

Messenger

Changing the world through Christ, by caring for all people.



Hunger Relief through Meal Packaging



On Sunday, January 7, we will work with Rise Against Hunger (formerly Stop Hunger Now) to package 10,150 meals. The meals will be distributed to impoverished nations for people who might not otherwise have enough to eat.

The packaging process is very precise. It's actually a lot of fun. We'll work in assembly lines to package the meals, and box and prepare them for shipping. You'll meet people you might not otherwise see at your regular worship time. You'll laugh, and you'll work together in service. It'll be an amazing feeling of accomplishment when over 10,000 meals are boxed and the boxes are stacked against the wall.

That morning, we'll begin in the Fellowship Hall at 11:00 a.m. *The Gathering* will become a time of "work-ship," rather than a regular worship service. We should be finished by 1:00 p.m. This is a great opportunity to invite a friend to St. Mark's. Most people like to do nice things, but might be hesitant to enter the Sanctuary until they get to know some of us. For more information about this event, please contact the church office (297-2062) or email Kim Ogle (kim@umcstmarks.org).

The Holy Yoga Experience

Saturday, Jan. 6, from 9:00 to 1:00 p.m., in Fellowship Hall

The Holy Yoga Experience is a half-day retreat for women and men that includes a Holy Yoga practice, the Word, worship, and community. We would love for you to get a taste of what it's like to be in the Holy Yoga community, so grab your mat and join us at the Tucson Experience – right here at St. Mark's UMC.



There will be different activities, both inside and outside, so make sure you bring weather appropriate outerwear. Snacks will be provided. Go to www.hollyyoga.net to register for this event and bring in the new year being physically refreshed and spirituality reinvigorated. If you have questions or need additional information please contact Pastor Tammy Hallam (tammy@umcstmarks.org) or through the church office (297-2062).

Pastor Sharon to be Honored By Scholarship



Pastor Sharon graduated from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 1991. In honor of her twenty-seven years of service, the seminary has announced they are establishing a scholarship in her name. This scholarship will provide financial aid to students attending Garrett-Evangelical in their path toward Christian ministry. A representative from the seminary will attend services at St. Mark's on Sunday, February 18, 2018, to present Pastor Sharon with a certificate recognizing her and acknowledging the scholarship.

You will receive a letter, from the church office in early January, that will provide details about how you can contribute to this scholarship fund and help honor Pastor Sharon's commitment to support others in their call to ministry.

Adult Spiritual Growth

Faith is a journey!

Spring 2018 Itineraries

The **Adult Spiritual Growth Committee** has just what you need for the next steps of your spiritual growth journey. You will find new opportunities, and a wide range of possibilities, including two or three small group experiences that support Pastor Sharon's first theme **Connecting to God's Creation** of her new sermon series. Take a careful look at the opportunities listed below and make some choices.

The Adult Spiritual Growth team will be available in the courtyard on Sunday, Dec. 31, and Sunday Jan. 7, to answer questions. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the Adult Spiritual Growth bulletin board, or you may register online (www.umcstmarks.org/adult-classes.php). If you have questions or need more information, contact Margaret Synhorst at the church office (297-2062 or margaret@umcstmarks.org).

Beginning the Journey

Spiritual Gifts — Do you hear God calling? All Christians have spiritual gifts. Come and discover your gifts and how to use them. Begins February 18, at 9:45 a.m. (4 sessions). Led by Pastor Tammy Hallam and others.

Disciple Old Testament — Explore the Old Testament's story of God and God's calling of the people of Israel through the many "voices" of the biblical text. Hear the magnificence of a *Creation* hymn, discover the law and wisdom teachings, listen to the warning of the prophets and explore the poetry of the *Song of Solomon*. Begins Thursday, Jan. 18, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. (8 sessions). Led by Alberta Farnsworth and Linda Sterling.

Continuing the Journey

Shaping a Life of Significance for Retirement — Retired engineer, Jack Hansen and spiritual formation leader, Jerry Haas explore the transitions, opportunities, and challenges of facing retirement through a series of interviews with persons facing and in retirement. It is about the more personal dimensions of the transition from working fulltime to retirement including relationships, feelings of self-worth and purpose, and spiritual and intellectual growth. Begins March 26, Mondays, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. (6 sessions). Led by Bill Fritz.

