

# Messenger

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

Volume 58, Number 05

March 13, 2018



## From Many... One

It's time for the annual **Celebration Singers Concert, Sunday, March 18, at 3:00 p.m.** in the Sanctuary. You may remember them as the Folk Choir, but the group has a new name now. Join us for much singing by the group with accompaniment by Lira Makarova, and directed by Sondra Franks. But wait... there's something more this time. We have called this concert **From Many... One** because it takes many people working together to make a great group of singers, as well as many smaller groups made up of individual singers. So, we will also have smaller ensembles singing some really nice songs, some may be familiar, others maybe not. Also, Lira Makarova will perform a piano solo.

The concert is free, but there will be baskets to make a freewill offering as you leave. Come to see just what united things many people can do.

Sondra Franks, Celebration Singers Director

## St. Mark's Easter Event

**Saturday, March 24, 9:00 a.m. - Noon!** You are invited to our Community Easter Celebration for kids, so bring the whole family and the neighbors, too, for fun crafts and activities like train rides, bounce houses, petting zoo, and egg hunts. Plus, yummy treats, cake walks and more. Admission is only \$3.

For questions, or if you would like to donate cupcakes for this event, please contact Rachel Mosher (297-2062 or [rachel@umcstmarks.org](mailto:rachel@umcstmarks.org)).

### Petting Zoo

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Egg Hunts

10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.  
(children age 2yrs. to 5th grade)

### Cupcake Walks

just \$1 - for kids of all ages!



## PASSION & PALM SUNDAY

### Palm & Passion Sunday — Sun., March 25

**Message: Voices Calling to Jesus.** Traditional worship (8:15 and 9:45 a.m.) and Modern worship at 11:15 a.m. include a procession with palm branches. The 8:15 and 9:45 a.m. services will include our Easter cantata **Love Divine** at 8:15 and 9:45 a.m. by our Chancel Choir, Celebration Singers, and Bell Choir.



## HOLY WEEK ACTIVITIES



### Multi-Sensory Stations of the Cross

Beginning the Monday of Holy Week, you will have the opportunity to walk with Jesus on his way to the cross and experience the multi-sensory Stations of the Cross set up inside and outside of the church campus. Join us weekdays (8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) and evenings on Wednesday (until 7:30 p.m.), Thursday and Friday (5:00-6:45 p.m.). Booklets will be available in the office and Fellowship Hall foyer to guide you to the locations of each station.

*Continued on page 2...*

## **HOLY WEEK ACTIVITIES continued...**

### **Holy Thursday**

**Thurs., March 29, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary**

A powerful, original drama will be performed, **The Seder That Changed Everything** by Rev. Dr. Evy McDonald. May your heart be touched by the reflections of Jesus and his disciples (see page 3).

### **Good Friday**

**Fri., March 30, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary**

**Were You There?** A Tenebrae service of increasing darkness as we remember the last days of Jesus' life, as told by the Gospel of Luke.

### **Holy Saturday**

**Sat., March 31, 10:00 a.m., Courtyard** Come and walk with Jesus as He makes his way to the cross to bring us new life out of the darkness. Pastor Tammy will guide a group through the multi-sensory Stations of the Cross accompanied by Lillian Porter on flute. If you need a wheelchair to participate, please call the church office in advance and let us know.

## **Easter Sunday — Sun., April 1**



### **6:00 a.m. — Sunrise Service**

An outdoor service on the church labyrinth, led by the St. Mark's youth, with Holy Communion.

### **7:00 - 10:30 a.m. — Pancake Breakfast**

Breakfast served on the West Patio, sponsored by the St. Mark's youth. Donations benefit Sierra Service Mission Project.

### **8:15 and 9:45 a.m. — Traditional Worship Service**

**Message: Conquering Death!**

A service of joyful celebration with traditional hymns accompanied by an orchestra, organ, and Chancel Choir, with Holy Communion. Bring a fresh flower to decorate the floral cross located at the Sanctuary entrance.

### **11:15 a.m. — The Gathering**

**Message: Conquering Death!**

A modern service with worship songs led by a Praise Team and accompanied by a band with Holy Communion. Bring a fresh flower to decorate the floral cross located at the Sanctuary entrance.

