

St. Mark's Messenger

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DEAR FRIENDS,

This Sunday we consider the classic “turn the other cheek” text from the Sermon on the Mount, which also says “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

There’s a certain delightful paradox in superimposing love on hate this way. It’s often fun to talk about, though it is difficult to understand, much less accept in our daily lives. This is the ongoing problem of faith—easy to say, hard to do. One simple reason for this is that, for all our efforts to describe it and explain it, faith remains an abstraction. Life, on the other hand, happens in the detail of the moment.

In the January 20 issue of *The Christian Century*, Elizabeth Palmer moves “love your enemies” from the abstract to the concrete by considering these questions: Who are my enemies? Do I even have enemies?

These are good questions. I don’t know about you, but no one’s ever taken my coat, or forced me to walk one mile, or struck me on the right cheek. At least not recently. As Palmer says, I can see hatred unfolding around me, but I am not in any obvious way its immediate target.

So, if I am not aware of any personal enemies, what do these well-worn phrases from the Sermon on the Mount have to do with me? If I can’t relate to it, how can I possibly tell someone who is the target of hatred that he or she is supposed to love the person who hates them?

This brings me back to “who are my enemies?” And the corollary question, “to whom am I an enemy?” These are disturbing questions, and yet their power turns to our benefit when we meditate on them. One way to meditate on them is to simply get a pencil and paper and make two lists.

It sounds strange and audacious to actually make such lists. But when it is mindfully done, something very, very good begins.

See you in church!

Craig

(Correction: Last week I gave the incorrect date for the start of the “Living the Questions” discussion series. It begins on Monday, March 6, from 1 to 2:15 in the New Room.)

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed on Monday, February 20, in observance of President’s Day. Rev. Craig will still be conducting the video study at 1 p.m. in the New Room. The office will resume normal business hours on Tuesday, February 21. Have a safe holiday!

REGISTER FOR THE WOMEN'S RETREAT

This year's retreat theme, "Breaking Through Boundaries", will be an opportunity for each woman to reflect upon who she is and discover what God is calling her to do. It is to acknowledge that barriers are sometimes in the way and to determine when and how God is calling her to break through the boundaries that threaten to hold her back.

All women are invited to attend this retreat in Pine Valley for a fun and meaningful weekend, March 24-26. Through music, discussion, and activities attendees will explore together who we are, and the One who calls us into boldness. Let us discover together what God's written and living Word will show us.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Altar flowers are a wonderful way to honor a loved one or celebrate a special occasion. There are several dates for the remainder of the year that no one has ordered flowers for the altar. Please be sure to stop by the church office to place an order

The cost for a basic arrangement is \$45, and a rose arrangement is \$50. It is preferable that payment for flowers be made at the time the order is placed. If you have any questions, please contact Malinda in the church office.

SAVE THE DATE AND PLAN TO PARTICIPATE

"The Hunger walk for the Community Christian Service Agency (CCSA) will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2017 at Mission Bay (De Anza Cove) starting at 8 a.m. and is a 5k walk"

Read Across America at Marston Friday, March 3

Marston welcome's any volunteers that would like to read in a classroom to celebrate Dr. Suess's birthday. A volunteer can bring their own book to read or the school can provide one.

Details are as follows: 8:30 a.m. check in, 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. read in a classroom. Share your favorite book and tell how reading has impacted your life. Light refreshments will be available.

If you would like to help with this event, please contact Cindy McIntyre via email at marstonreadacrossamerica@gmail.com or you can call 858-273-2030, by February 24th.

VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED

Every week two dedicated volunteers clean the pews by organizing the information in the pew pockets, replenishing the pens, and straightening the pew Bibles in preparation for church on Sunday morning. There are currently 16 pew volunteers who rotate services every 8 weeks. We are looking to add to the group of volunteers. So if you are looking for a way to serve in the church but are limited on time, please consider becoming part of the "pew crew." Martha Hilker has been faithfully coordinating the pew crew for well over a decade, so please contact her at 858-273-4393 for more information.

