

# The Evangelist

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
A Quarterly Parish Magazine + January 2020



Featured Article on page 8





# The Evangelist

## St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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### Submissions

All submissions ideas are welcome and considered

### Cover Photo

The cover picture was taken by the Diocesan Staff during our 2019 Diocesan Convention. On November 8th of 2019, Brenda was installed as our Diocese's 4th Archdeacon. The Archdeacon is a deacon



**St. Mark's Episcopal Church**

Called to be Christ Centered  
Touching Lives + Transforming Hearts + Teaching God's Word

St. Mark's is a traditional parish in liturgy and architecture, but a progressive parish in organization and community involvement. Each month dozens of our members work tirelessly and creatively with others in our community to combat hunger, homelessness, racism, and other significant issues. By the power and grace of God, we are seeing the Kingdom of God unfold in our community.

We are excited about what the Holy Spirit is doing in our parish and in our community and we would love to share that excitement with you.

We invite you to come visit. Peace be with you!



**Follow St. Mark's  
Episcopal Church  
Gastonia NC on Facebook**

[https://www.facebook.com/  
StMarksEpiscopalChurchGastonia/](https://www.facebook.com/StMarksEpiscopalChurchGastonia/)

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**Ash Wednesday February 26, 2020**



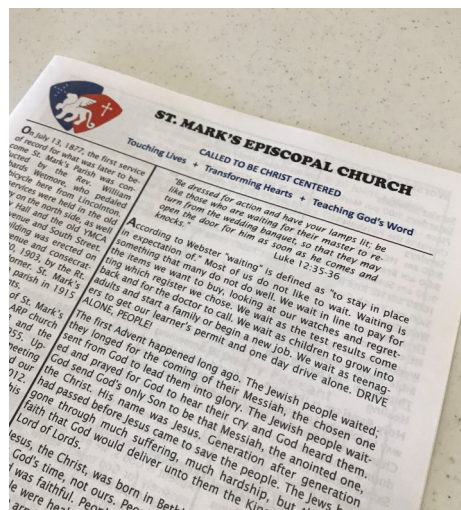
## **“This is not your grandparents’ church....”**

**Mrs. Polly Redd**

Communication is a vital part of our lives as human beings in relationship with others. We talk to family and friends regularly and yet the way we all communicate has changed in so many ways. I remember growing up with just 3 television stations that went off the air late at night and came back on when the sun rose in the morning. I remember when we got our first wall hanging phone upstairs near my sisters’ and my bedrooms and how wonderful it was to take the receiver into my room and close the door to talk to a friend, or possibly to a boy. Nowadays we all are privy to conversations in grocery store aisles and on street corners, often only hearing one side of the conversation because the speaker has an earbud in one ear and seems to be talking to the air.

With this “open air” conversing we often learn more than we ever wanted to know about a recent date someone had or a person’s current problems. I cannot tell you how many times I have recently had to honk at someone in a car in front of me who is not paying attention to their driving because they are on their smart phones. Email, texting, and posting on social media are the norm rather than the exception and I cannot tell you how many people have totally given up their land line phones.

Church communications have changed, too. For many of us we heard about activities at the church in a mailed, monthly newsletter or in announcements made on Sunday during worship. In the past we might have been part of a phone tree that passed news about meetings or prayer requests



Now we send out e-blasts using a program that counts how many people open and read the message, and we use emails and texts to broadcast meeting info or prayer requests quickly to everyone or to a select group. For many people, particularly in the church, we don’t want the way we communicate to change and yet we have to move forward in order to reach new people, as well as keep our younger people engaged.



To that end, St. Mark’s is making some communication changes starting this January. You are reading this article in our new quarterly parish magazine which will be mailed out 4 or 5 times a year and will contain more in-depth informational articles and lots of pictures. The hope is to also use this magazine to spread the word (dare I say “evangelize”) about all the good work that is happening at St. Mark’s throughout our community.

