



The Carillon

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The monthly newsletter of
St. Mark's United Church of Christ
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EVANGELISM MESSAGE
“Prayer enlarges the heart
until it is capable of containing
God’s gift of himself.”
Mother Teresa

>>> July 2021

Prayer Calendar



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 CINDY JOHNSON <i>Independence Day</i>	28 DAVE & HJ TUNES <i>Independence Day Holiday</i>	29 RAYMOND & PHILOMENA KEATH	30	1 BRENSA HUMMEL	2 CHARLES & BLANCHE HUMMEL	DOUG & MARGES HUMMEL BLAINE & SETH
4 CINDY JOHNSON <i>Independence Day</i>	5 DAVE & HJ TUNES <i>Independence Day Holiday</i>	6 RAYMOND & PHILOMENA KEATH	7 JEANINE KEEFER	8 EMILY KING	9 MICHAEL & CINDY KLARH	10 BELLAH, AUSTEN & MORGAN KLINE
11 NELL & GLENN KLINE	12 RICHARD & SUSAN KLINE	13 JENNIFER PATRICK & NICHA KNIGHT	14 CHAD, AMY, ADAM, NATHAN & FIDEL KOEHLER	15 JOYCE & STEPHEN ROEHLER	16 JACQUELINE ROONS	17 CARL, JULIE, KALI & CASEY KRAUSE
18 ANNA MARIE LAUER	19 GARY & KIM LEHMAN	20 JANET LEHMAN	21 ROBERT & ROSE LEIBY	22 HOLLY & DANIEL LIGHTNER, AUSTINE, EVAN	23 MARIO & MADISON LUCIOTTI	24 PAM & TOM HANBECKS, JOSH & CARDLINE
25 BOB & LINDA MEYER	26 EVA MILLER	27 SIERRA MOYER	28 JANE MOYLE	29 DAVID & HAREN MUSSELOWHITE, NATAN & GRAHAM	30 MEREDITH & SEAN MYERS, CHARLEIGH & JAN	31 NEATHER MOLL

The Journey Continues...

Something that has brought me joy lately is seeing so many people coming back to worship on Sunday morning. It may not seem like much, but for a pastor to see people in the pews on Sunday, it just feels good. I don't know about you, but before the pandemic, I took the opportunity to meet in public places for granted. After the pandemic hit, and only a handful of people were in the sanctuary for the broadcast on Facebook, the reality of "social distancing" really hit home for me. Leading worship in a sanctuary that was basically empty felt odd and awkward. But now that people are coming back, I am feeling blessed and thankful.

While we are talking about attendance numbers, I learned something recently that I found very interesting. Did you know only 11% of the 178 churches in the Penn Central Conference of the UCC average over 100 people in worship on Sunday morning? Those are pre-pandemic numbers of course, but St. Mark's average of over 100 people in worship every week (pre-pandemic) puts us among the top 20 of the largest churches in the Penn Central Conference. I had no idea! Of the remaining 158 churches, only 29% average between 50 – 99 in worship with 60% averaging less than 50 in worship. And those attendance numbers aren't just unique to the UCC. All of the mainline denominational churches (Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.) have experienced a similar decline in attendance. So what is going on? Why are so few people coming to church? Is Christianity going away?

Well, to answer that question: No, Christianity is not going away. The truth is, there are multiple reasons for the lower attendance numbers. One of those reasons is that people are busier these days and their priorities are different than they were in past decades. But even that isn't the biggest reason. One of the biggest reasons for the drop in church attendance is the drop in birth rate in our nation. In 1950 (just a couple of years into the baby boom generation), the birth rate in our country was 24.2 for every 1,000 people. In 2019, the birth rate declined to 12.001 per 1,000 people. So our churches have less than ½ the children today than 60 or 70 years ago.

Another important factor: in the past the church was not only able to maintain its membership through births, but also from people living in one place (or at least one town) their whole lives. These days, the average length of time Americans live in their homes is 13 years. In central PA, that average is slightly higher at 16 years. But there are some parts of the country where the average length of time people stay in their homes is only 7 years. With so many people moving from place to place coupled with the lower birth rate, mainline denominational churches (like St. Mark's) are seeing declining numbers because we operate with the mentality that people will get married, join our church, have lots of children, and never move away.

In light of these changes in society, what we need to do as a church to remain viable is rethink what we do and reinforce who we are. We need to rethink how we do Sunday School, what membership looks like, and how people can access our worship services. Fortunately, we've already addressed this access to our worship services because the pandemic forced us to change and broadcast our services online. Thanks be to God, too, because now we're reaching people we've never reached before. You will be seeing and hearing about more adaptations to membership and Christian Education in the coming months.

And what do we need to reinforce? Simple, we need to reinforce our relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The churches that survive and thrive (even if they only have 30 – 40 people in worship) are the churches where people experience the hope, love, and joy of our Savior. If people aren't experiencing Jesus, the church will not survive. So we need to stay focused on who Jesus is and the hope he brings to our broken and divided world. In other words, we need to keep "the main thing the main thing." If we keep our Savior at the center of what we do, the vibrancy of our church will be revealed. And once we discover our vibrancy, everything else will take care of itself.

The Journey Continues...

