

# The Messenger

*We could care less but decided to care more.*

## **From the Pastor's Desk**

*Once, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, there it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."*  
-Luke 17: 20-21

The problem with the kingdom of God is that it resists being measured. Jesus says as much, "the kingdom of God is NOT coming with things that can be observed." If we're honest, that's a pretty big problem for the institutional church; we just love to count things, maybe not as much as that guy on Sesame Street, but we love some good statistics. My running jokes about not being great at math aside, numbers and figures have their place, but who and what we are as a church often just doesn't really show up very clearly. Consider the way we look at mission, by most accounts a central aspect of what the church does and certainly an extremely important facet of our identity. The status quo on mission for most American churches is some version of a soup kitchen, a food pantry or a homeless shelter, it involves giving people things or doing things for them. We lean into these things, good things all of them, because they have quantifiable results; we can count the people, the bags of food, the "bed nights" that Lifestyles uses as a metric for Safenights. These numbers give us some affirmation that we are doing good works, they are measurements and observations that might reflect the work of building the kingdom of God, then again they might not.

This way of thinking that you can measure faith and put a numerical value on salvation had been plaguing us well before the pandemic hit. The reality of shut down just took a sledgehammer to a wall that was already crumbling. The questions we had been asking quietly suddenly got really loud: Are we relevant? Does the church really have anything to offer our communities? Is it just some vague notion of love, forgiveness or salvation? What are we "selling?" Our unease with those questions leads us to double down on the "good deeds," to prove we're not peddling spiritual snake oil, but, over time, those things just seem to be like trying to move water with a leaky bucket. We have been taught (myself included) to embrace service types of mission with enthusiasm and to see the measurable good that is done as the work of God. There will always be a place for such things, because alleviating the suffering of our fellow humans is indeed the work of God, but there is another part to this thing called the kingdom of God.

The other part is often what is missing from churches, even those who really do love to serve and do it well. Consider the familiar tale of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. Martha is busy in the kitchen and Mary is sitting at Jesus feet. Martha is rather upset with Mary, but Jesus tells her that Mary is not doing wrong. Mostly when I preach on this, including here at GSPC, I get at least one, and

### **Good Samaritan Presbyterian Church**

Mailing address:

PO Box 925, Waldorf, MD 20604

Website:

[www.goodsampc.org](http://www.goodsampc.org)

Email:

[gspc@comcast.net](mailto:gspc@comcast.net)

## **S e s s i o n**

**Pastor: Reverend Mark Gaskill**

### **Communion Team**

Bettie Dillon  
Mindy Tracy

### **Discipleship Team**

John Holmes  
Kate Lassman  
Sandy Webb

### **Hospitality Team**

Doug Ellison  
Al Flora  
Heather Kriebel  
Ted Roorda

usually several women in the congregation who tell me, "I'm Martha, and that isn't going to change." So, I want to say that we appreciate Martha, the church always has and always will, have a place for them, but there is the part that Mary takes, which we too often neglect. That part is community. Mary takes a spot in a place where society, and her older sister, say she shouldn't be. She sits in the company of the men, listening to the rabbi teach, and Jesus affirms her that it is right for her to be there.

The important thing to notice is that Jesus doesn't devalue Martha and her list of things to do and her emphasis on being productive. Jesus welcomes and holds a space for Mary, who was breaking several "rules," in addition to vexing her sister's drive to get things done. Mary was taking a moment to step outside of what was expected; the communities of Christians who call themselves Churches, need to do a better job of welcoming Mary. Mission means creating space for people in our community, even if they don't fit the exact picture of who we think they should be. The Pharisees always tended to ask the wrong questions of Jesus, not because they were always trying to trap him (though sometimes they were), but because they really thought the right questions were something very different than the ones he was answering. I get it, it can be hard to actually have a conversation with someone who seems to need money or food more than they need to talk. But recognizing the full humanity of people who are in need is more important than most of us know. It's a growing edge for the Church with a capital C. This paradigm shift becomes more crucial when you step slightly away from our usual thoughts about mission as "doing good," or "giving." When you realize that the person you are helping is an actual human being, you start to be able to see how mission is supposed to work. Mission, like everything else in the kingdom of God is about relationships. If your mission doesn't bring you into relationship with another human being, it is simply charity.

