

Living Nativity & Dinner:

This coming Saturday, December 15
at 5:30 p.m.

The old stable has been pulled from its cramped storage. Our beloved crèche gently lifted from her keeping place. Painted sheep are stirring, a few new ones added to the flock. No real animals this year, but the drama is ever charming.

The Living Nativity will be held inside the sanctuary. All children everywhere are invited to participate as shepherds and angels. No rehearsal necessary, simply show up to the church office by 5:00 p.m. on Saturday evening. Costumes are provided.

Following the drama of the nativity story, walk toward 'Bethlehem' for a close-up view of the cast of characters, then find your way to the gourmet meal prepared by Roger, Trish, and their team of professionals. Dinner is on a donation basis to support the Tijuana Build Project. Suggested donations are \$10 per adult (13+) and \$5 for children.

Finally, feast on hot cocoa, cookies, and happy company under the stars. And ring those Christmas bells!



Cookies for Living Nativity and the Homebound

St. Mark's will once again be hosting the Living Nativity and taking cookie trays to our homebound members and we need your help. Whether you bake or buy, we invite you to bring your tasty treats to St. Mark's on Saturday, December 15 before 3 PM to share with the community and those who are unable to attend church. Everyone is invited to participate in this offering of love. No cookies will be turned away.

Longest Night Service Fri. Dec. 21 at 6:30 p.m.

St. Mark's recognizes that often during the holidays there is grief or sorrow that cannot be erased by carols and parties. To help those who need a quiet place to sit, remember, and reflect we offer the **Longest Night Service** on the Winter Solstice, **Dec. 21**. The service begins at **6:30 p.m.** This is a service where people can come to sit, pray, hum or sing quietly, and light candles to acknowledge the darkness and sadness that may be very close.



Christmas Week: Focus on Gratitude

This is a ferociously busy time of year, but the heart of the Christmas season is a perfect time to think deeply about what it means to be a thankful people. How might we better understand the real power of grateful living, and apply it to our life together?

Monday, Dec. 17 through Thursday, Dec. 20 from 1 to 2:15 p.m. in the New Room—Rev. Craig will lead a searching daily conversation about the meaning of gratitude, guided by Diana Butler Bass' book *Grateful*. Reading the book is NOT required. Just come on by!

Sunday School Advent Giving Project

A wooden cradle standing in the Narthex is filling with infant items for the non-profit agency, Birthline, located a few blocks north of St. Mark's. Swaddling blankets, digital thermometers, hats, lotions/shampoo, small board books, diapers, and new/gently used clothing are needed. Your Christmas contributions to socially challenged mommies with new babies are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Poinsettias for the Altar

Poinsettias will be available to purchase to decorate the altar for Christmas. **The cost is \$8 per plant.** You can place your order through December 18. Order envelopes can be found in the Sunday bulletin and in the church office.

Interested in Becoming a Member (or Wondering What It Means)?

Are you interested in becoming a member of St. Mark's or just wondering what that even means? Do you want to know more about the United Methodist Church? Rev. Lydia will be leading a four week class that will take place after Sunday morning services in the month of January. We will meet in the new room during coffee hour. All are welcome to this class.

Scholarships for January 2019

In 1979 a College Scholarship Fund was established at St. Mark's to aid students at our church with some of the costs of an undergraduate or graduate education. We are thankful for this fund and would like to assist you. This year we are awarding scholarships in January 2019. If you are enrolled at a college or university for this school year, St. Mark's Scholarship forms are now available in the church office.



Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. And the apostle Paul writes "and the greatest of these is LOVE." Movies, music and society around us show us what love looks like but usually it is self-centered. I love somebody because they make ME feel good! I love somebody because they treat ME well! But deep and mature love is actually the kindness we give to one another no matter how they make us feel. This is the love that will save the world.

W2SM Warrior to Soul Mate

Thank you to everyone who gave to the Veterans Day Offering. We raised \$833 for the Warrior to Soul Mate Program which is designed to help couples learn effective communication skills to gain emotional wisdom as a way to strengthen and/or re-build their relationships.

