

love is our tradition



St. Mark's Episcopal Church 159th Annual Meeting January 26, 2025

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Agenda

Call to Order

Opening Prayer

Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting minutes (see last page)

Election of New Vestry Members

Recognition of outgoing members: Karen Franklin, Mickie Jones,
Rob McTier

Rules for the Election/Affirmation

Presentation of the Candidates: Ivy Burnes, Kent Slonaker, Ralph
Stanley

Nominations from the floor

Business Meeting:

Treasurer's Report

Rector's Report

Closing Prayer

From Our Rector:

Dear Beloved in Christ,

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

As I look back on the year 2024, and as I am nearing my 2nd anniversary of being called to St Mark's; I find myself feeling more integrated into the life and ministry of the parish, as well as in the community of Richmond. One of my favorite things that I get to do at St Mark's, is to greet you as you enter the church on Sunday mornings. And in tandem with the in-person worship greeting, I love sharing in the virtual coffee hours with our Zoom family. Experiencing your loving and gracious spirits on a regular basis nourishes my soul. Thank you all for continuing to share yourselves and your smiles, hugs, and stories with me, as we grow together in faith.

I want to take a moment, now to turn to some of the important details of what makes serving at St Mark's such a special experience.

When I arrived at St Mark's in the Spring of 2023, I encountered a tool, that I had not yet had the privilege in utilizing in ministry: A Strategic Long Range Plan (that is adaptable!). Our vestry and ministry team chairs, are getting more and more acclimated to how our Strategic Long Range Plan functions as a tool for ministry review and ministry planning.

Each Ministry Team has the opportunity to annually review and revise their ministry goals; and each vestry member serves as a liaison to a Ministry Team, to help keep the vestry and staff abreast of how effective our ministries are engaging our priorities. The document we refer to as our "Strategic Long Range Plan" helps keep these priorities at the forefront of our shared work as a parish. I am deeply grateful that such a tool helps to guide us at St Mark's. And I am deeply grateful for those who help implement and improve it as we continue to move forward with love.

And, in relation to our Ministry Teams, and our use of the Strategic Long Range Plan, one element that has come up in the past few years, has been the goal of thoughtful succession planning for our Ministry Team leadership. As our parish grows in ministry and in people, there are growing edges that regularly need

tending to. With the wisdom and guidance of the Ministry Team chairs, we find ourselves in a growing position, and we want to express our deep appreciation for their leadership. [If you have served as a Ministry Team Chair or Co-Chair, please stand up, so that we can recognize you.].

And, as we celebrate their ministry, I want to make a note, that the spirit of grace and shared leadership abounds here at St Mark's. On multiple occasions several of our current Ministry Team Chairs have expressed their desire to me, to pursue healthy succession planning for the Ministry Team Chairs who will follow them. Earlier, in 2024, Pam Piercy gracefully passed the baton to Michael Solberg to chair our Personnel Team; Thank you Pam and Michael for allowing me to witness such a grace-filled partnership.

If you are curious or interested in discerning a deeper role in our shared ministry, here at St Mark's, myself, and any of our Ministry Team Chairs would be delighted to speak with you; and help you find your ministry in our parish.

You will find in your Annual Parish Meeting packet, detailed ministry reports; but I want to take just a moment to highlight some new endeavors that we embarked upon in 2024, in addition to some opportunities on the horizon in 2025.

In 2024, Kenneth Decker proposed to our Worship Team, to host a region-wide service in commemoration for the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray. In June, we convened a diverse and justice focused congregation to learn about Rev. Dr. Murray's legacy, and inspired us to share in the ministry of justice and dignity for all. And not only did we host that lovely service, we were called upon by the Central Richmond Region of the Diocese to host the 2nd annual Pride Eucharist for the Diocese of Virginia. The collaboration of music, liturgy and preaching was a joy and privilege to witness in our sacred space.

And speaking of *sacred space*, in 2024, we embarked upon a Capital Campaign to revitalize our worship space upstairs. You will see/hear additional details elsewhere in the meeting today, but I want to take a moment to thank Beth Wentworth, who chaired our Capital Campaign Team. And, as the funding comes in for the campaign, we want to recognize the chair of our Buildings and Grounds Team, Brent Graves. Brent is overseeing all of the contractors/subcontractors,

and the full scope of the renovation project. Thank you Brent for your guidance and leadership on this front.

And, as things are well underway upstairs, we have all come to better acquaint ourselves with our space here, in the parish hall. Much time and energy and care has gone into making this space truly multi-functional. I want to thank especially Malinda, Forrest, Suzanne, Amos, Sanford, and their Teams, who have taken leadership in turning this space over and over, week after week, between worship, fellowship, 12 Steps, and so much more. Thank you all!

A few other items that have either returned from a hiatus or been born anew this past year: **Community Dinners** have returned with the leadership of Frosty and his Team! Thank you Frosty! The **Annual Parish Retreat** at Shrine Mont has also returned from a long season away. Thank you Mickie Jones and Team! The newly emerging ministry classes of **Sacred Ground** and **Prophetic Faith** have continued and grown stronger with each new iteration. Thank you Shannon Heady, Penny Adams, and Karen Hardison and Teams for strengthening these emerging ministries.

