



happy  
new year

# CONNECT

## PAULA'S PONDERINGS

I've been made aware that some of you do not understand the distinctly Methodist idea of "apportionments," so I want to dedicate the next few newsletter articles to explaining this term and how it affects us as a church.

Apportionments are not, as some people used to call them, "pew taxes", nor are they "franchise fees". Apportionments are simply St. Mark's fair share of the costs of doing ministry as United Methodists. As I've explained in a previous article, the legislative body of the United Methodist Church, the General Conference, meets every 4 years with elected delegates from every conference around the world. One of their responsibilities is to approve an operating budget for the following four years. The budget includes the salaries and business expenses of the bishops, the staff and operating expenses of each of the general agencies that serve the U.M. Church, as well as the budgeted amounts for all the mission and benevolence projects of the general church worldwide. The grand total is then "apportioned", that is, it is divided up among all the conferences worldwide according to the size of the conference and its economic strength. Thus, conferences in the U.S. are assessed more in apportionments than same-sized conferences in Africa, for example, because we in the U.S. are economically better off.

Each year in June, our conference, the Missouri Annual Conference, meets, and one of its responsibilities is to approve a budget for the following year. Part of that budget is the amount our conference was apportioned from the General Conference. Added to that amount is the cost of our bishop's housing, the staff and expenses of the offices in Colombia, and any statewide missions and benevolences we voted to support. That amount is then divided up among the local U.M. churches in the state of Missouri according to the average of our expenses from the past 3 years. This seemed a fair way to divide the apportionments because, in general, the larger a church is, the more money it brings in and the more money it spends. This number becomes our conference apportionment. The total apportioned amount for the Missouri Annual Conference for 2019 is \$2,359,998 of which our fair share is \$16,945.

St. Mark's is also assessed a district apportionment, which includes the cost of the district superintendent's salary, housing, and business expenses, as well as the salary and business expenses of his staff, and the operating expenses of the district office. This amount is divided by the number of churches in the district according to the average of each church's expenses over the previous 3 years, and the total is our district apportionment. The total 2019 Heartland District budgeted amount is \$193,000 of which our apportioned share is \$1,386.

Our apportionments have taken a bit of jump this year and will remain higher than normal for the next 2 years, because, after the merge with St. Matthew, that church ceased to exist and St. Mark's took on their expenses in 2017. Since apportionments are based on what we paid out in expenses averaged over 3 years, our apportioned amount jumped somewhat this year. Our treasurer, Chuck Townsend, and the Leadership Council have some ideas for how we will raise the funds to pay our apportionments in 2019. Be watching for them to unveil those ideas soon.

Our total apportionment amounts are broken out into different funds, and our treasurer, with the guidance of the Leadership Council, can choose which funds to pay off first. In the following newsletter articles, I'll explain each of the funds in more detail.

Regardless of how we feel about our bishop, regardless of how we feel about the pastor we've been sent, regardless of how we feel about the stance the Church has taken on controversial issues, regardless of how we feel about the needs of other churches in the world, it is wrong to withhold our apportionments. We have a duty to pay our apportionments, because we have received the benefits of being United Methodists. Our goal is to pay our apportionments in full in 2019, just as we pay our other bills. It's the right thing to do.

Blessings,  
Pastor Paula



## The Most Dangerous Prayer

The most powerful prayer you can pray also happens to be the most dangerous one. That prayer is “God do whatever it takes to bring me deeper into Your kingdom.” Pray it every day consistently, and I guarantee that your life will change, but probable not the way you expect it. It is indeed the most dangerous prayer.

### PHONE PRAYER CHAIN

Pat Townsend has put together a phone call prayer chain. If you know of a member going to the hospital, have a need, a concern, or a joy, please call someone on the following list, starting at the top if possible. Call anytime, day or night. If the person you call is not at home, leave a message or call the next person on the list.

