

love is our tradition



St. Mark's Episcopal Church Annual Meeting January 31, 2016

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
149th Annual Meeting
January 31, 2016

Agenda

Call to Order

Opening Prayer

Approval of 2015 Annual Meeting minutes – on file in the Office

Election of New Vestry Members

Recognition of outgoing members: Jennifer Kaufman, Mike Maruca and
Bill Martin

Rules of the Election

Presentation of the Candidates

Business Meeting:

Rector's Report

Budget Review by the Treasurer

Stewardship 2016 Report

New Business

Closing Prayer



St Mark's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Rector's Report

In a book entitled *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church*,” author and theologian Diana Butler Bass writes about how congregations need to change to meet the needs of a changing world. She points to a renewed trend in mainline churches of the 21st century:

...religious communities focus on meaning-making by gathering up the past and re-presenting it through both story and action in ways that help people connect with God, one another, and the world outside the doors of church buildings. It encompasses both pattern and practice.”

Generally speaking, church success is measured by the three “B’s” of congregational vitality: baptisms, budgets, and buildings. However, I think that what Diana Bass says is that we as Episcopalians need to be intentional about what we already do well: worship; mission; and spirituality. All three are essential to a life of discipleship.

Worship is not an optional activity for a Christian. Worship is the heart of who we are and is the activity in which we envision who God is for us. In worship, we are shaped by the story. Through Holy Scripture and in our actions of praise and thanksgiving, of eating and drinking, we are connected with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and with one another in the Body of Christ. Our relationship with one another is grounded in our common faith. Our relationship with the world is shaped by the demands of the Gospel. We are to love one another as we have been loved, and to serve one another as Christ has served us. We are called to become the voice of the outcast and the marginalized of our society, to feed the hungry, and to become instruments of God’s justice, peace, compassion, and mercy. That is how we practice our faith.

St. Mark’s is blessed with many people who offer themselves for the service of worship. The choir spends many hours practicing to make an offering of praise to God through the leading of service music, hymns, and anthems. Music shapes the “feeling” of our worship and I am grateful for the quality of music we have in the congregation. Our MC’s, Acolytes, Chalciers, Ushers, Flower Guild, Readers, Intercessors, Greeters, and the Altar Guild are all essential to the experience of worship. And, of course, there’s the extension of worship into community through hospitality in Coffee Hour which is so graciously sponsored by Parish Life – among their many events in our lives together.

To be disciples also demands our connection with God on a daily basis. We need to exercise our spiritual life so that we can continue to grow in our ministry as individuals and as a community of faith. The story will make no sense if we are not schooled in scripture. Our praise and thanksgiving will become hollow words if in our daily lives we can not give thanks to God for the abundance of our blessings. Our life in the Spirit of the Risen Christ will not be able to grow if we never open our lives to the movement of the Spirit in prayer.

Through various evangelism and education programs we have sought to support and nourish the spiritual journey of all who come to St. Mark’s. Childrens’ Chapel brings our chil-

dren into age appropriate engagement with both story and prayer. As the number of children has grown and the age range is varied we face a great problem to have – the need for more help in teaching as we split the group. And our Youth Groups are growing as we have joined resources with two other Episcopal churches. Eighteen people attended Episcopal 101 to learn more about the Episcopal Church as well as to prepare for Confirmation and Reception. Two gatherings of Vestry and Newcomers introduced folks to each other and began building relationships that have strengthened the church. There were opportunities for exploring meditative prayer in the Evening Prayers which were offered in the winter and Advent. Three Bible Study Groups meet for study and fellowship. And our building is offered for groups for various purposes. For our 150th Anniversary year we began focusing on what we can do to contribute to anti-racism in our neighborhood, city, and beyond. Thus far, we have had two dynamic speakers with us.