And, as we look at emerging ministries on the horizon, I would like to point out a few. [RISC](#) (Richmond's Involved to Strengthen Communities), in their own words: *"is a justice ministry organization made up of 25 congregations from throughout Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield Founded in 2002, we use the power of large numbers of people to hold our public officials accountable, and solve critical community problems. We are not a direct service provider, rather we are a grassroots, direct action, multi-issue organization."* Through our Justice and Advocacy Ministry Team at St Mark's, we are in discernment over joining as a RISC Member Congregation. I am happy to speak with folks who would like to learn more about RISC, as I have been attending their clergy meetings in recent months.

Also, as of 2025, I have been appointed to serve as the regional representative for the Diocesan Executive Board (similar to the vestry, but on the Diocesan level). I have the honor of following in the footsteps of Mickie Jones, who just rotated off of this ministry (thank you for your service to the diocese Mickie). And, beginning next month, I have been invited to join the Diocesan Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing. I am humbled and honored to be invited into that

vital ministry for our diocese; and I will strive to integrate the ministry of St Mark's into this work as well.

And the last 2025 horizon I want us to hold in mind and prayer, is the upcoming visit from Bishop Stevenson, during which we will Confirm in faith a number of our youth and adults. Bishop Stevenson will be with us Sunday April 6, 2025. Please make plans to attend and support our beloved in faith, as they deepen their sacramental life in the Church.

And, as we remember those whose lives have been sacramentally touched this past year; I invite you to celebrate and continue to hold in prayer all those who were baptized: (2024) Jennifer McCauley, Cooper Francis, Miles Tucker, Silas Tucker, (2025) Nicholas Roberts and Feild Brown-Pennington.

And as, just as we remember those who were reborn in the waters of baptism, we also remember and hold in our hearts, those who have been born into the nearer presence of God in paradise, in the year just past: Nancy Strite, Phillip Jones, Ethel Kutteroff, Cindy Garner, Tyrell Huggins, Diane Hoover, Dale Salyers, Phoebe Davis, Tom Burkhart, Tammy Clifton, Rodney Clifton, and Frank von Richter.

I would like to close my remarks by extending some particular words of gratitude.

Our staff, most of whom are part-time, truly put in a full heart, mind, and body's worth of ministry here at St Mark's. Malinda, Amos, Steve, Suzanne, Forrest, Buck, and Sarah, thank you for your grace, love, and devotion with which you serve St Mark's.

I also, would like to thank our outgoing vestry members, for their fulfillment of a 3 year commitment in overseeing the governance of our parish. Karen Franklin, Rob McTier, and Mickie Jones: you each have put in many long hours, and have helped to make prayerful decisions on our behalf. Thank you for your ministry! And, lastly, I want to make a special word of thanks to someone, whose leadership in ministry has touched each and every one of our lives for over 2 decades. This minister has taken on the mantle of a true servant in leadership. The job that no priest ever wants to do, yet must be done. And, not only has he done this

job with grace and vigor, he has also done so always with ***you all*** in mind and heart.

As the retiring chair of our Stewardship Team, Howard Pugh, it is with profound sincerity that I (and we all) thank you for sharing your gift of ministry with our parish.

It is a joy to serve in ministry with the St Mark's Family. Thank you all for this privilege and for all you do.

Yours in Christ,, Benjamin +

Vestry Nominees

Ivy Burnes

I was raised by Baptist missionary parents and grew up in Jerusalem, Israel and Athens, Greece. I attended college in Rome, Georgia (not Italy...) and then moved to Richmond in 1988.

Sandy and I were married in 2015 and wanted church to be part of our lives together. We met Becky Lee and Diane Hoover and they introduced us to St Marks. We began attending and have been active ever since. We have served at different times on altar guild, floral guild, as ushers, and for me, one previous term on vestry. I am grateful to St Marks for welcoming us and allowing us to make this our church home. I look forward to contributing to St Marks as a member of vestry, and supporting the mission of the church as we all grow in God's family.



Kent Slonaker

Hello all, I'm Kent Slonaker and I would be honored to serve as a member of the Vestry at St. Mark's. I am a lifelong Richmond resident and cradle Episcopalian. I have been a choirboy, acolyte, youth group member and advisor, and occasional chorister today. Here at St. Mark's I have enjoyed working with Karen Franklin on the food pantry and Ed Street on our outreach program with Rag and Bones Cycling Collective. I also lead our monthly Ice Cream Social bike rides during the warmer months. St. Mark's has been a consistently bright light in my

life, and anything I can do to help that light shine for others is a pleasure and an honor.

Ralph Stanley

My name is Ralph Stanley, and I have been a member of Saint's Marks for more than 20 years. I just retired on January 3rd of this year. My partner Neal Jones and I live in Northern Henrico County just past the city line. My career has been in sales and Business development. I came to Saint Marks after many years of not attending any church on regular basis. Saint Mark's is the church I had been looking for, welcoming and accepting of all people. I grew up in Appomattox VA and left to attend VCU in 1977 and Richmond has been my ever since.