(All Numbers—Area Code 816 unless noted)

Pat Townsend —373-3915	225-9459	Carol Buhrle —796-3630	225-8174
Rosemary Garten - 427-5725	519-8500	Shirley Weaver—461-9224	716-1184
Carol Marcks—427-5725		Chris Pauley—571-3922	
	560-5627	Gayle Elliott—257-9655	
Marilyn Berry — 796-5789		Arleta Cahill —600-6203	
Lucille Bolen — 560-5131		Flora Costanza—914-8034	
Mary Branstad —796-9659	868-3752	Sandy Bower —373-5603	
Ann Fiene — 257-5214		Anna Inman —660-232-1221	
Jackie Leffingwell - 257- 1123		Jackie McMenemy —461-7577	
Linda Roberts— 650-5131	853-3398		

### Phone's Ringing



### Answer it

If you have an emergency, know of someone in the hospital, have a joy or concern, and would like to have the entire church know, please contact the church office (257-1812) to get your message out. If the office is closed, contact James Brison at 836-2595.



<i>Michael Adkisson's family</i>	<i>difficulties)</i>	<i>Erica Moreland's (12 yr old</i>	<i>Donald Turner (Broken neck)</i>
<i>Scott Alerton (stint in heart)</i>	<i>Lee Crews</i>	<i>sister)</i>	<i>Weaver family &amp; friends</i>
<i>Ruth Amos</i>	<i>Neil Crews family</i>	<i>Jennifer Peters</i>	<i>Whitaker Family</i>
<i>Joella Bennett (Eye Surgery )</i>	<i>Beth Cowman 6 yr old daughter</i>	<i>Ray</i>	<i>Debra Wright</i>
<i>Ronice Bevan</i>	<i>(scoliosis)</i>	<i>Zoey &amp; Logan Bradshaw-Ring</i>	
<i>Tom Black</i>	<i>Darrel Joseph</i>	<i>Donna Rodgers</i>	<i>Those traveling, our church,</i>
<i>Ronald Bower</i>	<i>Dustin Khan</i>	<i>Pastor &amp; family</i>	<i>country, the military, leaders of</i>
<i>Sandy Bowers</i>	<i>Amanda Higgins &amp; family</i>	<i>Richard Schriebea</i>	<i>our country.</i>
<i>Dorothy Brison (Knee)</i>	<i>Penny Huhén</i>	<i>Laurie Slimone</i>	
<i>Bob Buhrle</i>	<i>Maurice family</i>	<i>Stacey</i>	
<i>Butch Caldwell's family</i>	<i>Susan Maurice</i>	<i>Rodgers family</i>	
<i>Callahan family</i>	<i>Jackie McMenemy</i>	<i>Robert Stevinson</i>	
<i>Keith Carr</i>	<i>Connie Meirier</i>	<i>Kay Sowther</i>	
<i>Jeanne Crane (heart &amp; breathing</i>	<i>Georgia Merrow (Hospice)</i>	<i>Sara Stewart—Thompson</i>	



## The Promise of Christmas

January 6th Communion

Dedication To God

Luke 2:21-25, 36, 37

January 13th

Best Of All, God Is With Us

Luke 2:41-52

January 20th and 27th

Associate Pastor Amy Armstrong will be preaching

### Sunday Schedule

9:00 am Sunday School

10:00 am Worship

10:00 am KidVenture



**Now Accepting 2019 Building use forms.**

- We ask all who worship with us to fill out the **Connect Card** found in this worship folder. Please place the card in the offering basket.
- Yearly giving statements are available at the back of the sanctuary.
- **Servant sign-ups** You'll find clipboards with sign-up sheets for greeters, ushers, communion servers, communion preparers, and scripture readers for 2019. If you want to serve St. Mark's in one of these ways, be sure to sign up this Sunday because openings are filling up fast!

May God bathe you with 365 days of happiness, 52 weeks of enjoyment, 365 days of achievements, 8760 hours of precise good fortune, 52600 minutes of top health and 31536000 seconds of ecstasy and bliss! Happy New Year!

# 7 Practices to Foster Scripture Engagement

So, what can we do to foster Scripture engagement in our churches? Here are several practices to try.

## 1. Write out Scripture by hand.

Have people write out entire chapters or even books of the Bible. This can be painstaking, but it slows us down to savor each word. I've engaged in this process by slowly writing out the book of Matthew. I was forced to focus on each word and phrase, allowing me to discover fresh insights. I could only write out a handful of verses at a time, so it kept me from "speed reading" or skimming the passage. Instead of water skiing on the surface, I went scuba diving in the text.

