

(April) March 25, 2020



St. Mark's United Methodist Church
546 W. US Highway 224
Decatur, IN 46733-7547

Return Service Requested



Update as best as I can tell you

I will admit, there will not be a lot of information in this newsletter other than this article.

We're in the middle of a shut down of just about everything. We have not meetings to report or schedule. Arlette has been recovering at home from some health events, and Kay has been sick as well. So...you're stuck with me trying to put together a newsletter.

The number of articles will be scant, and the layout may be dull. But I didn't want to NOT have a newsletter because I wanted something 'normal' to remain in place.

The day I'm writing this (March 19), I held a Facebook Live where I updated everyone on the current situation at St. Mark's, and we had prayer time together.

While many of you may have seen that message, I know many people on our newsletter mailing list do not have internet capabilities. So, what follows is an adapted version of my video message. Some parts have been edited for print. I also include the link from the video at the end of the message.

Please stay safe, and stay connected to your faith in Christ! Without him, we have no hope. With him, we have ALL hope!

I've typed out the basics of what I want to say, but I'm sure I will still miss something, so I want you to know that Facebook is now St. Mark's primary place for information updates (through this crisis) – because updates can be posted there much faster.

A lot of information is being floated... and not all of it is good. People are scared, and understandably so. Some people think government and community leaders aren't taking enough precautions. Others think this is nothing and we should all be living our normal lives.

Their reactions are being driven largely by their response to change. Change is hard for everyone. Accurate information is so very important, so let me encourage you to research any information before you post, forward, or share it. Bad information will only make this experience worse.

If you find yourself on either of the extremes; either crippled with panic or dismissive of any danger ... let me urge you to read reliable information from reliable sources instead of opinion pieces. This is a very real danger. Yet, there is no reason to panic. Our God is still in charge, and this has not surprised him. Max Lucado said: "Feed your faith and your fears will starve. Feed your fears and your faith will starve." Which do you want to feed?

St. Mark's will continue to provide worship streamed to our Facebook page — <https://facebook.com/stmarksumchurch/>

The live stream will begin at 9:30 each Sunday, and then the service will remain on Facebook afterward.

Even if we get to the point of "shelter in place", I will use my guitar to lead singing and stream from home.

Online worship will be weird for all of us — we've never done this before. Let me encourage you to prepare yourself/family for online worship. If you don't have internet access, find other ways to worship. Do you need a hymnal dropped off to your

home? Read Scripture, and talk about it with each other if you live with family. Pray together. Honor God with your "down time." Worship is simply honoring God, anyway. Take pictures or videos of your family or yourself worshipping! How awesome would it be to see Facebook flooded with pictures and videos of people worshipping God!

"As Best..." continued... ➡➡

...a Christ-centered community of **prayer** and **fellowship**, **reaching out** with the hope and love of God.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church · 546 W. US Highway 224 · Decatur, IN 46733

Contact us: mail@stmarksumchurch.org

Phone (260)724-7183

Facebook: Decatur St. Mark's UMC

www.stmarksumchurch.org

Office Hours: Mon-Thurs. 8:00-4:00 & Fri 8:00-12:00

Worship: Sunday 8:15am & 10:30am 1st & 3rd Tuesday 4:45pm

Adult & Youth Sunday School 9:30am Children's Sunday School (ages 5-5th grade) - Sundays 10:30am

High School Youth - Tuesdays 6:00-8:00pm Middle School Youth - Wednesdays 6:00-8:00pm

Combined HS & MS Youth - 3rd Wednesdays 6:00-8:00pm

1st & 3rd Tuesday - Worship: 4:45pm Food Pantry: 5:15-6:15 pm

Senior Pastor - Rev. Chris Gadlage (Ext. 305) or

E-mail: pastor@stmarksumchurch.org Cell/text: 810-882-1463

Associate Pastor - Rev. Ernie Suman (Ext. 310) or

E-mail: ernie@stmarksumchurch.org Cell/text: 260-706-1558

Youth Pastor - Terry Thieme

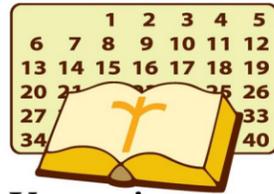
• Music Director - Sue Coolman • Organist - Dona Longbons

Preschool & Child Care Director - Lisa Nash 724-8082

Office Manager - Arlette Graeflin

Custodian - Norman Hirschy


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community of
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Upcoming Messages

APRIL SERMONS:

April 5—Palm Sunday

2 Timothy 3:16-17
1 Peter 5:5b-9
Future Church:
How May I Help You?

April 12—EASTER

2 Timothy 3:16-17
Acts 1:7-8
Future Church:
12-1=5000

April 19

1 John 1:1-5
1 John 1:5-2:2
Living in the Light

April 26

Matthew 11:25-30
Romans 4:1-8
JUSTIFIED!

“As Best...”

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Please keep in mind, Christians are community champions.

- Who lives near you that shouldn't go to the grocery?
Who needs a prescription that you may be able to pickup/deliver?
Who could use an encouraging call?
Are you able to support local businesses who are providing carry-out/delivery food service?

