



The Evangelist

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



Processional Cross decorated for Easter Day 2019
given in memory of Mary Marsh Thrower

Our cover picture for this May shows the church with its empty pews. This is the view that our clergy and lay readers have seen during our Virtual Services since the shutdown for the COVID-19 pandemic in March. An empty chancel can be either a quiet place to pray and think or a slightly “spooky” place to preach and read when there is no one there. Hopefully we will be back with people in the pews soon.



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!

The Evangelist

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The Altar on Easter Day, April 12, 2020

Holy Spaces at Home

Polly G. Redd

Director of Formation

We generally think of Holy Spaces as those we find in our churches. We look toward the altars that mark these spaces as calm and peaceful and connecting us to God's Holy Love. And at this time we find ourselves in the midst of a wilderness that does not allow us to be in our holy spaces. We are staying connected with the practices such as Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube, and other platforms, but not being in our sanctuaries is really hard. It is becoming very clear to us that Church is not a building but a community gathered in prayer and worship.

Our homes can also be places of prayer and worship. It may be time for you to create Holy Space at your home that can be used anytime of the day or night by anyone in your house. In the midst of the chaos that is our lives at home, coming together to create a sacred space may help to create a little order and peace for our lives.

The first step is to find a place that is quiet and low traffic. It might be a corner of a room or even a window sill that is wide enough to hold your "holy" objects. It might be on your screened porch or patio where you can soak in nature while you do devotional work. Find that space and if it is possible, put a chair or two nearby so that you can sit together in quiet.

Now begin to gather holy things for your space. You might want or use any of the following items:

- First you will need a table or other surface to put things on. As I say later, it might be a tray you carry back and forth to another place in the house. On that surface you might add a placemat, piece of fabric, or even a scarf. You could look for a color to match the season of the Church year; for example, Eastertide is white and Pentecost (which begins on Sunday May 31st) is red for the first Sunday and green through the summer.
- A good item for your space is a candle, either real or battery operated, to remind you that Jesus is the Light of the World. It also can symbolize the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- A cross can be a good thing to focus our attention. It can be any shape or type or even one that you and your family create from two twigs and yarn. You can find a way to stand it up with a little base or put it on



the wall behind your space.

- Other objects are things that remind you and your family of the holy. It might be a small icon or picture of Jesus or one of the saints. It might be a stone or shell or leaf that reminds you of God's creation. You might include a small vase and keep a flower in it or add a small potted green plant.
- You might want to have a Bible and a Book of Common Prayer, if not actually on the table, near by so that you can read from them each day. If you have a regular devotional book, that would also be good to have on hand. You might want to write a favorite prayer on an index card and stand it up on one of those small picture easels so you can pray it daily.
- A small pad and pencil can be helpful as you think of people and things to pray for.

Let me describe my own prayer space which is in my office and is pictured to the left. It has a small fountain that reminds me of the Living Water. There is a candle I light when I am in that space for prayer. There are a couple of icons of Jesus I have gotten over the years and a stained glass angel, plus a small wooden cross on a stand. There is a small pot that reminds me that God is the Potter and molds me each day and a wonderful glass frog, for the saying Fully Relying on God (FROG), from a member of our St. Mark's Daughters of the King chapter. I also have my own personal Golden Snitch given to me by a friend who loves the theology of Harry Potter, and with my Bible is a copy of the Saint Helena Psalter which has the psalms written in a female voice and nurtures my soul.

The important thing for any sacred space is that it works for you and your family. I have set up devotional areas in my house before and they always seemed to be too far out of my way, and thus they were never used. Whatever and wherever you set up a sacred space in your house, let it be fluid and shift as your spiritual lives shift. Let your children be part of the creation and let them help with the devotions you might do there. You might even want to have your sacred space items on a tray that comes to the dinner table for the blessing at the meal and then goes back to another space until needed again.

Remember that we are in the wilderness together and God is present with us. Jesus has been here before and Jesus is with us now. We will all emerge changed, but not by the griefs of this time but by the mercies and graces that we see and feel and that sustain us always.

Where are you, God?
How can I find you in this troubled time?
Are you in my closet
Ready to jump out with a "gotcha"?
Are you in my cozy chair
Ready to wrap your arms around me to be safe?