Sacred Rhythms — Explore the practices that spiritual seekers and growing disciples have used throughout history to grow closer to God. Begins April 9, Mondays, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. (6 sessions). Led by Dr. Rev. Evy McDonald.

Praying the Psalms — Discover the richness of the Psalms. Learn to pray into and through them. Let the gamut of your emotions place you closer to God. Experience telling God how you feel. Experiment with writing your own Psalm. Led by Rev. Judy Boroto

● First Session: Jan. 11 – Feb. 15, Thursdays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. (6 sessions)

● Second Session: Mar. 6 – 27, Tuesdays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. (4 sessions)

Excursions

Grounded in Grace — A Lenten One-Day Retreat. Using the guide ***Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life***, explore practical spiritual activities appropriate for Lent and beyond. Saturday, February 24, 9:00 – 3:00 p.m. Led by Rev. Roger Pierce. Location: Redemptorist Renewal Center, Picture Rocks.

A Walk through the Holy Land, 2018 — This class will give people the opportunity to learn about the history and geography of biblical and archaeological places in the Holy Land, Israel. The class is designed for those who are making the journey to Israel in February 2018, but is also open to all people who are interested in learning more about these places which are significant to our faith. A suggested book for the class is ***An Illustrated Guide to the Holy Land for Tour Groups, Students and Pilgrims*** by Lamontte M. Luker. Monday Jan. 22, 29, and Feb. 5, 12, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Led by Pastor Sharon Ragland

Five Wishes® Workshop — This workshop provides opportunities to reflect on your Five Wishes: Who you want to make healthcare decisions on your behalf. What kind of medical care you want, or don't want. How comfortable you want to be. How you want people to treat you. What you want your loved ones to know when you approach the end of your life. Participants leave with a completed medical power of attorney and advanced directive (living will), and tools for communicating their Five Wishes to their loved ones and care team. Saturday, April 21, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Led by Martha Lundgren (There is no cost for this workshop).

Lent

Prayer Beads Workshop — Lent is often viewed as an opportunity to examine the practice of the various spiritual disciplines, especially prayer. This workshop will include assembling your own prayer beads, a brief talk about the history of prayer beads, and an opportunity to practice using them. Saturday, Feb. 17, 9:00 - 12:30 p.m. Rm 17/18 (Cost is \$5, paid at the workshop.) Led by Brenda Hunter

Mending the Soul — A small group experience for women who have experienced any type of abuse. The group will consist of four to seven participants who will go through an application and intake process, work through the **Mending the Soul** workbook, then share during the weekly confidential small group. Pastor Tammy Hallam has facilitated MTS groups in church settings since 2007, and trained facilitators and churches with implementing a community-based model of healing. If you would like to explore whether this group would be helpful to you, contact Pastor Tammy (297- 2062 or tammy@umcstmarks.org) Begins Wednesday, Feb. 21, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (11 sessions). Led by Pastor Tammy Hallam.

FAITH - Imagine That! — How can we express our faith? 4 weeks of creating. Come and play. Each week we will use a different media. Begins Feb. 20, Tuesdays, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. (4 sessions) Led by Nancy Bautzmann.

MORE TO COME - Other Lenten studies and Making the Connection groups will be scheduled during Lent. More information about these opportunities will be provided soon.

Extending the Journey

Discipleship — New long-term Bible study classes will begin in the Fall of 2018.

Living the Questions 2.0 — An open-minded alternative to studies that attempt to give participants all the answers and instead strives to create an environment where participants can interact with one another while exploring what's next for Christianity. Featuring thirty acclaimed scholars, theologians and other experts, **LTQ** includes downloadable and printable leader and participant guides with weekly readings and discussion questions. Plus, twenty-minute video segments include conversations with leading voices of faith, digital stories illustrating aspects of an evolving faith, and concrete spiritual practices and disciplines. Begins April 12. Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 p.m., (7 sessions). Led by Rev. Roger Pierce and Art Ragland.