This will be my second time serving on the Vestry and I am very excited to be coming back during this time growth and renovation. I have been involved with the property committee for many years, and I look forward to continued involvement with Brent and his team. 2025 will be an exciting year for all of us and I will do my best to serve as a member of your vestry.

Vestry members serve a three-year team. Each member also serves on at least one ministry team of the congregation and reports on activities and needs of the teams to the full Vestry.

Vestry meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6pm, and during its annual retreat .

Ministry Reports

Education and Formation:

Children's Worship continues each Sunday and with the worship space soft spots is enjoyed by our children and their families. We hosted several seasonal Fun & Learning Days for our younger children and incorporated some of our youth in the Food Pantry ministry. This year our Christmas Pageant returned to its 4:00pm service and we had 20+ children take part.

Adult formation programs are ongoing with both *Sacred Ground* and *Prophetic Faith* (which is a Justice & Advocacy study) forming new cohorts in 2025. Both of these emphasize

the formational work needed to better understand ourselves and our community. *St. Mark's Reads* continues and in 2024 we enjoyed topics from Pauli Murray to housing discrimination in *The Color of Law*, racial stereotyping in *James*, and images of God in *God is Black Woman*. We're kicking off 2025 with *Social Justice for the Sensitive Soul* and considering two works on the murder of Emmett Till. The Wednesday AM Bible Study continues weekly September - June. Buck's Bible Study after decades of Wednesday evenings together has retired. Father Benjamin led an Adult Confirmation preparation class and from it has come a monthly Rector's Forum.

The Young Adults Discussion group led by Ryn Kennedy continues to meet weekly and Ryn is expanding to take on Youth Ministry beginning with Father Benjamin in January for the Youth Confirmation Class.

In cooperation with Pastoral Care we continue to offer occasional end of life and aging issues programs. *Women Rowing North* meets monthly. Currently we are reading *Autumn Gospel* by Kathlen Fischer.

The church renovation led us to forego an Advent series. *Malinda Collier*

Evangelism:

THANK YOU for ALL that you did to promote Evangelism for St. Mark's in 2024! You were SUPERSTARS and real naturals in performing ministry and sharing about the work of your ministries, inviting folks to join us, welcoming newcomers and spreading the love that is our tradition. While we are a small core group of members on the Evangelism team, YOU ALL are evangelizing throughout the week at home, at work, in your peer communities and beyond. Your work at evangelizing really showed up for St. Mark's in 2024. Your efforts were and will continue to be impactful for the health and well-being of our church.

Just how did YOU underpin the success of Evangelism in 2024? Simply put, you lived into your passions and you didn't miss a step! As an example, Sunday Worship is our largest public program and it underwent quite a challenge in relocation in 2024. With careful planning, use of expertise and creative resourcing, as members of the Worship team, Altar Guild, Floral Guild, Choir, ZOOM team, Property, Clergy and Staff (at a minimum) you transitioned our Parish Hall into a magnificent worship space for the benefit of the renovation in the Nave/Sanctuary. In the midst of all the logistics maneuvers, you continued to setup, clear out, polish, prepare seasonal florals, process &

recess, read lessons, deliver sermons or reflections, offer communion, provide family friendly spaces and delight us with the gift of music. By Advent, you were well into your “groove” and the Wise Men were in the Parish Hall embarking on their annual trek. Whether upstairs or downstairs, Sundays, Holy Week, Easter, Christmas or otherwise, you engaged in ministry together to celebrate the joy of our faith and you invited folks to participate. That’s Evangelism.

What else did you do to promote Evangelism? You fed people! Hospitality and Evangelism go together like peanut butter and jelly. You provided “spreads” for Coffee Hour on Sundays, for the monthly neighborhood meal, for J&A book group meetings, seasonal formation series and for special occasions where St. Mark’s was the hosting facility for Diocesan regional services including the Celebration of Life and Ministry of Dr. Pauli Murray and the Pride Eucharist! Oh, and by the way, hosting a regional celebration and inviting everyone from the region to attend is Evangelism in a big way. Way to go! And you win the fellowship award, hands down.

As if all that wasn’t enough, you didn’t stop there. Through your Outreach efforts, which are a reflection of your living into the Gospel, you extended the name of St. Mark’s in the community with the goodwill items you donated to ACTS, CARITAS, Anna Julia Copper School, Rag and Bones Bike Co-op and the citizens of RVA’s 8th Council District. You showed up to represent St. Mark’s at PrideFest, at the Episcopal General Convention in Louisville, KY and at the DoV convention in Fredericksburg. You added to our visibility at our Porch Events including Sundae Sunday, Blessing of the Animals, Boo Halloween and Marathon Cheers. I’m thrilled to say that St. Mark’s “gets around”. That’s Evangelism.