## **Linda Girard to be Honored with Leadership Award**

St. Mark's member, Linda Girard, will be recognized for her HIV/AIDS leadership role at worship service, **Sunday, March 25, at 8:15 a.m.** Scott Blades, the Executive Director of the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN), will present Linda with the **Center for Health and Hope's 2018 Leadership Award** for her extraordinary service as one of the most active and long-serving volunteers in Southern Arizona's HIV community. The award

will also be presented to Linda during the 4th Annual Swinging@AIDS benefit weekend (March 24 and March 25).



Linda serves as chair of the HIV/AIDS Ministry Committee for St. Mark's, as well as fills the position as St. Mark's congregational liaison to Tucson HIV/AIDS Interfaith Network (TIHAN). Linda has devoted the past 25 years to HIV awareness and support. A founding board member of TIHAN, she has been an organizational volunteer for the past 24 years. As chair of the HIV/AIDS Ministry at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, she has helped raise thousands of dollars for TIHAN and the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF), plus ensuring the congregation provides desserts for the Food for Life meal program of SAAF. To view the full press release regarding this Leadership Award go to [www.umcstmarks.org/pressrelease.lgirard.pdf](http://www.umcstmarks.org/pressrelease.lgirard.pdf).

## **The Seder That Changed Everything**



Join us Holy Thursday, March 29, at 7:00 p.m., in St. Mark's Sanctuary for a powerful drama, ***The Seder That Changed Everything***. Witness the accounts of Jesus and his disciples, both men and women, during this last Passover meal they would share together. Experience the connection to the roots of our Christian faith. See the love Jesus has for everyone including his betrayer.

## **LOGO SHOP Sale... coming soon!**



Get ready to purchase some of our great new Logo products, and order logo shirts and caps. Our Spring Logo Shop sale will be held on **Sundays, April 8 and 15**. Look for the table in the courtyard.

You'll have a chance to pick up some great items:

- large utility tote
- clear plastic stadium tote
- insulated (9x13) carrier for hot/cold dishes
- new grocery bags
- lunch totes

We'll also have a limited supply of a new insulated pop-top cooler that might be perfect for your transporting needs! Orders for embroidered shirts and caps will be taken.

**Payment will be DUE for all items, even ordered clothing, at the time of purchase – so come prepared!** Bring your cash, check book, or credit card so you can take home these wonderful items and order clothing with our St. Mark's logo. The products also make wonderful gifts, too! This is a great way to carry our brand (St. Mark's logo) into the community whenever we use or wear the logo items. This will be the last chance until fall to make logo item purchases, so we're counting on YOU to come and buy and help spread the word!

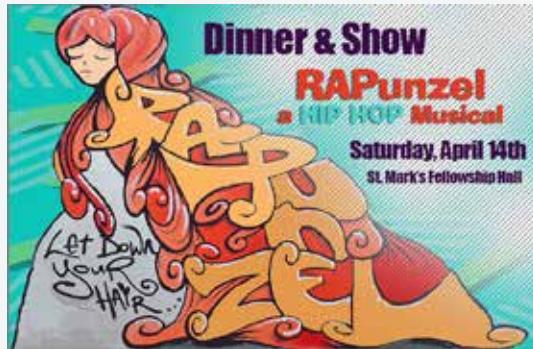
## **Pet Memorial Service**

The Animal Ministry Team invites our church and local community to its annual Pet Memorial Service on

Sunday, April 8, at 3:00 p.m. Experience a time to acknowledge and respect the importance animals have held in our hearts and lives, and to celebrate their place in God's creation. It doesn't matter how recent or long ago your loss occurred.

If you would like your pet's picture to appear in a video montage during the service, please email it to [animalministry@umcstmarks.org](mailto:animalministry@umcstmarks.org) no later than Friday, April 6. (You can also bring a photo to the church office to be scanned.) The video will provide a time to honor their memories.

Following the service, members of the St. Mark's Animal Ministry Team will offer refreshments in the Welcome Center, providing time for participants to mingle and share stories with others who understand. You may even wish to bring a photo with you for this time of sharing. Several therapy dogs will also be available to offer comfort. Please feel free to share this invitation with others who would be interested.