CHAIR YOGA

Stretching our muscles while deep breathing is something everyone knows is important but sometimes we don't know how to get started. Maybe Chair Yoga is the place for you to begin. You do all the same stretches while using a chair to help provide stability. No headstands or pretzel bending, just moving body and breath. You are invited to chair yoga at 7:30 a.m. through the month of January in the Social Hall.

Please note: Class time has changed from 7:30 to 8 a.m. to allow more flexibility to those who need it. Please call the office for more information.

WANT A MORE-AUTHENTIC FAITH? *LIVING THE QUESTIONS* BEGINS MONDAY, MARCH 6

People know that at its core, Christianity has something very, very good to offer the human race. At the same time, many have a sense that they are alone in being a "thinking" Christian and that "salvaging" Christianity may be a hopeless task. What is needed is a safe environment where people are encouraged to ask the questions they've always wanted to ask but have been afraid to voice.

Living the Questions is a video-based study which moves beyond the traditions and rote theologies in which so many people and local churches seem to be stuck. **It will help seekers and long-time members alike to discover the profound significance of Christianity in the 21st Century and what an authentic faith can look like in today's world.**

The study begins on Monday, March 6, from 1 to 2:15 p.m. in the New Room, near the church office. It will run through Lent. All are invited.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2017

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

PREPARED FOR LENT WITH A TIMELY BOOK STUDY

It takes moral courage to provide a preferential option for the poor in obedience to the imperatives of Jesus found in Matthew 25. Dr. Paul Farmer was solving social as well as physical ills in Haiti before he had finished medical school in Boston, but he did not stop there. The subject of Tracy Kidder's biography, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* continues to inspire healing to this day. You are invited to a study which started last week on February 10, and will meet on Friday's February 17, 24 and March 3 at 10 a.m. in the home of Joy Lewis, 4904 Mt. Hay Drive. Please contact either Joy Lewis at 858-735-0691 or Debbie Abbott at 858-717-1632 for details. Books are available.

WEEKLY VIDEO STUDY CONTINUES

The origins of the Bible and Christianity are examined in-depth in the video study *First Light: Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. Filmed on location in Galilee and Jerusalem, these challenging videos feature renowned scholars John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg. The study will continue through February, from 1 to 2:15 p.m. in the New Room, near the church office. Rev. Craig leads this discussion, and you are invited to come to as many or as few sessions as you like.

MUSIC FROM THE POINT

The Vocal Jazz Ensemble and Chamber Singers from Point Loma Nazarene University will perform in our Concert Series on February 26, at 4:30 p.m. under the direction of Dr. Keith Pederson here at St. Mark's. These talented students are selected from performance groups at Point Loma Nazarene University. The Vocal Jazz Ensemble sings various styles of jazz music, both unaccompanied and with a rhythm section. The Chamber Singers perform secular and sacred music from the Renaissance to contemporary on campus, in the community, and in local churches. A reception will be held after the concert to meet and greet these students and their director. Please invite your friends and family to attend.

YOUR PRESENCE

Sunday, February 12, church attendance was 182.

PASTOR'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Begins at 8:30 a.m. in the New Room. Everyone is invited. Child care is available.

Below are the lectionary readings for this week:

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

Psalms 119:33-40

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

Matthew 5:38-48

When we joined the United Methodist Church, we made vows to commit ourselves to support the Church by "our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness."

IN OUR PRAYERS

- ♥ *Mitch and Marisa Boyer*
- ♥ *Gary Childs*
- ♥ *Zlatoslav Sokolov and Family*
- ♥ *Friends and Family of Maria Penalosa*
- ♥ *Blayne Bays*
- ♥ *Dave & Marisa Newman*
- ♥ *Terri Dillen*
- ♥ *Erin Reichman*
- ♥ *Tricia Martin*
- ♥ *Ron Hess*
- ♥ *Bernice Morrison*
- ♥ *Lee Smith*
- ♥ *Felix Mena*
- ♥ *Floyd Murphy*
- ♥ *Forrest Sedgwick*
- ♥ *Christine Kay*

and our military personnel, including:

