

**Welcome to The Saint Mark Good News Gazette!** In this issue: A Note from Pastor Jay, The Clerk's Corner, Christian Formation report, 2023 Stewardship Plan, "Welcoming" Sunday, Adult Sunday School, World Communion Sunday, Upcoming Events (Blessing of the Animals, Derek Black talk, Book Lovers), Mission Ministry Updates, (Meals for Interfaith Works Women's Center, Manna & DC Diapers), Spotlight on New Members (Patti Kurtz), Saturday Walk, Calendar of Events

## Respecting your privacy

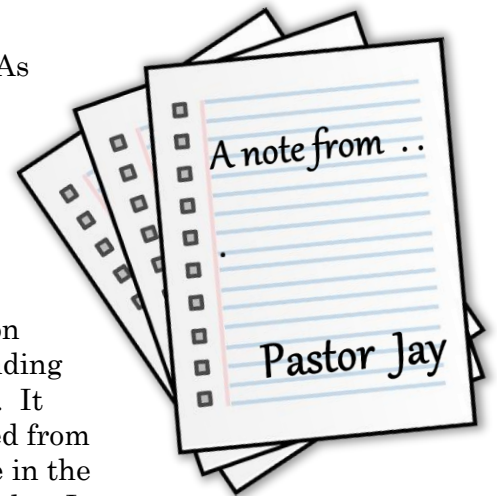
There are group photos in this issue that include (unnamed) young children, and in some of the content there are references to family names, or some personal information or email addresses. If there are any photos or text that you think needs to be blurred or removed before this issue is placed on the website, please report that to Rhonda Ricci, our Office Administrator, or Phyllis Norrie, the Gazette Editor.

Please enjoy this month's edition of the Saint Mark Good News Gazette!

## Zen Buddhism and Saint Mark

I recently was visiting the Zen Buddhist Center near Germantown. As I walked in, I was struck by the simplicity of the large glass building that was meant for meditation for all who came. I had a good conversation with the monk who was there to greet me, Sagaranunda. He spoke of meditating and seeking to fill oneself with loving kindness and compassion for all creation. That sounded good to me.

As we were about to leave, he ushered me over into a main meditation room, again, very simple with kneeling pillows across the floor. Standing at the front of the room was a rock hewn 3-foot statue of the Buddha. It was beautifully cut, and as we talked about it, he told me it was saved from an area in Afghanistan that had been riddled with sectarian violence in the past few years; they had saved it. It was beautifully hand carved, and as I turned to speak to him again, he said, "It's about 2,000 years old."



As we turned to continue to walk outside the building, I caught him make a small bow to the figure, much as a Roman Catholic does when first viewing the altar in a Roman Catholic Church. It struck me as a beautiful sign of his humanity. We had spent most of the time talking about the spiritual and mindful practices that Buddhist tradition gives for anyone, anywhere. They are open to all, and a diverse group of people, from any religion, could use them. Yet he showed his great devotion, his love, for the physical representation of the spiritual leader of his tradition, the Buddha, perhaps without even knowing it.

I believe that Jesus' teaching of the inbreaking of the Reign of God doesn't need any physical reminders, other than the presence of justice. I think that all of us who gather at Saint

Mark could practice the enlightened teachings of Christianity anywhere in Montgomery County or the

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world. And yet, we do give thanks and love for the physical representation of our devotion; we do love Saint Mark Church, its sanctuary, the people who come, and the creation which enfolds it.

This month we will be turning, just as Sagarununda did, to give thanks and reverence for a physical representation of the body of Christ “in the flesh” here in the Stewardship campaign. We can love the Spirit of God, we can love the teaching of Christ, and we can love the wind of the Spirit, but we also must love the very physical presence and financial needs of our community here on Old Georgetown Road; we must revere it.

I hope to take all of you to the Zen Center in the future. Because of our love of Saint Mark, its facilities, staff and ministries, I also look forward to inviting “Nanda” (He said that was simpler to call him by; I agreed) here to continue our ministry of reconciliation and peace begun not so long ago. I look forward to that time.

Pastor Jay

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## Help Wanted! Digitizing and Consolidating Church Records

Saint Mark, and the Session, have initiated an effort to digitize and consolidate church records, many of which have historically resided in filing cabinets, three ring notebooks, or individual members’ computer files. These include many years of meeting minutes and other records overseen by the Clerk. If you are interested in helping bring “order to chaos” by helping to track down, compile, and organize these records, please contact Nathan Brown ([nate\\_brown@verizon.net](mailto:nate_brown@verizon.net)).