## **RAPunzel HIP HOP Musical**

Coming Soon! Dinner and Live Show, here at St. Mark's! Join us on April 14 for a wonderful show, courtesy of Live Theatre Workshop, **RAPunzel**. Join us for some pizza, salad, and a fun family play for all ages. It's the typical story of boy meets girl. Only this girl was kidnapped as an infant, locked away in a tall tower, and forced to grow her hair long so her evil step-mother can climb in and out of the tower. When a prince stumbles across Rapunzel in her tower, a true love blossoms. But if the evil step-mother has anything to say about it, this love will not succeed. Tickets are available in the church office for only \$3 each. Reservations can be made online at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094aab623abf85-rapunzel>, or at the office.

# ***Living The Questions 2.0***

If you find it interesting to sit down and talk about current theological topics and about the future of the Christian faith, *Living The Questions* might be something to put on your calendar.

This seven-week group experience is an open minded alternative to answers written in stone. Using brief video discussion starters, **LtQ** gives participants a chance to interact and probe current life issues against the backdrop of information provided by the video presenters: Marcus Borg, Dom Crossan, John Shelby Spong, Diana Butler Bass and others.

**LtQ** begins Monday, April 9, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. in the Library. Facilitators are Rev. Roger Pierce and Art Ragland. You may register online at [www.umcstmarks.org](http://www.umcstmarks.org) and following the Classes & Registration link, or call the office (297-2062) to sign up.



## ***Invitation to the New Testament***

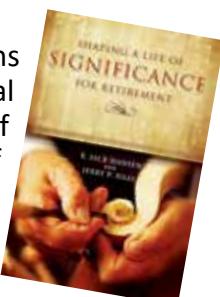
Have you ever wanted to get the big picture about the New Testament? To learn more about Jesus' ministry and the development of the early church?

Please join us on March 22 at 1:30 p.m., Rm. 20 for this short-term class. Alberta Farnsworth and Linda Sterling are facilitating.

## ***Shaping A Life Of Significance For Retirement***

There is still time to sign up for a six-week book study, *Shaping A Life Of Significance For Retirement*. Class starts for this book study on March 26!

The book focuses on personal dimensions of the move from fulltime work to partial or full retirement. It identifies some of the key transitions in the first years of retirement, as well as opportunities and challenges in this phase of life.



If interested, sign up on the Adult Spiritual Growth bulletin board in the courtyard, or online at [www.umcstmarks.org](http://www.umcstmarks.org) using the Classes and Registration link, or call the church office (297-2062). Class meets Mondays from 6:00-7:30 p.m., March 26 through April 30, and is led by Bill Fritz.

## ***Spiritual Retreat Recap: "Let's Have More!"***

Twenty-one St. Mark's folks attended a special Lenten Spiritual Retreat, *Grounded In Grace*, at the Redemptorist Renewal Center recently. Rev. Roger Pierce presented information and practical applications of five Spiritual Disciplines that can help individuals or groups deepen their spiritual faith.

The day included sharing opportunities as the whole group met to examine the specific disciplines and free, unstructured time in the beautiful foothills of west Tucson for meditation, self-examination, and the beginning steps of creating a Rule of Life.

There was an overwhelming consensus that St. Mark's should have at least two spiritual retreats each year...some said "at least four!"

Comments from attendees included these:

The opportunity for deep spiritual sharing and fellowship is a blessing.

This retreat gave me the opportunity to be in community with others. It also gave me ideas and confidence to pursue my faith.

Thank you! This is going to be valuable in the future." The opportunity for deep spiritual sharing and fellowship is a blessing.

I thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Taking a few hours to connect to God and others is time best spent.

Wonderful for folks who can't attend a series of classes. I came tired and stressed. Roger made it so smooth and comforting that I just flowed with interest and understanding. This session was meaningful and should be repeated.

Really enjoyed the retreat. It was so nice to have a day dedicated, other than Sunday, to God and ways we can be in communication with Him.

As always the human spiritual fellowship and connection is the greatest blessing. The retreat was so meaningful to me. I felt the promise, "the desert will lead you to your heart where I will speak..."

This is going to be valuable.

## Grace Circle of UMW

The Grace Circle of UMW will visit St. Luke's Home for their March meeting. We will meet in the church Library Tuesday, March 20, at 9:15 a.m. After a short devotion we will carpool to St. Luke's Home, 615 East Adams Street, where we will assist with organizing their inventory spaces and return to St. Mark's by Noon. You are invited to bring bottles of shampoo and conditioner for residents.