- ♡ *Kris Brendal, Army*
- ♡ *Robert S. Chisholm, Navy*
- ♡ *Craig Clemans, Marines*
- ♡ *Paul Clemans, Air Force*
- ♡ *Blake Cross, Navy*
- ♡ *Brandon (Dempster) Lewis, Navy*
- ♡ *Samuel England, Navy*
- ♡ *Lenny Hezelett, Navy*
- ♡ *Amanda Hoadley, Navy*
- ♡ *Michael Hunter, Navy*
- ♡ *Brady Jackson, Army*
- ♡ *Jeremy Munson, Navy*
- ♡ *Milo Riegle, Marines*
- ♡ *Nathan Streeter, Army*
- ♡ *Robert Tarango, Navy*

NEXT WEEK @ A GLANCE

Monday, February 20, 2017

OFFICE CLOSED - HOLIDAY

7:00 AM Lot Maintenance/Campus
1:00 PM First Light Study/NR
4:30 PM CCSA Board Mtg/CR
6:00 PM Carillon Bells/SH

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

6:00 PM Finance Mtg/NR
7:00 PM Church Council/SH

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

12:00 PM CCSA Annual Mtg/SH
3:30 PM UMW Exec. Mtg/Lib
5:00 PM Peace Ringers/SH
5:30 PM Bible Study/NR
6:00 PM Glory Ringers/SH
Youth Group/Rm. 10

Thursday, February 23, 2017

8:00 AM Chair Yoga/SH
10:00 AM Ties of Love/SH
1:00 PM SD IDC/NR
4:15 PM Cherub & Hallelujah Choirs/CR
5:20 PM Chimes/SH
7:00 PM Chancel Choir
Boy Scouts/SH

Sunday, February 26, 2017

8:30 AM Pastor's Sunday School/NR
9:30 AM Church /Sanc
10:45 AM Blood Pressure Screening/NR
12:00 PM Tongan Fellowship
4:30 PM PLNU Concert/Sanc

ARE YOU A SMART DRIVER?

An AARP Smart Driver refresher course will be held in the Social Hall on Saturday, March 4, from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. This class is open to all who have had a Smart Driver class within the past four years. Cost is \$15 for AARP members, \$20 for non-members. Certificates will be issued which may be presented to one's car insurer for a discount on premium(s). To enroll, sign up in the church office or contact Marie Campilongo, (858) 278-4287, or e-mail: mariecamp@san.rr.com. Please invite your friends and neighbors.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY

Are you interesting in engaging in friendly and lively study of the Bible? You are always invited to drop in on Wednesday Night Bible Study, which meets weekly from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. in the New Room near the church office.

WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcing the marriage celebration of Lindsey Marie Amati and David William Van Gorder on this Saturday, February 18. A ceremony will be held at St. Marks UMC at 2 p.m. and a mini reception to follow on the patio (or in the Social Hall) after the ceremony. All are invited to attend and celebrate their marriage.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE SERVICE

There will be a Celebration of Life Service this Saturday, March 4 at 2 p.m. for Liz Cotton. All are invited to come and show your love and support to Liz's friends and family. Please bring something Liz has knitted.

GIVING ENVELOPES

Those of you who receive giving envelopes in the mail know how helpful they can be. If you do not receive giving envelopes but would like to have them, please let Arlene Dempster know. You do not need to be a member or a "pledger" to receive these envelopes. The next order will be sent to the printers March 15 (for delivery for use in May.)

EQUAL EXCHANGE

You can make a world of difference by purchasing organic and fairly traded coffee, tea, chocolate, foods and gift baskets from EQUAL EXCHANGE. These make great gifts while proceeds go to UMCOR to support farming communities worldwide. Funds go to help women as they raise children, work the land, participate in the co-op and care for their households --- often all at once. Fair Trade purchases support gender equity programs, leadership training, and other social initiatives that empower women in Latin America and Africa. Stop by the Equal Exchange table on the patio on Sunday mornings.

SERMON VIDEO AVAILABLE

Video of each Sunday's sermon is available via our website: stmarksumcsd.org/sermons or our YouTube channel: stmarksumcsd.org/youtube.

LET US KNOW!

Picture-taking and video recording are frequently done during church events. Some of those pictures may be published in our church publications, slideshows, on our website, or on our social media pages. If you do not wish to have your picture published, please let an usher know, or contact the church office by phone or email.