I believe you are in the very air around me
as I breathe in and out
as I go through my day
as I "live and move and have my being".

I feel your presence with me
all the day long
and through the night.

I seek your presence with me
when I rise up and when I lie down.

Be with me, Lord
in all I do
and say
in every word and action.

Be with me, Lord,
Now and always.
Amen.

Polly Redd
COVID 19 - May 2020

Watch Our Services Each Sunday
via either the Live Streaming
on the web page,
or on Facebook Live.

Holy Communion Rite I	8:00 am
Family Service with Puppets	9:30 am
Holy Communion Rite II	10:30 am



Servant Leadership and the Coronavirus

The Rev. Martin Darby

6 March 2020

(Reprinted with permission)

All around the world a great deal has been spoken about leadership in recent times. As nations have dealt with the coronavirus situation, the role of leaders has been scrutinized more than ever before. And as never before, the application of servant leadership, when practiced, has never been more critical or more needed.

Servant leadership is most often identified as being founded in the teachings of Jesus. He taught that a leader's greatness is measured by a total commitment to serve others. When He asked his disciples, who is the greater among you, the one who sits at table or the one who serves, he answered the question himself by telling them that they would say it was the one who was sitting at the table but He was among them as one who serves. As we approach Maundy Thursday when Christian churches commemorate the washing of the disciples' feet, our leaders would do well to remember that the act was an unambiguous demonstration of leadership as servanthood.

It is a style of leadership based on compassion and caring not on domination and dictation. It is authority with those you seek to lead, not authority over them. It is anchored in empowering, enabling, and entrusting, not on coercion, command, and control. And above all else, it demands a brutal honesty, sharing the truth with all and not trying to manipulate the facts or the people with whom you are sharing them.

Experience tells me that when practiced, this style of leadership can have an astonishing effect on the culture of the community served. It becomes a kinder more compassionate body and differences of opinion are respected and sorted out in a good-natured, gentler manner. The interaction of the servant led community with others also changes, and interactions are not marked by aggression, ridicule, and rudeness but by friendliness, respect, and courtesy.

The United States is in the midst of a crisis the likes of which, many of us have never experienced before. Talk of Pearl Harbor and 911 have been comparisons. More than ever before, we need leaders who not only understand the astonishing impact that servant leadership can have on the present situation but also the impact it can have on the final outcome. We will only get through this pandemic successfully if we work together and recognize that we each bring different gifts. It is the harnessing of these gifts, the respecting of them, and the sharing of them that will allow us to win the battle against COVID-19.

The world is experiencing the crisis too, it is a global pandemic, and so not only do we need to see the US gathering experts around the table, listening to their wisdom and knowledge born from their unique gifts - the whole will become far greater than the sum of the parts - but we also need to work harmoniously and respectfully with all other communities (countries) around the world, not criticize and ridicule them. We need each other!

The theologian, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician Albert Schweitzer said "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." Let us pray and hope that our leaders in the US and around the world will find happiness in serving and lead us through this pandemic with clarity of vision, compassion and caring, and with respect and dignity for all.

Congratulations to Cindy Bozarth
who graduated this spring
from UNC-Asheville
with a degree focused on her work
with computer graphics and design



The Atrium Mural by Ed Hoerning St. Mark's Historian

During 2008 while serving on the vestry, I had the pleasure of working with Sandy Rankin on converting the blank brick wall of the atrium into a work of art. The wall was originally outside the church. A statue of St. Francis had been the centerpiece of that outside space. Construction of the addition to the second floor above the Parish Hall and the adding of a handicapped ramp into the sanctuary had recently been completed and the outside wall was now inside our new atrium.

Sandy invited me to join her at Covenant Village where an artist had recently painted a mural on a section of its building. It was most impressive and she wanted to have him do one for St. Mark's. Shortly thereafter, the vestry granted approval to move ahead with the project.

Sandy commissioned the artist, whose name is Heath Taylor, to paint the mural for us. The photos to the right show the change from open atrium to blank wall to work on the mural by Heath. Below is how we all see the mural today.