We will continue to send out our weekly email “blasts” each Thursday that tell about the upcoming schedule and events. It will remind you about or highlight certain activities in the immediate future. We will also use the e-blast system when we have someone in the hospital, a death in the parish family, or have a special prayer request or need that we want everyone to be aware of.

The printed announcement sheet will continue to be included in the Sunday worship bulletins which you can take home with you to remember something that is coming up. We plan to add the monthly lay leadership listing and calendar to the bulletins at the beginning of each month and have them available to pick up at the

church with other “newcomer” information to remind everyone of the many activities that happen in our building and beyond each week.

As we all know, social media is a big part of communication across the nation now. Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and other “platforms” offer a quick way for people to learn about what is happening in our lives and respond with likes and comments. To that end, St. Mark’s has a very active Facebook page that posts a devotional-type prayer or other writing each morning and publishes pictures and information about people in the parish and special events and activities. You are encouraged to follow us on Facebook if that is a media platform that you use.



You will find us listed as *St. Mark’s Episcopal Church Gastonia NC* and you will know it is the correct St. Mark’s if you see a picture from either inside or outside our church at the top. Our youth group has an active Instagram account that they use to let members of their group know what is happening and to share pictures and other information with the entire parish. They are located at *@\_stmarksyouth\_* and you can follow them as well.

The parish has a Twitter account but it is currently inactive. We will be working on that platform over the next several months and soon you can start “tweeting in church”.

One concern is always getting information to those people who do not have access to a computer and therefore miss all the regular information that goes out. In the past we have used a phone messaging system that would make a call to our computer-less group to tell them the information that had been emailed to others, but that has not been occurring for several months. We hope to update that group and reinstate that program so that everyone can know what is happening.

It is important for the life of St. Mark’s that everyone has some way to know what is happening each week and how they can be involved at whatever level. If you have any questions or find that you are not getting any of the information that goes out, please contact the church office or me using the contact information below. As the Director of Communication for St. Mark’s, I take seriously the work of getting out the word each week and I welcome your input at any time.

Polly Redd, Director of Communication

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704-864-4531, Ext. 4

Watch Each Sunday for  
the Live Streaming of  
our worship services.

Holy Communion Rite I	8:00 am
Holy Communion Rite II	10:30 am





# A Shout Out for the Youth

Anthony Varriale

Hello, my name is Anthony Varriale. I am the vice-president of the Youth Group here at St. Mark's. The Youth Group teaches core religious values in a fun and adventurous way for Youth for grades 4-12!

We have two programs for the Youth at St. Mark's. The first and youngest one is Club 45. This is for kids in the 4th and 5th grade. They meet once a month on the first Sunday of every month. The time is from 4-5PM. This is to give younger kids a taste of what is yet to come in EYC! Club 45 does a lot of joint-meetings with the EYC, the older kids help out the younger ones and show what it's like to be in a tight-knit family!



EYC is our older program for kids in the 6th-12th grade. They currently meet every week on Sundays. The time is 5-7PM. In EYC we go on mission trips, hold lock-ins, and have multiple volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

For all the things we do in EYC I cannot measure how much we do and how much amount of fun we have! Some of our past mission trips included Chicago, West Virginia, and Virginia. For the Summer of 2020 we will be going to Washington D.C.

We have decorated our own Youth Room, and made it one of the hottest rooms in the church to visit and relax! It has its own Surround Sound, Cloud Lights, Christmas Lights, Pool Table, Mini-fridge, Pop-Corn Machine, Wii, T.V, Chalk Board, and much more! It always calms me down and lets me relax whenever we are in there.



In our Youth programs we all know each other and care for each other. If something is wrong or if you are dealing with something, we will always be there to help you. We always need and want new people, so if you are interested please contact me at [anthony.varriale11@gmail.com](mailto:anthony.varriale11@gmail.com), or DM us on our Instagram Account [@\\_stmarksyouth\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_stmarksyouth_)

Have a Great Day and don't be shy about contacting us to join or get more details.