Outreach continued to be a priority this past year. We were reminded through our story that in the 90's, when our reliance on a trust fund ended, we had to redefine ourselves from a “check writing” church for outreach organizations to a “hands-on” church for ministry. Locally there is ministry in partnership with CARITAS, ACTS, the elderly, as well as our own Saturday Feeding Program which fed almost 1700 people last year, St. Mark's Food Pantry, the Panera Doughboys who pick up bread that is used by us and two other churches for feeding hungry individuals and children, Christmas boxes for the elderly, Easter baskets, ice cream socials for Vets at McGuire VA Hospital. Thanks to the Property Team who oversees the upkeep of this complex we host 12-Step every Wednesday as we have for almost 40 years, Girl Scouts, SCAN, and other organizations. New ministries will be initiated this coming year which involve personal contact among rising 2nd and 3rd grade children in need of mentoring in improving reading skills and a vocational deacon serving women in prison.

We are a dynamic and creative community and yet there is room to grow and to change. To be good stewards we must monitor our expenses carefully. To create a balanced budget we must be creative in ways to increase income so that we are not totally reliant on pledges, loose offerings, and the investment fund. We currently have 86 units who have made a pledge for 2016 for \$220,534. This exceeded our pledge goal. We are grateful for the trust that the Vestry, Finance Team, and Stewardship Team are good stewards of these gifts. I would urge you, if you have not made a pledge of financial commitment to the life and ministry of St. Mark's that you do so. If you want to know more about pledging, please speak to a member of the Vestry or the Treasurer.

Look around and most likely you will see new faces. We have been blessed over the past year to have many visitors on Sunday morning. We have welcomed new singles or families into the parish. Some of them have joined our Young Adults Group and are beginning to claim their ministries among us. Growth means change, and as the community changes it makes demands on how we communicate with each other and how we connect with one another. You have to be engaged to form community. Strengthening a practicing Christian Com-

munity requires time and commitment. I would challenge you this year to commit yourself to one area in the life of this community in which you will offer your gifts, your time, and your commitment. With everyone pitching in, the ministry God gives us will be accomplished. I would be remiss if once again I didn't thank our staff. These people work hard to support the ministries of St. Mark's. Steve, Malinda, David, Noah and Kaitlin are invaluable in the work they do in supporting St. Mark's. I thank Loren for her work as nursery attendant and wish her well in her retirement. I thank Buck for his generosity with his time and preaching. And, of course, we miss the wisdom and friendship of Edgar whose memory is a blessing to all of us. We are so blessed with our Vestry and Register, Mary Clark. They work hard to govern this church in a fair and faithful manner. I am especially thankful for the three people who have served for three years and who are rotating off with this meeting: Jennifer Kaufman, Bill Martin, and Mike Maruca. They have given so much to us and we are thankful they will continue in their other ministries among us. And I thank Laura Hicks for her ministry as Treasurer for so many years. She is still a great resource to Suzanne and all of us.

We are a practicing Christian Community. We are followers of Jesus Christ, rooted in worship, generous in giving to the needs of others, and fostering our relationship with God and one another. As we move through these coming months and years we will face new challenges in our economy, in the world around us, and in this congregation. However, I am convinced that God will provide the resources to carry out the ministry that we are called to do in this place. We will be stretched, we will grow, and above all we will continue to give praise and thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon – the last one Bill Watterson drew. Published on Sunday, December 31, 1995, the strip depicted Calvin and Hobbes outside with their toboggan in a freshly fallen snow. “Wow,” Calvin says to Hobbes, “It really snowed last night! Isn't it wonderful?” Hobbes, Calvin's philosophical stuffed tiger, replies, “Everything familiar has disappeared. The world looks brand new!” “A New Year – a fresh, clean start,” Calvin asserts, to which Hobbes responds, “It's like having a big white sheet of paper to draw on!” Calvin puts his hands on his hips in satisfaction. “A day full of possibilities,” he surmises, adding – as they climb onto the toboggan – “It's a magical world, Hobbes, ol' buddy . . .” Finally, the two push off, flying over snowy hills in the final frame. “Let's go exploring,” shouts Calvin, which is what I invite of us as well. Explore the possibilities for St. Mark's in the coming year and for your own spiritual life.