*Submitted by Nathan Brown, Clerk of Session*



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## If You Build It, They Will Come! Sunday School for all ages is BACK!

**On September 10<sup>th</sup>, Sunday School opened many doors to exciting new adventures.**

This year’s classes are:

- ✦ PreK/K - 2<sup>nd</sup> grade - led by Elena Laguna, Barbara Caskey, Jennifer Carr, and Patti Kurtz,
- ✦ 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 5<sup>th</sup> grade - led by Rebecca Johnson, Rosemary Johnson, Julie & Drew Harrison,
- ✦ Middle School - led by Karen Richardson, Sharri Moses, Alison Dewey, and Bebel Delgado, and
- ✦ High School - led by Jen Ferguson, Brian Hooker, and Todd Kenreich.
- ✦ Not to forget about our adult class led by Pastor Shelby! (With many more leaders and interesting topics in coming weeks)

The attendance has been awesome, averaging 16 children, 15 youth, and 20 adults each week.

Sunday School is open for **All Ages** and each week is different, so even if you’ve missed the first several sessions, no worries, come when you can.

Also, if you are interested in helping assist with one of our Sunday School classes, please let Pastor Shelby know.

Sunday School meets at 9:30 am Sunday Mornings (list of class locations located on the doors entering the Fellowship Hall).

*Teddy Ferguson, Elder for Christian Formation*

# An Invitation from the Stewardship Ministry



## *Stewardship 2023 Back to the Future*

*"... and the person who sows generously will also reap generously."  
2nd Corinthians 9:6*



*What does a DeLorean have to do with Stewardship?*

*Come to our Stewardship Kick-off on  
Sunday, October 8, 10:15 AM  
and find out!!*



*Giving made easy using the QR code.  
Thank you for your generosity!*

*Submitted by Beth Irons, Stewardship Elder*

# Recent Activities and Events

**Welcoming Sunday! – September 10, 2023  
Sunday School & Two Services**

**We returned to two services of worship:**



**9:30 for In-Person Only,**

**11:00 for In-Person and Zoom (Hybrid)**



## We had Sunday School for All Ages at 9:30



Many thanks to all our Sunday School leaders!



♥ And we had a very special Coffee Hour, ♥  
♥celebrating Dean and Dorothy Hearn's 68<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary!



68 Years of Wedded Bliss!!  
Happy Anniversary  
Dorothy & Dean!



**Adult Sunday School:  
*The Gospel According to . . .***

The theme for Sunday School is “The Gospel according to...” We are studying scripture and theological concepts paired with TV shows, books, music and other aspects of culture that have spiritual significance. Winnie the Pooh, Mr. Rogers, Narnia, things we love, can sometimes have a lot to teach us about our faith.

The first “thing we loved” was Ted Lasso! On September 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, we discussed “The Gospel according to Ted Lasso” led by Pastor Shelby. Once a month we will have a “Faith Forum” with Pastor Jay and special guests from other faiths to share in interfaith conversation. Our first session was September 24<sup>th</sup>.



Upcoming sessions include:

- **October 1:** The Gospel according to U2, led by Tom Prelovsky
- **October 8:** The Gospel according to Ted Lasso, led by Pastor Shelby
- **October 15:** The Gospel according to Harry Potter, led by John Johnson

We would love it if you have a “favorite thing” that teaches you about your faith, and you would like to talk about it! If so, please let Pastor Shelby know!

# World Communion Sunday – October 1, 2023

The flags of nations represented by members of the Saint Mark congregation were once again flying above us on the walkway into the sanctuary. The flags will remain up for the month of October. (**Note:** If you do not see the flag for your country of origin, please contact the main office to let us know, so we can obtain a flag to fly.)



This was also the Sunday we assembled everyone who came to worship in person to take an “All Church” photo to put on our website. Unfortunately, we were not able to include those of you who were attending worship over Zoom. Les and Carol Henig, and a few helpers, worked at “herding us cats” into a beautiful group for the photo. See below.

Better yet, view the finished All Church photo when it is final and placed on our website!



## SPECIAL OFFERINGS

## Peace and Global Witness



On World Communion Sunday, we celebrate with a special offering for **Peace and Global Witness**. Through this annual offering, our church is extending Christ’s peace throughout our community and our world. We begin at the communion table, with our siblings in every time and place, and we celebrate the peace we find there and commit to building a more just and peaceful world. God is with us ... and God in Christ is with us through the Sacrament of Communion, celebrated on World Communion Sunday. We are not alone. Peace begins with each of us.