Charity has been considered a very high virtue for a very long time, but it has limits. One of its limits is the bottomless pit of human need; simply giving things away will never be enough. The other is an all too limited capacity for love and grace in human hearts; even the most compassionate can get burnt out by the depth and despair of suffering. We need to begin to see Mission as something beyond charity, but which includes the good things we do out of charity and for the sake of helping others. We need to understand that our core mission is always to make space and invite people into the presence of Jesus. We must sit with him and learn from him and grow to trust him. We must learn to welcome people as he welcomed people, which was radical enough to draw the ire of the good religious folk of his day. Perhaps it was because they simply felt, as many do, that virtuous charity was good enough. Jesus has a higher goal: relationship and community. It may not be easy or comfortable, doing mission this way, but it is the way to truly be a part of this thing called the kingdom of God.

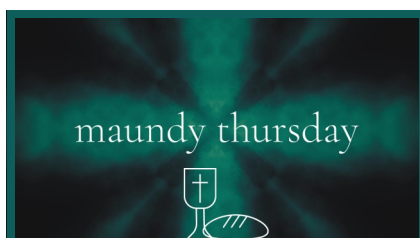
*Mark*

### **UPDATE ON COVID PRECAUTIONS**

Many organizations, including the public school system, have recently changed their policy to make masks optional. We are also looking towards taking that step, however, Session has decided to wait for several weeks before we make the move, to see if infection rates begin climbing. We are planning on making masks optional on April 10, Palm Sunday. This move is contingent upon available data and is always subject to your individual decision. Keep in mind that singing is an activity that presents a higher than normal risk of transmission, but is something we very much want to continue, especially through Holy week and Easter.

With similar caution we are also planning to have social time following the services beginning on Palm Sunday. We will be offering prepackaged snacks and coffee in the Narthex after worship beginning on Palm Sunday.

As with all activities during the pandemic, we hold these plans lightly, but with hopefulness.



**Service—April 14th at 7PM**

## FINANCIAL STATUS—March 31, 2022

<b>Balance, Beginning of March</b>	<b>\$13,337.97</b>
Income	\$13,571.88
Disbursements	\$25,385.88
<b>Balance, End of February</b>	<b>\$1,523.97</b>

<b>Summary of Assets</b>	<b>03/31/2022</b>
Community Bank of the Chesapeake—Checking	\$4,060.18
Community Bank of the Chesapeake—Escrow	\$38,588.05
<b>Investments</b>	
Union Bank of Switzerland—Building Expansion Fund	\$244,048.20
Union Bank of Switzerland—Wm. Lees Mem. Scholarship Fund	\$39,043.74
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$325,740.17</b>

## NEXT ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES

### QUESTIONS

As pastor Mark said in his sermon on Sunday, March 20, people were always asking questions of Jesus. The curious people that heard about Jesus came for different reasons. They had different questions. Some were bold and challenging, others timid or differential. Most requests dealt with everyday needs, health and food. But some also came with deeper more searching questions concerning belief and faith.

But Jesus in turn also posed questions, of his disciples and of the people who came to him. The Gospel of John records almost 40 questions that Jesus asked. Questions sometime reveal more than the answer. We will look at each of the 40 questions following six narrative themes.

- Believing and professing
- Demonstrating understanding
- Love, forgiveness and acceptance vs condemnation
- Carnal and spiritual caring
- Defending justice
- Praying and pleading while suffering

In class we will follow a sequence of looking at the setting of each question. We will explore how the setting of the question might apply to our own experiences; and discuss how each of us identifies with the question, either simply or profoundly, and then perhaps speculate how we/I would answer Jesus' question.

The texts will all be based on the Gospel of John. Hope you can join us starting SUNDAY, MAY 1.

