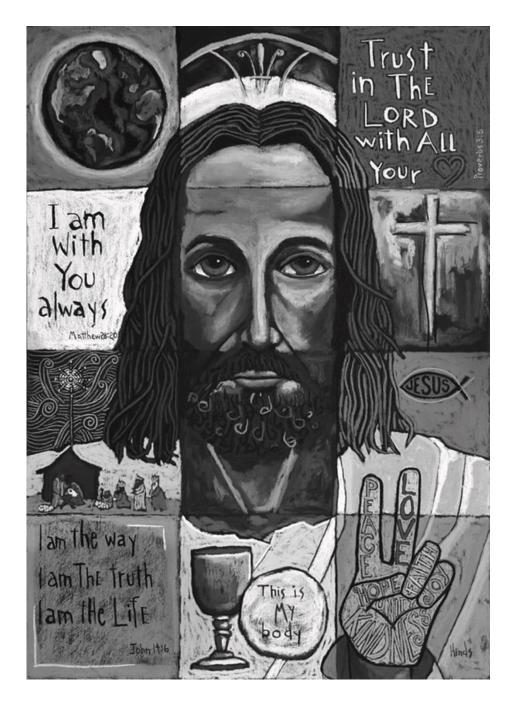
THE EPISTLE JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2026



ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH 655 WAYNE AVENUE DEFIANCE. OH 43512 WWW.STJOHNDEFIANCE.COM 419.782.5766

From the Desk of Pastor Mews



PASTOR MEWS EPISTLE: January and February 2026

Happy New Year, 2026! The Lord's mercies are new every day! We also know that the Lord's mercies are new every year. We don't know the challenges or joys that we will have in 2026, but we know that God will be with us. Much of what we do as a Christian church is to create a culture of mutual love and respect, and the hope that shapes our ministry to make disciples and share the Good News of Jesus. We Christians are really in the "people" business. How we speak and interact with each other is as those created by God, redeemed by Christ and set apart to be God's people.

- 1. St. Paul instructs with the redeemed: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and bear with each other." Colossians 3:12-13a.
- 2. St. James sharply reminds us of the power of words: "The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person and sets the whole course of their life on fire." James 3:9
- 3. May we remember that it is the Lord's Word that created us, redeemed us, and by Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. empowers us to have 'pearls' fall out of our mouths. With that in mind, may these guidelines be a blessing to you:

Christian Guidelines for Godly Communication:

- 1. Remember, it's more important to be GRACIOUS than to be right.
- 2. The MEDIUM is the message; 92% of all communication is non-verbal.
- 3. HOW it is said is more important than WHAT is said.
- 4. It is better to first UNDERSTAND, then to be understood.
- 5. The SANDWICH approach: compliment, concern, then compliment again.
- 6. What if all meetings / encounters were RECORDED for future purposes and possibly exit surveys?
- 7. Speak the TRUTH in love.
- 8. God gave us TWO ears and ONE mouth and they are to be used in that proportion.
- 9. "Love is PATIENT, it is kind, it is not rude or self-seeking". 1 Corinthians 13:4
- 10. At the end of the meeting or encounter can we reflect upon our actions and words? Do I need to APOLOGIZE for being non-Christian in my words and actions during this encounter or recent meeting?

Which struck you as the most important? Which do you do well? Which do you need the Lord's help with? Someone said these appear to be common sense and straightforward. Others thought that these bring clarity. Still others have taken a copy and placed it on the bulletin board where they work. May the Spirit prompt us to review them imploring the Holy Spirit to place these guidelines into our hearts, souls and minds, knowing in repentance and contrition that redemption is ours in Christ. Jesus and His Word will never pass away! In Christ, Pastor Kurt F. Mews

PROFESSIONAL REPORT FROM PASTOR MEWS:

- Funeral of Susan Borkosky, who died on December 7, 2025; the funeral was on December 12, 2025.
- Funeral of Jim Miller, who died on December 13, 2025; the funeral was on December 18, 2025.
- Marriage of Brayden and Erika Stykemain on Saturday, December 6, 2025 in Ada, Ohio.
- Reception of new members will be Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.: by Affirmation of Faith: Dave and Fran Coonrod and Marissa Wagner; by Confirmation: Elijah Wagner,

PERSONAL FROM PASTOR MEWS:

- Pastor is in Illinois from January 1 to January 3, 2026, visiting family.
- Pastor will be on vacation from January 16 to January 26, 20026.
- Pastor may be returning to Cleveland for matters surrounding his father's death.
- My family and I thank you for your kind gifts, cards, and treats during the Christmas season. It is a joy to be loved.