The mural is titled "Jesus with the Children" and we give thanks to Sandy Rankin for her vision and gift to St. Mark's each time we walk through the atrium.



Virtual Worship in the Real Presence of Christ

The Rev. Shawn L. Griffith, Rector

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.
1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

The world of virtual worship came upon the church like a thief in the night. What started, a few months ago, as a brief item on the news about a virus in China has now become a worldwide threat to every man, woman and child on our planet. Social distancing and stay at home guidelines have been necessary to protect us and those we love. Jobs are being lost, people are getting sick and some are dying, and there is not yet a cure. This continues to be a stressful time for us all and one direction that many of us turn in difficult times is to the church.

We call the place we worship a sanctuary, a place of refuge, a shelter, a safe haven. We want to be able to sit in our pew and humbly pray to our God who surely would not cause us to become sick. We trust God to protect us from all the evil of this world.

Canticle 9

*Surely, it is God who saves me; *
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, *
and he will be my Savior. Isaiah 12:2*

We want to gather and worship in the Lord's house, Holy ground, a place that we have known as a home of hope and comfort. We sometimes forget that what we call the sanctuary is just a room simply made of mortar and stone. And when we refer to "the church" we are not speaking of the building on West Franklin Blvd. We are describing the people of St. Mark's.

Wherever we gather to worship, be it in a sanctuary inside a building, around a fire at summer camp, or huddled together on a couch watching a digital picture of an altar far away, we are gathered as an extended family. Whether we are two or three or three hundred, Christ is in the midst of us.

You often hear me talk about God speaking to me. Last May, when I started my Sabbatical, my plan was to visit a different church every Sunday to see what God was doing in other congregations. I never had the chance to visit those churches because of my brain tumor.

After my surgery, I found myself on something of a quarantine for four months. I wanted to worship every Sunday, I wanted to hear the lessons and listen to a ser-

mon. I wanted to receive the Body and Blood of Christ because without those things I felt incomplete.

I found Christ Church in Charlotte on the internet and they were live streaming three services on Sundays. It was wonderful to get out of bed, sit in my recliner, still in my pajamas, and watch another priest lead the service and give the sermon. I watched the Eucharist even though I could not participate.

I was blessed when I realized that Mary Stamey was bringing communion to Ruth and Rosanne every Sunday and that I could go downstairs and receive the bread and the wine, after I put on my clothes, of course.

For four months, Christ Church was my place of worship and at the same time so was St. Mark's.

Those four months helped me realize that there were people in our church who could not watch our service and could not participate in the worship. These people were receiving the Body and Blood of Christ but, hearing the lessons and reflecting on the sermon fed me in a way much different than just receiving the bread and the wine. I knew then that when I came back to work, I would begin to learn how we could share Jesus, not only with our own members of St. Mark's but also with the world.

We have had several bumps in the road. I have learned about mixing boards and encoding software and baud rates. And yet, there are times I still don't have a clue why the sound goes out for no reason.

I believe that God was speaking to me to help equip St. Mark's for live streaming for our people at home then and for us now.

For the doors of the church building to be closed so quickly, had we not been prepared, more than half of us would

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20



be Presbyterians by now because they were on the air.

My guess is that worshipping in the Episcopal tradition is as important to you as it is for me.

We are a sacramental community, meaning our lives are centered in the two sacraments of the church, Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

To me watching the worship services of other denominations is educational and instructional. I learn things about the Bible that I did not know before. However, the joy I feel in the Great Thanksgiving, the "Eucharist", the participation of the lay people in the liturgy, and receiving the Real Presence of Jesus at the table of our Lord and Savior fills my Cup - my Cup of Joy, my Cup of Life, my Cup of Salvation - to the brim. Our worship moves me as I hope that it moves you.

Through God's gift of technology, we acknowledge our sins in the general confession and receive God's forgiveness and grace. We unite in one voice to pray our common faith, the Nicene Creed, and we gather around the table, here, at home, and across our community to receive one bread and drink from one Cup, as the one Body in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I want to share some things with you that have been special to me. One person shared that the pictures from past years shown just before our Easter Sunday service touched her heart deeply. Another person who is new to St. Mark's said she was so moved in attending the services during Holy Week. Many people have shared that our worship together online has kept them connected to our community and the sermons have helped them deal with the struggles we are all facing.