Open Minds Book Study — The group meets in the church Library, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m., Led by Todd and Tyger Penson

Jan. 26: **Churchless** By George Barna and David Kinnaman
Feb. 23: **Undivided** by Patricia Raybon and Alana Raybon
March 23: **An Altar in the World** by Barbara Brown Taylor
April 27: **The Color of Water** by James McBride
May 18: **Convictions** by Marcus Borg

Ladies Bible Study — **Unveiling Mary Magdalene** by Liz Curtis Higgs. Video presentations that reveal Mary Magdalene's life-changing message for women today. Begins January 5, Fridays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. (5 or 6 sessions). Led by Karen Allison

Ongoing Journeys you are welcome to join at any time

Sharing/Family Life	Sundays, 9:45 a.m.	Rm 17/18
Common Grounds	Sundays, 11:00 a.m.	Rm 20
Seekers	Sundays, 11:15 a.m.	Rm 17/18
Monday Bible Study	Mondays, 10:30 a.m.	Mountainview Care Center
Wednesday Study Group	Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m.	Library

Making the Connection

Made to Crave — This small group experience helps women understand how cravings for lasting spiritual satisfaction are often mistaken for cravings for food. Craving isn't a bad thing, but God created us to crave so we'd ultimately desire more of Him in our lives, not more food. Many of us have misplaced that craving, and overindulge in physical pleasures instead of lasting spiritual satisfaction. If you or someone you know is struggling with unhealthy eating habits, Made to Crave will help you crave God and develop healthy eating habits. Begins January 9, Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m., (7 sessions). Led by Susan Gerstad

Creation: The Apple of God's Eye — Please join us for a discussion of the book **Creation: The Apple of God's Eye**, by Justo L. González. Reverend González explains how God reveals his love in creation, and discusses other topics including the problem of evil in the midst of God's creation. Our conversations will provide a different, but complementary view to the sermon series "Connecting to Creation." Begins January 18, Thursdays, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., (5 sessions) Rm 17/18. The book is available through Cokesbury for \$9.49 (either eBook or paperback).

Hiking/Walking Group — Forming now! Contact Art Ragland (see directory) if you are interested in joining.

Open Minds Book Study

The book for January is **Churchless** by the Barna Group: George Barna & David Kinnaman. Taking a different direction this month, this book challenges us to “understand today’s unchurched and how to connect with them.” Think of those you know who are churchless—and why—to enhance your part in the discussion.



Have you not heard people say, “I’m not interested in church” or “I used to attend, but it’s been years” or “I believe in God, but can encounter him anywhere. Why go to church?” The discussion should be rich and perhaps this book will help us find ways to understand our friends, family, or neighbors who are among the churchless. Coffee and refreshments will be furnished by Vicky Minger. New folks are always welcome! For questions, call the leaders, Todd and Tyger Penson (520-336-1736).

Chronic Illness Support Group News

First, Cliff Nystrom and I want to extend our sincere gratitude to the office staff, pastors, Kay Hayworth, and various others at St. Mark’s who have helped us launch and maintain this new ministry. Also, a very special thanks to Pastor Tammy for her guidance, support, and prayers.

We would like to invite any men or women to join this uplifting group. What will be different in the new year? **Beginning in January, we will meet three times, on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Wednesday each month, from 10:30-noon, in the church Library.**

Look for new guest speakers, new materials, and even a special guest that will help us do Lectio Divina around chronic pain. Don’t know what that is? Grab a friend and come find out! You do not have to be a member of St. Mark’s to attend. If you have any questions, contact April DuBoce (see directory). All inquiries are confidential. Hope to see you there!

Grace Circle Meeting

St. Mark’s United Methodist Women Grace Circle will meet Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2018, in the church Library. Please join us at 9:00 a.m. for devotions. We will carpool to Sister Jose Women’s Center at 1025 S. Park. **Donations of gently used clothing such as jeans, sweaters, sweatshirts, coats, gloves, scarves, sox, shoes, or other items for cooler temperatures would be greatly appreciated.**

The Sister Jose Women’s Center is dedicated to the care and nurture of homeless women within our community. They provide beds, food, clothing and encouragement to homeless women in our community. All women of the church are invited. You do not have to be a member of St. Mark’s United Methodist Women or St. Mark’s United Methodist Church or any church to attend. Should you have questions, please contact Sharon Hunter (see directory).