With your love of all things social, you helped us keep our website updated with current pictures of happenings at church or in our community in ministry service. You posted pictures to your personal media pages and you tagged St. Mark’s so that your friends could see us! You put likes, hearts, caring hug emojis and comments on our St. Mark’s Facebook and Instagram posts and stories. For all your social media work in support of the Evangelism team, we THANK YOU and we ask that you keep up the efforts! AND we’d love to have you help us further in 2025 by creating some simple reels and videos that reflect your love of St. Mark’s at home or when you’re out and about. Short and eye-catching content goes a long way in Evangelism and we’re looking forward to seeing yours. In the meantime, remember that liking is great, and shar-

ing is better.

Finally, an heroic measure you took to promote Evangelism in 2024 was the prayerful planning and undertaking of the renovation of our public spaces! With your help, St. Mark's is preparing invitations for not only newcomers but for new generations!

Suzanne Long, Evangelism Chair

Justice & Advocacy:

"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public." Cornel West

Originally part of the Outreach Ministry, J&A became a stand-alone ministry in 2023. The start of 2024 was time for us to define the ministry separately. To that end, the first part of the year was given over to crafting a strategic plan specifically for Justice and Advocacy. We recognized that so much of what we do at St. Mark's, and how we do it, inherently points toward social justice. Making that overtly true--calling attention to social justice in our work--would be our call for the Team. We chose to incorporate Benjamin's comment that love is not just our tradition, it is also our vision.

The Plan's focus is finding ways to promote J&A as an undercurrent for everything we do and are at St. Mark's. Our work with the Prophetic Faith study has given us a way to dialogue with other teams to bring justice more into focus. In September we had a meeting with the Vestry and Ministry Team leaders to explain this more fully and sign-off on our long-range plan.

We also spent part of the summer drawing up by-laws for J&A.

We updated our wall, tying J&A to our baptismal covenant. We completed one Sacred Ground session and planned for a second session for early 2025, and planned to organize another session of the Prophetic Faith study for 2025. St Mark's Reads held two Soupers for *The Color of Law* and *God is a Black Woman*; we have another one, *Social Justice for the Sensitive Soul*, coming up in February.

We staged a "Get Out The Vote" postcard writing event, collaborating with Reclaim Our Vote, where we produced 350 cards that were sent to an historically disenfranchised area in south Texas. We joined the RISC (Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities) and participated in meetings there. We have generally made con-

tacts with other community organizations in anticipation of our work for 2025. And we attended the VA Interfaith Day at the General Assembly last week.

Justice & Advocacy might not have more relevance than it does right now, and we invite all interested to join our work in 2025.

Penny Adams and Karen Hardison, Co- Chairs

Outreach - Ed Street, chair

2024 was another fun and impactful year for Outreach. Our ongoing missions continued to thrive, and we successfully introduced new initiatives to further our goal of serving the community.

Food Pantry and Breakfast Ministry

Our twice monthly food pantry with a sit-down breakfast continued. We provided approximately 1000 meals for the year. This mission is led by Karen Franklin, supported by six dedicated volunteer teams who prepare and serve the breakfasts. Also, thanks to Columbus Parks who is always there on food pantry day to help with setup and provide our guests with assistance. During the renovation we are providing breakfast to go. Once renovation is complete, we will resume our sit-down meal. Of course, we continue to hand out a bag of groceries and clothing essentials to our friends in need. Many thanks to Jackie Bitler and the McDuff family, our grocery bag packers. Over the summer we also gave out many personal care kits containing items donated by the congregation. Your support by shopping regularly for pantry supplies is critical to sustaining this mission. Currently, we need volunteers interested in occasional bulk shopping for the pantry. Your purchases will be reimbursed, so please consider helping in this way. Please contact Karen if you would like to help with our food pantry ministry in any way. We can use your help and it's a great way to meet other members of our congregation.

12-Step Recovery Group

The 12-Step Recovery Group continued to meet each Wednesday night in the parish hall. The group has grown. Some nights have 240 attendees. The program runs even more efficiently now as the leaders have access to our building and can arrive on their own to set up the room as needed. As always, we provide a host / chaperone each Wednesday. It's a simple task. If you're interested in joining that important ministry, please contact Suzanne Long.

Lenten Mission

For our Lenten mission, we again collected and delivered a small truckload of care essentials to ACTS (Area Congregations Together in Service). We have developed a strong partnership with ACTS, a critical Richmond organization assisting neighbors in financial need, bridging them through crises that might otherwise make them homeless. In Lent we also asked members of our congregation to step up donations to our food pantry.

Partnership with CARITAS

Under Suzanne Long's leadership we maintained our close partnership with CARITAS in 2024. We prepared and delivered four lunches and three dinners to their Southside facility. We got rave reviews for our meals which always include a main course, numerous sides, giant salads, breads, desserts and choice of beverages. If you'd like to help out in meal planning, preparation, or delivery please contact Suzanne. We would love to have your help.