Respectfully Submitted,
David

Vestry Candidates

Mike Gephart—After moving to Richmond after college, I began my search for a new church home. I visited churches from Church Hill to Goochland, but in my search, I never found a church that was as warm and welcoming as St. Mark's. Having found my new church home, I was confirmed at St. Mark's in 2000. Idle hands are a rare thing at St. Mark's so within weeks of my confirmation, I was asked to join the Altar Guild. Eventually, I became co-chair of the Altar Guild and continue to serve in that capacity. My service in the Altar Guild has been an amazing learning experience and has provided a place for my faith and understanding to grow. In addition, I served as Assistant Treasurer from 2007-2010. In 2012, I was licensed as a Lay Eucharistic Visitor, which has proven to be an incredibly fascinating and rewarding ministry, visiting with our parishioners who can no longer attend services regularly. I began this ministry thinking I would be helping others, but it has increased my faith and enriched my life in ways I never expected. I hope all of these experiences have helped prepare me for service on the Vestry and, if given the opportunity, to help St. Mark's continue to thrive.



We all know that St. Mark's is a special and unique place, filled with incredible people. It is such a true reflection of God's love. Old or young, male or female, single or married, rich or poor, graceful or awkward, sick or healthy, witty or dull, we are all accepted and loved for who we are, no more, no less. With that knowledge of acceptance and love, St. Mark's calls each of us to show the world how wonderful life can be if we just acknowledge and accept that all encompassing love.



Dolores Ramiza—I previously served on the Vestry at Church of the Redeemer in Morristown, New Jersey. I never thought I would find another church like Redeemer until we came to St. Mark's 10 years ago. Jerry and I knew after our first visit, that St. Mark's was where we belonged.

The majority of my work experience has been in the non-profit world. I've led programs in large organizations such as United Way, as well as local organizations, such as The O'Brien Center, serving abused and sexually abused children. I've come away from all of these experiences with the realization that if we are willing to look, we will see the opportunity to do God's work at every turn. At St. Mark's I have been involved in pastoral care ministries, I serve as a Greeter and faithful Neighborhood Dinner cook and server.

I have a very clear understanding of what it takes to be a member of the Vestry, and would do my very best to bring the dedication and commitment the members of St. Mark's deserve.

Rules for the Election:

In keeping with Canon 11 of the Diocese of Virginia all adult communicants (ages 16 and older) in good standing, registered at St. Mark's shall be entitled to vote at the election.

The voting shall be by ballot in person, no proxy voting allowed. Vote for no more than 3 candidates.

No election shall be valid unless the participating qualified votes number at least ten percent of the number of active communicants qualified to vote as reported for the previous year.

Jennifer Kaufman, Bill Martin & Mike Maruca will serve as the election judges and tellers.

Candidates receiving the plurality of votes will be considered duly elected to serve a full vestry term of three consecutive years.

Election may be by affirmation.

Vestry Ballot

Tear off and give to the Tellers.

Ministry Reports

Education and Formation:

This program year, in honor of the 150th anniversary of St. Mark's, the Education and Formation Team began the "RVA Talks @ St. Mark's" series. This year's series has been exploring race and reconciliation, and what faith communities can do to promote reconciliation.

Events so far include:

A visit from Very Reverend Mike Kinman, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis, MO. Rev. Kinman preached at the 10:30 service and gave an evening presentation about his experience as a Black Lives Matter activist.

An evening presentation by Rev. Phoebe Roaf. Rev. Roaf spoke to her experience as the first black woman ordained in Louisiana.

This coming spring we will offer:

A facilitated panel discussion in February with local faith leaders and scholars, centered on the question: What can one community of faith do to promote racial reconciliation and healing in the city of Richmond?

A live performance in March of the play "uncle tom: deconstructed," followed by a talkback with the cast. This play, put on by the local theatre troupe The Conciliation Project, has toured internationally.

Ongoing offerings:

Two ongoing Bible Studies (one lead by Buck, one by Malinda).

Goals we would like to meet include:

More members for our team. If you have enjoyed the education events, please consider joining this ministry. You don't have to teach unless you want to do so!

More congregants stepping forward as youth mentors and ministers. Again, we ask that you consider if you have this call.

Dale Smith, Chair

Evangelism:

2015 Progress:

New logo fully implemented: letterhead, business cards, advertising, website, service leaflets, and exterior banners

New interior directional signage

Reinvigorated Greeter ministry, with a new visitor card and worship brochure.

