

May 13, 2020

E-Messenger

Our Mission Statement To build a family of believers who glorify God and help each other become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ

What Do We Do Now?

When the "shut down" began, we anticipated something that might last a few weeks or maybe a month. Now we are in a months-long, life-altering experience with no clearly defined resolution. Ambiguity is stress causing but also full of opportunity. Let me touch on a few things.

1. When are we re-opening?

We do not know. I grieve the loss of 'normal' every day. At the same time, we keep finding good ways to care for one another and love God. Over and over I am reminded that the church is the people and is not reliant on building access or large gatherings.

You are aware that city, state and federal authorities, the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church and other entities are issuing guidance, advisories and instructions. Within this framework, St. Mark's will make decisions of when and how to re-open. Church Council is attempting to stay up on developments and David Miller and I are putting together a small task force to recommend a re-opening plan and interim gathering alternatives.

Here are my impressions of the re-opening status so far. As David and I looked over the information available today, it could easily be June or July before St. Mark's is "open" in any sense that we would like to be. When we open, social distancing, group size, sequential room use will all be different than before.

In short, we will re-open. We do not know when, but it may be in June or July. And when we re-open, how we gather will be different than before.

2. What do we do now?

We plan to do a daily devotion and Sunday worship service online. Many Sunday school classes, small groups, Life Groups, Bible studies, fellowship groups, Reunion groups and whatever groups are gathering via Zoom or similar means.

Stay in touch with others through all means available. Reach out to offer help and to ask for help.

3. Is this crazy, or what?

Yep, this is different that many of us have ever experienced before. Remember when Jesus was on the stormy lake with his disciples? They were terrified. It was different than they had experienced before.

He calmed the storm. He was their shelter and peace in the turmoil. Luke 8:22-25.

He was also the peace for everyone else on the lake. The storm ended shore to shore. Everyone on the lake or shore benefitted. The peace of Christ spreads from where He is present.

Ask Jesus Christ to be present and help you experience his peace. As you do, you can be the peace sharers in this storm. If asked why you are peaceful, tell about Jesus. We are infected with Jesus and thus are the peaceful, hopeful and calming antidote in life today...whether we are meeting at the church building or not.

We will get through this storm and be more faithful for it.

God be glorified,
Pastor Keith

What is Going on at St Mark's?

That is a great question. The best answers may keep changing as we continue working to contain the spread of COVID 19 in our communities. You understand that the idea is to limit the spread from person to person by keeping people physically away from each other. We want to do our part to keep each other and our communities safer.

Here is a smattering of **responses to common questions**:

In person **Sunday worship** and nearly all other activity at the church is postponed until further notice. You may participate in Sunday worship through our Facebook page or RightNow Media. Special resources for children are being created and loaded to RightNow Media. Do we choose to gather through online worship? Yes! Our online measurement tools tell us that we set a non-Easter **attendance record last Sunday**. We are working on each Sunday's service throughout the week.

Staff has been asked to work from home but we are still here for you.

The **church phones** will be forwarded so that we can respond to phone calls.

The **usual ways** you have been using will continue to be the best and quickest means to reach each other and those who serve on staff. The nation has a strong communications infrastructure.

The **prayer chain** remains active and may be contacted in the usual ways.

If for some reason **you come into the church building, you are responsible** to use the available disinfectant clothes to wipe down everything you touch - doorknobs, light switches - everything. Wearing gloves protects you but not others, you still need to wipe down all surfaces.

Several **classes and study groups** are finding ZOOM and other means effective ways to gather online.

You can make **contributions** to St Mark's by clicking the link on the home page of our website. Click on it and it will take you to a secure donation page. Of course, the US Mail is still delivering, allowing us to also mail gifts to the church.

Communications: We are emailing information, prayer updates, or prayer guides as needed. A list of online resources can be found on the following page. This is a great way to stay connected.

I am looking forward to when we meet in person again. How about you? Until then...

Remember God is still God and he is not quarantined. Let's keep in contact with each other. Pray for each other. Encourage each other. God's Holy Spirit is stirring among us. We are in this together, you are not alone.