Kayla Flannery, Guest Speaker

St. Mark’s United Methodist Women will meet Saturday, Jan. 13, 2018, in the church Library. Please join us at 9:30 a.m. for light refreshments and fellowship. Kayla Flannery will share her missionary work and service in Detroit with the US-2 program sponsored by the United Methodist Women.

Kayla is a member of St. Mark’s UMC. Her parents are Mark and Cindy Flannery. Kayla’s desire to become an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church was affirmed by St. Mark’s Methodist Church at St. Mark’s Church Conference Meeting on Oct. 30, 2017. Kayla is currently taking online seminary courses while working in Sierra Vista.



All women of the church are invited. You do not have to be a member at St. Mark’s UMW, St. Mark’s church, or any church to attend. Childcare may be requested through the church office, on or before Friday, Jan. 5, 2018. Should you have questions or need a ride, please contact Virginia Tupper (see directory).

Modern Parables Study

The Wednesday Morning Study Group will present the six-week, video-based study **Modern Parables** beginning Jan. 3. In this study, several parables told by Jesus are recreated to occur in modern times by incorporating contemporary elements. The intent is to help stimulate the same response in the participant that the original audiences might have experienced. In addition, the DVD content enables the viewer to engage with the Bible in a powerful and compelling new, and for some, real way. *The Good Samaritan, The Shrewd Manager, The Sower, and The Prodigal Son* are a few of the Biblical parables re-scripted into a modern-day setting for this class.



Please join the group on Wednesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. in Rm 17/18. If you cannot commit to attending the entire six weeks, please come when you can! (Please Note: Ash Wednesday is Feb. 14, and the Wednesday Morning Class will begin a Lenten study that day. Information about the Lenten study will soon be announced.)



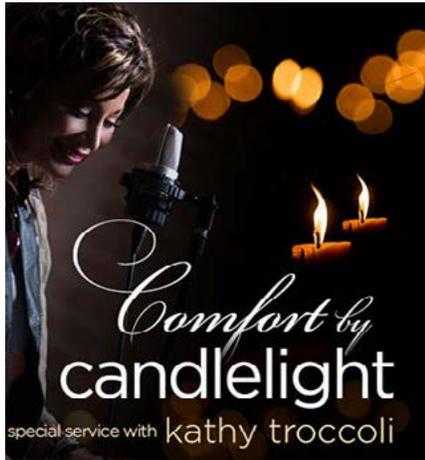
Kathy Troccoli in Concert

Don't miss this concert!
Sunday, Jan. 21, at 6 p.m.,
St. Mark's Sanctuary.

Comfort by Candlelight

performed by grammy
nominated Kathy Troccoli.
She will sing, she will
share encouragement,
hope, truth, and love!

There is **no charge** for the
concert, but you must get
a "reserve ticket" for the
event. Ticklets will be available between services at the table
in the courtyard Sunday, Dec. 31, and Jan 7, Jan. 14.



New Worship Theme Begins January, 2018

A longing exists within us to connect to other people and, even more, to God. We hear phrases like "I tried to connect with him or her, but couldn't manage to do that." or "The best part of that gathering was connecting with old friends." or "With all the struggles in the world, I wonder where God is, and wonder how to reconnect with that presence of peace and hope."

St. Mark's theme in worship for 2018 will focus on connecting us to God and one another – lifting up our current connections, and challenging us to connect more deeply with God, one another, and our broader community.

Coming January 14, 2018 – **Connecting to God's Creation**. We'll see ways that God's creation – nature, animals and one another – draws us closer to God. Sometimes we have questions about natural disasters and the frailty of our bodies, as God's creation. How can we care for God's creation, including our bodies?

January at Soul Station

During the month of January at Soul Station, we have several community organizations that partner with St. Mark's coming to share how they serve those that need an extra hand-up and support. One way that Christ's church makes an impact is by reaching out and showing the concern and love of God. By partnering with these organizations, we truly do become the presence of Christ in our world. We look forward to hearing about just how that is happening. Come and bring a friend to hear about how St. Mark's is **"changing the world through Christ, by caring for all people."**



Here's the schedule for January:

Jan. 3: ICS: Interfaith Community Services - Tim Kromer, Community Engagement Director, will give an overview of all that is available through their network of resources

Jan. 10: TIHAN: Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network - Miguel Soto, who is the Pima County Health Department HIV Prevention Program Coordinator, will update us on the current HIV data in our county

Jan. 17: Kairos: Doug Bowers will discuss the exciting ministry that takes the Walk to Emmaus behind bars, in our prison system.