Sincerely,  
Anthony Varriale



## What does church music mean to me?

Julia Bozarth

This past December marked 44 years of my service as either a church organist or organist/ choir director. I have played for several different churches in six different states, with congregations of varying sizes and worship styles. Before becoming an organist, I had also participated in choirs at church. Yet, even though I have been singing and playing for a long time, I still try to approach each service with a fresh perspective.

We come together as a church family each Sunday to worship God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What a privilege we have—both to be able to worship in a land where we can freely express our praise, and to be granted the freedom to come to our Lord as we are.

Music enhances our worship by bringing a different facet to the written word. By adding music to the poetry of the hymns, the intended message comes to us on a more emotional level, thus enhancing our engagement with the service. In other words, music can bring us more emotionally into the worship of



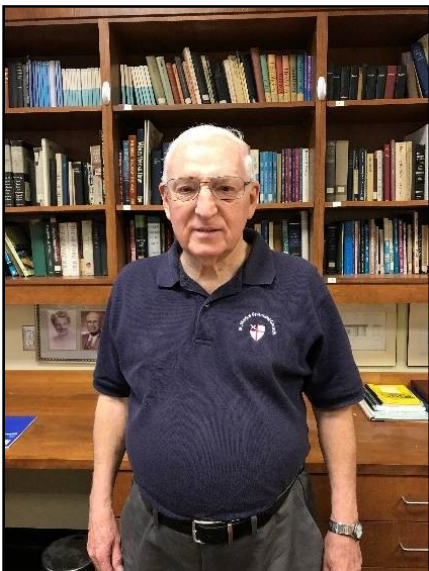
How many of us have sung “Silent Night” and felt like we were actually at the manger so many years ago? How many of us have had tears in our eyes as we sang “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord”? How many times have we felt the joy of God’s presence when we have heard a rousing anthem or postlude?

A thought to ponder—Think about music, and how it enhances the worship service.

Another thought to ponder—If music means as much to you as it does to me, would you be willing to consider using your talents in the Chancel Choir, Handbells, or another form of musical expression?

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## Meet Our New Church Historian



Ed Hoerning has agreed to become St. Mark's new Church Historian. Ed and Carol have been long time members of the parish and have been involved in many aspects of our Community. Carol was the ministry team leader for several years before retiring from that position in 2016. Ed has been a lay reader at the 8:00 am service for 21 years and has often been responsible for training our new lay readers before they begin their service.

Ed also continues to be one of our most faithful Lay Eucharistic Ministers. Ed was asked to take on this responsibility because he and Carol have taken and kept so many pictures over their time here. In fact, Ed has a slide show which last about two hours that he would love to share with you. He also has pictures of past priests and deacons going back several years.

Help us build a library of pictures and documents that will record for posterity our past and present, ultimately creating for the future an example and tradition of how this parish has served God, God's people and this community. We invite you to send us your pictures, newspaper articles or stories. We will make copies and return the original to you.

Help us answer questions like, who was the first couple to be married in the new church? Or when were the new Sunday school rooms build. Who was the Balthis family and what did they mean to this parish?



# Our Own Archdeacon

## An Interview with The Venerable Brenda Gilbert



Brenda Gilbert came to St. Mark's 15 years ago and never imagined where the Holy Spirit would lead her. She is not a "cradle" Episcopalian. That transition happened some 28 years ago when she married Dan. Brenda and Dan lived in Germany in the early part of their marriage where they attended the protestant church services on the military base. It wasn't until they moved to Golden, Colorado that Brenda experienced Cavalry Episcopal Church. Although grounded in a strong Bible Baptist family, Brenda said that she was drawn to the traditional worship she found in the Episcopal Church.



### What is an Archdeacon?

I get asked that a lot! If you look on page 543 of the BCP you'll see the Examination for Deacons. Among the vows that we make is a little sentence in there that reads, "You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties from time to time." That's where the Archdeacon comes in (laughing).