25% of the Offering stays at Saint Mark, and 25% works at a higher level to unite congregations to support peacemaking in their regions, and 50% of the Offering supports the work for peace and reconciliation being done by Presbyterians across the globe. You can donate in a variety of ways: place your check in the offering plate, give online at [pcusa.org/peace-global](https://pcusa.org/peace-global) or scan the QR code below. As always, it is never too late to give and Saint Mark thanks you for your generous gifts.

For more information visit:

<https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/peace-global-witness/>.



# Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>

4:00 PM

On the walkway  
between the buildings



Bring your creatures, great and small, to the

## Blessing of the



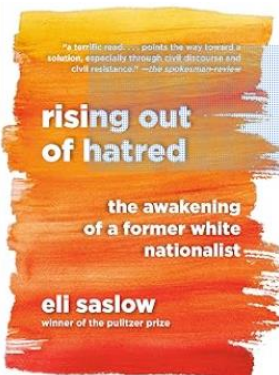
## Faith in Public Life! Inaugural Talk!

Sunday, November 5 @ 7:30

Saint Mark will host our first speaker of the “**Faith in Public Life Speaker Series**” under the Rev. Roy W. Howard Scholars program. This program was dedicated in December 2021 after Pastor Roy’s retirement (12/2019), and it continues the effort to bring interesting speakers with remarkable stories to Saint Mark to talk about current relevant issues and how they go about living their faith in public life. These speakers challenge us by asking “How shall we respond?”

Our first guest speaker will be Derek Black, raised since childhood to be a leader in the white nationalism movement. His father, Don Black, created and hosted Stormfront, a radical radio show dedicated to growing the white nationalist population worldwide. His godfather, David Duke, was formerly the Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. But once Derek started attending a liberal Florida college, he found himself surrounded by interesting, intelligent people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds and began to question the validity of his beliefs. It was a long and often painful journey to discover his truth, and Derek eventually found himself denouncing his former ways. Rejecting those ingrained ideologies came at great personal cost to Derek, who at one point legally changed his name in order to avoid any angry repercussions from his former supporters.

Join us on **Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>** to hear about his journey and to consider “How shall we respond?” Tickets are **FREE** and can be reserved in advance using the QR code or accessing <https://www.smpcfaithinpubliclife.com/>.



## Join BOOK LOVERS in discussing the book about Derek’s life

Eli Saslow, then a reporter for the Washington Post, interviewed Derek and ultimately wrote the compelling book *Rising out of Hatred, The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist*, about his early upbringing, his move away from white nationalism, and the personal cost of rejecting those early beliefs. We will discuss the book at the **October Book Lovers meeting, on Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM over Zoom.**

**Questions?** – Contact Phyllis Norrie ([phyllnorrie@gmail.com](mailto:phyllnorrie@gmail.com)). (Note: You are **not** required to read the book in order to attend!)



# Mission Updates

## Saint Mark - Interfaith Works Women's Center Week of Meals, September 25 – 30, 2023

### By the Numbers!



- 44** Individuals or couples contributed, plus the Youth Group cooks
- 7** Meal Captains/delivery people
- 11** People contributed a total of \$300 towards the cost of ingredients (for Youth dinner and purchased casseroles)
- 135** Separate meal items contributed for
- 444** Meals provided (2/day x 37 women x 6 days)

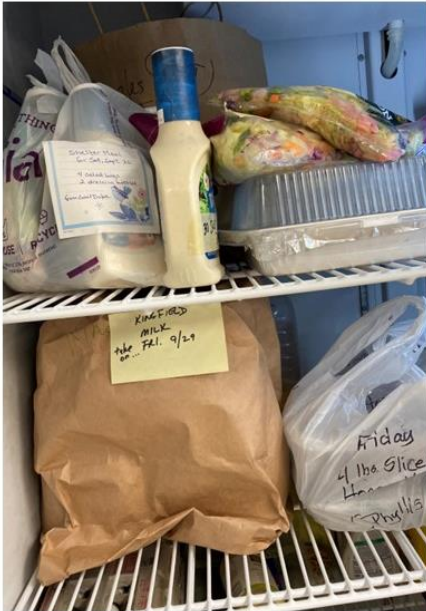


Many thanks to everyone who participated in Saint Mark's Annual Week of Meals for one of the Interfaith Works Women's Centers. This year we provided the meals to the center on Crabbs Branch Way in Rockville. Special thanks to **Carl** and **Nancy Shea** who participated in every step of the process including managing the sign-ups.

