



Vol. 4 No. 1

# SKYLANDS UPDATE

February 2024

## Chase Away Those Winter Blues with a Spiritual Boost!

What better way to chase away those winter blues than to come together with the Skylands Walk to Emmaus community and sing, pray, worship and share communion? Oh, not to mention lots of wonderful fellowship, a mission project, lots of good food and an inspirational Fourth Day talk by one of our community members.

That's right ... there is no better way! So mark your calendars for **Saturday, March 9**, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Our gathering will be held at **Rockaway United Methodist Church**, which is located at 1 Hoagland Ave., Rockaway, N.J. 07866.

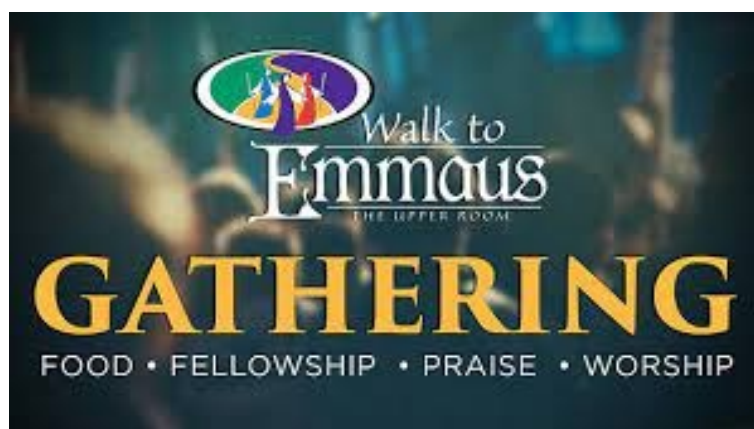
One more time, with feeling:

We have planned a wonderful community gathering to raise your spirits. It will feature:

**Singing**  
**Praying**  
**Worship and Communion**  
**Fellowship**  
**Wonderful Food**  
**Mission Project**  
**Sponsorship Training**  
**Fourth Day Speaker - Rev. Innica Humphrey**

Please mark your calendars **now and RSVP** so we can plan. And click the link below to let us know what you would like to bring!

[Skylands Emmaus Community: Emmaus Gathering](#)



# The Spring 2024 Walks Are On. Now We Need Pilgrims!

The Spring 2024 walks are set, teams are formed and training is happening. Now *all we need are pilgrims*. As of mid-February, we had exactly zero. We need at least 12 for each walk. The goal is in front of us.

Please prayerfully consider sponsoring someone. Application forms are available at [www.myswte.org](http://www.myswte.org). The deadline for sponsoring pilgrims is March 31.

And if you haven't already, please begin praying for the Lay Directors, **Carla** and **Dave**, for team members, pilgrims and sponsors. We know that God is already, always at work and he wants to hear from

What: Women's Walk #51  
 When: April 25-28, 2024  
 Where: Sacred Heart Retreat Center, Newton  
 Lay Director: **Carla Sasso**

What: Men's Walk #51  
 When: May 2-5  
 Where: Sacred Heart Retreat Center, Newton  
 Lay Director: **Dave Dickerson**

## Thinking of Sponsoring a Pilgrim?

*Great! Here are some guidelines to prayerfully consider*

### Who to Sponsor

- Church leaders
- Dependable church members
- Less active members
- Christians seeking a deeper relationship with God
- A cross section of the church
- Respected laypersons and clergypersons
- Members of diverse congregations, denominations, and ethnic groups
- Youth who are not part of the church but show a desire to meet Christ and to grow spiritually.

### Who Not to Sponsor

- People with no interest in the Christian faith or the church
- People undergoing emotional crisis or who are distracted or distraught
- People whose pattern it is to disrupt
- People whose theology is notably different
- Church hoppers

# Got Gifts? Of Course You Do!

One thing we know for sure about God is that he is generous. He has blessed each one of us with our own set of special gifts and talents. The things you love, love, love to do and even those that, well, maybe you don't love doing them but you're really good at them.

For some of us it's teaching. For others, it's singing or playing an instrument. It might be painting. Or being good with numbers (and Excel spreadsheets!) or administration, managing people. It could be friendliness, the ability to chat anyone up. Or maybe communications, telling stories, sharing your faith. Or possibly working with computers, writing code, troubleshooting tech issues.

The point is, we all have God-given skills and talents. And if God gave them to us, he must want us to use and share them!

Here's an opportunity to do just that. Below you will see the 2024 Skylands Walk to Emmaus Board and their roles or areas of focus. Each one of them could use some help. Board members who are specifically looking for some extra hands include **Steve Yeske** for community development, **Nancy Cooke** for music and **Tracy Allen** for reunion groups. But seriously, if your gift is prayer, reach out to **Innica**. If it's logistics, reach out to **McWilliam**. Etc. (You'll find a list of board members and their email addresses on the last page of this newsletter.)