I want to thank our staff who have been working much more than their required hours. They have done a tremendous job of keeping things going and being creative to adjust to the new normal. I also want to say how grateful I

"It is written 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

am for Ken Brown stepping in to assist us with our music. We have had several adult readers and acolytes who have been wonderful in helping during our worship. Starting up our family service, we now have our youth as readers and acolytes as well.

Special thanks to the choir members who came in during Holy Week and sat through multiple taping of hymns and prayers and readings that were not actually being read at that moment and sermons that were not being preached at that time. These people had great patience and their gift of music made Holy Week as glorious as ever.

Our videos, live streaming and all the magic that happens behind the cameras would not have been as successful had it not been for Dionne Browning. She has been making deposits, paying bills, doing our accounting, applying for Government grants, and running all the video equipment. We owe her a great deal of gratitude.

Finally, I cannot say enough about our wonderful and amazing Deacon Brenda Gilbert. Without her we would not be worshipping and as blessed as we are today because I would be dead. Jesus may have risen but if I go down it will be for the count. Brenda has a reserve of energy that has kept things going with a smile and a laugh. She honestly did more to get things ready for our services than I ever could. She put up with my crazy ideas, like the puppets, and together we have laughed and cried so much. We are so blessed to have her in our lives.

We will be back together soon, and we all should remember this time with thanksgiving and love.

Stewardship in the Age of COVID-19

Michael Whatley, Jr. Warden

(adapted from a sermon
given in September 2019)

Stewardship 2020

Father Shawn and Brenda asked me to give a sermon last September addressing the role of Stewardship in our daily lives. Although that was barely six months ago, it feels like an eternity given the massive changes to our Church, community and economy caused by the spread of COVID-19 around the world.

All of us have been affected by the National Health Emergency even if we have not been infected or don't know anyone who has. Healthcare workers and first responders are on the front lines of dealing with the virus, many of us cannot work, none of us can worship together at St. Mark's (or at any other Church) and every household has felt the impacts of the Stay at Home orders.

Yet, while our world has been turned upside down by the lockdown, the needs of our community remain – as does the need for the membership of St. Mark's to engage in active Stewardship to help both our Church and our Community.

Stewardship. What are we actually talking about here?

The textbook definition of Stewardship is pretty straightforward. The Miriam Webster Dictionary defines Stewardship as “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.” For Christians, this is a pretty expansive concept. The first lesson in the first book of the Bible tells how God created the world and entrusted mankind with dominion over his creation. But it is important to note that it is his creation – and that we are part of it.

As Christians, we have been asked by God to serve as Stewards of his creation. So what does that mean? Some would argue that it means we have an obligation to preserve the earth – to do no harm to people, animals and environment. However, Jesus makes it clear that we need to do more.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells of a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags and to another one bag. Jesus tells how the man who received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. You are probably familiar with the master's response to the servants who had invested his money and

built upon it – “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.” However, to the servant who had not engaged, who had not invested and who had merely preserved his master's wealth, he had a markedly different response – ordering him to be thrown outside into the darkness where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus teaches the disciples to “use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

In these parables, Jesus teaches the disciples (and us) with stories about wealth and money – but the critical point of the lessons goes beyond money. It is about everything that God has given to us - not just our treasure, but also our time and our talent.

In his First Letter, Saint Peter teaches that “each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.” Similarly, in his letter to the Colossians, Saint Paul wrote that “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

So how do we apply these teachings today?

The answer isn't merely “give the Church more of your money.” Our faith calls for us to give much more.

We are a part of God's gift, God's wealth, God's Creation. All of us. Our bodies, our minds, our souls, our talents and our time. As Christians we are called on to be good stewards – to invest, to engage, and to serve with all of the gifts that we have received in order to make ourselves and our world better tomorrow than today. As members of this Parish, we have an opportunity to invest, engage and serve both our St. Mark's family and our community every day.