## The Youth Group prepared Baked Ziti, made salads, and decorated cookies for a wonderful dinner for the Women's Center.



**Carload after carload of dinners and breakfasts were assembled and delivered to the Women's Center every afternoon.**



## Food First Sunday

We continue to collect packaged food for **Manna** and baby supplies for the **DC Diaper Bank** the first Sunday of each month. (Of course, you can bring your donations at any time and leave them under the table near the Office door.) Please keep in mind that if there is a Federal Government shutdown, many families will be needing the support of these two charitable organizations, and therefore our support as well. Be generous!

This year is particularly special for **Manna Food Center** as it celebrates **40 years** of service on **November 11th, 2023**. They are hosting a celebration for their community of participants, partners, and supporters: there will be food and fun for the whole family! Click the birthday cake icon to complete free registration to let them know that you'll be there!



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# Spotlight on New Members!

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## Patti (Patricia) Kurtz



**Patti Kurtz** has known the **Carr family** for a number of years, and they were instrumental in getting Patti to visit Saint Mark. **Jenn** assured Patti that Saint Mark is a place where we learn valuable life lessons from scripture AND where we support social causes and practice what we preach, i.e., where Spirit and Service come together! Patti finally decided to visit Saint Mark and see what Jenn and Greg loved about the church. One of Patti's most memorable visits was the MLK Day of Service in 2023 (where we packaged more than 20,000 packets of food for Rise Against Hunger). Patti joined the church soon after that, on May 28, 2023.

Patti is a divorced mom of two children, **Nathan** who is 8 and **Jacklyn** ("Jack") who is 4, and a wild and crazy pet named Rosie, a whippet/terrier/lab rescue dog. Patti is originally from the Detroit, Michigan area and has lived in Chicago, Illinois and spent a year in Ecuador during college. After living for 6.5 years in the United Kingdom, Patti, her ex-husband (Steven Sweet), and Nathan moved from the UK to the local area near the end of 2017.

Patti's work experience has been in the digital communications arena. Most recently she led the digital department at Health Affairs, a policy journal publication operating within Project Hope, where she managed areas such as the website, social media, digital content, and analytics. (I guess you could say she knows the Internet!) Currently she is freelancing, while testing out where she would like to take her talents next.

One of Patti's proudest accomplishments was doing a year of service with AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps in 2007. She spent most of the year along the Gulf Coast helping the area to recover and rebuild from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. She also honed her construction skills (did you see that ASP and Rebuilding Together teams?)!

Here are a few more interesting facts about Patti:

- She likes pizza and mint chocolate chip ice cream!
- She likes all kinds of music (except Prince) and goes to live concerts frequently.
- She enjoys reading, running, making things with her hands, learning, and pickleball!

*Welcome Patti, Nathan, and Jacklyn (and Rosie too)!*



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## Walking Together – First Saturday

A small, but dedicated, walking group met the second Saturday, **September 9<sup>th</sup>** at 8:30 AM at the Boathouse at Lake Needwood to take the 2.3 mile walk around the lake.

The walk planned for October will be **Saturday, October 7** at starting at **8:00 AM**. Meet us at the West Lake Drive parking lot of **Cabin John Regional Park**. The total route is 2.6 miles, but there is an option to make it longer if you are up for it!

**Questions??** – Contact Rosemary Johnson



# October

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>World Communion Sunday</b> 9:30 – SS & In-Person Worship 10:30 – Coffee Hour 11:00 – Worship (Hybrid)  <b>Food First Sunday</b>	7:00 – Building Use Comm. on Zoom			E-News delivered		8:00 – Walking Together (Cabin John Park)
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
9:30– SS & In-Person Worship <b>10:15 – Stewardship “Kickoff”</b> 11:00 – Worship (Hybrid) 1:30 – Mission Mi on Zoom 4:00 – Blessing of the Animals 5:00 – Youth Group	<b>Federal Holiday</b>			E-News delivered		
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
9:30 – SS & In-Person Worship 10:30 – Coffee Hour 11:00 – Worship (Hybrid)		7:00 PM – Session Meets	7:00 – Book Lovers on Zoom (“Rising out of Hatred”)	E-News delivered		
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
9:30 – SS & In-Person Worship 10:30 – Coffee Hour 11:00 – Worship (Hybrid)		7:00 PM – Deacons Meet		E-News delivered		
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>				
9:30 – SS & In-Person Worship 10:30 – Coffee Hour 11:00 – Worship (Hybrid)  5:00 - Youth Group				<b>Coming in November . . . Consecration Sunday, Nov 12</b>		
				E-News delivered		