

A photograph of a group of people, mostly seniors, gathered around tables covered with patterned tablecloths. They are seated and engaged in conversation, with some holding small pastries. The setting appears to be a church or a similar indoor space with wood paneling. The text 'The Messenger' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font, and 'from St. Mark's' is written below it in a smaller, italicized, white, serif font.

The Messenger

from St. Mark's

December 2016 /January 2017

**Senior Tea Highlights
Advent, Christmas, Epiphany
Vestry Election Results
Confirmation**

Gathering as the Body in Advent and Christmas

The Rev. Beth Knowlton

Last year we tried a little experiment. We decided to use Advent and Christmas as a time to really focus on gathering together as community. We offered intergenerational events at 9.00am, accompanied by delicious food, and then continued with a 10.00am combined worship service. It was a wonderful experience, and so we are going to try it again. It is always a little hard to shift church schedules, but we appear to be a flexible enough community to make this work. This year, we have added some wonderful activities and combined others.

We will have intergenerational Advent wreath making the Sunday following Thanksgiving. Feel free to bring friends and visitors you might still have in town. On the second Sunday of Advent, we will enact as a community Las Posadas. We will gather in the church and participate in the 400 year old Mexican tradition. We will sing songs and parade throughout the church and parish house re-enacting Mary and Joseph's search for lodging. Later that evening at 5.00pm, we will gather for a service of Advent Lessons and Carols. For third Advent, we will have our Christmas pageant featuring our children telling the story of the birth of Christ. Immediately following we'll have food and a Living Nativity. Kids, you can leave your costumes on and go have your picture taken with Seth the donkey! Then for fourth Advent, the treble voices of our choirs will present Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols at 9.00am.

We will host our annual Christmas to the Street luncheon here and at Haven for Hope on December 10th. Serving those in our community who are homeless a delicious meal with fellowship is always a highlight of our year. This year we will also have an evening concert of Organ, Brass, and Choral Music along with a reading of "Twas the Night Before Christmas." This fun evening event is a great opportunity to invite friends and family to come and join us here at St. Mark's.

We will of course offer beautiful services on Christmas Eve beginning at 3.45pm, 7.00pm, and 10.00pm. This year Christmas Day falls on a Sunday and so we'll offer one combined service at 10 am.

I'd sincerely like to invite you to commit to St. Mark's during this season of preparation and celebration. It can be difficult amidst the many other obligations that appear on our calendar. But, I suspect if we really make Advent and Christmas worship a priority, we will find ourselves much more grounded in the deep invitation to experience the birth of Christ anew. We most understand ourselves as the Body of Christ when we gather together for worship and fellowship. Join us! Invite someone you've been thinking about bringing to church. I am looking forward to seeing you here as we prepare to welcome one another as we have been welcomed by Jesus Christ.

Peace,

Beth +



Sunday, December 4, Advent II

9.00am Las Posadas
10.00am Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 11, Advent III

7.45am Holy Eucharist
9.00am Christmas Pageant + Living Nativity
10.00am Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 18, Advent IV

7.45am Holy Eucharist
9.00am Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols
10.00am Holy Eucharist

Christmas Eve, December 24

3.45pm Prelude, 4.00pm Holy Eucharist
(with Children's Chapel)

7.00pm Holy Eucharist with St. Mark's

Choir 10.00pm Prelude, 10.30pm Holy Eucharist with St. Mark's Choir
(with incense)

Christmas Day, December 25

One Combined Holy Eucharist 10.00am

First Sunday After Christmas, Jan 1

One Combined Holy Eucharist 10.00am

Advent Offerings

Enlarging Our Hearts to Embrace the Love of God: An Advent Quiet Day

December 3 at St. Benedict's Workshop
Led by The Rev. Carol Morehead

Plan to take time out of your busy schedules to engage deeply in the themes of Advent. Advent is a time to prepare and wait, yet it is also a time when we feel burdened by extra activity and pressures of family life.

At its best, it can be a time to deeply reflect on our expectations of God. Often our hearts can feel cut off or unable to sense the depth of God's love for us. Our theme for this day will help focus us on the ways in which we can continue to expand the boundaries of our images of God in ways to more fully experience the love that is already present and available to us. Using scripture, poetry, silence, guided meditation, and journaling, we will prepare for the arrival of the Christ child. All are welcome. Lunch is provided; please reserve a spot by 12/2/16 at noon by calling the office, 210-226-2426.



Sunday, December 4, Advent II Las Posadas

We'll gather in the Church at 9am to participate in this 400-year-old Mexican tradition. As we sing songs and parade through the church and the parish house, we'll re-enact Mary and Joseph's search for "posada" (lodging or accommodation) - a place to rest and to birth the coming baby Jesus. We "peregrinos" (pilgrims) will find our journey's end in Gosnell hall in a joyful celebration with food and a piñata. Breakfast provided. Combined worship service follows at 10.00am.