## 2. Ask questions—even tough ones.

Read a passage, and then ask people to write out 10-to-15 questions about the passage on a piece of paper. *Why did the woman ask that of Jesus? What was running through Abraham's mind when he was walking up the mountain to sacrifice Isaac? Allow people to interact with the text by courageously wrestling with tough questions.*

## 3. Put yourself in the story.

Read a narrative passage of Scripture with a group of people. Then, divide the room into quarters and assign people different characters in the story you just read. Ask them to imagine themselves in the story as if it were happening. Then read the story again and have them answer the questions, "If you were that particular person, what would you feel, think, or consider doing?" and, "What would you want God to do for you in that situation?"

## 4. Practice Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina—"sacred reading"—is a way to prayerfully read a passage of Scripture, slowly and repetitively, inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to us through four movements: reading, pondering/meditating, praying, and living. While this is practiced most often individually, it can be just as

powerful with an entire church.

## 5. Read the Bible communally & ask five simple questions.

Gather a group of people together, and have someone read a large chunk of Scripture. Then follow up with questions for interaction. For years our church has given people these five questions to encourage deeper interactions with the text.

- What's going on in the story/passage?
- What excites, inspires, or encourages me about the passage?
- What challenges, jolts, confuses, or even offends me about the passage?
- What does this tell us about the essence of God or the nature of Jesus?

## What will we do with what we just heard/learned in the next seven days?

## 6. Memorize Bible stories together.

Many of us grew up memorizing verses, but when was the last time you memorized an entire Bible story? Stories grip us, shape us, move us, and inspire us. Gather with a group of people and commit to memory the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the story of Jesus healing Bartimaeus, and then take turns recounting the story to each other.

## 7. Utilize art and Scripture.

Through the centuries, artists have painted beautiful renditions of biblical accounts. Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, and Eugene Burnand's *The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection* are great places to start. For a longer list of resources, visit Art and the Bible at [artbible.info](http://artbible.info). You can also lay out art

supplies (colored pencils, markers, paper, paints, canvases, clay), read a passage aloud, and ask people to draw or sculpt the story. Then, invite people to share their creations with others to stimulate conversation about the passage.

There are countless ways to invite people to engage with Scripture together. As pastors, may we model this love, delight, and passion for Scripture, showing others how our own relationship with Christ is deepened by our engagement with the Bible and inviting others to participate in the process with us.



If we help people see the Bible as a grand story in which God invites us to participate, it can inspire and transform.

# COMMUNITY CLOTHES CLOSET NEWS AT ST. MARK'S CHURCH

The Community Clothes Closet is a unique non-profit assisting those in need in Independence, Mo. The CCC's general shopping floor provides clothing and accessories for men, women, and children. Various programs also help our shoppers during other events in life; the birth of a new baby, the first day of school, a wedding, or an interview for a new job.

The mission of the Community Clothes Closet is to provide free clothing and opportunities for our clients to improve their lives. Our shoppers can shop knowing that the CCC won't charge, and they can save their money to use for other living expenses. Also provides the opportunity for new job seekers and new job starters to shop for career clothing, giving them a chance to change their situation.

**OPEN Tuesday & Thursday 9-Noon.**

The idea is simple. We take new or gently-used, donated clothes and distribute them to people in need. There is no application process - as long as we have clothes, they go to any one that needs them. No matter where you live.

**NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED!!**

**Donation Hours:**

Monday-Friday 9:00am - 1:00pm

**Shopping Hours:**

Tuesday & Thursday 9-12

**HATS, GLOVES, and SCARVES**

Spread the warmth of Jesus with families this winter. Donate new or lightly used gloves, hats and or scarves. They may be dropped off at church thru Jan 2019.

## BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY

If you would like to make an appointment, please call the office at **257-1812**.

Donations of non-perishable food items, personal care items, and monetary donations are needed.

[www.facebook.com/breadoflifstumc](http://www.facebook.com/breadoflifstumc)

A warm THANK YOU to the Burhle family who donated 89 items of deer meat to the Food Pantry. Thank you!

A note to volunteers Thank you for providing care to families who are in need. Sending blessing on your journey and I will see you again in the spring 18'.