Pastor Dave

What's happening at St. Mark's

Volunteers Needed

For us to move forward, we need help from the entire congregation, not a handful. You'll be seeing advertisements for volunteers being needed to do things like Children's Message, Children's Church, the Nursery, etc. We hope to continue our planning of these things over the summer so we can bring them all back to life in September. Please consider being part of these programs as we move forward. Please reach out to Becky Colban if you have any interest in any of these items.

While we need to put together the appropriate job description and such to move forward with getting a music coordinator, this won't happen overnight. Therefore, if you'd like to help with special music, reach out to Kim Shearer or Cindy Johnson.

Kid's Kamp

2021 will be the 31st edition of Kid's Kamp. Please mark July 19th – 22nd on your kid's, grandkid's, niece's, nephew's calendar. This year again will be a modified edition of KK. This year, we will be back to full days of 9-4 Monday – Thursday. There will be NO Wednesday night program or Wednesday night sleepover. In lieu of the Wednesday night program, the kids will be doing a Facebook Live Stream on Thursday at noon. Why Thursday at noon and not Wednesday at noon.....um, we need the extra day of practice. For more information, contact Marilyn Reppert or Kathy Follett. By the time you read this, all participants of the last two years should've received an invite in the mail. If you didn't, holler.

Vesper Services

Vesper services and Fellowship Time are being tried once a month at Pine Acres. While June's was postponed to Sunday June 27th, July will be July 17th and then August is August 20th. September we are looking for something a little different so that date will be announced. All vesper services are at 6:30 with a fellowship time after. If you plan to stay for the fellowship time, please sign up to ensure we have enough ice cream or smores. You can come without signing up, the sign up is to give us a ballpark of number of people.

If vespers needs to be postponed due to weather, we will post the announcement on Facebook by 5 PM. If you are uncertain or don't have Facebook, feel free to call/text Pastor Dave or myself. Postponing vespers does not impact Sunday's service. Sunday's service will be at 9:00 AM. It is that service that will be live streamed.

I continue to be asked why we don't have our regular Sunday services at Pine Acres during the summer. Three reasons. Weather is the biggest challenge and stresser. Our livestream capability is very limited and iffy. Pine Acres is rented many weekends during the summer. To do vespers as we are, I "reserved" the dates on the calendar back in February for us to use.

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Pastor Dave now has a Wednesday evening Bible Study starting at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. This Bible Study is very similar to the morning Bible Study but is held in the evenings.

Mission 2021

The mission team will again be staying in Lebanon this year. We will be working with some of our friends and neighbors in the community such as Coleman's Park and Stoever's Dam Park. We also have some projects planned around the church building and hoping to do another project at Pine Acres that will benefit the younger kids. We have one day reserved to help any members of the congregation with small projects around their house. If there's something that you need, reach out to Kathy for more information.

Kathy



Kathy's July Blog

It was hard to find a pic to fit this month's blog because Snoopy is such a good dog. This is the best I could do... Snoopy sees Enemy Troop Movement. What is the enemy Snoopy sees? Identity Theft. What is Identity Theft? Simply put, it is when someone uses your information to do something without your approval.

Recently, I received that dreaded call from my employer. Kathy someone used your information to submit an unemployment claim on your behalf. They used my social security number, my date of birth, my employer's name exactly as it's known (most of you don't know beyond Highmark).

How could that be? I work in IT. We are taught what to do and what not to do. But still it happened. In talking with the police officer, he said with all the data that is out there, meaning on the internet, this is a very, very common occurrence. As Charlie Brown would say....RATS.

A few quick tips to help protect you:

. Phone calls

Never ever give any credit card number, social security number, date of birth over the phone of someone who calls you. You always need to initiate the phone call. The exception would be if someone is returning a phone call that you placed and only then, ensure it is coming from whom you think it is.

Watch for those scam calls. We've all heard about the calls where they say your grandchildren are in trouble and you need to send money or whatever. Hang up and call your grandchildren.

Screen your phone calls. I rarely answer my landline or my cell phone unless I know who it is. I'll answer if I know, otherwise, it goes to voicemail.

. Emails

Don't ever reply to someone you don't know. Check the email address of who is sending you the email. If the email address doesn't feel or look right, it most likely isn't. If the content of the email doesn't feel right, i.e. bogus bank, it most likely isn't.

Don't ever click on a link in an email asking for some information. I typically will type the URL from the link in a new window and if it says not found, guess what, DON'T click on the link. It's an imposter trying to get access to your computer.

Identity theft costs businesses billions of dollars and the pandemic has caused that to double since 2018. Many victims of identity theft are senior citizens that don't monitor their accounts and won't figure out they've had new accounts opened until it's too late. The key is to be vigilant in monitoring your bank accounts, your credit cards and your credit rating. While it is a pain, it will only help you in the long run.

Stay safe and Snoopy and I'll see you in August.

Kathy



YOUTH MISSION WEEK

PINE ACRES

AUG. 8, 2021 - AUG. 14, 2021

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD DONATIONS

We are asking the congregation to participate in the Mission Week by donating non-perishable food items.

The donation slips will appear in the Narthex on Sunday July 4, 2021. Any donation (either food or monetary) will be greatly appreciated. Envelopes will be available for the monetary donations.

All donations will be accepted until Aug.1, 2021 in the church office.

Thank you in advance for your generous support of this youth group project.

Any questions, please contact Diane Vogel 717-269-9431