It is my responsibility as the Bishop's Chaplain to assist with ordinations, meet with Aspirants (those in the process of seeking Holy Orders as priest or deacons), organize continuing education for the deacons in our diocese, and make sure that active deacons are happy in the parishes they serve and are writing their annual reports to the bishop. I also step in if there is a conflict or concern between a priest and deacon in their working relationship. There have not been many of those, thanks be to God!

### Did you ever think 15 years ago when you first came to St. Mark's that you would be where you are today?

When Dan and I came for our first visit to St. Mark's, we knew that we were home. Just walking through those doors, we could feel the Holy Spirit in this place. Having said that, I had no clue how God would use me, but I knew that I wanted to be involved in some type of outreach ministry.

*"When Dan and I came for our first visit to St. Mark's, we knew that we were home. Just walking through those doors, we could feel the Holy Spirit in this place."*





## **Tell us a little about your relationship with God growing up.**

The importance of knowing God was always stressed in our home. My parents didn't constantly sit us down and talk about the Bible, they didn't have to. They lived out their faith in front of us daily. They would share with us what they were asking God for and they would tell us how God answered those prayers. They also let us know that we didn't have to be perfect to have a relationship with God. We just needed to be faithful and trust in a God that loves us more than even they did. Just hearing that made me want to know who God really is.

## **What has been the most exciting thing that has happened to you since being ordained?**

That's easy! Being asked to prayerfully consider being the next Archdeacon for the diocese of Western North Carolina. The former archdeacon called me on November 6, 2018 to tell me that the bishop would like me to take the position. I remember plopping down on my bed because my knees had given out!

## **What has been the most disappointing?**

That's a hard question. I am not and never have been disappointed in being an ordained clergyperson. I have been disappointed in the attitudes of some ministers from other faith traditions in response to my being a female minister. In one instance I had a minister make it pretty obvious he'd rather not administer communion to me while I was wearing my clericals.



## **What changes have you noticed in yourself since being ordained?**

Honestly, it is my willingness to just do things no matter how uncomfortably I may be. In the past, I always wanted to have as much information as possible before I stepped out on a limb. Now, if I feel that it is something God is calling me to do, I confess to God how unsure I am with my own abilities to do this task, and then I ask for the courage to do it no matter how afraid I may be. My motto is do it afraid if I must, then trust that God is in this with me.

## **Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?**

I really have not thought of it. When I was still in Deacon Formation school, we jokingly talked about which of us would replace the former archdeacon. There were three of us in my class and I can remember secretly thinking to myself, I hope it's me. Of course, I thought I would have 5 or 10 years to "prepare" for the job. One day I will learn that God has a wonderful sense of humor!

Perhaps my next dream position will be to somehow work with Bishop Curry on a project before he retires. It could happen!

this and receives no pay. Not that it matters to her. She does all for the love of God.



We are blessed beyond what we deserve to have Brenda and Dan in our parish. Our hearts are filled with joy that Brenda now inspires us in a new way to deepen our relationships with God. Brenda has a servant's heart, she is a wonderful preacher, a teacher, pastoral care, and our primary youth leader. Our Diocese is blessed beyond belief to have selected Brenda as the Archdeacon. She serves Iona, race relations, Commission on Ministry. She does all of this and receives no pay. Not that it matters to her. She does all for the love of God.

**Excerpts from Bishop's Sermon  
97th Annual Diocesan Convention  
November 8, 2019  
Acts 8:26-40, John 15:1-8**

*This sermon is the best message I have heard since being a priest, so I wanted to share it with you. I think it sums up what every priest feels about their congregation. I know these words spoke directly to my heart and what I want for each one of you. I redacted some to fit our space. The entire text is on the Diocesan Website.*

*Fr. Shawn*



Spiritually speaking, people are hungry for what we, the clergy and people of the Diocese of Western North Carolina, have to offer. But it's not a simple hunger – it takes many forms – and so our efforts to meet that hunger also takes many forms. The lessons we've heard this evening from the Book of Acts and from the Gospel give us insights into those hungers and guidance on how to help people satisfy them.