All women of the church are invited. You don't have to be a member of St. Mark's United Methodist Women or St. Mark's, or any church to attend. If you have questions, please contact Pat Adams (see directory).

## Got Support?

The **Chronic Illness/Pain and Wellness Support Group** will meet three Wednesdays this month (March 14, March 21, and March 28). This group supports both men and women who attend St. Mark's, as well as people of other faiths. Everyone is welcome.

We will be starting a new short book in the series of Chronic Illness and the Christian Life. The book is titled, "When Chronic Pain & Illness Take Everything Away: How to Mourn Our Losses." No need to order it, as there will be plenty of copies available at the meetings. Cost is \$9. As always, if you need a scholarship book, please talk to one of the facilitators. As usual, we will end our meetings with "Fun and Games With Mrs. Hunter." We believe laughter and fun are major coping skills and we make it a practice to use them in spades.

If you have any questions, call April DuBoce (see directory). Hope to see you there!

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for Memorial Gardens!

I hate to have to resort to begging, however the Meditation Gardens is in desperate need of more volunteers for our monthly work days which occur from September through May. I understand that there are many events that everyone is involved with and time is limited, so we all have choices to make. On average we have three to five volunteers who come and help for 4-5 hours with general cleanup and maintenance each month. Most of them are members of the board. We manage to get the minimum done so that the area is safe for everyone who uses it.



This month, on **March 24, at 7:00 a.m.** we will need extra bodies to complete everything we need so the Gardens are ready for Easter week. We will be planting a new tree as a memorial gift, and new plants in the Baby Memorial. Some trimming, raking and weeding may also be necessary. Please help this month, and the next, and the next, starting in March!

## Update from Christian Persecution Task Force

Following the defeat of ISIS, Christians are rebuilding in Syria. During October 2017, ISIS was defeated and removed from large parts of Syria.

Christians who had been victims of ISIS began building their lives in cities like Aleppo and Homs. With the recapture of eastern Aleppo, Christians can enter what had been a "no-go" area for them. One example is the ministry of Father Tom Tahan whose ministry helps an average of 230 families a month. With help from Open Doors, an affiliate of the United Methodist Church's Church and Society section, he was able to start two pharmacies, creating jobs for several young pharmacists.

Open Doors' program partnering with local indigenous churches to help open Centers of Hope will equip each to serve 1,000 to 1,500 families through a variety of ministries. A church in Aleppo recently purchased a ground floor of a building where they plan to establish a Center of Hope, hosting vocational training, food distribution, discipleship training, trauma counseling, etc. In Damascus, the Center of Hope is also based in church with activities such as deaf ministry, food distribution, and a clinic. A Center of Hope in the city of Homs is focusing on social-economic development, farms, and food distribution.



**Prayer:** Dear Lord, please bless our brothers and sisters in Syria as they rebuild the Church and their lives.

To get more information or join us in St. Marks Christian Persecution Task Force in addressing the needs of persecuted Christians, contact us [christianpersecutiontaskforce@stmarks.org](mailto:christianpersecutiontaskforce@stmarks.org)

# PRAYER CORNER

We are a praying community at St. Mark's. Besides Sunday worship, you may submit prayer requests by email to [prayerchain@umcstmarks.org](mailto:prayerchain@umcstmarks.org) or from our website [www.umcstmars.org](http://www.umcstmars.org). Also, visit our Prayer Room on campus and leave a prayer on our prayer wall.

Alan and LuAnn Roberts  
Breanne Hallam  
Carol Underwood  
Carolyn Hanna  
Connie White  
Dave Webster  
David & Floretta Harrington  
Don Chester  
Donna Reed

Gail Blevins  
Howard & Gina Russell  
Jared Bowman  
Jim Ward  
Judy Drescher  
Karen Linebarrier  
Keith & Mary Ann Glazier  
Lindsay Williams  
Lori Grimsey

Marian Shultis  
Pam Kytola  
Patricia Keele  
Ray Loughney  
Ruth Machtley  
Shirley James  
Yvonne Yare

## LOVED ONES IN THE MILITARY ...

*Please keep these people in your prayers.*

*Email additions or updates to [messenger@umcstmarks.org](mailto: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/Compernolle 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



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).