I attended six different Episcopal Churches before I found St. Mark's. I say “attended” because my typical level of participation was to attend Sunday morning services, drop a twenty in the plate and shake the Rector's hand on my way out to the parking lot. But when Michael, George, and Mary Kate were born, I began to see the Church through a totally different

As Christians we are called to be good stewards - to invest, to engage, and to serve with all of the gifts that we have received in order to make ourselves and our world better tomorrow than today.

lens. Instead of avoiding the family service because there were kids running up and down the aisle interrupting the sermon, I was bringing my kids to the family service and Sunday School. I was teaching Sunday School and participating in after-church events. I was becoming a member of the church – not just attending the services.

As I spend more time at St. Mark's with my family, I see all of the other ways that our Church family is engaged with each other and our community:

I see a Vestry made up of amazing people committed to serving our Congregation
I see Suzanne participate in the Family Promise Ministry and other Outreach efforts
I see Michael, George, and Mary Kate participating in Youth Group and Children's Ministry
I see the impact of giving out Blessing Bags when I am on the road across the state
And I see a church that is engaged in a fantastic array of Outreach Ministries to help those less fortunate than ourselves

Before joining St. Mark's, I thought of Stewardship as merely a call to give money to the church. To some degree, this makes sense – we have a big, old building that needs to be kept in good repair, we have several outreach ministries which need money, we have beautiful flowers on the altar every Sunday and we have fantastic clergy and staff who need to be paid. Indeed, the donations that are provided by our Congregation are the funds which make all of these possible.

But today, I see Stewardship as so much more. To me, Stewardship is a call asking each of you to think of the gifts that our creator has bestowed on you and what you can do with them to invest in St. Mark's, the Episcopal Church, and our Community.

Think of your time

Can you participate in programs?

Stewardship is a call asking each of you to think of the gifts that our creator has bestowed on you and what you can do with them to invest in St. Mark's, the Episcopal Church, and our community.

Can you help with our various ministries?
Can you help with the Altar Guild or serve as an usher or in the choir?

Think of your talents

Can you teach?
Can you cook?
Can you stuff Blessing Bags?
Can you serve on the Vestry or one of our Committees?

And – of course – think about your treasure.

As North Carolina recovers from the COVID-19 emergency, it will take a while to return to normal. Companies have closed and jobs have been lost. Schools have been closed for the semester and it will be even longer before the elderly and vulnerable are able to re-engage in normal activities.

This is a unique time for those of us in the St. Mark's Community. Now, more than ever, we are being called to act as good Stewards of God's Creation - to help our Congregation and our Community get back on their feet and move forward.

The more we as a Parish engage in St. Mark's, the stronger our church will be. But it's not just our church that will be stronger. Our community will be stronger. The Episcopal Church will be stronger. And – most importantly – the Body of Christ will be stronger.



Education for Ministry (EfM) - Rick Hargis

The current EfM class continues to meet in this COVID-19 world via internet connections – but we're happy to have any connection at all. Our weekly sessions are the core of EfM as these are our time to share space with each other while covering our lessons and participating in group worship. We are ready to look for new students to join us next fall. If you are looking for ways to understand your faith at a deeper level and get to know fellow parishioners better, we encourage you to consider the EfM class at St. Mark's. EfM is designed for us, the laity.

The EfM website says: "Lay persons face the difficult and often subtle task of interpreting the richness of the church's faith in a complex and confusing world. They need a theological education which supports their faith and teaches them to express that faith in day-to-day events. As the emphasis on lay ministry has grown, EfM has come to play an important role by providing a program that develops an informed and knowledgeable laity."

We encourage you to join us. For more information do not hesitate to go to the following link: <http://efm.sewanee.edu/about-efm/about-efm> or call on either of us to enroll or answer your questions about the program. Rick and Nancy Lynn Hargis [rick.hargis@carolina.rr.com/931-265-8653; hargisnl@gmail.com/931-265-6194].

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

By: Heather Griffin MA, LCMHC, NCC

St. Mark's Counseling Ministry

Last week, while working, my phone rang. A client that I have not met with in quite some time called to share that he was having a “really bad day” and just needed to hear a friendly voice and “talk it out.” It was good to hear from him, to feel needed, and get validation that what I do can make a difference.