God does great things,

Pastor Keith



The screenshot shows the top portion of the church's website. At the top, it reads "St. Mark's UNITED METHODIST CHURCH". To the right of the name are social media icons for Facebook (Share) and Twitter (Follow). Below the name is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. Further down, the church's address and phone number are listed: "8140 NW 36th St., Bethany, OK 73008 (405)789-9033". At the bottom of the header area, there is a link that says "Click here to give your tithes & offerings online" and another set of social media icons with the text "Check us out on Social Media".

St. Mark's Social Media Links



Facebook.com - search for "stmarksbethany"



Instagram.com - search for "St. Mark's United Methodist Church"



Twitter.com - search "@stmarksbethany"



Youtube.om - search St. Marks United Methodist Church, Bethany, OK



RightNow Media.com - "St. Mark's United Methodist Church"



Zoom.com - sign up and then watch for upcoming announcements on Bible Studies, Sunday School classes and other things you can join with other members of St. Mark's

Bible Study you can join from home to kick off.

Starting May 13, Wednesday afternoons, 2:00 pm-3:00pm. For more information contact Jan 641-5863 or Joey 720-7814 or 819-8100. 6 week course. Free participant guide. Great study of Jesus' ministry along the Sea of Galilee!! The study will be done together on zoom. If you are not familiar with using zoom don't let that keep you away. We can help you easily get setup. All you need is a computer, tablet or cell phone.



Here is a quick description of the study:

Get ready for the wettest, stormiest, wildest trip through the Gospels you've ever taken! The Gospels are dramatic and incredibly wet, set in a rich maritime culture on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Yet we've missed much of this perspective—until now.

In this 6-part series, Leslie Leyland Fields, author, speaker, and seasoned Alaskan fisherwoman, takes us on a journey through the life of Christ. She leads us across the waters of time and culture out onto the Sea of Galilee, through a rugged season of commercial fishing with her family in Alaska, and through the waters of the New Testament beside the ragtag fishermen disciples. Her own story and her fresh insights will challenge our understanding of Jesus and what it means to "Come, follow me."

Staff Emails

If you have questions please feel free to contact the staff.

Keith Cressman pastorkeith@stmarksbethany.com

Becky Roman becky@stmarksbethany.com

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Jackie Swedlow finance@stmarksbethany.com

Gwen Sears finance@stmarksbethany.com

Pat Morford pat@stmarksbethany.com

Daily Devotions

If you are not getting the daily devotions or know someone who you think would like to get them please let us know. The devotions arrive to your email each Monday through Friday morning and members of our congregation are doing a great job of sharing the Word of God with us all. Thanks to those providing the devotions. Email pat@stmarksbethany.com if you would like to receive them.



St Mark's will host another ministry opportunity this fall...Whiz Kids! So just what will we be doing? That is a great question!

We will be hosting several 2nd thru 5th grade students from Overholser Elementary immediately after school, one day a week throughout the 2020/2021 school year. Each of these students will have been identified by their respective teacher as reading below his or her grade level. We will provide one-on-one tutoring to each of them in order to improve their reading skills.

So what is the need? Separate conversations with individual teachers at Overholser indicate that as many as 30% of their 600-plus students may be "at-risk" relative to their reading level. Additionally, statistics show that students who still read below their grade level by the time they enter 6th grade are 40% more likely to

spend time in the Oklahoma penal system as an adult than are those who are reading at or above their grade. The gap is huge, the need is real and it is right in our back yard! The principal, Marj Iven, and all the teachers are excited that St Mark's has stepped forward to help close this gap. But Whiz Kids is much more than a tutoring program.

Whiz Kids also is a "faith-based" mentoring program. Each of the 34 Whiz Kids sites throughout the metro area is hosted by a church; thus the "faith-based" part of the program. And the fact that each student receives one-on-one attention from the same tutor throughout the year highlights the mentoring aspect of this vital ministry.

The tutoring day each week is still to be determined. We know that the time of day will be right after school dismisses: 3:45pm - 5:45pm.

Do not be concerned if you lack tutoring experience: training will be provided. The only tools you need are a deep faith founded on the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ and the resulting heart to touch lives in a meaningful, Christian manner.