Monthly Finance Report

Pledge/Envelope Giving for November 2018

November	Year-to-Date
\$28,342.69	\$317,789.34

Required to Meet Budget

4 Sunday Month	Year-to-Date
\$29,230.76	\$350,461.52

If you would like to check to see if you are behind on your pledge, please call our wonderful finance secretary, Arlene Dempster, at 858-273-9938.

A Gift for the Staff

During this holiday season the Pastor/Parish Committee (PPRC) wishes to offer you the opportunity to thank the hard working church staff and ministers with a monetary gift. If you would like to contribute to this gift from the congregation, please give your donations to a PPRC committee member or you may send it to the church office. Please be sure to designate your contribution as "staff gift". PPRC members are: Andy Guevara, Brad Cannon, Arlene Dempster, Carol Brown, Kirk Hinkleman, Robin Nuspl and Susan Holko. Thank you!

Meals for Teens at Storefront

St. Mark's provides dinner on the fourth Monday of each month to Storefront, which supports homeless youth in the Hillcrest area. A meal is delivered to Storefront at 6 p.m. and the group delivering the meal can choose to stay and eat with the youth or set out the meal and leave. The sign-up sheet for 2019 is on the announcement board in the church library. When signing up, please be sure to provide the name of persons of group delivering the meal as well as a contact phone number. Please contact Hope Coleman at 619-275-0603 for more information.

In Our Prayers

- ♥ Forrest Sedgwick
- ♥ Phyllis Drewett
- ♥ Sherry Forrest
- ♥ Vera Morrison
- ♥ Al Johannesen
- ♥ Hope Coleman
- ♥ Brad Cannon

Our military personnel:

- ♥ Kris Brendal, Army
- ♥ Robert S. Chisholm, Navy
- ♥ Craig Clemans, Marines
- ♥ Paul Clemans, Air Force
- ♥ Blake Cross, Navy
- ♥ Samuel England, Navy
- ♥ Lenny Hezelett, Navy
- ♥ Amanda Hoadley, Navy
- ♥ Michael Hunter, Navy
- ♥ Brady Jackson, Army
- ♥ Jeremy Munson, Navy
- ♥ Milo Riegle, Marines
- ♥ Casper Stalnaker, Navy
- ♥ Nathan Streeter, Army
- ♥ Robert Tarango, Navy



You are invited to participate in the St Mark's prayer chain via email. Prayer requests will be sent to you via an email account you provide; you will not be asked to do anything other than offer your private prayers for requests you receive. To participate, please email Donna Newby at donewby@san.rr.com.

St. Mark's Messenger (USPS 516-260) is published weekly by St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 3502 Clairemont Drive, San Diego CA 92117. Periodicals Postage paid at San Diego, CA POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Mark's Messenger, 3502 Clairemont Dr, S.D., CA 92117



Did you know there is more information on our website and in the email Messenger?

- Learn the details of what YOU can do to help asylum seekers: make a hygiene kit! Details on-line and in the office.
- Need a pick-me-up? Videos of all sermons are on-line!

If you don't want to miss a thing, subscribe to the email Messenger at www.stmarksumcsd.org.

Office Volunteer Needed

Do you have some free time during the week? Consider becoming an office volunteer. We currently need help on Monday mornings from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. For more information contact the office at 858-273-1480.

Pastor's Sunday

In Pastor's Sunday School we study the lectionary texts which follow the church calendar. For Sunday, December 16:

- Zephaniah 3:14-20
- Isaiah 12:2-6
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:7-18

It's an informal study, **always open to all**, at 8:30 AM in the New Room.