Rag & Bones Bicycle Co-op Mission

In June, we kicked off a bike collection mission to support Rag & Bones Bicycle Co-op, a volunteer-run non-profit helping bikers in the Richmond area. They provide space, tools and assistance for do-it-yourself bicycle repair; inexpensive bikes and parts; and programs for the community. Kent Slonaker, who volunteers with Rag & Bones, proposed and led this mission. This mission was a resounding success! We collected and donated **30 bikes** to the co-op. Most bikes came from members of our congregation. Some bikes were generously provided to us by Commonwealth Catholic Charities in downtown Richmond. The bikes ranged in condition; some required extensive repair, while others were ready to ride. We even donated several vintage Schwinn bikes. Rag & Bones loved our bikes and was especially grateful for child bikes we donated. These were in excellent condition and are in high demand within the community they serve.

Support for Anna Julia Cooper School

In August, we collected items for Anna Julia Cooper School. This year we provided thermal laminating paper, notebook paper, multi-color cardstock and Ticonderoga #2 pencils. These supplies will help students and teachers complete a successful academic year.

VA Pridefest

In September, we joined with other Episcopal churches to host a booth at the VA

Pridefest. As always, many members of our congregation volunteered to help with this event. Thanks to Malinda for coordinating this mission. The following Thursday, 9/12, St. Mark's hosted a Pride Eucharist celebrating acceptance and affirmation of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Habitat for Humanity

In November, seven members of our congregation spent a Saturday working on a Habitat for Humanity house in Petersburg. We finished the subfloor of a new house. The future owner joined our work team, thanking us and telling us how much her family is looking forward to their new home. This is our second year of a re-kindled mission with Habitat for Humanity.

Christmas Gifts Program

We've just completed the annual Christmas Gifts mission. Each year we receive a list of needy neighbors living in Southside District 8. Many live alone with no family in the area. Each person provides a list of needed items. They ask for simple everyday provisions: winter clothes, jackets, socks, shoes, sheets, towels, blankets, and comforters. Our gifts provide useful items and some holiday cheer. This year we provided gifts to 65 Southside neighbors, including our friend Buddy the support dog. We also adopted one local family – a mom and her 4 sons, including them in our gift mission. So, our grand total was 70 gift recipients, an amazing testament to the commitment within our congregation to help in our community. Santa's sleigh picked up your gifts in mid-December and they were distributed over the holidays.

Looking Ahead

We greatly appreciate the involvement of all members of our congregation in our Outreach programs. Your dedication makes the missions possible. If you're interested in shaping, leading, or participating in new missions, consider joining the Outreach team. Together, we can expand our impact and bring hope to even more neighbors in our community.

Here's a list Suzanne put together of the monetary value of some of our key missions. It reflects the generosity of our congregation.

CARITAS Initiatives

Lunches for Works

3/15/24 \$400 100 pieces of chicken (fried/baked) plus sides

6/21/24 \$350 Cold salads (chicken, tuna, pimento cheese, tossed)

8/16/24 \$350 Salad bar

10/4/24 \$400 Mission BBQ, Mac/Cheese and sides

Afterworks Dinners

1/31/24 \$400 Lasagna meal

5/29/24 \$350 Mexican Casseroles

11/20/24 \$450 Pork tenderloin and fried chicken

School Supplies Anna Julia Cooper School: \$1000

Christmas Boxes: \$9000 - \$11000 for 70 recipients

ACTS Carebags: between \$1500 and \$2000 value

Parish Life/Fellowship:

2024 was a busy year for the Parish Life Ministry. We are pleased to note that we gained several new members. We started the year in January with the Epiphany Dinner, a celebration for our whole parish family in the calm after the frenzy of the Christmas season. This was followed by Lent, kicked off with the Shrove Tuesday meal, ably managed by Karen Hardison. A heartfelt “thank you” to Karen for taking this on, and to all of the volunteers who cook, serve, and set-up and clean-up. In a joint effort between the Justice & Advocacy Ministry, Education and Parish Life, a three-part Lenten Series was held on the book *“The Color of Law”*. The series was a “Souper” – it included soup, salad and a sweet for the participants. The Spring season ended with the enhanced Palm Sunday coffee hour, hosted by Parish Life.

In June, St. Mark’s hosted a regional commemorative service for Pauli Murray, followed by a reception put on by Parish Life. Things were relatively quiet until we got to September. The month was kicked off with the Welcome Back Sunday – coffee hour organized by Parish Life; then came the Regional Pride Eucharist, hosted by St. Mark’s; a “souper” meal in conjunction with J&A’s “St. Mark’s Reads” event; and finally, the Parish Picnic on September 29th. A very busy month for the Parish Life Crew.

Other activities involving Parish Life include:

- organizing the joint Parish Retreat with the Church of the Holy Comforter, held at Shrine Mont in October. This effort begins in late winter with the kick-off of the planning work.

In association with Pastoral Care, “Goodie Boxes” are prepared and sent to our Zoomer congregants throughout the year.

We also need to say a giant “thank you” to Penny Adams for organizing the Coffee Hour ministry. We wouldn’t be St. Mark’s without it.