So many times, clients come and go without notice and it leaves you wondering if you did all you could to help them. Yes, as therapists, we second guess ourselves - “Did I push them too hard?” “Did they get what they needed?” are questions that are revisited more than I would like to admit. However, at the end of the day, having carefully collected the stories of unimaginable pain and trauma that people bring with them into the counseling room, one question haunts me the most - “Where is their community support system?” or, in regular human-speak, “Where is their family? Where are their friends?”

More often than not, they are non-existent. Don't get me wrong, we still have friends and family, but the intimacy of community is missing from our relationships. Shame and guilt prevent us from unmasking and revealing our true selves to our neighbors and those with whom we work, worship, and play.

For the most part, we have adapted to this way of

life. We keep hiding behind the mask, reaching out only if we are assured of not being rejected, and carrying on in our silos. That is until the Pandemic reached us. Ironically, even though we don't enter stores and other places without physical masks these days, now more than ever, we are vulnerable and exposed - not just to COVID-19, but to our own anxieties and fears. We are reaching out to others to check in, caring for one another by providing for others' physical necessities - who needs toilet paper? - these are actions that keep us focused on anything other than our own stressful circumstances. And out of the fear, possibly for the first time in a long while, we are finally choosing to remove the mask and live more authentically, focusing back on the basics of life and on the commandment to love one another with fewer distractions.

Though I try to limit my exposure to social media, I couldn't help but notice the recent articles flooding in about the changes to life as we knew it. An abundance of people are writing about the joys they have found during these unprecedented times. Many are finding out what things they can do without, appreciating the slower pace of every day. Despite social distancing, we are reaching out more than ever to family, friends, and yes, even therapists.

Together we will remember that the most important thing in life is the love we share with each other whether it is picking up groceries for those who cannot get out, helping those who have lost their jobs, or simply listening to those who have nowhere else to turn. We can learn a whole lot by listening, but most importantly we learn we are not alone.

The St. Mark's Safety Team

Dan Gilbert

St. Mark's has a wonderful Safety Team who work to advise and support good practices to keep us all safer.

St. Mark's safety team recently held their 2020 kick off meeting. We welcomed a lot of new faces to the team including several young adults. The entire team is focused on delivering the safest environment possible to the members of our church.

Our continuing members are Dan Gilbert, Andrew and Jackie Quinley, and John Watts and we welcome new members Eric Fields, Alan Jolley, Mike Tamberella, Julie Christy and Bob Ridgeway. We are especially thankful for the young adults, Anthony Varriale, George and Michael Whatley, who are joining us.

The safety team is an advisory group with the mission of helping the clergy and staff develop and implement policies and practices that ensure that all members of the parish feel safe while participating in services and activities at St. Mark's. You can identify safety team

members by the Chi Rho badge on their nametag (as shown to the right).

If you get a second, thank them for their contributions, and ask them any questions you have about safety at St. Mark's.



This year we are introducing a new ‘best practice’. We are providing enameled red cross pins (shown to the left) to members of the church that have advanced medical training. These members will wear the pins on their name badges. If you need medical assistance and are new, or simply don't know who is medically trained, all you have to do is look at their name-tag.

Stay tuned! We will be announcing safety initiatives for the year. Currently we provide training on the Church Safety Policies, the Refuse To Be A Victim program, and Citizen Response. We also help coordinate our AED/ CPR machine and organize First Aid training. We are also part of the group that helps to provide the information to “Safeguard our people” through training programs. Watch for information as we go forth.

God Is Still With Us

Deacon Brenda Gilbert

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Colossians 3:16

Who could have imagined that we would gather together in early March to begin the season of Lent and then.....poof. We were dispersed. Everyone scattered and sheltered in their homes until we could safely be under the same roof to worship again. It sounds like something out of a science fiction novel or a movie plot written from the fertile imagination of a Hollywood screen writer. And yet, this has been our reality.

Many of us rode on an emotional roller coaster going from the high of finding a new shipment of toilet paper at the grocery store to the stomach dropping low of feeling that this will never end. Will we ever be able to go back to the normal way of worshiping together?