2017 Valentine's Day Story Collection: Celebrating Friendship

A heartfelt thank you to all of our contributors. Your stories are wonderful. They will be shared in our youth program as we discuss friendships. Often our youth first experience God's love and grace through relationships with family and friends. While Feb. 14 is traditionally associated with romance, thank you for helping us use this time to celebrate the special bond between friends. Happy Valentine's Day!

My Best Friend Dee *by Mary Alice McKinney*

I met Dee the summer before we started high school. We were on staff for a summer recreation program for elementary school kids, and besides providing lots of fun and games for younger kids, we were able to watch the building of a unique new high school! Our high school was the first anywhere public school built on a military base. Burroughs High School, named for the first CO, Admiral S.E. Burroughs, was most unusual, but our whole life was unique. We were at the then top secret Naval Ordnance Test Station China Lake, on the remote Mojave desert. We lived inside the fence in military housing, families of physicists, scientists, technicians and military staff. Students from Ridgecrest, outside the gate, families of construction and support staffs, were bussed in through the security gate. Exciting times. Dee and I met at the newly formed MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) group and attended worship services at the base Chapel. Dee was one of the first friends I made at China Lake. We took part in everything we could at High School. We were both class officers, members of the chorus, Y-Teens, GAA, started a school paper, girls basketball team and jumped into everything we could. We were elected cheerleaders and rode the team bus to games from Bishop and Lone Pine to Barstow and even Needles. Big frogs in a very small pond!

We had a small, tight group of 5-8 we called the "Buddies" and had lots of slumber parties and hung out after school in the youth canteen which we helped rebuild out of a surplus Navy building. Even had a soda fountain and dance floor. We were able to use the big Navy gym for basketball and proms and swim classes and the Officers Club pool for recreational swimming. A pretty charmed and sheltered life, and Dee and I and our group did everything together for four precious years. The Masonic order became active, and they started Job's Daughters. Dee was first Honored Queen and I was her Senior Princess. She was Jr. Prom Queen, petite and lovely. We double dated and led the grand march together. I spoke at our graduation. Dee helped me choose my theme. We two were selected to attend Girls State in Sacramento and rode up on the train with two cars

full of girls from all over southern California. We learned a lot, including how naive and sheltered and unsophisticated we were.

It was hard to go off to different colleges, but God had a plan for our lives- Dee met her husband Bob at Bakersfield College. Mack and I went to San Jose State. Then Korea blew up and we married when he was called back to Pendleton, and the next year had our first baby and moved back to China Lake where he had a job offer. Dee was home for Christmas, so our first visitors were Dee and another of our "Buddy" girlfriends, and they all brought Bill a baby gift. We did attend a couple of school reunions and built a float together and did a homecoming game "reunion" cheer session at halftime and got together occasionally. Then we moved to San Diego and Dee and Bob married and started their family in Palo Verdes, so we started sending lots of cards and emails. We served an interim at Long Beach church and Bob and Dee showed up in worship one Sunday and took us to lunch. Lots of cards- I used to keep them all, but ran out of space! We send crazy cards, and lonely cards and just because cards. Running across one being used as a bookmark is always sweet. Saw each other through bouts of cancer, loss of loved ones and celebrations of new life! She has sent me the whole Mitford series books as each one comes out. Mack and I took a side trek to Blowing Rock S.C. where the stories are based one rainy fall day and sent back two rolls of photos with all the sites from the books. We just take each along. I am so happy to share my best girlfriend with you and you can bet I will send her a copy and tell her about you and a good bonded group of friends you have developed together. Thank you for inviting me to share Dee. This has been fun! Cherish your friends, and try to keep in touch wherever your lives lead you. God bless,
Mary Alice

Colossians 3:12-14 *2Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

FRIENDS
by Sandy Plutchak

I am truly blessed to have had many wonderful friends throughout my life. I have had friends from grade school in Wisconsin, and new friends from church youth group and high school after my family moved to El Cajon. We have shared in many joys and also in difficult times. We have supported each other through the years. I have found many special friends at St. Mark's, and I am so fortunate to have had their love, friendship and support through the many mountains and a few valleys in my life.