In 2025 we would also like to re-activate Foyer Groups – small groups that meet on a regular basis to foster community and friendships. A “champion” for this would be appreciated.

We are always interested in having new members on the Parish Life Ministry Team. You can sign up for a single event or be a full -time member. We encourage your participation in any capacity. All events and activities need help with set-up, clean-up, cooking and preparation. Not just meals, but also “goodie boxes” and other joint ministry activities. If you are interested, reach out to Fred Crowley, Mickie Jones, or any other member of the Parish Life team. We’d love to hear from you. *Fred Crowley, Chair*

Pastoral Care:

One of our core values at St. Mark’s is that “We love each other.” Pastoral Care is instrumental to doing that, and it blesses both the giver and the receiver. Simply put, Pastoral Care is us putting God’s Love into action by caring for each other. And that happens in as many ways as there are parishioners.

It starts with being mindful of each other, noticing when someone is troubled (or reaching out if it is you who is troubled) and following up. Sometimes, we can respond to a specific need (e.g., provide a meal, run an errand, bring flowers from the altar, send a note, bring communion). But more often, just listening with compassion (and respect for privacy) is the gift of Love we provide each other. So often, life confronts us with challenges that can’t be “fixed.” But, having another person “be with” us is a gift from God.

St. Mark’s Pastoral Care Committee meets monthly to share information regarding parishioners in need, degree of confidentiality the person wants, how we can help, and who will follow up. In addition, we are in constant communication throughout the month via email with staff and each other, as we become aware of parishioners in need. Cards are sent monthly to all on the parishioner prayer list. (Names remain on the list three months, unless there is a request for extension). We also focus on our

own needs for support, as a group and as individuals, by sharing meaningful readings or experiences.

And we occasionally break bread together.

In support of St. Mark's Strategic Plan, we have increased our numbers (current members Becky Adams, Margie Costas, Karen Franklin, Gaye Frugard, Jeanine Harper, Lisette Johnson, Sandy Goldie, Frosty Own, Christian Munson, Annette Spanel). We organized an End of Life educational forum in May 2024 and are discussing ideas for other forums in 2025. Several members of our committee take communion to parishioners who are unable to come to the altar through our home Eucharistic ministry. We coordinate with Parish Life for delivery of seasonal gifts and meals needed during a crisis, and with Worship for delivery of altar flowers.

Much pastoral care informally happens at St. Mark's among those who know each other well. But, if you feel especially called to this sacred ministry, please let us know—and join with us in living God's Love through our love for each other.

And, please reach out whenever you (or someone you know) feel you (or they) could use the loving support of your fellow parishioners. We bless each other in the giving and the receiving. You can reach out to the Rector, Priest Associate, staff, or any member of the committee. *Annette Spanel, Chair*

Property: Our Church Property is now 103 Years old:

In addition to our planned Interior Church Sanctuary Renovations by way of our "RAISE to RENEW" Campaign, we still handled the general daily and monthly routine work, maintenance, issues as well as expenses. In 2024 we had the opportunity to make some minor impactful improvement projects as follows:

Addressed a leak in our Basement which was being caused by the City of Richmond's – Water Meter Vault:

In 2024 the West wall next to the alley of our Basement / Lower Level Kitchen area started to leak. It was determined that this leak was a result of the City of Richmond's large Water Meter Vault which is located in the alley behind our Church. George Collier helped facilitate this effort to stop the water entering our Basement by way of the public utility vault.

EXTERIOR GROUNDS & EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE:

As the Visibility of our Church is a part of our Strategic Plan, Malinda and George Col-

lier were both great assets in helping with the daily items associated with this core value and function. They were also very helpful with addressing various exterior visibility / first impression items over the last year.

The Sacristy: Removal & Replacement of the AC Unit:

The AC Unit in the Sacristy quit working and functioning. As a result, we replaced this unit with a new AC unit.

Property work we planned and started in 2024 that will be completed in the near Future:

In 2024 St. Mark's Episcopal Church was successful in taking our next big and faithful step towards our future by way of:

PLANNED PHASING of RENOVATIONS: We determined what and how we could potentially afford to accomplish the needed work over the course of Three (3 each) Phases of Renovations. The purpose of having three (3 each) Phases of Renovations was strictly based upon being good stewards of the fact that we would not have all the financial resources available to us at the start of our Renovations to complete everything we want to accomplish. Therefore, we thoughtfully subdivided the work and subsequent costs into smaller portions of work in an effort to afford each phase, rather than having to have all of the financial resources upfront.

The Sacristy: Removal & Replacement of the Countertops as well as a much larger New Sink and Faucet:

Communion and the Lord's Table plays a huge role every week in our Worship. As a result, we took the full return of our services this year as an opportunity to invest in our Sacristy. This work was paid for by a member/family of our Church. The work included the removal of the water damaged and worn-out laminate Countertop, Sink and Faucet. All these items were replaced with new Quartz/Stone Countertops along with a much larger stainless-steel sink, sink accessories, as well as a more appropriate large faucet with a spray mechanism.