# Calendar Notes

## Sun., March 18

3:00 p.m. From Many... One Concert, Sanctuary  
4:00 p.m. Preteen and Youth Groups meet

## Mon., March 19

9:15 a.m. Holy Yoga, Fellowship Hall

## Tues., March 20

6:30 p.m. Covenant Council

## Wed., March 21

### Noon - BULLETIN DEADLINE

5:45 p.m. Community Meal, Fellowship Hall  
6:15 p.m. Soul Station  
6:15 p.m. Common Grounds

## Thurs., March 22

### Noon - MESSENGER DEADLINE

6:30 pm. Holy Yoga, Fellowship Hall

## Fri., March 23

9:30 a.m. Open Minds Book Study, Library

## Sat., March 24

9:00 a.m. Community Easter Event

## Sun., March 25

### Palm and Passion Sunday

4:00 p.m. Preteen and Youth Group

## Mon., March 26

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

## Wed., March 28

### Noon - BULLETIN DEADLINE

5:45 p.m. Community Meal, Fellowship Hall  
6:15 p.m. Soul Station  
6:15 p.m. Common Grounds



## St. Mark's Messenger

Published bi-weekly

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Website:  
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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.

## Dear Church Family Continued ...



My deepest thanks and gratitude to my St. Mark's family for all the prayers, cards, phone calls and visits during my recovery from spinal cord surgery. All that love worked, because this was one was way easier than the first time around! I am truly humbled and blessed to be a part of this church community.

**April DuBose**

Thank you for the cards and prayers, every week I feel stronger. I finished my chemo in December and had my surgery. I still am getting treatments. There have been a few problems along the way, but all is on track now. Hope to be seeing you soon!

**Gail Blevins**

## MISSIONS GIFT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS –

Wesley Methodist Campus Ministry received \$2,000 in 2017 from St. Mark's Missions Committee in support of the UA campus ministry here in Tucson, AZ which serves collegiate men and women attending either UA or Pima Community College.

Thank you for your gift received January 30, 2018 of \$1,797.04 to Rise Against Hunger. You have changed lives with your contribution, and we are truly grateful. Your gift helps build a firm foundation of support for children in Zambia. Please accept our sincere appreciation for your gift.

**Warmest regards, Rod Brooks,  
President and CEO – Rise Against Hunger.**

Due to your generosity in 2017 of \$2,600, Emerge! participants and their families were able to access Emerge! and get the safety and support they needed to live their lives free from abuse. Thank you for being part of the movement to create safety for all. Sincerely, Lauryn Bianco, Director of Development – **Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse.**

**Frontera Wesley (Wesley Foundation of UA)** needs volunteers who are willing to bring dinner on Thursday nights to serve about 15 U of A and Pima CC students at the Campus Christian Center, 715 N. Park, Tucson. You can sign up at the SignUpGenius website –  
<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090c4aacaf2fa2f49-thursday>.



# WASS UP?

March 13, 2018

Volume 19, Issue 5

“I Can Only Imagine”



## UPCOMING MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL EVENTS

**March 18, 2018—**

**4:30 to 6:45**

*I Can Only Imagine*  
Meet at the movies at  
Foothills Mall

**March 25, 2018—**

4:00 to 6:00

Service Project at the  
Wesley House

**March 29, 2018—**

Holy Thursday

7:00 p.m.

*The Sedar That Changed  
Everything* (drama)

**March 30, 2018—**

Good Friday Worship

7:00 p.m.

Last November, Rachel and Kim were blessed to be able to attend the National Youth Workers Convention. At that convention, we saw a prescreening of the movie “I Can Only Imagine.” It’s a true story of the artist who formed the Christian band, MercyMe. We loved the movie so much, that we want all of you to see it with us. Your admission is only \$2.00. Friends and family invited.

## HOLY WEEK Leads us to Easter Sunday

Holy week begins with Palm Sunday, marking Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

On Holy Thursday at 7p.m. in the sanctuary, our church's drama group will present *The Seder That Changed Everything*.

On Good Friday, the choir will present a Tenebrae Service.

Confirmands are required to attend Holy Week services, but all of us are encouraged to do so.