OHIO DISTRICT and AREA MINISTRY:

- Pastor Mews continues to lead worship at Laurels the 3rd Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m.
- Pastors Circuit meetings will be held on January 13 at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lima, OH, and on February 10 here at St. John Lutheran Church.
- Pastor Mews and Greg Johnston have been elected alternative delegates of the NW Ohio Circuit 1 to the LCMS Synodical convention in July, 2026, in Phoenix, Arizona.

WORSHIP FROM PASTOR MEWS:

- Dedication of new church keyboard at all services, the weekend of January 10-11, 2026
- Upcoming video sermons of Pastor Mews (January 17-18), and Pastor Luhring, during Pastor Mews' vacation in late January.
- Ash Wednesday service with the imposition of ashes on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. with a Lenten meal from 4:30 - 5:45.





Pastor Mews' Sermons January-February 2026

"Mystery Made Known" January 3-4 Epiphany Ephesians 3:1-12 Revealed/Grace

January 10-11 The Baptism of Our Lord "The Rest of the Story" Isaiah 42:1-9 Baptism / Holy Spirit

January 17 Pastor Stephen Nierman (Guest Pastor)

2nd Sunday of the Epiphany "Come and See" January 18 John 1:29-42a Lamb of God/Revelation (Pastor Mews' sermon will be projected)

January 24-25 3rd Sunday of the Epiphany Seminarian Joshua Gerken

Jan 31 & Feb. 1 4th Sunday of the Epiphany "Choosy God Chooses You" Matthew 4:12-25 Chosen/Disciple

February 7-8 5th Sunday of the Epiphany "It's Not About You" 1 Corinthians 2:1-12, 13-16 From, By and For God

February 14-15 The Transfiguration of Our Lord "Mountain Top Experiences" Exodus 24:8-18 God dwells with us

Feb. 21-22 1st Sunday in Lent "Christian Acts--More How than What" Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 Works/Heart



SJL RECONCILIATION PROCESS: "Church Doctor Ministries--Healthy Churches Thrive"

- A three-year commitment with Diagnostics & Healthy Churches Thrive

- Vision Team Meeting January 12th, 2026
 ECDC Team Meeting January TBA
 Spiritual Gifts book study continues on Monday evenings
- The Church "Governance Team" has been formed
- Church Governance Consultation with Church Doctors on January 14 & 15, 2026
- Discover Your Windows Special Presentation "Resurrecting a Biblical Worldview of the Local Church" Open to all, February 10, 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Bible Study Opportunities - Led by Pastor Mews



WINTER, 2026, Life with God begins on Monday, February 23. Please take a form available in the back of the church or in the church office.

"Your Spiritual Gifts, Discover God's Plan for Your Life!"

This is an ongoing class that supplements the spiritual gifts inventory taken by members and is part of "Healthy Churches Thrive" ministry. Monday evenings, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Room

Dates: January 5 and 12, February 2, 9 and 16

Come explore the Biblical definitions and applications of various spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit has given to believers.

In-Depth Bible Study, "How Jesus Changed the World," by Christopher Hudson This class takes an in-depth look at Jesus' influence on every part of our world and life. Wednesday afternoons, 2:00-3:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Room Dates: January 7, February, 4, 11, 18 and 25

"Romans" We will wrap up our study of Romans, then begin **"The Nicene Creed."** which will begin the first week of February. Thursday Mornings, 10:00-11:30, with break for refreshments in the Fellowship Room

Dates: January 8, February, 5, 12, 19 and 26.

Class Outreach Ministry: Path Center of Defiance, items donated first class each month

Cross Training continues each Wednesday from 6:00-7:30 for all 1st through 8th graders: classes resume on January 7th.

Bible Studies
SUNDAY-10:00 a.m.
Phil Rohlf — "Mews Sermon Review"
in the Cafeteria

Sandy Gyurnek —
"God Never Gives Up On You"
Fellowship Room on the left

Jeff Rohlf — Max Lucado: "The Promise of Psalm 23, Traveling Light" Adult Ed A Room **Prayer Requests**

Please let the church office know of any prayer requests. Call 419.782.5766 or email church.office@stjohntigers.com.

For the Prayer Chain, please contact Judy or Penny via phone, text, or email if you have a prayer request, an addition, a correction, or any feedback for the Prayer Chain Warriors to include in their prayers. Judy Detter (detterjudy@gmail.com), text Judy: 419.783.7032. Penny Mueller (pennym41@gmail.com) text Penny: 419.304.5768



Our Adult CrossTraining Studies (ACTS) continues on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. We follow the same schedule as the CrossTraining students - bring your student to CrossTraining and meet with the adults!