Name	Role
<b>Don Schulz</b>	Community Lay Director
<b>Stephen Yeske</b>	Ass't. Community Lay Director / Community Development
<b>Mark Halverson</b>	Treasurer
<b>Greselda Powell</b>	Secretary
<b>Janet Saulter-Hemmer</b>	Database/Website
<b>Nancy Cooke</b>	Community Spiritual Director
<b>McWilliam Colon</b>	Ass't. Community Spiritual Director/ Facilities/Gatherings
<b>Nanette Fandino-Diaz</b>	Trainer/Team Selection
<b>Nancy Cooke</b>	Music
<b>Greg Crawford</b>	Newsletter
<b>Tracy Allen</b>	Reunions
<b>Carol Baker</b>	Agape
<b>Innica Humphrey</b>	Ass't Spiritual Director/Prayer Chain



## Make a Lasting Impact on SWTE!

*Qualified charitable distributions are a way to make a donation and satisfy your IRA distribution with pre-tax dollars.*

If you are 70-1/2 years old or older and have an individual retirement account, there is a way to make a donation to the Skylands Walk to Emmaus that will go toward satisfying your required minimum distribution. And it's done with pre-tax dollars.

It's called a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD. A QCD is a transfer of funds from your IRA custodian to a qualified charity. It can be counted toward satisfying your annual required minimum distribution (as long as certain requirements are met).

Unlike regular distributions from an IRA, a QCD is not counted as taxable income and so is not subject to income tax. In other words, if you are already withdrawing funds from your IRA, which are taxable, you could use QCDs to support your charities with funds that would not be recorded as income and would not be subject to income tax.

So instead of using the dollars that you are paying tax on and coming out of your bank account, you can use untaxed dollars from your IRA. By doing this, you save the percentage of federal income tax that you pay on the amount of giving.

As with anything related to taxes, there are certain conditions that must be met and requirements to make a QCD, so be sure and discuss any such plan with your tax accountant or financial adviser.

For example, you cannot make a QCD directly to a charity. It must be done through the IRA custodian. Also, the charity must be a 501(c)3 organization that is eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions.

For more information, read this article from the IRS: [Seniors can reduce their tax burden by donating to charity through their IRA | Internal Revenue Service.](#)

Thanks to **Mark Halverson** for sharing this opportunity and information.

*Photo by Simon Maage on Unsplash*

# Agape: It's More Than Trinkets, Snacks and Letters

I was recently reading a book for the [Academy for Spiritual Formation](#) I am attending. I began reading about how agape love has been seen through the centuries through different theologians' eyes. I was reminded of a friend involved in Emmaus Ministries for many years who said to me, "Unfortunately, in Emmaus, agape has come to mean a trinket, snack or letter and not the true love of God it is intended to be."

Martin Luther King Jr., in his address delivered at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in December 1957, spoke of the three kinds of love in the Greek New Testament: *eros* — physical love; *philia* — brotherly love; and *agape* — the sacrificial, unconditional love of God.

King said: "When we speak of loving those who would oppose us, we refer neither to *eros* or *philia*. We speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate. It means understanding, creative, redeeming goodwill for all [people]. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is not set in motion by any quality or function of its object. It is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative. It is the love of God operating in the human heart. When we rise to love on the agape level, we love [people] not because we like them, not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but we love them because God loves them. Here we rise to the position of loving the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed that the person does" (MLK Papers vol. 6, p. 325).

With the rising tide of criticism and disagreement in our world, where the common belief is *If you don't think just like me, you must be my enemy*, the oasis of Emmaus Ministries stands as a bulwark of agape love. Living a Fourth Day lifestyle reminds us that we love others not because they are just like us, but because God loves them, and that is what matters. Let us all continue to shower the world with agape love, not just during our Emmaus events and not just in the "trinkets, snacks and letters," but every day and with every person with whom we come into contact.

As MLK, Jr. said on another occasion, "I have a dream!"

We too can dream of a day when the world is filled with agape love. This dream can come true when we approach the world in a "spirit of high idealism, cooperation. and charity" and with agape love.

**Hess "Doc" Hall, on behalf of The Upper Room Emmaus Ministries staff**

*(Reprinted from the Emmaus Ministries newsletter.)*



# WHO'S WHO ON THE BOARD



NAME	ROLE	EMAIL
<b>Don Schulz</b>	Community Lay Director	dnschulz2@gmail.com
<b>Steve Yeske</b>	Asst Community Lay Director/Community Development	stephenyeske@comcast.net
<b>Janet Saulter-Hemmer</b>	Database/Website	JanetSWTE@gmail.com
<b>Nancy Cooke</b>	Community Spiritual Director/Music (acting)	pastornancy8192@aol.com
<b>Mark Halverson</b>	Treasurer	Markhalverson1365@gmail.com
<b>Tracy Allen</b>	Reunion Groups	adrene08@hotmail.com
<b>Griselda Powell</b>	Secretary	gpowell6@optonline.net
<b>Innica Humphry</b>	Assistant Spiritual Director/Prayer Chain Coordinator	innica@aol.com
<b>Nanette Fandino-Diaz</b>	Community Trainer/Team Selection	mrsnfdiaz@aol.com
<b>McWilliam Colon</b>	Ass't. Community Spiritual Director/Facilities/Gatherings	pastormcwilliam@hotmail.com
<b>Greg Crawford</b>	Newsletter	gcrawf216@gmail.com
<b>Nancy Cooke</b>	Assistant Spiritual Director/Community Development	pastornancy8192@aol.com
<b>Carol Baker</b>	Agape	travelinggir1@hotmail.com