## GSPC HELPS CHILDREN IN THE SON HELP UKRANIAN REFUGEES

The Children in the Son mission in Romania has a house, called Agape House, where teenage Roma boys were living while they attended school in the city. Since the boys are now attending virtually from their homes, they are not using the house. When the refugees from Ukraine started coming to Romania, the mission decided to help by housing refugee families there - some for just a day as they traveled further west, and some for longer periods. They need support for this, as the people coming were not able bring much with them, so money for food and other needs would be greatly appreciated and will go directly to their support. **If you would like to help, please bring or send a check made out to GSPC with "Children in the Son, Ukraine Refugees" on the memo line by Palm Sunday, 10 April.**

\*\*Below you will find part of the most recent Children in the Son Newsletter.



Dear Family and Friends,

As I type this update, I am communicating with my staff in Romania about the unbelievable crisis of Romania's northern bordering neighbor, Ukraine. There is no way you have not heard about the Russian invasion at this point and the ensuing humanitarian crisis of Ukrainians trying to flee the country. Men who are not soldiers are taking up arms to protect their country and vowing to fight to the end. When we found out early last week that the Ukrainian men were pleading for boots because they were given an assault rifle to fight and not much else, our ministry's director, Nelu, very quickly ran to a store and purchased 10 pairs of the best boots he could. The boots went on a Red Cross truck the next day but now we are being told there is hardly any way to get more supplies to the men fighting. We are awaiting to hear more but we are happy to get raising the funds to get boots on the feet of those fighting the evil minds behind this war.

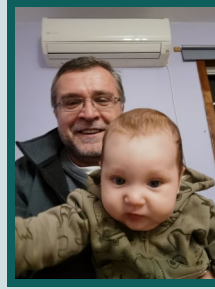
Romania, like Poland, has taken in many refugees by freely opening their borders to their Ukrainian neighbors. While the first few ways for people were just traversing Romania to go to western Europe, the last wave brought with it many poor people who have no connection to the west.

Agape Home has not been functioning since Romania closed schools over a year ago and only allowed virtual school. Even though the schools are open again, the boys that we would have housed there decided just to stay at home since they were already used to it which meant we had an entire building we could offer to refugees but we had problems with the gas furnace that we had to resolve and we weren't even sure it could be resolved. We needed to add a mini-split with heat as well in case the gas furnace broke again. Just like The Lord, and thanks to Nelu's hard work, the issues with the heating were resolved within a matter of two days. Here is the newly installed mini-split! He was finding that most refugees only wanted to stay a night while they were traveling through Romania into Hungary. Nelu communicated with the Romanian Baptist Association that was collaborating with the Ukrainian Baptist Association and find out about two families that were coming from Ukraine and wanted long term housing. We graciously accepted this knowing full well The Lord would provide for their needs while they are with us.



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Our youngest Ukrainian guest is Lia, who is pictured here being held by our director, Nelu.



The family to the left consists of a mother (Lilia), her six-month-old baby girl (Lia), and her mother-in-law (Lilia) who is a widow. (The person holding the baby to the left is Nelu's wife, Carla, who has been a tremendous help and resource for our ministry during this chaotic time.) The family to the right is comprised of a father (Yuri), mother (Natalia), their 18-month-old son (Sasha), and their family dog (no name just yet). We love that they didn't leave behind their dog! Yuri was to leave Ukraine because he had a stroke right before the invasion and needs continued medical care which he could not safely receive in the Ukraine right now. Nelu and Carla are working to get him treated immediately to prevent future strokes.



The families had to endure several nights of traumatic bombing and fighting while sleeping on mattresses in a basement with over 100 other people. I am sure not much sleeping was had in those tense circumstances. As you can imagine, many people are traumatized and shell shocked. Each of these two families drove for three days from Kyiv (Kiev) in their own cars while seeing the bombing behind them as they drove away. Those sights alone are so incredibly traumatic, especially knowing loved ones were in the middle of it. Please pray for Lia's father to live through his horrible war. We will gladly receive him when he is able to join his family. We ask for you to pray for these dear sisters and brother in Christ and their precious children. If you would like to donate to help with the expenses to house them, you can give through PayPal on our website at [www.childrenintheson.com](http://www.childrenintheson.com) or by going to PayPal and using the email address [Michelle@childrenintheson.com](mailto:Michelle@childrenintheson.com) or you can go to our Facebook page [Children In The Son FB page](#) (they do not charge us a fee like PayPal does) and click on donate. Please be sure to follow us on Facebook if you have an account so you get all the updates! As always, you can send a check to Children In The Son, PO Box 99063, Raleigh, NC 27624.