PRIVATE COMMUNION

Pastor continues to offer private Communion for anyone who wishes to have Communion. Please call the church office for an appointment.

SHUT-IN CALLS

We have around 30 people who are designated as shut-ins in our congregation. Pastor, George Kaiser and Walt & Lorna Smith are keeping in contact with our members. If the shut-in person is comfortable having a home visit, arrangements will be made for this visit.

PASTOR'S SERMONS

If you missed a sermon, you can find it on our YouTube channel, on our webpage (www.stjohndefiance.com) and on our Podcast site.

Google search: st john lutheran church defiance ohio youtube. Then subscribe to St. John channel to get notified when we are broadcasting "live".

LINK TO OUR WEBPAGE
https://www.stjohndefiance.com/sermo
ns-2/

LINK TO OUR PODCAST

https://www.buzzsprout.com/54964
Put your favorite podcast app on your
phone and listen to the sermons any
time of day.

Our service is broadcast a week later on the radio on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. on WONO 1280 AM and on WZOM 105.7 FM at 8:00 a.m.



MEN'S PROJECT TEAM

The Men's Project Team will meet on the second Saturday of January at 8:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Room. They will not meet in February. The team discusses projects around the church. We also discuss leadership, talent, and time schedules for projects. The Project Team is not all blood, sweat and tears, but a time of fellowship, to get to know your fellow Christians, and sometimes to solve the world's problems. In the past the Team has had coffee and sometimes donuts while breaking down the work list, dividing the work load according to talents. This format has worked pretty well. God has given every human being a gift or talent to use for His purposes. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10).

I look forward to enjoying everyone's company as we share fellowship. -Thom Kent

Ladies Aid

This being the month after we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior, let us remember 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" and John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

We hope that everyone had a good time at the Congregational Christmas Party!

Our Officers for next year are President – Jan McGee, Vice President – Lorna Smith, Secretary – Carolyn Richard, and Treasurer – Carolyn Hoyle.

Our January meeting will be on January 29th at 2 p.m. with the food pantry item being hand and body lotion. Roberta Phlipot's team will be your hostesses.

The February meeting will be held on February 26, 2026 at 2pm. Donna Van Vlerah's team will be our hostesses. Toilet paper is the food pantry item.

We are hosting the Ash Wednesday Lenten Meal on February 18 from 4:30 -5:45. We are planning on having lasagna, salad, garlic bread and dessert. Come for the meal and stay for the mid-week Lenten service at 6:00 p.m.





SAVE YOUR PLASTIC CAPS!

We are saving CLEAN plastic caps (any size, shape, or color) to possibly have a park bench on our church property. Please bring them to the church office. Examples of caps: water bottles, milk jugs, sprays (oil, etc.), cleaning products, food products. Thank you!



DECEMBER 2025 FOOD PANTRY REPORT

It was a busy December filling the food orders. As of December 30th, we served 76 families or 230 people and distributed 488 bags of food. We continued to distribute EXTRA Thanksgiving food items that were donated from the previous month. Thank you to everyone who donated food. It was very much appreciated. I used two Thrivent Action Team events for the canned turkey and the hams, and that totaled \$500 of additional assistance. We spent \$1,180.01 in Meijer Simply Give Gift Cards.

I want to thank Sandy Joost and Elaine Carpenter for their many volunteer years of service to the Food Pantry. May God continue to bless you both. Thank you to all the volunteers who made the distribution of food go well. We welcome Ruth Blake, Fran Coonrod and Mary Ann Hurst, who are being trained to use the software program, PantryTrak. Also, thank you to Mary and Howard Grime with help with bread donations.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Food Pantry. We always welcome food and money donations. If you wish to give money toward this ministry, please send it to Krystle Clark. Once a month we go to the Toledo Food Bank and spend money on the order and Krystle pays the invoice from the Food Pantry account.

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY FOOD ITEMS NEEDED: canned tuna, oil and cream of chicken soup. Bath tissue is always needed.







The Clothes Closet

located across the street from the school, continues to provide gently used clothing at an affordable price to our community. The Clothes Closet is open on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Fridays from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. If you have a donation, you may drop it off on Monday or Tuesday from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. or during the times we are open. Bring donations and come on in and do a little shopping. The Clothes Closet donated \$1,000 to the Defiance Furniture Bank, \$1,000 to Operation K.A.V.I.C (Keller Assists Veterans In Crisis), and \$50 a month towards missions. We also funded the ramp out in front of the Clothes Closet. If anyone would be interested in volunteering at the Clothes Closet, please call Nancy Eickenberg at 419.785.4269 or Linda Hageman at 419.439.3284.

