is no limit on the size of a charitable gift to the church at the time of your death? No matter how large, the gift is deductible for federal estate tax purposes.

Our Session and Pastors enthusiastically support planned giving to our church. Contact a member of the Planned Giving Committee or the Pastors for more information.

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### Carrie Newcomer in Concert at Saint Mark March 8 at 7:30 PM

Saturday March 8 Saint Mark in collaboration with the Institute of Musical Traditions presents an evening with grammy winner **Carrie Newcomer**. Tickets on sale here are \$25 in advance.

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Here you can find a home for your heart and an opportunity to serve  
Regardless of race, class, marital status, sexual orientation, ability or disability.

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### Saint Mark Presbyterian Church

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