The Children's Nursery: Removal & Replacement of the Carpet as something which holds both water / moisture damage as well as germs with a waterproof Luxury Vinyl Tile Wood Plank Flooring product:

The Future of our Church is in our Children and young families. As a result, this year

we took the full return of our services this year as an opportunity to invest in our Nursery Room Flooring. There was also a freak flooding incident which occurred in this room in September.

This work was paid for by a member/family of our Church. The work included the removal of the water damaged Carpet and the replacement of the Flooring with a Luxury Vinyl Tile – waterproof Wood Plank flooring system along with new Base. Once again, Malinda was a great help and resource for this small, however a very impactful transformation of this room.

Our CHURCH PARKING LOT as an asset:

In spite of the lingering pandemic issues and outfall, we were successful in generating some income by renting out our Parking lot. We have continued our agreement to out-source the marketing and management of our parking lot. City Parking is continuing to market and manage our larger parking lot area, which does not include our smaller “Church Office” parking lot.

Our underlying goal is to provide our parking lot as an asset as well as a resource to our surrounding neighbors and community at a “market rate” rental amount.

Overall, as more events evolve after the pandemic and people start attending major neighborhood area public events, we hope others and the community will utilize our Parking Lot outside of Church Hours to generate even more income for our Church. Some of these events would include:

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts – any and all overflow events or outdoor events in the gardens can be very well attended and crowded,

Shamrock the Block,

Easter on Parade,

Octoberfest in the Parking lot of the former Benedictine School, now Cristo

Rey – Richmond High School.

Property work we hope to accomplish in the Future:

FINANCIAL RESOURCES: The Capital Campaign Committee of our Church by way of “The Raise to Renew Campaign” determined the extent of our financial resources, for us to compare against to the work which needs to be accomplished within our Worship Space.

WE STARTED the INITIAL RENOVATIONS: Based upon having defined and determined items “A” and “B” above, we have begun our exciting journey towards performing Two (2) out of our Three (3) Phases. The last Phase will now be the Narthex portion.

Overall, St. Mark’s will continue to diligently work towards determining what is in the long-term best interest of our Church during the Renovation process to accomplish such a major endeavor.

Stay tuned for more exciting news and progress in 2025!

Stay tuned for more exciting news in 2024! *Brent Graves, Chair*

Stewardship:

Though St. Mark’s certainly has some particularly generous parishioners, our church is dependent upon the breadth of the pledge base rather than the depth of individual pockets. Several years ago the Stewardship Team decided to underscore this reality by not publicizing the financial goal at the beginning of the campaign, only announcing the number of pledges we hoped to receive. Our aim was and is to affirm that, at St. Mark’s, all pledges are valued. The amount of the pledge is less important than the fact of the pledge—the pledge as sign, the pledge as tangible commitment to our common life and work, in Christ.

It continues to be the Team’s belief that a broad enough pledge response will naturally lead to a successful campaign, which has again proved to be the case. In homilies and postings we have underscored our long-term stewardship goal: to create a balanced budget without drawing down the church’s investment account. We hoped to raise at least \$323,000 for the 2025 fiscal year and exceeded that goal by \$42,000, bringing us closer to our multi-year goal, and doing so during an ongoing capital campaign. It is important to remember that the larger the portion of the budget that can be funded by pledge and plate, the smaller the draw on the investment account—and the more secure our financial future. *Howard Pugh, Chair*

Worship:

2024 marked the first full year of the Worship Ministry Team and the Rev. Benjamin Badgett’s working together to pray, plan, imagine, and offer worship opportunities at St Mark’s. As the chair of the team, I found the year to be tremendously exciting for several reasons.

We helped facilitate an increase in the number of people who actively participate in the

worship ministry of the parish be they members of this ministry team, worship assistants (lectors, intercessors, chalice servers, & acolytes), ushers, altar guild members or members of the choir. We worked together to establish a system to ensure that regular training and recertifications occur where needed, to comply with diocesan expectations. Anyone interested in participating in any of the worship related ministry areas should most certainly speak with Karen, Sanford (Altar Guild & Floral Guild), Amos (music) or Benjamin.

We saw the ongoing twice monthly mid-week services of healing offered as an opportunity for worship along with the Sunday morning service, and online morning prayer and compline.

We continued to support the inclusion of young children & families of all kinds in our worship, notably having the children presenting bread and wine for Eucharist, and families lighting the Advent Wreath and offering a reading related to doing so as part of each liturgy during Advent.

We engaged in ongoing dialogue with team member Amos, our Minister of Music, to ensure that the music of the church was both varied and familiar. The year saw the institution of the monthly community choir, the regular singing of the Psalm, greater exposure to music beyond the “blue book”, and a summer educational series about hymns in our bulletin, along with the occasional hymn sing.