OUTREACH MINISTRY January / February 2026



Outreach Ministry seeks to share the Gospel of Christ within and outside of our walls to proclaim Jesus and the ministry of our church and school locally, nationally and globally.

Outreach Ministry featured a Nativity scene along with a large St. John Lutheran Church banner at the Christmas Cruise-Thru at the Defiance County Fairgrounds in Hicksville in December. This display, in its third consecutive year, has been viewed by thousands.

The committee is currently making plans for 2026. They meet monthly to plan additional opportunities to be more welcoming to worshippers and be more visible in the community.

Additional information regarding this ministry is available by contacting Mike Saxton at 419-393-2513 or Pastor Mews at 419-782-5766.

2026 LENTEN MEALS

February 18th Ladies Aid I
February 25th Boy Scouts S
March 4 Elders S
March 11 Youth Bd. / Dartball Cross Training March 25 Tuesdays @ 10 Bible St.

Lasagna Supper
Soup / Sandwich Supper
Sloppy Joe Supper
Spaghetti Supper
Taco Bar Supper
Chili Supper

Scouting News January / February 2026



Thank you to everyone who supported the Troop during their fundraising efforts by purchasing wreaths and Christmas cookies! It was a challenge and fun at the same time.

The Cub Scout Pack has been on track earning their goals toward rank while mixing in some fun! They held their annual turkey shoot and learned about health and nutrition. At the beginning of the month, they worked on family traditions and then they all brought their family's favorite Christmas treat to share at their Christmas party!

The Boy Scout Troop over the last month has completely cleaned out the paper garage, worked on giving the Scout Garage a facelift by scraping, painting and straightening it up, and putting on a new metal roof! It should last for years!! We are hoping to replace the garage door in the spring. They also made wreaths to sell. We had a lock-in where they not only decorated 350 of their own Christmas cookies to sell, but due to the heat being out and events being canceled, they also decorated 300 Christmas cookies that church Cross Training students were to decorate. They held their own Christmas party with a gift exchange and movie binge-watching! Finally, they are starting to polish up on scout skills in preparation for the Klondike Derby in January. They will also help with their District Dinner in January. In February, if the weather cooperates, they hope to do a Polar Bear at Auglaize Village, and will take part in the first Merit Badge Day hosted by their District!

The Troop extends their thanks to all who have dropped off pop cans and newspapers in the garage in the south parking lot. It not only helps with their conservation project of recycling but it has also helped with the cost of their activities. With the newspaper garage being totally clean, we are asking for everyone's help by NOT putting in items we cannot recycle, like magazines, printer paper, and anything shredded. Please further help by putting your newspapers in paper sacks. You can ask for them at any grocery store.

Youth and adults are always welcome to attend Pack and Troop activities to learn more about our program. Any questions can be directed to Stephanie Sindel at 419-438-8268.

TUESDAYS AT TEN SHOP WITH A COP PULLED-PORK BENEFIT

On November 4th, 2025, Tuesdays at Ten Bible Study had an Election Day Pulled-Pork Dinner. We served 275 adult meals and 25 children's meals. Through the profits of the dinner, donations and Thrivent grants, we raised \$4,124.64 for Shop with a Cop. This means we supported 41 children to go shopping with a cop. Each child and (up to grade 8) received \$100 to purchase clothing, gloves, shoes or boots. No toys. Rita Bergman (below) presented the check to Det. Sgt. Dave Richard (left) and Patrolman Garrett Roth. The shopping was held at Walmart and served 270 children. What a joy for the children! Thank you for your support by purchasing a ticket(s) or making a donation. YOU made the children very happy! God loves a cheerful giver.



January &





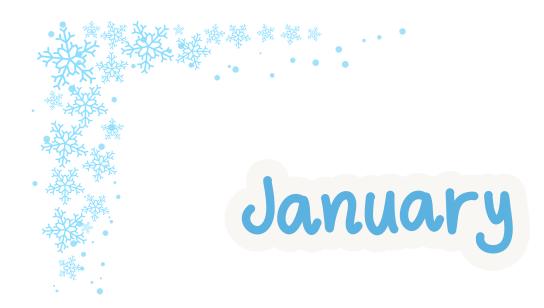
Gladys Spreeman	January 6 th	(83)	Shirley Groll	February 9 th	(86)
Faye Luhring	January 8 th	(81)	Jackie Marcellus	February 11 th	(82)
Shirley Homan	January 19 th	(84)	Martha Tonjes	February 12 th	(84)
Walt Smith	January 21st	(80)	Ed McCray	February 16 th	(88)
Harold Sprow	January 25 th	(81)	Peg Miller	February 19 th	(81)
Penny Mueller	January 28 th	(85)	Anne Shoup	February 19 th	(80)
Dorothy Bockelman	January 30 th	(87)	Sharon Boehm	February 28 th	(84)