Expanded visibility through the Museum District Mother's Day House Tour, and through regular advertisements in the Association's newsletter

Promulgation of the church's sesquicentennial and 150th programming through a wide range of media

2016:

We will consider various strategies for newcomer incorporation, especially ministry-initiated invitation and social events.

We will pair newcomers with “shepherds,” when requested.

We will make full use of the 150th to heighten awareness of St. Mark’s and its mission.

Howard Pugh, Chair

Outreach:

In September, we served approximately 45 women from CARITAS as guests at St. Mark’s. CARITAS 2016 is November 12-19.

We had a very successful 2015 Yard Sale raising \$3,200 distributed to: ACTS, the Haiti Micah Project, YWCA Domestic Violence Prevention Programs, and Safe Harbor. Planning is underway for the 2016 Yard Sale scheduled for Saturday April 2nd.

We continued the annual Easter Basket program with Southside Child Development Center. In 2015, we provided a record 90 baskets.

In December, we delivered 65 personalized Christmas Gift Boxes to elderly or disadvantaged members of our community. We partnered with Councilwoman Reva Trammel again for this initiative.

We collected many school supplies for Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School in the fall.

Our Cooling Center was open on hot days last summer and we are well staffed with volunteers for this initiative.

We continued 12 step hosting on Wednesday night. In 2015, we trained a few new volunteers to join our core group of very dedicated hosts. Guests exit through the North door to minimize noise impact to neighbors.

We continued hot meal and food pantry distributions twice each month. We are fortunate to have a huge staff of dedicated volunteers for this initiative.

We continued every other month visits to McGuire hospital for ice cream socials.

This summer we will re-launch Reading Stars, a summer reading enrichment program.

Ed Street, Chair

Parish Life/Fellowship:

The Parish Life/Fellowship committee came under new leadership this year – Elaine Wittel and Mickie Jones have taken over as co-chairs, hopefully making life easier for Penny Adams who so successfully managed this committee in the past, and who continues to coordinate the Sunday coffee hour.

We started the year off with our annual Mardi Gras party, which was nearly side-lined by bad weather. However, the brave folks who made it out were treated to great food, great music and wonderful company! The tradition of the First Tuesday Neighborhood Dinner is continuing strong thanks to the outstanding efforts of Frosty Owen and the teams of cooks, set-up

and clean-up volunteers. If you haven't made it to dinner, please join us on the first Tuesday of each month for the best \$5.00 meal in town. Most recently, we celebrated Advent in early December with dinner, caroling and a skit by the children. It was a huge success with a good turnout – we hope to start a new tradition!

There are several Foyer Groups that are meeting on a regular basis, enjoying each other's company in private homes and on weekend outings. The "Lunch Bunch" meets monthly after church to try out various eateries around town. If you have an interest in making new friends, family fun, or attending a cultural or sporting event there is probably a group for you. We are also happy to launch a new group, should you have a special interest.

The next big event is the Mardi Gras Party, scheduled for February 6th, with a back-up date of February 13th in the event of a "Snow-mageddon" or other traumatic event. This year's party will be hosted by the Young Adults group, with food by Parish Life. It is BYOB with a per-person cover charge at the door.

Planning continues for the 150th Anniversary celebration to be held on April 24th. Bishop Goff will celebrate a special Sunday service, to be followed by a reception.

Parish Life is always looking for volunteers! Long- or short-term commitments will do. If you don't want to be a regular Parish Life committee member, we can always use help on a per-event basis. Please let one of the co-chairs know if you are interested. We are always appreciative of any help!

Mickie Jones & Elaine Wittel, co-chairs

Pastoral Care:

Pastoral: concerning or appropriate to the giving of spiritual guidance. True to this definition, the St. Mark's Pastoral Care team seeks to reach out to those in our parish who have requested prayer due to an illness, death or any other family, social or work challenge. We offer guidance and support in a variety of ways including:

- Phone calls
- Monthly cards
- Home and hospital visits
- Christmas Caroling
- Delivering altar flowers
- Providing home communion
- Maintaining confidentiality

Our group meets the first Sunday of the month to make sure we are reaching out and supporting those who have been identified as in need. David and Malinda are usually the first point of contact for identifying those in need, but any parishioner can reach out to our team. In the year ahead, we will explore if there are any particular pastoral programs we can share with the larger parish.