Jan. 24: Emerge: Domestic Violence shelter for women and children will share how our support helps families gain a new future.

Jan. 31: Teen Challenge: will share information about their Springboard Home and how this faith-based residential program helps young women in crisis.

If you would like information about how your support makes all of this possible or if you have questions about our missions outreach, you can contact Pat Kittrell the chair of St. Mark's Missions Committee (see directory).

Always More to Learn!

St. Mark's Leadership Training for 2018.

If you are serving on a committee, team, task force, or board in our church, you know that there is always more to learn. So, an upcoming training opportunity is for you. Leaders need to be spiritually grounded, understand the mission and priorities of our church, and have skills in the particular area in which they're serving. This training is designed to help with all these.

What: St. Mark's Leadership Training

When: Tuesday, Jan. 23 from 5:30—7:00 p.m.

Where: Fellowship Hall

For all chairpersons and committee, task force, and team members, or anyone who is interested. Learn important details about leading and being part of a team at St. Mark's, our mission and priorities, the importance of your spiritual growth, and get your questions answered.

A light dinner will be served, so please RSVP to kandy@umcstmarks.org by Wednesday, Jan. 17.

The Covenant Council meeting will follow the training at 7:00 p.m.

Sharon Ragland

WASS UP?

December 26, 2017

Volume 18, Issue 26



UPCOMING MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL EVENTS

December 31, 2017—

5th Sunday

No Confirmation

No Sunday School

SEE YOU IN WORSHIP!

January 7, 2018—

3:00 to 4:00

Youth Council

4:00 to 6:00

"New Year, New Friends"

bring

friends

(Epiphany)



January 12-15, 2018—

WINTER RETREAT

January 21, 2018—

4:00 to 6:00

Youth Mission \$

NEW YEAR, NEW FRIENDS

Our first Sunday program of 2018 is a party! It's the New Year, so bring your friends and/or meet some new friends. We'll celebrate Epiphany, even though it's technically January 6.

The Youth Council will meet that day, rather than the 2nd Sunday, to plan games for the Winter Retreat, as well as future programs.

Hope to see you Jan. 7th.

WINTER RETREAT

The Winter Retreat is just around the corner. We'll leave right after school on Friday, January 12 and return before dinner on Monday, January 15. Registration for Friday-Monday is only \$50, which includes all meals except Friday dinner and Monday lunch. Register online at umcstmarks.org

a note from the

YOUTH DIRECTOR

Christmas Eve was amazing! We put white die-cut luminarias around the tree wells and up the steps leading to the sanctuary: we had a guest appearance by Joseph and Mary at the 4 p.m. Blessing of the Children; and we put the campus to rest after the last service ended.

I love Christmas Eve. I get to spend extra time with you. I also get to see former youth who come back to visit, as well as current youth whom I don't see as often. It never gets old.

I hope you're enjoying your break, and that you're making plans for the Winter Retreat over the next school break — MLK weekend.

Blessings,
Kim

Middle School Moments

Merry Christmas! I'm sure you are thinking I sound like a total dork...Christmas is over, isn't it?

We tend to focus on that one day, on December 25. But have you ever wondered why we sing about the twelve days of Christmas? It's because Christmas lasts for all 12 days, from December 25 until January 6, Epiphany. So...

Merry Christmas! I hope you are all getting some well-deserved rest over this break from school. You worked so hard this semester, you deserve this! Plus, you need to be well rested so you are ready to join us on the Winter Retreat. Don't wait to reserve your spot... you don't want to miss out, it's way too much fun!

See you Sunday,
Rachel



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1-2 Liam DaDeppo
- 1-08 Seth Young
- 1-09 Zoe Newell
- 1-14 Sydney Edwards
- 1-29 Kyle Drake

HOLD THESE PEOPLE IN PRAYER!