In the middle of experiencing the “Lentiest Lent that I’ve ever Lented”, I was struck by how, even in the midst of the chaos and fear of the unknown, God had not ceased being God. God had not left nor forsaken us. That powerful fact deserved our praise and our worship. Our worship of God should not and would not be confined to a sanctuary. That was something the apostles and early Christians learned when they no longer had a temple to go to. When they were in hiding, in fear for their lives and in hostile surroundings,

they still found ways to give God glory and encourage one another in the faith. They wrote letters that were passed from one group to another and read aloud. They ate meals together and sang the psalms. They pooled their resources and looked after the poor and widowed among them. Does any of this sound familiar? Are you able to relate to any of this?

Although we’ve missed the physical act of getting up and going to church every Sunday, I see us becoming more like The Church that I believe we may have lost sight of in our lives before this quarantine. Some of you have shared pictures of your families watching the service on the internet together. We have more people than ever participating in Morning Prayer and Compline on a daily basis. People have been praying for one another using the prayer wall on the website and the Loads of Love ministry has been a blessing to over a dozen families so far. Through your generous donations to our clergy discretionary fund, we have been able to help several agencies in Gastonia that deal with domestic violence, food insecurity, and with gift cards and stipends to help with rent and utilities.

People have been able to stay connected spiritually, they have heard God’s word and they have received the Sacraments and whether that happens inside of a church building or not, God’s glory cannot be contained. Ministry has and is happening and people are being blessed. I’ve said it before and I will say it again, “Devil, take that!”

As a parish, we have continued to shine a light into the darkness and offer people peace and hope. Thank you all and thanks be to God.

Congratulations to Our High School Graduates

Will Buzzeo graduating from Forestview and heading to Georgia Tech

Abigail Dills graduating from Gaston Day and heading to Clemson

Kiera Eaton graduating Cumberland Gap HS in Tennessee and heading to Roane State Community College

Sophia Varriale graduating from Ashbrook and heading to Appalachian State

Jake Walker graduating from Piedmont Community Charter School and heading to Western Carolina

Parish Transitions

Births:

Banks McGinnis Euliss, son of Stuart & Megan Carothers Euliss, grandson of Carol, 2/18, Gastonia

Mabel Young, daughter of Brandi & Mike Young, granddaughter of Cathy & David Young, 3/17, Gastonia

Marriages:

Janie Kelchner & Alan Bozarth, Julia & Jeff's son, 1/18, Melbourne, FL

David Annastas & Courtney Grooms, Tim & Candy's daughter, 2/22, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Recently Transferred In:

Prince (Hycy) & Gloria Bull, with children Lynea, Prince Jr, & Christie, from St. Philip's, Durham

Recently Transferred Out:

Chappell Harris to Holy Comforter, Charlotte, 1/9

Seth Pendleton to First United Methodist, Gastonia, 3/4

Deaths:

Ruth Burns, parishioner and mother of Rosanne Griffith, Gastonia, 1/20

Johanna Machnik, former parishioner, Hickory, 1/20

Terri Moloney, member of the parish, Gastonia, 2/1

Rebecca Gazdik, Vic & Barb Cooper's daughter, Gastonia, 2/24

Neville Allison, Stan's father, Moody, TX 2/28

William Stephenson, Kenna Watts' father, 4/7, Gastonia

Jane Williamson Wilbanks, Clay (Big Daddy)'s sister & Alex's aunt, 4/30, Hilton Head, SC



Calendar 2020

Our Spring Picnic will be held in the fall sometime and there are several postponed events and services (like Youth Sunday or Easter and all those birthdays and anniversaries) that we will plan to do when we are back together, whenever that happens.

May

- 17 - Vestry by Zoom
- 24 - Rogation Sunday
- 25 - Memorial Day
- 31 - Youth Sunday / **Feast of Pentecost**

June

- 7 - Hoping to be back to “in-person” worship
- 21 - Vestry
- 21 - Beginning of “Virtual Vacation Bible School”
Compassionate Camp
Be Loved, Be Kind, Be You

July

- 4 - Independence Day
- 19 - Vestry

August

- 9 - Bookbag Blessing
- 16 - Vestry

September

- 7 - Labor Day
- 13 - Homecoming Celebration & Service TBD
- 20 - Vestry



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
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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