The exchange between Philip and the Ethiopian court official, I think, reveals at least five different ways that people are hungry for the spiritual fruits of the spirit which we as Christians have to offer. I want to take a look at each of those in turn.

For starters, the spiritual fruits of the spirit look like meeting the needs of those who are literally hungry, literally food insecure. They look like ministries of radical invitation and welcome to our places of worship.

From there, rooted in our baptismal covenant to strive for justice and peace among all people, the fruits of the spirit in our lives look like standing up to homophobia, sexism, and consumerism.

In other words, we are to bear fruit not for our own sake, but for the sake of a hungry world. And the world IS hungry for the fruit we are called to bear in the world.

Where do we do that? Where do we find opportunities to bear fruit and be people of healing, reconciliation, and justice-making?

It is precisely in the nitty-gritty every, plain-old ordinary day that God -- and opportunities to remain in God -- are present, and active, and most possible.

We are to bear fruit out there. And even though we are "out there," because we are attached to the vine, we are connected, nourished, reinforced -- by Christ Jesus himself.

People see our outreach and social justice ministries, and say "oh, that's a ministry of The Episcopal Church" -- and that's a good thing. But again, those official ministries are only the tip of the iceberg, the 10% which is visible, and people see.

It is not only through our official ministries, but "out there" in the daily lives of each parishioner that we bear the fruit of the spirit.

The Book of Acts provides a rich text, full of fascinating details, but what I want to focus on here this evening is how, I think, it reveals five general spiritual hungers that human beings -- our world -- has.

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**Those five hungers are:**

- 1) **curiosity** – being curious or on a spiritual quest
- 2) **openness** – being open to instruction or guidance
- 3) **questioning** – asking a lot of questions
- 4) **commitment** – making decisions for God
- 5) **joy** – living a life of joyful faith



At the beginning of the story, an Angel tells Philip to go to a road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza -- So he does. Next, we are introduced to an Ethiopian -- a court official of Candace, the Ethiopian Queen.

"He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home." We're told this man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. That means he was, in some way at least curious about matters of faith. He was seated in his chariot and was reading from Isaiah.

**So that's the first spiritual hunger revealed here: curiosity.** People are curious. The people we serve are on a spiritual quest. "And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.'"

Philip senses by the Holy Spirit that he should go approach this man. So Philip runs up to him, and hears him reading the prophet, and asks him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Philip had been inspired to approach this man. This encounter was no accident...it was pre-arranged by the Holy Spirit, and the Ethiopian's curiosity means he is open to the encounter. He's not only - NOT offended by the question, he welcomes it.

And curiosity moves us on to **the second hunger: -- openness** -- open to the opportunity of exploring spirituality further, of digging deeper, of being challenged.

THIS IS A COMMON HUNGER. I've often said we exist -- our churches exist -- not for us, but for those who have not yet found us. So many people, even if they don't want a lot to do with "organized religion," are open to churches that are open. This official says, "how could I [understand it] unless someone guides me?"

And as you know from so many of your experiences in Bible studies, when people have their spiritual hungers of curiosity met, and our churches are open to their openness -- when we meet people where they are, what happens next? We get to see **the third hunger, questioning.**

The Ethiopian says to Philip, "About whom, may I ask, does the prophet say this? About himself, or about someone else?" Questioning!!

Despite what some of you might, unfortunately, have learned growing up in other churches, in Episcopal churches we believe that questioning -- questioning what the Bible has to say, questioning the creeds, questioning one's faith, questioning God! -- is good.

Questioning is evidence of the Holy Spirit being active in someone's life, activating and revealing deeper and deeper hungers. When curiosity leads to openness -- when people find out we are open to them, open to their questions, then people find themselves asking a lot of questions. This is a whole new and deeper hunger.

One of the things I treasure about the Episcopal Church in general is that we welcome questions. When we're at our best, we don't pretend to have all the answers, but we create environments where questions will be taken seriously and answered from the best resources of scripture, tradition, and reason.