Hospital:

Hazel Roberts
Gail Underwood

Rehab or Care Facilities:

Patricia Keele
Harold Mull
Howard Russell
Earlene Schock

Hospice Care:

Judy Mitzenburg
Tom Walker
Yvonne Yare

Undergoing Treatment at Home:

Jude Anderson
Jared Bowman
Judy Drescher
Breanne Hallam
Megan Krzmarzick
Karen Linebarier
Dell Long
Ray Loughney
Ruth Machley
Lona Stauffacher
Don Watt
Connie White
Lindsey Williams
Jim Ward
Dave Webster

Recovering at Home:

Gail Blevins
Donald Chester
Harmon Harrison
Sharon Thomas

Condolences:

Our prayers of sympathy for Linda & Ron Hill and family upon the death of Linda's father in California.

We extend our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of Rev. Betty Luginbill, a long-time member at St. Mark's who died on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017.

PRAYER CORNER

We are a praying community at St. Mark's.

Besides Sunday worship, you may submit a prayer request by email prayerchain@umcstmarks.org or from our website at www.umcstmarks.org/contact-us-prayer-request.php.

Also, visit our Prayer Room on campus and leave a prayer on our prayer wall.



LOVED ONES IN THE MILITARY...



MOMS of Military is a prayer and support group for mothers, wives, sisters, aunts, daughters, and friends of loved ones currently serving in the military. The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month in the church Library from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. For information contact Nancy Bautzmann (248-5814).

Please keep these people in your prayers.

Email additions or updates to messenger@umcstmarks.org.

Hank Bautzmann, son of Nancy Bautzmann

Jon Chytka, nephew of Roger & Donna Severson

Zachary Dojaquez, grandson of Roger & Donna Severson

Brandonn Eto, friend of Zirnheld/Compernelle family

Rob Eubank, son of David & Johanna Eubank

Mike Freeman, son of Ken & Ann Freeman

Garrett Geer, grandson of Ellen Wise

Patrick Harris, grandson of Marilyn Vaughn

Matthew Hughey, son of Juliee & Billy Morrison and grandson of Joyce Flick

Rachel Kester, daughter of Don & Ruth Kester

Chad Long, grandson of Pat Long

Jake Newton, son of Robert & Cheri Newton

John O'Regan, husband of Ashley O'Regan and grandson-in-law of Janet Krug

Brian Osborn, pastor in the DSW Conference

William Putt, son of Harold & Susan Putt

Adam Seia, son of David & Vonda Seia

Jason Smith, grandson of Jerry & Judy Smith

Alex Snow, brother of Shelley Shelton

Clint Staschke, son-in-law of Cliff & June Young

Michael and Karisa Szczygiel, daughter and son-in-law of Joyce Flick

Brianna Walker, granddaughter of Barbara Fradenburgh; niece of Joan Fradenburgh



St. Mark's Messenger

Published bi-weekly

St. Mark's UMC
1431 W. Magee Road
Tucson, AZ 85704
(520) 297-2062 Fax: (520) 297-1058

Email:

info@umcstmarks.org

Website:

www.umcstmarks.org

Senior Pastor:

Rev. Sharon Ragland

Associate Pastor:

Rev. Tammy Hallam

Sunday Worship:

8:15, 9:45, 11:15 a.m.

Soul Station

Wednesday Nights:

Community Meal

5:45 p.m.

Music/Programs

6:15-7:15 p.m.

Calendar Notes

Sun. Dec. 31

8:15 a.m. service
9:45 a.m. service
11:15 a.m. *The Gathering*
NO Preteens or Youth Group meetings

Mon. Jan. 1

Church Office is CLOSED
NO - Holy Yoga

Wed., Jan. 3

5:45 p.m. Community Meal, Fellowship Hall
6:15 p.m. Soul Station program - Interfaith
Community services (ICS) presentation
6:15 p.m. Common Grounds

Sat. Jan 6

9 - 1 p.m. HOLY YOGA EXPERIENCE, Fellowship Hall

Sun. Jan. 7

8:15 a.m. service
9:45 a.m. service
11:15 a.m. *The Gathering*
4:00 p.m. Preteens and Youth Group meetings

Mon. Jan. 8

9:00 a.m. Holy Yoga, Fellowship Hall

Tues. Jan. 9

9:00 a.m. Coffee Chat, Old Time Kafe

Wed., Jan. 10

10:30 a.m. Chronic Illness Group, Library
5:45 p.m. Community Meal, Fellowship Hall
6:15 p.m. Soul Station - TIHAN presentation
6:15 p.m. Common Grounds

Dear Church Family...