In an effort to support each other and guide us in our spiritual growth, we decided to become a book club of sorts. The first book the group chose to read was The Book of Forgiving by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu. The next book we are going to read is Learning to Walk in the Dark by Barbara Brown Taylor. We read a few chapters each month and have a discussion at our monthly meetings. Our discussions are really insightful and meaningful and it's been a good way for the group to connect more deeply.

Remember, anyone who visits or calls a friend or parishioner that has not been at church in a while is providing pastoral care. We welcome all who would like to join us in this wonderful ministry.

Annette Spanel, Chair

Property:

Keeping a 90+-year old building running is never easy but through the ongoing efforts and attention of our Property volunteers and staff, St. Mark's is today in better physical shape than many of her younger sisters. A sample of improvements made this year include:

- Painting of exterior trim and rails
- Painting and repair of north side windows
- Purchase and delivery of new chairs for Parish Hall
- Procurement and installation of interior and exterior signage
- Installation of LED Chancel lighting
- Various necessary repairs and maintenance to elevator
- Replacement of Parish Hall window panes
- Electrical upgrades as necessary
- Kneeler repairs
- Ongoing janitorial, HVAC and grounds keeping

Brent Graves & Keith Mackay, co-chairs

Parish Administrator Report:

We completed a switch over to a new phone/internet provider in late August. The new vendor was able to run wiring for a **new phone in the kitchen** at several hundred dollars less than the closest bid for the work. The estimated savings from the switch will be roughly \$700 annually which includes cost of an additional phone line.

Many other projects were completed that improved the overall appearance of the building and grounds.

Steve Barnes

Worship, Altar & Flower Guilds:

Our Worship continues to be strongly supported by many who give countless hours of time

and talent to the Altar and Flower Guilds, service assistants, choir and ushers.

The Worship Team is composed of the Rector, Organist Choirmaster, Master of Ceremonies, Altar Guild Chairs, Vestry Liaison, and 4 members from the parish at large.

Special ministry areas have included

- Working with Evangelism and others, we updated our visitors cards and worship pamphlet.
- Helped with reworking the layout of the Sunday bulletin to make it more user friendly.
- Helped with planning the different seasons and special days of the church.
- Helped with training of worship assistants, altar guild & floral decorators.
- Read a commentary on Episcopal worship and used it as a base for discussion.
- Assisted the rector with any and all aspects of worship as needed.

Budget Items for the Future: Repairs to the sound box of the organ. In simple terms, a mechanism that opens and closes doors that function to control volume and certain tone colors of the instrument. Right now it doesn't close completely, or in degrees to produce all the range of sound and could just stop functioning.

Those components are simply wearing out. This will probably come in at over \$10,000.

Once done should last for many decades.

Our dedicated choir and organist/choirmaster continues to render beautiful music during regular services. Yearly recitals have developed a dedicated following of parishioners and friends. The Friends of Music continues to provide off budget support of musicians and singers.

The Altar Guild weekly prepares the altar for all worship services, including weddings and funerals. This includes the cleaning and polishing of all the brass candlesticks & vases, and silver used during the Eucharist, changing of the seasonal altar hangings and the general cleaning and polishing of the chairs, pews and marble floor of the chancel. 16 members serve on 4 weekly teams each with a captain, the captains serve when there is a 5th Sunday. They along with the full membership do a remarkable job, are most faithful and dedicated. Our 2 oldest chalices and patens were refurbished this year. The funding came from wedding nonmember altar guild fees and the generous gifts from members being married.

The Flower Guild prepares flowers or greenery for the altar weekly and render all the beautiful floral arrangements throughout the church year for the "High Holy Days" such as Christmas Eve & Easter, as well as for weddings and funerals. The membership has almost doubled in the last year to nine, along with others, who help with the Nativity and Christmas Trees. The most recent Easter & Christmas Seasons we had the most volunteers in years.

To all those who assist during worship and behind the scenes in preparation. Many Thanks!

Sanford Eberly, Worship Chair, Altar Guild Co Chair