And so, Philip and the Ethiopian go on down the road. At some point, the questions become answers, or at least enough questions become satisfying enough that the Ethiopian makes a decision -- a decision to be baptized.

*"One of the things I treasure about the Episcopal Church in general is that we welcome questions."*

When people find a faith community open to their openness, and they are fed from the best resources of scripture, tradition and reason, a whole new hunger emerges...they move from questioning to commitment.

They get in touch with **the fourth hunger: a hunger for commitment.**

This, I believe, is how churches -- and ministries within churches -- grow the best and last the longest, from people who are not cajoled or guilt-tripped into involvement, but from people who love the fact that we are open to their curiosity and questions, and who, by action of the Holy Spirit, are hungry to commit. They WANT to commit. And the word "want" is important.

There's a scene in the movie "The Breakup" where the couple is having an argument and the character played by Jennifer Aniston says to her partner, "I don't want you to do the dishes: I want you to WANT to do the dishes!"

She took the words right out of my mouth: as Bishop, I don't want you to support the diocese; I want you to want to support the diocese. And don't you feel the same way?

Don't we all feel the same way?

□ *We don't want people to come to church regularly, we want them to want to come to church regularly.*

□ *We don't want the vestry to take bold risks, we want the vestry to want to take bold risks.*

□ *We don't want people to pledge, we want people to want to pledge*

When our people are acting out of this fourth hunger – a hunger for commitment-- they are acting NOT out of a sense of “ought” or “should” or “must” but out of that same sense of spontaneous “look, here is water, what’s to keep me from being baptized?” desire to commit. They say, “what can I do? How can I help?”

And notice, the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing. This is the note the story ends on, and I want to end on: this **fifth and final hunger, a hunger for JOY.**

Talk about a deep hunger out there: in a culture that feels sometimes overwhelmingly cynical, negative, empty, lonely, artificial...there is such a hunger for genuine, authentic JOY.

And that is one of the things we have to offer the world! For too long, too many people have been led to believe that the goal of Christianity is to:

Avoid sin  
Keep the commandments  
Earn grace  
Get to heaven  
Or save our souls.

Those goals are not bad goals, but they are not the primary goals of the Gospel. Avoiding sin, keeping the commandments, earning grace, getting to heaven, saving our souls, are not the primary goals of the Gospel because they are individualistic, self-centered goals. The focus of those goals is the individual. But Gospel goals are God-focused, community focused, other focused, justice focused. Gospel goals are to bear the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

And because love, joy, peace, patience, and the rest of the fruits benefit the people around us and the wider world, and because we are created in the image of a giving God, there is joy in fulfilling Gospel goals.

Joy comes to us, and through us to the world, through our healing, reconciliation, and justice-making ministries. Spiritually speaking, people are hungry for what we, the clergy and people of the Diocese of Western North Carolina, have to offer.

But it's not a simple hunger – it takes the form of curiosity, openness, questioning, commitment, and it reveals itself in joy – living a life of joyful faith.

So, at the end of this Eucharist, at the end of this convention, at the end of all your services, nourished in word and sacrament, bearing fruits of the spirit, let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

*Bishop José A. McLoughlin*

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## Stories from the Pews

Price Thrower

“Embarrassing Lesson in Responsibility”

My story begins at a vestry meeting early one Sunday morning. About nine a.m. to be exact. Our minister, Dr. Wilson Sneed, brought us to order with a prayer. He added that he'd been diligently working since coming to church as communion had not been set for the eight o'clock Holy Eucharist service. After attending the altar duty, presiding over the early service and the vestry meeting, he was becoming weary.

As I sat making notes, it suddenly hit me that I had forgotten my Saturday altar guild obligation. I abruptly interrupted the agenda and admitted my failure to which Wilson Sneed responded, “I wondered how long it would take for the light to turn on!”



*Has anyone seen Price?*



## A Reflection By Toni Belhu

John 1:43-51.