My twin sister, Sue, is a very special friend. I feel that God tucked an angel in beside me before I was born. There is a very special bond with a twin, and Sue and I have been so very close, all through our lives. Even though we may have different opinions, we think so much alike, so we never argue. When we started a new school, we had someone to go with, so it wasn't a frightening experience. Sue was always someone that I could talk to when I needed to make a decision. So many times we have laughed with each other, prayed with each other, and a few times we have cried on each others shoulder. In school, it was great to be able to study together and to enjoy time with our friends. In college we often went on double dates, and ended up having a double wedding, so now we have the same anniversary. We have celebrated together for the 57 years that we both have been married. God gave me a very special gift when he gave me Sue as my best friend.

TNT Fellowship
by Marie Campilongo

We have belonged to the TNT fellowship group since the early 1960s. TNT stood for "Twenties 'N Thirties" as that was our age range back then, and that name has continued to be used even though we—and our children—are way past thirty. In the intervening years we have become very close friends with several couples. We've gone on many camping trips with them where we enjoyed hiking, preparing meals, and sitting around an evening campfire; we've also taken several long trips together, as well as meeting for dinner on Sunday evenings. These close friendships are very important as we've watched children grow, shared our joys, celebrations, sadness, and declining health in some cases. Everyone knows TNT provides a strong support system not only for present members, but welcomes folks new to St. Mark's so they will feel the love and support of others.

So I Said Yes
By Kay Bays

When we moved to San Diego over 40 yrs ago we lived within walking distance to St Mark's so I started going to church there. Pat Comer was one of the first persons I met and she asked me if I wanted to help with vacation church school. So I said yes. We helped with recess time-so we were busy the whole day with the kids while the teachers had a break!! My son enjoyed being there and there was child care for my daughter. So she asked me to join the bell choir a while later and then became children's coordinator and have been active ever since. All because I was willing to become involved!!!!

Truly Blessed
by Sherry Miller

Valentine's Day is a time when we typically acknowledge the love and appreciation we have for friends and family; a sort of February day of Thanksgiving.

I have been truly blessed by my immediate family, but I also think of St Mark's as a second, very special family! The love, support, and understanding so many church members have given me over the years has been an incredible gift!

I have felt lovingly embraced by St. Mark's ever since I attended the 2005 Women's Retreat. My mother needed a lot of assistance at the time as did her dear friend Juanita Burrows. I roomed with them both and remember driving through heavy rain and fog to get there.

It was the year of the labyrinth, Mom thought she'd lost her purse, Juanita lost her key, and that was all before the Friday evening session even started. It was also the year several ladies got locked out of the bathroom...a source of many laughs after the fact...

I thought I was there to help Mom and Juanita, but as it turned out I was the one who reaped the greatest benefit. That Retreat touched my heart, forged great new friendships, rekindled old ones, and was the reason I reinstated my St. Mark's membership. The welcome and acceptance I received then was a gift and affirmation I will never forget!

Growing Up Together *by Debbie Bell*

When our daughter, Krista, was a baby she went to Alyce Peterson's house for daycare while we worked. It was in daycare that we also met the McKibbin family and began attending St. Mark's. Krista attended daycare with Claire McKibbin and Chris Peterson (Alyce's grandson). The three of them did everything together, which soon included Danny Hess as well. They played bells, sang in choir and attended youth group. Claire and Krista became the closest and as the years passed our daughter Kellie became old enough to begin participating too. They enjoyed a bond like none other. It was the kind of support you give to someone you love; unconditional. I think that came from experiences that they could not get anywhere else.