Anything we can do to help our community weather this crisis, please do it. We have an incredible opportunity to be Jesus to people who may not even know who he is!

St. Mark's will also feel an economic impact. I want to urge you to give electronically during this time. You can, of course, still mail a check, but processing electronic donations involves a lot fewer people and hands, so we would prefer you give electronically while we're all trying to exercise 'social distance'.

I am continuing to monitor updates from Federal, State, and local authorities. We have been in fairly regular contact with the Adams County Board of Health, and expect that to continue. I will keep you updated with any decisions as they're being made.

In my written update posts, I've tried to include a pastoral note, and I want to continue that with this video update.

We are living in very unique times. We are experiencing DRAMATIC shifts from one unknown to another. I know this causes a lot of stress and anxiety.

If you have encounters with other people, please remember that they are stressed, too. They're likely to be short-tempered and short-sighted...just like we are at times. Talking with our Child Care Director, Lisa Nash yesterday, we both talked about moments when we were just at the end of our rope with all of the rapid changes and all the information we're trying to process and still care for people. I'll give you the same advice we shared with each other:

Be on the lookout for that feeling. When you feel like one more thing will break you ... take a minute away. Walk away from whatever you're doing. Breathe a few deep breaths. I'd recommend a breath prayer during those breaths, too. On the inhale, you can call on God's name: Yahweh, Almighty God of the Universe. On the exhale, you can cry out to him: Help me keep moving and help someone else. Four or five of those will serve you well in those moments. Spend as much time as you need, and then return to life.

Several times in Scripture, we read that Jesus went off by himself to pray, "as was his custom." We don't follow that custom often enough when life is normal.

We need it even more now. Take a moment away ... even if it's just a couple of steps away. Ask for God's help and breathe a little.

No one knows any more than anyone else how and when this will all end. Pray for yourself throughout each day. There is no shame in acknowledging that this is more than you can handle. Recognize it is NOT more than God can handle, and he loves you. So do I.

“As Best...” continued...

“As Best...”

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Until I can see you eye-to-eye again, stay healthy, stay safe, and stay with Jesus. Remain in his hope and offer it to others you encounter along the way. And before I pray, let me share a promise from God's Word:

Romans 8:28 says, "God will work all things for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose." Life's circumstances and events may not be good. But our God promises to WORK THEM for our good, if we love him and respond to his call.

May God bless you as you navigate the uncharted waters in front of you.

Pastor Chris

Thank You

With appreciation for the outreach prayers and thoughts. I'm grateful for the prayer commitment and appreciate their correspondence.

Gratefully,
Karen Mills

MISSION Matters

- baby bottle donations to The Hope Clinic totaled \$768.33
anyone interested in serving with the work camp team at Red Bird Mission contact Cindy Thieme, 692-2716, or the church office. We'll go September 13-19
Fourth Sunday giving will be SAFE in Adams County, to help prevent child abuse.

10 GUIDELINES for Prayer in these COVID-19 times

- 1. PEACE- Pray against spirits of division, suspicion, anxiety, panic, and fear that grip our communities. Release perfect peace that transcends human understanding.
2. LEADERSHIP- Pray for wisdom, truth, direction, compassion, and strength for all leaders (political, medical, economic, ecclesial, etc) in authority. Pray that we would move beyond our differences, not politicize the crisis, and work together for our common good, healing and restoration.
3. PROTECTION - Claim the blood of Jesus as a shield and healing over people groups, institutions, systems, policies, processes, and over all areas of life and society against COVID-19 and its effects.
4. IMMUNITY - Daily speak strength and health to immune systems (personal, family, friends, etc.)
5. RESOURCES - Pray for sufficient human and medical resources for our healthcare systems and sufficient and necessary resources for all other sectors (i.e. financial) and institutions (i.e. schools). Pray for legislation that would accommodate and compensate those impacted by business closings.
6. TESTING - Pray for a prompt, expedient, widely available, efficient, and sufficient, production, distribution, administration, and interpretation of tests locally so that leaders may realistically ascertain the scope of the problem and be equipped with strategies and resources to address the problem thoroughly and speedily.
7. STRATEGIES - Pray for the deployment of effective strategies for identifying epicenters and centers of the disease's proliferation, for social distancing, for closings, for judicious and humane regional, local, and home-based quarantining that would level off the rate and intensity of occurrences, for home-based and institutional treatment of the sick, for accurate contact tracing, and for all other epidemiological issues and solutions.
8. RESEARCH - Pray for all types of researchers to develop an expeditious, effective, sufficient, affordable, well-tested, and safe production of a CV-19 vaccine and treatments.
9. INSTITUTIONS RESTORED - Pray for all of the institutions and systems impacted by this crisis (the church, gov't, healthcare, schools, the economy, businesses, the homeless, law enforcement and other first responders, and all other workplaces) that they would be protected and restored to normal healthy functioning.
10. SALVATION - Pray that we all come to a place of true repentance and total dependence on God for all things and that God would release to this world. protection, provision, healing, restoration, strength, salvation and all things that pertain to life and godliness. Time for the church to be the church and embody and minister wisdom and love in all we do. Be a Kingdom witness.

Rev. Dr. Pete Bellini
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