### *What Does Your Next Day Look Like?*

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented as being the Word that was with God from the very beginning. Jesus is the word in flesh who is here to help us have a relationship with God. The interesting thing about the lectionary reading, John 1:43-51, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany in Year B in the Revised Common Lectionary is that it is a continuation of Year A and, yet, it is not the full chapter. Divided as such, each year we get a glimpse into what it felt like to be one of the first disciples called by Jesus and to do the calling.

We are fortunate to be a part of the Diocese of Western North Carolina. Our diocese includes over 63 parishes in the western part of North Carolina. Members of our diocese are very active living out its mission.

Together we:

**Walk in the Way of Jesus**

**Widen the Walls** by welcoming all people – no exceptions

**Wake up the World** to the grace and mercy of God.

It is through this mission that John 1:43-51 is lived out daily, in real time. The gospel writer of John uses a sense of time throughout the Gospel. We see in this passage that, as a continuation of John 1:19-42, it is now the next day and Jesus has decided to go to the town of Galilee after spending time the previous day with his first three disciples including Andrew and his brother, Simon Peter. Just like our mission, the second part of the chapter of John is told

in real time to demonstrate the sense of movement, the sense of excitement, and the sense of mission. Jesus finds Philip in Galilee and asks him to “Follow me.” The scriptural passage does not indicate how Philip replied, but Philip goes on to find Nathanael. Nathanael questions where Jesus comes from, but he is curious and wants to see who Philip has described as someone “about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote”.

Nathanael demonstrates that he is knowledgeable about scripture and the Torah because he does not question about whom Philip is speaking, he simply questions how Nazareth can produce such a person. Nathanael and Philip proceed to “Walk in the Way of Jesus” by going to meet Jesus. Nathanael expresses his belief by stating “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” after Jesus shares knowledge of Nathanael being under the fig tree earlier. I am certain that neither Philip nor Nathanael expected their “next days” to be spent with Jesus.

The parts of the passages shared above are the ones which remind me of my own journey. Two months after moving to Gastonia, North Carolina in July 2013, my husband passed away. We had started to attend St. Mark’s Episcopal Church and felt very welcomed by the members of the congregation we had met.

As many people who experience significant loss, I questioned what would my “next day and days” look like. I was fully engaged with my work as a Human Resources Manager, but, the time outside of work and church on Saturday or Sunday were the hardest. I was invited to participate in the Education for Ministry program at the church. This was my “next day”.

Each Tuesday evening, I was in the presence of those who were growing to know God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in a way I had not experienced before. Each Tuesday, we would include Theological Reflections (TR’s) in our

process to relate our study to “real time”. As we progressed, I found that I had become part of a community. A community where I knew that Jesus had “seen me under the fig tree”. I could see that just like Philip, the members of the EFM group had asked me to “come and see”.

One day, when I was stopping by the church before going to spend time with one of my teammates (employees) whose father had passed away, I ran into Rev. Shawn Griffith, the priest at St. Mark’s. He asked me what I was doing. He then asked me a question - “Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?” I indicated that I had several years ago. He said, “Come and see me this week”. This was another part of my “next day”. I started the discernment program for ordained ministry. My “next day” has included seeing “greater things than these” which includes getting to know Jesus more and more each day through prayer, study, worship and interaction with others.

*“A community where I knew that Jesus had “seen me under the fig tree”. I could see that just like Philip, the members of the EFM group had asked me to “come and see”.”*

At Seminary of the Southwest, I have learned to be more like Nathanael; to be even more curious and open to see how God is at work in the world. Returning to the mission of our diocese, I am learning through my field education placement at Saint Mary Magdalene in Manor, TX, a bilingual (Spanish/English) parish what it means to truly “Widen the Walls by welcoming all people – no exceptions”.