They were the first group of kids to attend SSP. There were a lot of unknowns that first year and they had each other's backs. Years later they were also the first group to go to a foreign country. They went to Jamaica. Being somewhere unfamiliar and so different than their home life was a little frightening and bonded them, cementing friendships in a way that's nearly indescribable. Through the years Claire and Krista have remained close friends, even when distance doesn't allow them to see each other often. Amazingly, those experiences also bonded Krista and Kellie. A few years later when our daughter Denise was old enough for youth group, Krista had moved on but it brought Denise and Kellie close together as well. Each Sunday evening they were reminding me it was time to leave for church. They looked forward to seeing their friends and since they didn't attend the same schools it was the only time they saw each other. Kellie had strong friendships that lasted for many years with Alyssa Cook and Jessie Wingfield. They were quite the trio. College took them to different cities but at Easter and Christmas they would look forward to the reunions at church. As a parent it was heartwarming to see these friendships grow and develop. It was comforting knowing that they had support away from home and the safe environment of their family. They also had a safe forum to share when life dealt those hard times. Denise experienced the most of that and knew she could count on those friends to really listen. I think as a parent I can see that those friendships were and are invaluable, but they also bonded our three girls in a very unique way. Today our girls still share that closeness. They are BEST friends and I'm grateful for that.

To the youth of St. Mark's today I would offer that you enjoy every moment you have with one

another and treasure your similarities and your differences. Be a friend to one another and support each other. Make lasting friendships with other youth and your siblings if possible. Enjoy the unique experiences that youth group offers and take those friendships with you beyond the walls of the church buildings

A Friendship Strengthened Through Tragedy *By Charles and Venita Ballinger*

This is a true story of tragedy, resilience, and friendship among St. Mark's members.

In late 1984, Venita Ballinger, newly arrived in San Diego, began earnest conversations with Julie Coleman, the vivacious 18-year-old daughter of Bob and Hope Coleman, about her life, her experiences, and her negotiating with her father, Bob, for a car of her own. Venita loved to talk with Julie.

Tragedy struck on the very early morning hours of Thanksgiving Day. As she was coming south on I-5 through the Camp Pendleton area expecting to join Bob and Hope for Thanksgiving dinner, Julie's life was snuffed out by a drunk driver heading the wrong way on the freeway.

Charles has become accustomed to going to brunch after Sunday church services when he served as foster parent and support to Quang Bui, a young man from Vietnam who attended Clairemont High and UCSD. Once Quang had gone on to graduated school and a job with the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Charles and Venita continued the practice of going to brunch after Sunday services.

After the memorial service for Julie, Charles and Venita considered how to reach out to her parents, Bob and Hope, as a way to show support and friendship. Why not invite the Colemans to join the Ballingers for Sunday brunch?

So now there has been more than 30 years of Sunday brunches and friendship between the couples. Hope and Charles have worked together on church committees and councils, and both worked day jobs with the National Association for Year-Round Education.

One never knows when reaching out to others will result in friendship or rejection. In our story, reaching out resulted in true friendship.

Others can tell their stories of friendship through St. Mark's. Ask Venita how she becomes friends with Pamela Adam through St. Mark's.

Just Sisters *by Karen Scanlon*

Eek was the smallest of four sisters, and the least confident in disposition. She was afraid of the dark, nervous talking with adults and especially teachers, and frightened by news reports drifting out of the television.

The girls' father came home early one day during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962—that if nuclear war were to take place, he would be home to die with his daughters. Alas, a peaceful solution of that 13-day confrontation was established between the United States and Soviet Union.

Curly grasses wrapped cobblestones and Eek slipped away from family chatter to spend time in the yard and nearby woods. Little fingers twirled the tiny plants and Eek felt best when she was steeped in nature. She believed trees nodded at her, ignoring the breeze that brushed the branches.

The oldest sister, Lee Ann, understood Eek's fears and odd habits and simply stayed near her at times, never critical. Lee Ann—ever the teacher and comforter—taught the girls to sing long lists of memory work. Prepositions. Civil War dates. It didn't matter what the homework assignment—Lee Ann swooned about our lives with the playfulness of Mary Poppins. Our mother left the home when Eek and her twin were in second grade. Lee Ann loved her sisters as much as any mother might have.

Twin Kim was elsewhere in the house, writing letters to movie stars and keeping up with the latest songs and bands on the radio. The twins led separate lives, in a sense, coveting independence. But they always felt close and understood the other's thoughts.

Jan was the baby of the four and allowed Eek to be her pretend teacher and personal dresser. We designed play clothes out of fabric scraps.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness..." Jan recited for Eek.