Find us on Social Media!



St. Mark's Youth Group



stmarksumyf

a note from the

# YOUTH DIRECTOR

This is a very exciting season in the life of the church. Before we know it, it will be Holy Week (see reverse side).

I invite you to notice all of the preparations for Easter. Our Confirmands will attend Holy Week services; the SSP participants are eagerly awaiting the pancake breakfast schedule; and *Grace Notes* is practicing for the Sunrise Service. And, have you ever thought about the people who make sure that the music is perfect, there are greeters in worship, the sound works, etc.?

More importantly, Jesus prepared for this all of his life. Scripture tells us that he knew exactly what was in store for him.

Don't let this season pass you by. Make sure that, on Easter Sunday, you're ready to greet the morning with a joyful "Hallelujah!"

Blessings, Kim

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."



Sierra Service Project

On April 1, we'll have our **Easter Pancake Breakfast**. (We love 'em) Then, on May 12th, we'll have our **Golf Tournament**. SSP participants should be looking for donations for the silent auction, as well as individuals or businesses who are willing to sponsor a hole. Also, the **second payment of \$60** is due in April. (Hint: that makes the first payment of \$40 past due!)

## Middle School Moments

Practice makes perfect. When I was growing up, I played both in the band and orchestra at different times. I switched instruments and loved learning new things. What I didn't love was practicing. I was pretty sure my mom was just trying to make me miserable when she made me practice whatever I was playing at the time. When I was in high school, I started playing the snare drum in marching band. This was a whole new ball game....when I made a mistake EVERYONE could hear! So...I decided I better listen, and I better practice. And you know what? It's worked! I got better and better.

It's not only music, though. I find that I have to "practice" a lot. I have to practice being kind (to other people and to myself!). I have to practice my faith. I have to practice forgiveness. All of these things we need to remind ourselves to do, and do it...and eventually it gets easier and easier to just do it! What is it that you practice?

See you Sunday!  
Rachel



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## Reflections

On Feb. 19, 2018, 34 members and friends of St. Mark's left for Israel on a journey to learn about the land of Jesus and the Bible, and strengthen their faith as they were immersed in this land. Twelve returned home on Feb. 28, while 22 others spent three extra days exploring Jerusalem. Everyone is safely home now, although some are still battling colds and coughs, and trying to recover from jet lag. One person said, "This completely changes how I read the Bible." Another said, "I got to know and love others from my church who share my faith." Several said, "Deep experiences of Jesus' land help me know him better and understand the land and people more fully." Since I've been to Israel before, people have asked me about highlights for me from this journey. Here's a few thoughts:

**T**We had the privilege of visiting the Temple Mount, the site of the original Jewish temple and the second temple, and now the home of the Dome of the Rock. Four years ago we were unable to visit here, but on a drizzly and uncrowded morning, we had the joy of standing in the place where Jesus taught, and his people worshipped and prayed.



**T**We visited places in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem that we had not seen before, including the stairway with tiny crosses carved into the walls by long-ago pilgrims (I'll share pictures in worship on Good Friday evening), and small chapels in the underground.

**T**Visiting the Golan Heights, we stood in the ruins at Caesarea Philippi, the place where Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" and he replied, "You are the Messiah."

**T**At the Jordan River, we sang and prayed and remembered our baptism with water from the river, and were reminded that we are God's beloved ones, called to serve Jesus Christ in our hurting world.

**T**Late one afternoon, we met with Elizabeth Heft, from the Methodist Liaison Office, who lives and works in Bethlehem as a missionary for the General Board of Global Ministries. She talked about her work and experiences as a high school math and Bible teacher at the Jerusalem School Bethlehem, where Muslim and Christian youth study together. Her deep faith and commitment to peace in our world was so evident – I'll be sharing more about her and the work there. And much more.

I'm grateful for the chance to lead this journey with Art, and Paul and Sallyann Wassmuth, and the life-changing experiences laid upon the hearts of those who traveled to Israel. It was especially meaningful to share this journey during Lent, when we listen to the voice of God within us to change and mold us more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

*Blessings, Sharon*

P.S. After Easter I'll resume the ***State of the Church*** message. I know I said I'd do that with this message, but I couldn't resist sharing about our recent journey.