Thank you to all who made this year's Community Carol Sing a success - the directors, the accompanists, the soloists, the guest musicians, and all those generous people who donated refreshments for afterwards. Bless you!

Susan Putt, Music Ministries Coordinator

I would like to thank Pastor Sharon for Ed Glenn's wonderful memorial service, and the congregation for all the words of concern, encouragement and love. They were truly appreciated!

Sarah Glenn

Again this year, Sidewalk Sunday School (SSS) was generously supported by our generous, caring congregation! The Green Valley UMC partnered with St. Mark's and collected nearly 200 bags and 47 gift cards for this event. Despite the wet weather, the SSS event, at New Hope UMC, was still a great success. Thank you all for your help with this project that gives underprivileged children the chance to hear the Christmas story and receive gifts. Again many thanks and my personal and sincerest appreciation.

Blessings to each of you, Ellen Beene



Lil and Tony Lovaglio

St. Mark's brought 54 hand-tied fleece blankets to the Diamond Children's Medical Center for their patients. We made five during the Advent Workshop, and Susan Ambrose took one home to make. And **Lillian Lovaglio** made 48 blankets by herself! The staff was so appreciative and was especially happy to receive larger blankets for the teenagers. Hopefully, St. Mark's can continue to support children during painful and uncertain times.

New Year, New Goals, New Volunteer Opportunities!

Did you know that TIHAN is the largest volunteer-based provider of support services for people living with HIV in Southern Arizona? TIHAN helps people with HIV to live well, and have a variety of volunteer opportunities.

If you are interested in exploring these and other available opportunities, contact Volunteer Coordinator, Dennisse Ley (520-299-6647 ext. 206 or VolunterCoordinator@tihan.org). On Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2018, we have an orientation session for new volunteers - learn more about what's going on with HIV today, TIHAN's programs, and how you can help support people living with HIV, either directly or indirectly, with your time and skills. Be part of a network of caring people making a difference and providing outreach and care! Get started now, be part of something bigger in 2018, become part of TIHAN's Volunteer Team!



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Reflections

Early morning, December 26, 2017 – Just 30 hours have passed since we closed the church doors after our last Christmas Eve service. Christ is born, we sang and spoke and saw in our Sanctuary, patio, and among the people who gathered that day. I know the birth of Christ in our hearts and lives is a mystery in some ways. Yet, throughout the Advent season and on Christmas Eve I witnessed the birth of Christ as people gave of themselves with the hope of bringing Christ's love and peace to others. People made our Sanctuary and campus ready, helped in countless ways in worship, sang and played music, watched over us, taught classes, organized fellowship times, and so much more. I've often wished there were words bigger and deeper than "thank you" or "I appreciate that," to express the gratitude I feel for all that witness and service, in Jesus' name. Thank you, thank you, thank you, will have to do, my friends. Thank you to our church staff, and to so many of you. God knows what you offered to help make Jesus real for others.

A graphic with the words "Thank You!" written in a large, flowing, red cursive font. The text is surrounded by several small, colorful dots in shades of blue, green, and yellow, giving it a festive and celebratory feel.

St. Mark's. In a recent magazine interview, TV journalist Ann Curry talked about her upcoming PBS series, "We'll Meet Again." In the series, people who once were powerfully connected, but lost touch for many reasons, set out years later to find someone. As I read this interview, I thought again about how often we seek connections with one another, and with God. I thought about how often I hear people say, "It was so good to connect with him," or "that life experience left me feeling so disconnected from God."

In 2018, we're going to explore ways of **Connecting with God and One Another**, drawing upon Scripture and the power of our stories of coming close to God and each other. "Connecting with God and One Another" will be our year-long worship theme. We begin with a series on **Connecting to God's Creation**, looking at how creation draws us closer to God.

With gratitude, I wish you blessings for the new year.

Pastor Sharon

This early morning, with the heart of Christmas still beating, my thoughts turn to upcoming worship and opportunities at