### DINNER EVENT HOSTED BY THE YOUTH OF GSPC

The Youth is hosting the dinner that had to be postponed on Valentine's Day. We will be sticking with the French food theme. The new date is April 10, 2022, dinner will begin at 6:00, the youth of GSPC will be providing top quality cuisine, service and entertainment. Reservations are required, cost is \$20 per person or \$35 per couple. Almost all of the spots are taken, so if you have not made your reservation yet by signing up in the narthex—call the church ASAP to reserve your spot.





**FREE** At-Home  
Covid Tests  
& N95 Masks

Available while supplies last.

Charles County Health Department has given Good Samaritan a large supply of KN95 masks and COVID-19 Antigen Rapid at Home Self Test Kits. If you are in need of a test kit or mask, please do not hesitate to email or call the church or see Reverend Mark on Sunday mornings.



5th—Charlie Persing  
7th—Jill Buntz  
14th—Ed Yatty  
15th—Bill Wagner, Cindy Benjamin  
16th—Roman Benavente  
18th—Jeremy Mandragos, Jean Robinson  
20th—Siyami Takha

21st—Judy Howell, Jay Koehler, Terri  
Tipsword  
23rd—Karen Brandes  
26th—William Buntz  
27—Jim Daugherty  
29th—Jim Kriebel

## Lectionary for April

### **Fifth Sunday in Lent—April 3**

Isaiah 43:16–21  
Psalm 126  
Philippians 3:4b–14  
John 12:1–8

### **Palm Sunday—April 10**

*Liturgy of the Palms*  
Luke 19:28–40  
Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29  
*Liturgy of the Passion*  
Isaiah 50:4–9a  
Psalm 31:9–16  
Philippians 2:5–11  
Luke 22:14–23:56 or Luke 23:1–49

### **Maundy Thursday—April 14**

Exodus 12:1–4 [5–10] 11–14  
Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19  
1 Corinthians 11:23–26  
John 13:1–17, 31b–35

### **Good Friday—April 15**

Isaiah 52:13–53:12  
Psalm 22  
Hebrews 10:16–25 or Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9  
John 18:1–19:42



### **Easter Sunday—April 17**

Acts 10:34–43 or Isaiah 65:17–25  
Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24  
1 Corinthians 15:19–26 or Acts 10:34–43  
John 20:1–18 or Luke 24:1–12

### **Second Sunday of Easter—April 24**

Acts 5:27–32  
Psalm 118:14–29 or Psalm 150  
Revelation 1:4–8  
John 20:19–31

# APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Sunday School @ 9AM Worship @ 10AM	4	5 Women's Bible Study @ 9:30 AM Crafters @ 10:30 AM	6 Bible Study with Rev. Mark @ 11 AM	7	8	9
10 <i>Palm Sunday</i> Sunday School @ 9AM Worship @ 10AM Youth Group Hosted Dinner @ 6 PM	11	12 Women's Bible Study @ 9:30 AM Crafters @ 10:30 AM	13 Bible Study with Rev. Mark @ 11 AM	14  Maundy Thursday Service of Holy Communion & Tenebrae at 7 PM	15	16
17 Sunday School @ 9AM Worship @ 10AM 	18 Rev. Mark's Vacation Through April 24	19 Women's Bible Study @ 9:30 AM Crafters @ 10:30 AM	20	21	22	23
24 Sunday School @ 9AM Worship @ 10AM	25	26 Women's Bible Study @ 9:30 AM Crafters @ 10:30 AM	27 Bible Study with Rev. Mark @ 11 AM	28	29	30