# JANUARY SERVANT LIST 2018

## Very thankful ~ for servants at St. Mark's!

From the greeters who hand out notes and open doors. The ushers who make sure people find seats. There are people who brew coffee, stock coffee supplies, brew more coffee, restock the supplies and still brew more coffee. There are people who make sure the sanctuary is clean and stocked with pens. There are people who faithfully (and honestly) count the offerings every week so our church can be good stewards of your giving. There are people who make sure communion happens each week, with bread, juice. There are so many small details to attend to, and these are the servants that make it happen! Thank you for making an empty building hospitable and welcoming. When people feel welcomed they come back as a direct result of your service.

There's also the people who make it happen on the stage and the pulpit each week. There are musicians who give of their talents to lead us in singing. There are sound engineers who make sure everything sounds good and you don't have squealing microphones. There are Powerpoint operators who help you to sing and respond by showing you the right words, and who help you follow the sermon by displaying the Scriptures for you to read along. There are people who make sure we have fresh batteries and tape for the wireless mic so the pastor doesn't run out of juice mid-way. A lot goes into the Sunday 'production' and these servants make it seem pretty darn seamless. Thank you for helping St. Mark's to present the gospel without distractions, through making the most of technology.

Then there are the KidVenture workers. Servants wait in the fellowship hall to teach the next generation the whole gospel and make sure everybody enjoys their popcorn/snacks. Thank you. I look forward with joy and anticipation to seeing this generation mature through the blessing of your time and attention.

There's also the people who serve way behind the scenes. I'm talking about the men and women who pray through each service – for the musicians, for the pastor, and for everyone hearing God's word preached and sung. And the people who counsel others and pray with them after services. People are coming to know Christ while listening to their hearts at our church. Those extra minutes before and after a service you offer are the hope of Christ. It's beautiful and I'm thankful for you who pray for us and pray with us.

Finally, there's you. YOU can and often do serve on Sundays. You serve through your giving. If you've given up your seat to a visitor, thank you. If you've given up your comfort zone to make someone feel welcome and loved, thank you. If you've parked further away and walked, even though there was space closer, thank you. I long to see more and more members washing the feet of visitors through making welcoming space for them.

I hope you celebrate with us over God blessing at church with many, many true servants. They'll be the first to tell you that there's room for more. Right now, a small percentage of the church is carrying a large percentage of the weight. And they do it well, but we have a real need for more people to serve. I urge you to consider ways you can sacrifice and step up with them to shoulder some of the load. It takes a lot to do what St. Mark's does, and many hands make light work. As you consider serving, and as others of you continue serving, let's all remember that before we can serve for Jesus, we must be served by Jesus. This month, make an effort to reflect on how Jesus has served you and shown you the way to serve and given you a new heart to serve well.

Greeters/Ushers	
Scripture Readers	
Communion Preparer	
Communion Servers	
Money Counter	<b>Marvin R., Larry A.</b>
Newsletter Helper	

## SCOUTS AT ST. MARK'S CHURCH



Boy Scouts ~Meet~ 7pm Monday's

Cub Scouts ~Meet~ 7pm Tuesday's

Girl Scouts ~Meet~ Monday's 6-7pm

Tuesday's 6-7:30

every other week Wednesday's 6pm-8pm

## DOMINOS CLUB AT ST. MARK'S CHURCH

TUESDAYS 1-4PM



# CONNECT

to **God**

to the **World**

**Saint Mark's United Methodist Church**

603 North Jennings Road

Independence, Missouri 64056

Phone: 816-257-1812, FAX 816-257-5438

Email: [stmarksumc.umc@att.net](mailto:stmarksumc.umc@att.net)



If you have a November birthday not listed here or you have a correction, please contact the church office at **257-1812** or e-mail us:

[stmarkskc.umc@gmail.com](mailto:stmarkskc.umc@gmail.com)

Visit us on the web:

[www.stmumc.net](http://www.stmumc.net)

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### Staff

Rev. Paula Smith: Pastor

Rev. Amy Armstrong: Associate Pastor

Asia Townsend: Admin. Assistant *-Job opening-*

Greg Price: Organist/Pianist

Nursery Supervisor: TBA

Rebecca Brison: Custodian

Chris Yaeger: Choir Director

1/5 Paul Sorensen

1/12 Diana Bennett

1/17 Gayle Elliott

1/21 Ray Whitaker

1/22 Phyllis Peters

**St. Mark's United Methodist Church Mission Statement:**

**Making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of our communi-**