Members of the team worked alongside the rector and Brent to provide input into both the plan to move worship to the fellowship hall during the renovations to the nave/chancel/sanctuary, and the changes that will occur in the worship space upstairs that will better reflect the needs of the congregation. It should be noted that the contributions of the team were not limited to thoughtful suggestions...time, hard work, and elbow grease were a must in creating the worship space and experience that are serving us so well downstairs during this time. While citing individuals is always done at the peril of leaving someone out, (and if I do so, I am truly sorry), I would be remiss to not mention the enormous contributions of Sanford and Amos. We’d not be having the worship experience we currently enjoy without them.

We updated our portion of the Long Range Plan to better reflect the work before us, the needs of the congregation, and the challenges we face in the coming years.

Members of the team participated in the planning & conducting of, the region wide service in honor of Pauli Murray. It is our hope for this to become an annual event. Kudos to Kenneth Decker for his idea & for his leadership in this.

Paul Shane attended a national conference for Vergers where he made connections, learned much, earned a national certificate as a Verger, and got a most impressive

portrait taken in full Verger regalia!

We very much look forward to continuing our work together into & through the new year, and of course would welcome anyone who might have an interest in participating in any aspect of this ministry.

All of the above may well be seen as the typical work of the Worship Ministry Team. It reads like the “business” we attended to if you will, and it was/is important. The most exciting work we engaged in during the year is a bit more difficult to capture. In the fall of 2023, Benjamin shared with the team, a communication from Bishop Stevenson, that addressed some important thoughts he had related to Eucharist. The implications for our parish were significant. The team spent the remainder of 2023 and the first half of 2024 in prayer and discussion about this letter. We asked important questions, we held deep, long, personal discussions. We listened. We asked questions. We sought to support our rector and our parish. We communicated with our Vestry and our Bishop. In July 2024, Bishop Stevenson came to St. Mark’s and met with members of the team and some of the Vestry for a couple of hours. It was an extraordinary meeting... honest, open, respectful, heartfelt, loving even. It was an example of how we are the church. The conversation probably changed no one’s mind, but it took place in such a fashion that budding relationships were formed, and there is room for more engagement, more dialogue, and even more growth. I have never been more grateful to be part of this parish and this ministry team than I was throughout this process and am as we continue our work together, seeking to be faithful followers of the Christ.

Karen Hardison, Chair

Worship Assistants, Altar Guild & Floral Guild

Our Fall Ministry Fair was a rousing success with new members joining all areas!

Our current numbers: Readers/Intercessors 39, Chalicebearers 10, Acolytes 11, Vergers 5, Altar Guild 17, Floral Guild 5 regular Sunday arrangers, plus 5 additional folks who help at Christmas, Easter and other special times.

Paul Shane has graciously assumed the regular quarterly worship assistants scheduling for 2025. The Guilds have worked hard with the rector to adapt our procedures during our time in the parish hall.

Altar Guild members have become very comfortable transporting our Eucharist set up by way of cart and elevator. Our current motto, “Everything needed on cart, check twice before leaving sacristy, then roll by way of the elevator to the parish hall”. Our 5

new members are a blessing to our efforts. We always welcome more help. Please join us anytime and serve on a once-a-month team.

The Floral Guild decided this year at Christmas to use poinsettias. Thanks to all who contributed financially and physically in placing and watering them. A core group of 5 regular Sunday arrangers, plus additional folks help with all aspects of decorating from exterior and interior trees, greenery, lights, wreaths and nativity at Christmas, to easily portable arrangements ready to be shared by congregants with family and friends post worship.

Ralph Stanley heads up the placing of the lighted garland on the front portico for Advent/ Christmas. We need someone-s to work with him learning the steps of that decorating. Please consider helping on the first of December 2025.

Many thanks to all who serve and please consider joining one or more of these ministries! *Pam Piercy, Floral Guild Chair & Sanford Eberly, Altar Guild Chair*

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

158th Annual Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2024

The meeting was called to order by Rev. Benjamin Badgett, rector at 12:04pm. Rev. Benjamin opened with a prayer. He noted that a quorum was present and this being the case the business meeting could proceed (62 present in-person, 5 via Zoom)

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting minutes – Penny Adams moved and Laura Hicks seconded that the minutes as reconstructed (originals could not be found) be approved. Approval was unanimous.

Election of New Vestry Members

Recognition of outgoing members: Jamie Francis, Shannon Heady, Don Kyser

Rules for the Election/Affirmation: Rev. Sarah Kye Price and Steve Barnes served as tellers for the election.

Presentation of the Candidates: Becky Adams, Gaye Frugard, Kate Williams

Nominations from the floor – none

Becky Adams, Gaye Frugard, and Kate Williams were duly elected to the Vestry.

Business Meeting:

Treasurer's Report – Suzanne gave a thorough presentation of the 2023 budget and coming year's financial plan. Copies are available in the office and as requested by email.

Rector's Report – Benjamin gave a brief reflection on his first year with us as rector noting the warmth and generosity of the congregation and its strength in ministry. His written report is in the Annual Meeting booklet.

Closing Prayer – Rev. Benjamin closed the meeting at 1pm with the reading of the General Thanksgiving. *Karen Franklin, Register*