

# From the Pastor

January 10, 2017

Happy New Year!

I wanted to share the letter our staff prepared for our Christmas day service. We modeled it after Paul's letters to the early church recorded in the New Testament. We can't thank you enough for all you do to make St. Mark's a truly wonderful place. We so look forward to serving with you in 2017!



## Christmas Day Letter

Craig, Jim, Martha, Beth, Mary and all members of the St. Mark's Church staff,  
To the congregation that meets at 1267 North Rutherford Blvd in Murfreesboro, Tennessee  
In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks for you and especially this day as we look back on a wonderful year of ministry together. We remember you in our prayers and ask you to remember us in yours as we serve God together by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We know brothers and sisters, beloved by God of your dedication to Christ and his church which meets in this place. Your hospitality is known throughout this region and beyond. Our Next Step class participants often describe being warmly welcomed by you and made to feel at home. As we welcome others, they experience God's welcome. Thank you for every smile, handshake and hug. You are a blessing.

Thank you for your overflowing generosity expressed in more ways than can be counted.

We began this year with plans to build a new home for a family in need in rural eastern Kentucky. Several churches came together to help work on the home both here and at the location of the home. On Saturday, August 20th, the house was dedicated. Tennessee Conference staff members and Dr. Lenoir Culbertson, our Murfreesboro district superintendent were among those in attendance. Plans are already to build another home.

The last weekend of January our youth group and leaders joined with two thousand other United Methodist youth across the conference for a weekend of worship at Warmth in Winter here in Murfreesboro. Members of our youth group hold leadership positions at the conference level and help plan warmth in winter and other great conference events. Our youth music praise team also led conference events with rave reviews. Missions are also important to youth. This past summer the senior group worked in Johnson City and the Jr. high group worked more locally in Nashville. This next year the group will help repair and reroof houses in one of the less populated islands in the Bahamas. We love and are proud of our youth.

On February 14th, we welcomed Rev. Mary Dicken to our staff and church family. Mary is serving as our worship and music pastor and brings exceptional gifts to the life of our church. We especially love to hear her play her harp. We are fortunate to have her and appreciate her efforts to reach out into our community with the love of Christ. Please keep Mary in your prayers as she completes the process for ordination as deacon this year.

We look back at Easter Sunday as a great time of joy and celebration here at St. Mark's. Children brought butterflies forward as giant butterflies were lifted high as symbols for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was an exciting time to be a part of this great congregation.

We have continued our tradition as a mission oriented church. Our Reeves Rogers tutors and mentors continued to work with students at the school and our Fall Festival was held on the campus of the school. We supported the ministry of Project Transformation again with finances and volunteers and are excited about extending the program into the Woodbury area. We continue to provide shelter for homeless women and children once a month; to pick up and deliver furniture for those in need and reach out in many, many ways into our community with tangible expressions of God's love.

Our sages remain active and productive servants of Christ at St. Mark's. We are so grateful for their wisdom and example.

Sunday School continues to be an important part of our life at St. Mark's as well as Wednesday Night Together and many other programs including confirmation class, jam sessions, UMM, UMW, Stephen's Ministry, various support groups, our fantastic preschool and more!

St. Mark's is a congregation bearing the fruit of the kingdom! You are shining as a light and city set on a hill.

We appeal to you brothers and sisters to continue to allow God to work in your and through you.

Rejoice always.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

Pray, pray, pray.

Invite, invite, invite.

May the God of Christmas peace guard you, heart, mind, body, soul and strength, until the coming of the Lord Jesus. The one who calls you is faithful.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Merry Christmas—St. Mark's United Methodist Church Staff