Happy Knniversary

40+ years

Dennis & Kathy Ripke	January 7 th	(49)
Bob & Karen Hastedt	January 15 th	(54)
Dick & Diane Bonin	February 2 nd	(60)
Howard & Mary Grime	February 5 th	(60)
Mark & Kathy Řeynolds	February 17 th	(48)
Jill & Pat McMillen	February 18 th	(43)
Bernard & Anna Sines	February 20 th	(72)
Jack & Marie Clark	February 24 th	(63)





January 2026

Sunday	Monda	ау	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December 28 NON-COMMUNION Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance	8:00 am 9:30 am	Food Pantry 9 am	31	CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED HAPPY NEW YEAR!	2	COMMUNION 3 Worship Ser. 5:30 pm
COMMUNION 4 Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Music Mtg. Tele Care Boy Scouts Spiritual Gifts	8:00 am 9:15 am 11:00 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Book Club 2 pm Outreach Mtg. 6:30 pm	Mews' Bible Study 2 pm Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10 am Elders Meal 5 pm Elders Mtg. 6 pm Pickleball 6:00 pm	9 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	NON-COMMUNION 10 Worship Ser. 5:30 pm
NON- COMMUNION 11 Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Sunday School 9 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Boy Scouts	12 8:00 am 9:30 am 11:00 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Knit & Study 1 pm Parish Planning 6 pm	On Site Church Govt. Consultation 9 am-3 pm Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	On Site Church Govt. Consultation 9 am-3 pm Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Pickleball 6:00 pm	16 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	COMMUNION 17 Worship Ser. 5:30
NO COMMUNION 18 Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Sunday School 9 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	M. L. KING JR. I Admin Mtg. Finance Boy Scouts	8:00 am 9:15 am 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Book Club 2 pm Trustees 6:30 pm	Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Pickleball 6:00 pm	23 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	NON-COMMUNION 24 Worship Ser. 5:30 pm
NON-COMMUNION Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Sunday School 9 am Bible Studies 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Boy Scouts	26 8:00 am 9:30 am 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Knit & Study 1 pm	Mews' Bible Study 2 pm Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10 am Ladies Aid 2 pm Pickleball 6:00 pm	30 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	COMMUNION 31 Worship Ser. 5:30 pm





February 20 26

Sunday	Mond	ay	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
COMMUNION Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Music Mtg. Boy Scouts Tele Care Spiritual Gifts	8:00 am 9:15 am 11:00 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Book Club 2:00 pm Outreach Mtg. 6:30 pm Youth Board 6:30 pm	Mews' Bible Study 2 pm Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10:00 am Elders' Meal 5:00 pm Elders' Mtg. 6:00 pm Pickleball 6:00 pm	6 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	NON-COMMUNION 7 Worship Service 5:30
NON- COMMUNION 8 Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Boy Scouts Spiritual Gifts	9 8:00 am 9:30 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Knit & Study 1:00 pm Kickoff Presentation Small Grp. "Discover Your Windows" 6:30 pm	Endowment Mtg. 10 am Mews' Bible Study 2 pm Hand Bells 5:45 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10:00 am Pickleball 6:00 pm	13 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	COMMUNION 14 Worship Service 5:30
COMMUNION Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Boy Scouts Spiritual Gifts	8:00 am 9:15 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Book Club 2:00 pm Trustees 6:30 pm Altar Guild 6:30 pm	Mews Bible St. 2:00 pm Lenten Meal 4:30 pm Hand Bells 5:15 pm Ash Wed. Service 6 pm Cross Tr. / ACTS 6:00 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10:00 am Parish Planning 6:00 pm Pickleball 6:00 pm	20 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	NON-COMMUNION 21 Worship Service 5:30
NON-COMMUNION 22 Worship: 9:00 & 11:00 am Adult Bible Study 10 am	Admin Mtg. Finance Life W/ God Boy Scouts	8:00 am 9:30 am 6:30 pm 6:30 pm	Food Pantry 9:00 am Tuesdays @ Ten 10 am Knit & Study 1:00 pm	Mews' Bible Study 2 pm Lenten Meal 4:30 pm Hand Bells 5:15 pm Ash Wed. Service 6 pm Senior Choir 6:30 pm	Clothes Closet 9:00 am Food Pantry 9:00 am Mews Bible St. 10:00 am Pickleball 6:00 pm	27 Clothes Closet 10:00 am	COMMUNION 28 Worship Service 5:30