So if you are looking for a way to give back...a way to impact both the children of our community as well as our community at large, this is a great ministry opportunity! These students are simply waiting for you to step forward! Please contact Mark Walpus at 405.887.6067 if you are interested in helping these students change the trajectories of their lives! Remember these children and volunteer ministers in your prayers.



RIGHT NOW MEDIA

Resource during quarantine

Hopefully you have been taking advantage of the Right Now Media for personal, group and family opportunities offered by Right Now Media. But with the Corona virus having us all at home and isolated more than usual we hope you take advantage of the service to use the videos, studies and other resources to use this time to strengthen your faith. If you have not signed up go to <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/stmarksbethany> and do so now. Once on take time to look at all the opportunities. We are even adding a St. Mark's channel to see original content from the church (go to libraries and click on St. Mark's United Methodist Church). During this time we will be adding content to this regularly. If you have questions contact the church office.

Children's Ministry

Be watching your email for links to children's programming during this time to provide opportunities to stay in contact with one another through lessons and other concepts that Miss Sharon and Miss Alicia are working on. Some will be interactive and others will just be lessons and updates. Hope you and your family take advantage of these.

EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTRY DIRECTOR:

Sharon Hunt

Phone: 789-9033

Email: sharon@stmarksbethany.com

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR:

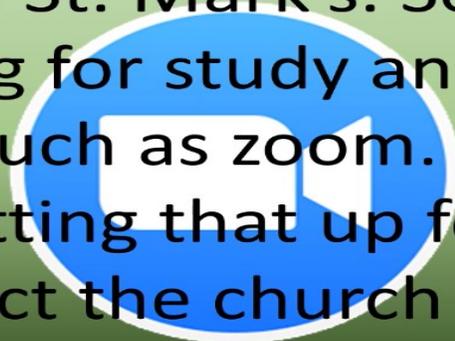
Alicia Schneider

Phone: 789-9033

Email: alicia@stmarksbethany.com

Keep in touch with your Sunday School class members, Bible Study groups and friends from St. Mark's. Several groups are meeting for study and fellowship using apps such as zoom. If you would like help setting that up for your class contact the church office.

zoom



OTHER NEWS NOTES

If you need to visit with someone

St. Mark's wants to extend an invitation to anyone feeling disengaged or just needing a friendly voice to share, pray and just hear a word of encouragement. If you would like to visit with someone who cares and wants to be there for you feel free to contact Jan Greve at (405) 641-5863 and she will help you make that connection.

Do you need a mask?

If you are in need of a mask for going out we have members who are making them for people at no cost. If you have a need please contact us and we will connect you with them.

Food Pantry

Our Food Pantry is still open every Sunday and has been busy. Thanks for your support these past couple of week! You have supplied everything we have asked for. See pictures below of some of the donations. We are beginning to run low on the some other items which are listed below and if you would like to drop them off at the back door of the church Sundays from 3-4 pm we will pick them up at your car.

**Flour
Peas**

**sugar
pancake mix**

**dry milk
syrup**

canned meat



Since we haven't met I am sure you still have your rice bowls. We will gather them when we are able to gather again. Feel free to keep dropping some loose change in them. Rice bowls is an amazing organization feeding, orphaned and hungry children.

Facts and Figures

2020 Annual Budget620,218
Rec'd toward Operating 5/3/202013,253

YTD 2020

Rec'd toward Operating 5/3/2020.....166,914
Expenditures 5/3/2020164,189

Attendance

Sunday, May 10
Online 255 views

Prayer Box

Corona Virus issues
Don & Fran Nobles
Votaw family
Barbara Homer
Beverly Clark
Pam Barnes
John Baumeister
Andre Frehley
Penny & James Hays
Hazel Bremmer
Don Greve
Sandy Kelly
Cheryl Pavelko

Dorothy Lynch
Mike Spiser
Linda Pollock
Cole Talbot
Marty Croy
Letha Davis
Karen Homer
Jullie Sitton
Dennis Graham
Vernon
Hazel Bremmer brother
Barbara Johnson family
Sherry White