Once Eek woke Jan in the dark of night to go to the bathroom with her. Jan wasn't happy to be wakened and intentionally ran ahead the length of the long hallway bedroom to bathroom. Eek yelled, "Stop! Wait for me!" Jan stopped short and Eek slammed into sister's heel and broke two toes.

Mm. I never thought about sisters being my friends. They were just sisters! I love them deeply still today. As I look back at our lives, friends were exactly what we were together. We enjoyed the most creative play and the neighborhood kids loved hanging out at our house. And we could sing and make facial expressions like the Lennon Sisters.

I wonder if the family knew the shame I felt about being so muddled in unrealistic fears, or so completely broken by the misfortune of other people. The name 'eek' was simply my exclamation.

Though I have outgrown fear, these friends of mine understand my shortcomings and exuberance for life and love me anyway. Together we lived and breathed the horrors of my years on renal dialysis and celebrated Lee Ann donating a kidney when things got too hard for us.

The Bible says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother (and, likely, three sisters) is born for adversity." And born for the pleasure of my days.

Friendships *by Hope Coleman*

The most important thing in life is relationships. Out of relationships come friends. A sure way of making friends is to smile, show respect, be a good listener and have a caring attitude. Common interests also help.

A special friend of mine, Gladys York, and her family moved in next door to my family in 1959 while I was away. When I returned and met Gladys, we discovered that both of our husbands were teachers, we were both from the Midwest, we both loved sports, we had selected the same pediatrician for our children and the same church, St. Mark's.

We quickly became very involved in the activities of St. Mark's. Gladys didn't drive at that time so she rode with me much of the time to our church activities. Being seen together so often, we became labeled. Some referred to us as Mutt and Jeff of the comic strip as I was tall and she short. Our children watched a popular TV show of the time called the Mod Squad. As a take off on that, they called us the God Squad!

Through the years we have shared holidays at one house or the other, donuts after church for many years, and shared other special times such as birthdays, 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries, attended many sporting events together, camped together, went to baseball spring training together, and had Thanksgiving in the desert for many years. We were also involved in PTA as well as other community groups. We have been there for each other during critical illnesses and deaths in the family, each doing whatever was needed.

If you have the qualities of a good friend, you will find that you have many friends you don't even know about. They come out of the shadows when you have a need, offering themselves to you.

Friendship - After 75 Years *by Mack McKinney*

Halfway through my sophomore year in high school, our family relocated from Memphis, Tennessee to a small town in Maryland just outside the border of Washington DC.. This was a tough time for me- I was solidly established in my group, at school and at our church and I had just begun to have my first real girlfriend. I was part of a group that did stuff together, like church things, group movie "Dates" and just general hanging out together. Then suddenly I was in alien territory. I didn't know anyone, and they all talked funny. Their accents were different. And they all knew each other- most of them had been together since kindergarten, so I felt really alone.

As a group they were friendly enough, polite and curious, but I was a little shy, so I was pretty uncomfortable. One of the first guys I met was the son of the local Judge, and the most popular boy in the class. His family had deep roots in the community and were, if not the richest family in town, then the most respected. The first thing he did was introduce himself, said he was glad to meet me, and then grinned and said, "I bet this is pretty weird for you, isn't it? Boy, if it was me in your shoes I'd be scared to death with all these new people standing around looking at me. Come on, let me show you around."
And he did. He answered my questions about the school, the traditions, and he introduced me to the guys he hung with. He asked me about my family and about how things were different in the school and the city I had come from. He just simply was genuinely curious and interested in me and he was open to inviting me into his circle of friends and activities.

I was 14 years old when we met. Three and a half years later we graduated high school together. I went into the Marine Corps and he went on to college at the University of Maryland. Our lives headed off in different directions. We haven't lived in the same area together since that time. But over the years there have been reunions, and our families have been together a few times. There have been occasional phone calls and always letters and Christmas cards and photographs. We've shared marriages, births of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and important times in the lives of our families. That bond of friendship is as strong now as it was in the busy days of high school. Time and distance haven't changed nor diminished what we grew into back then. Friends.