Next Week @ A Glance

Saturday, December 15, 2018

3:00PM Cookie drop off/SH
5:30PM Living Nativity/Sanc
6:30PM Catered Dinner/SH

Sunday, December 16, 2018

8:30AM Pastor's Sunday School/NR
9:30AM Service/Sanc
12:00PM Tongan Fellowship/Sanc

Monday, December 17, 2018

1:00PM Gratitude Study/NR
4:00PM CCSA Board Mtg/CR
6:00PM Carillon Bells/SH
6:45PM AA Meeting-Wmn/RM 9

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

1:00PM Gratitude Study/NR
6:00PM Family Advent/SH
6:00PM Finance Cmte Mtg/NR
7:00PM Church Council Mtg/SH
7:15PM AA Meeting/RM 9

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

1:00PM Gratitude Study/NR
5:30PM Bible Study/NR
6:00PM Glory Ringers/SH

Thursday, December 20, 2018

12:00PM Midday Mindfulness/NR
1:00PM Interfaith Disaster Council/NR
1:00PM Gratitude Study/TBD
4:00PM Cherub Choir/CR
5:20PM Hallelujah Chimes/SH
6:30PM Community Forum/RM 10
7:00PM Boy Scouts/SH
7:00PM Choir Rehearsal/CR
7:15PM AA Meeting-Wmn/RM 9

Friday, December 21, 2018

6:30PM Longest Night Service/Sanc

Sunday, December 23, 2018

8:30AM Pastor's Sunday School/NR
9:30AM Service/Sanc
10:45AM Blood Pressure Scrn/NR
12:00PM Tongan Fellowship/Sanc

CR=Choir Room Sanc=Sanctuary
Lib=Library SH=Social Hall
NR=New Room

***If you have any questions about or would like to add an event to the church calendar, please contact the church office at 858-273-1480 or by email at office@stmarksumcsd.org.**

St. Mark's Messenger

December 11, 2018

3502 CLAIREMONT DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92117

Vol. 45: Issue 46

Keeping In Touch

"I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

"So, with many other exhortations, [John the Baptist] proclaimed the good news to the people." Luke 3:16-18

We can get mixed messages this time of year. When we shop for gifts or groceries, we may hear the herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn king." On the other hand, in our gospel reading this week, we hear the chaff burn "with unquenchable fire."

The expressions "winnowing fork" and "unquenchable fire" can be a little frightening to us. It may seem like this is good news only for those who make it their business to scare people into "right" living. Classic "fire and brimstone" preaching is still how many people are introduced to the Christian faith. For some, it even becomes a cornerstone of their spiritual life. Many others are scared away.

The people who first heard these words considered good grain very precious, and wheat was especially prized and relatively rare. If you had some wheat, you wanted to be sure the grain was separated properly, and not contaminated with husks, or chaff. It was quite tricky to completely separate wheat from chaff, but it was vital to preserve the value of the grain.

So hearing about chaff being treated this way might be good news if you're growing grain. The winnowing fork would clear away the chaff by forcing air through the grain, so that it doesn't blow back into the wheat. And then the chaff would be burned in a fire that doesn't even have to be tended, because it cannot go out. This process might sound ideal to someone who works and sweats trying to support their family by harvesting grain.

Someone like this would understand right away that the point of separating the wheat from the chaff was not destroying the chaff, but preserving the wheat. That's the whole point. Don't mess up the grain. That's where the nourishment for sustaining life is.

Also, the writer James Kay says that chaff destruction might have seemed like good news to the crowds who had put up with the bad guys for so long--the Romans, the system, the Herods. In other words, the fire was being prepared for them, and that was good news.

But John's message is meant for everyone, of course. Not just those who I decide need to hear it, or those the first century crowd decides, or a fire-and-brimstone preacher decides.

Today, with Advent in full bloom and Christmas a scant two weeks (gasp) away, we can remember that the point is to preserve the wheat. And just keep the chaff out of the picture. The chaff will be taken care of. Pay attention to the wheat.

Maybe there's a way to do this in the midst of getting together with our family, friends and coworkers in this season. Maybe (and I do mean just maybe) we can focus on and abide in their best qualities. Maybe we can trust that their irritating, chaffy qualities will take care of themselves.

There's a name for this. It begins with L. Hint: it has something to do with this Sunday of Advent. Another hint: Jesus talked a whole lot about it.

See you at the Living Nativity this Saturday at 5:30, and in church on Sunday morning at 9:30!

Craig



Rev. Craig Dorval
Senior Minister

Sunday, December 16, 2018

9:30 AM Service
Rev. Craig Dorval

Child Care, Room 1

Sunday School
Rooms 6, 8 & 10



WORSHIP ATTENDANCE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9:
156