Sunday, December 11, Advent III Christmas Pageant + Living Nativity

Advent II, Our annual Christmas Pageant will be performed by the children at 9am in Gish Hall. Following the pageant, live animals including goats, ducks, sheep, and the famous "Seth the Donkey" will help us create our own living nativity - a great opportunity for families to take pictures and videos and to enjoy meeting the animals. Breakfast provided. Combined worship service follows at 10.00am.

Sunday, December 18, Advent IV begins with Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols

Treble voices from St. Mark's Choir are joined by harpist Paula Page in Benjamin Britten's beloved 'Ceremony of Carols'. Breakfast provided. Combined worship service follows at 10.00am. Underwritten by the St. Cecilia Guild.

Music at St. Mark's

DECEMBER 4 ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS

SUNDAY, 5.00PM The Choirs of St. Mark's sing a service in celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 10 BRASS, ORGAN, AND CHOIR

SATURDAY, 6.30PM A festive evening of music for the season. Highlights include Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker Suite'; Leroy Anderson's 'Sleigh Ride'; Frosty the Snowman; and 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. Narration for the evening will be provided by The Rev. Beth Knowlton and Stephen Blount. *Underwritten by the St. Cecilia Guild.*

DECEMBER 18 CEREMONY OF CAROLS

SUNDAY, 9.00AM Treble voices from St. Mark's Choir are joined by harpist Paula Page in Benjamin Britten's beloved 'Ceremony of Carols'. *Underwritten by the St. Cecilia Guild.*

JANUARY 8 EPIPHANY PROCESSION

SUNDAY, 5.00PM Music and readings for the season of Epiphany.

Christmas Flowers



Consider making a contribution to the Altar Flowers Fund for Christmas flowers in memory of, in honor of, and in thanksgiving for family and friends. The Christmas floral display will be in the church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Forms are available in the Parish House and in the Steves Bell Tower and can be returned with a \$25 donation for each memorial or honorarium to the Parish House or placed in the Sunday offering plate.

Deadline for forms with donation is December 20th. Direct questions to Ann Choimer at 210-828-3452 or atcoimer@gmail.com.

Women's Christmas Luncheon

Wednesday, December 7th from 11.30am - 1.30pm at the home of Barbara Cummings

This come and go luncheon is a time of joy and reconnection for the women of St. Mark's. All are welcome. Valet parking will be available. Childcare is available at the church from 11.00am-2.00pm. The RSVP deadline was November 30, so if it slipped your mind, please call the office today at 210-226-2426!



12th Annual Christmas to the Street

Saturday, December 10th

Youth Lock-In and BBQ
Pit Crew volunteers start preparations the evening of December 9th at St. Mark's.

Christmas to the Street provides a home-cooked meal of brisket and sausage with all the fixin's to hundreds of our neighbors in downtown San Antonio. In addition to the lunch served by our youth and volunteers on Saturday, two volunteer teams will serve dinner at the Haven for Hope campus through partnerships with the Society of St. Vincent De Paul and the San Antonio Food Bank. Altogether, Christmas to the Street 2017 is expected to serve over 3000 meals to hungry men, women, and children. If you would like to volunteer at St. Mark's or Haven for Hope, contact Todd Allison at tallison@stmarks-sa.org.



Feast of the Epiphany

The Feast of the Epiphany is one of the principal feasts of the church, a time when we remember how God is revealed in Jesus. While this feast principally honors the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child in Bethlehem, it also remembers Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and his first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. An epiphany is a sudden moment of realization, a kind of 'a-ha' about life. The liturgical season that falls after The Feast of the Epiphany is a time when we open ourselves for God to be revealed through the Incarnation, the life of Jesus Christ. Just as the Magi followed the star and discovered The Christ Child, so we are invited to experience Jesus Christ anew, allowing us to be stirred and awakened to the new things God is doing in our midst.

This season can be very short or very long, depending on when Lent begins; this year, it will include the eight Sundays between January 8 and February 26. The lectionary during this time will lead us through some of the major moments in the life of Jesus, beginning with his baptism in the River Jordan, which we observe with The Baptism of Our Lord on January 8th, and leading us toward Jerusalem and the final week before his passion and resurrection. May we all be listening as God leads us, remaining open to whatever epiphanies may await us.

This year on Sunday January 8th, we will have several opportunities to enter into this time of revelation in several ways. At our Sunday morning services, we will have baptisms, which invites us all to renew our own baptismal vows. During the 10.10am formation hour, we will gather together for the annual Daughters of the King Epiphany Baby Shower, when we collect our resources to share with mothers in need. Then we will follow the star that leads to Christ with the Epiphany Procession, a wonderful musical offering at 5.00pm that evening.

Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord January 8

Regular Holy Eucharist Schedule
7.45am, 9.00am, 11.15am

Daughters of the King Epiphany Baby Shower at 10.10am in Gosnell Hall

In the tradition of the Magi, bring a bagged or wrapped gift to celebrate. All gifts will be donated to Good Samaritan Community Services.