'Girlfriends from First Grade' *by Susan Holko*

I have "5 Girlfriends from First Grade"!! We met 65 years ago in first grade in a small Ohio farming town. We all now live in different states. We meet somewhere in the US as often as possible to explore new areas, laugh a lot, reminisce, and provide comfort, support, and encouragement as needed. I'm often asked how we've kept in touch. The secret for us was attending high school class reunions in our hometown. But it wasn't until the last 20 years that we started traveling together. And now Social Media has helped us stay even more connected.

Belonging to a church was part of most everyone's life 'back in the day'. In our group there were three Methodists, one Lutheran, and one Church of Christ member. Three of us sang in a quartet for Methodist church services. We were also very involved in our local school activities. We all left our little town and continued making friends as we passed through college, careers, marriages and families. I have noticed over the years that there is a different level of connection to my "girlfriends from 1st grade" than the friendships I formed later in life. I think the difference is that we all knew each others extended families and the joys and sorrows of the growing up years even though we didn't talk about it. We were like Sisters rather than just acquaintances. Even though we never talked about it...



An Invitation

Notice how several of these stories contain references to groups here at St. Mark's? You are invited to participate in St. Mark's volunteer opportunities, study groups, musical groups, social groups, committees and special events. For women, the Women's Retreat is coming up and there's also the United Methodist Women (UMW) which meets monthly. Sign up online or in the church office. You just might make a new friend!

Inseparable *by Kris Nieder*

This is a story of a friendship born before cell phones. Most of you in the congregation are familiar with this time. For our youth it may be hard to imagine. The internet was new. And it was so slow and clunky that it took forever to do anything with it. Very few of us had email addresses. All that to say, when I wanted to invite this new girl I'd met over to my house for a birthday party, I gave her a paper invitation. It was my sophomore year of high school. Ann was a star of the soccer team. Taller than me, a horseback rider, and frankly wealthier. All of Ann's clothes came from Nordstroms and all mine came from the Mervyn's sales racks. She had a housekeeper and lived in a beautiful home in Mission Hills. In my house, there were six people crammed into three bedrooms. She was very calm, studious, smart, and driven on the soccer field. I loved that I could make her laugh. After that party, we were inseparable. We would laugh for hours together. No cell phones or online statuses to distract us. We would work up the nerve to call boys, using phones that were connected to the wall by cords that we stretched as far as possible to get away from our parents. If the boys actually answered we'd lose our nerve and hang up on them. When we got up the nerve to actually talk to those boys we started double dating. Boys came and went but our friendship stayed strong. Junior year we could drive. We felt very fashionable wearing our clunky Doc Marten shoes to coffee houses in Hillcrest for long nights talking over all the ills of the world. We listened to the Smiths and the Cure. We were very happy with our depressing music.

Ann started for varsity soccer. As goalie, she never washed her gloves. The smell was incredible. She was a powerhouse on the field-her team won the CIF champions for our junior and senior year. One night after her team won, she told me she had a dream that she'd laid down on the grass and looked up at the stars to revel in the moment. In reality the field was full of cheering fans who'd streamed down from the bleachers after the last play. We ended up on a cold concrete sidewalk looking up at the stars. Still wonderful. I don't remember the cause of our first - and only- big fight. What I do remember is that my mom said, "Well, you better tell her

you're sorry and make up." What! I thought my mom would sympathize with my injured pride. No such luck. Later I learned that Ann's dad told her she needed to apologize to me. Both our parents knew the same thing: We were better off together. They were right.

Ann and I were roommates for a year in college, worked together in LA, were Maid and Matron of Honor in each other's weddings. She moved up to Oregon. We try to see each other every year. I was fortunate enough to spend the summer of 2013 up there with her. We have six kids between the two of us. It wasn't easy to catch a quiet moment for conversation. Towards the end of the stay we discovered that we could use YMCA's free childcare and not work out. We'd drop off our kids and go to the YMCA cafe and again, talk and laugh and talk some more. Some things never change.

I have three brothers who I love dearly. They are wonderful men. Still, I always hoped for a sister. Sometimes God answers our prayers in unexpected ways.

John 15:12-15

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I