I hope to bring this ministerial context and my concentration in Latinx Studies back to the diocese upon graduation. Philip provides a great example by reaching out to others that he knows. Jesus finds Philip, but Philip finds Nathanael. This form of discipleship is what has brought me this far on my journey, someone willing to share their knowledge of Jesus with others and invite them to “come and see”. I know this may be hard for us as Episcopalians. However, as you can see by this article, we all have a story to tell. We all can invite someone.

The last part of our diocesan mission is to “Wake up the World to the grace and mercy of God.” Nathanael’s exclaims, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Nathanael, in his excitement, calls Jesus “Rabbi” which in Hebrew means “my teacher”. Indirectly, Nathanael is calling himself a disciple or a student or follower of Jesus at that moment, in real time! He does not need any further confirmation other than that Jesus has seen him and knows him. I believe that in that instant, Nathanael was ready to “Wake up the World to the grace

and mercy of God.” This is what we are called to do as disciples, as followers of Jesus.

My discernment process has led me on the track to ordained ministry in the Priesthood and to obtain an M. Div. Degree from Seminary of the Southwest. Each of us is taking part in our own discernment process and each one is as unique as we are. We are fortunate to be in a diocese which offers many avenues of discernment locally and diocesan wide. As we read John 1:43-51, please consider “What does your next day look like?”

I have included the poem I wrote which was turned into a song by songwriter Kelley McRae. The poem describes my reflection on my discernment process.

## **You Called My Name**

By Toni Belhu

Lord, you called my name and I refused to answer. I continued on my wayward path.

Lord, you called my name and I refused to turn around. Certain that my path was the only one.

Lord, you called my name and I closed my eyes. Like a child playing hide and seek. Not to be seen.

Lord, you called my name and I walked away. Guided by the promise of something new.

Lord, you called my name and I pleaded. Please answer me.

Lord, you called my name and I listened. I now know what to do.

Lord, you called my name and I prayed. Please hear me.

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Bibliography Available on file



# Calendar 2020

## January

- 5 - Epiphany Pageant
- 12 - Annual Meeting
- 19 - Vestry Meeting

## February

- 2 - Souper Bowl Sunday/Lunch
- 7-9 - Vestry Retreat
- 14 - Dinner Dance
- 25 - Shrove Tuesday
- 26 - Ash Wednesday

## March

- 1 - First Sunday in Lent/ Lunch after church
- 7 - Quiet day, Walk the labyrinth 10:00 am
- 8 - Lunch after church
- 15 - Vestry Meeting/Lunch after church
- 21 - Quiet Day, Walk the Stations of the Cross 10:00 am
- 22 - Lunch after church
- 29 - Lunch after church

## Parish Transitions

### Baptism:

**Coraleigh Pendleton**, daughter of Seth & Meredith, granddaughter of Duane & Sheila, 12/1 at 1st United Methodist Church, Gastonia

**Avery James Kotecki**, son of Julia and Eric, grandson of Jim and Anne Carriel, 12/22 at St. Marks

### Recently Transferred In:

**Bradford Frazier** from All Saints, Gastonia

**Fran Henderson**, from St. Bartholomew's, Richmond, VA

**Jackie and David Campbell**, from 1st United Methodist, Gastonia

**John and Isiah Bacorn**, from St. Mark's Catholic, Huntersville

**George and Susan Sowersby**, from All Saints, Gastonia

**Julia Madden**, from All Saints Gastonia

**Anna Carsner**, from St. Alban's, Hickory

### Deaths:

**The Rev. Albert Edward Eaton**, Scott's father, in Stella NC, 11/25

**Wildon Brooks Eaddy**, parishioner and Jean's husband, in Gastonia, 12/4

**Martha Barker**, Chad's mother, Gastonia, 12/14



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# St. Mark's Episcopal Church

**Is called to be Christ centered**

**Touching Lives, Transforming Hearts, Teaching God's Word**

*"Being a Christian is not essentially about joining a church or being a nice person, but about following in the footsteps of Jesus, taking his teachings seriously, letting his Spirit take the lead in our lives, and in so doing helping to change the world from our nightmare into God's dream."* Presiding Bishop Michael Curry