Items requested: diapers (sizes 3 and higher), pull-ups, infant and toddler clothing (3mo.-5T), baby wipes, blankets, baby toiletries, and sleeper/PJs. Cash donations for formula are welcome.

Second Sunday Evening Eucharist with Epiphany Procession at 5.00pm



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Engaging the Mystery: Adult Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation

Through our baptism, we know that we are members of the Body of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, forgiven, and given life eternal; these are deep truths and mysteries of our faith. So what does all that really look like in our day to day lives? These deep mysteries transform us in our daily life, and as adults, these mysteries invite us to examine our faith more closely. The earliest Christians spent time learning about the faith in a process called the catechesis. The culmination for these students, called catechumens, was to be baptized, often at the Easter Vigil.

Living into this same model of instruction, each year at St. Mark's we offer a kind of catechesis by offering instruction for confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation. Each person is a full member of the church through baptism, and confirmation is a pastoral rite which offers a way for people to reaffirm their faith and remain deeply connected to their baptism. At confirmation, an individual receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop, thereby affirming their faith and visibly connecting to the broader Body of Christ.



The Rev. Carol Morehead

People often ask, "Am I a 'full member' of The Episcopal Church without being confirmed?" The answer is yes. The Book of Common Prayer defines Baptism as "full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble." Confirmation is a pastoral rite rather than an initiatory rite. This means that the sacramental nature of confirmation connects with our growth in faith and our relationship with God.

So then, is confirmation ever required to participate in certain aspects of the Episcopal Church? Again, the answer is yes. There are some positions of leadership in the church to which God may call some individuals which require a person be confirmed. For example, the Canons of The Episcopal Church state that confirmation is required for certain leadership positions, such as Vestry members, and for some service positions such as Eucharistic Visitors.

So what is the difference between Confirmation, Reaffirmation and Reception? Confirmation is "a mature and public affirmation of faith and commitment to the responsibilities of Baptism" (BCP). Reaffirmation means that a person chooses to renew their commitment to Christ in The Episcopal Church, honoring growth in faith throughout the spiritual journey. For many people, the path of their faith life has wandered. Reaffirmation is a way to honor their journey by making this public and sacramental gesture. Reception is common for people who have been confirmed in other faith traditions, such as the Roman Catholic Church.

St. Mark's class for Adult Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation will be held in the spring, meeting on February 5, 12, 19, 26, March 5, 19, and April 23 during regular Christian Formation time at 10.10am. Each class builds on the previous classes, so plan to attend every session. We will also gather at the Bishop Jones Center on a Saturday in April (dates TBD), when we will share a meal, meet the bishop, and cover some additional ground. If you are interested in participating but know you must miss a class, it may be possible to participate at the confirmation service, but prior arrangements must be made. The class is open all those seeking to be confirmed, received, or who would like a refresher. Confirmation will be on Sunday, April 30 at the 11.15am service. For more information, contact The Rev. Carol Morehead at cmorehead@stmarks-sa.org or 210-226-2426.

Feast of St. Mark's,
Confirmation Sunday
April 30 at the 11.15am
service for adults.

Adult Formation Schedule

The Mind of Christ In Relationships: Engaging the Holy Trinity, Epiphany 2017

The Reverend Mary Earle and The Reverend Beth Knowlton

Class meets: January 15, 22, 29; February 5, 12, 19, 26

This seven week class will look at the Doctrine of the Trinity as an essential way of understanding the Mind of Christ. Rather than looking at the Trinity as an abstract doctrine, something beyond our comprehension because of its mysterious nature, or simply an antiquated concept, this class will delve into the deep relational nature of God. How does the Second Person of the Trinity, in particular, form our experience of God? How does actively engaging God as dynamic relationship, instead of an abstract concept, have the possibility of inviting us into a place of deep transformation. Drawing on wisdom from mystics across the centuries and specific invitational practices during the class and throughout the week, we promise you will never be afraid to call yourself a Trinitarian again!

Essays and recording of class are online at stmarks-sa.org. Click on the Resources menu.

Adult Track 2: Exploring Our Faith Together

Bible Stories: Stories for the Journey

The Rev. Carol Morehead and The Rev. Matt Wise

Class meeting: January 15, 22, 29; March 5, 12, 19, 26

15-Jan Simeon and Anna, Luke 2.22-40
22-Jan The Boy at the Temple, Luke 2.41-52
29-Jan Social Gathering Day
5-Mar The Disciples, Luke 5.1-11; 8.1-3
12-Mar Four Friends, Luke 5.17-26
19-Mar The Good Samaritan, Luke 10.25-37
26-Mar The Lost Sheep and Lost Coin, Luke 15.1-10

Eucharistic Instruction For Families

The Reverend Matt Wise and The Reverend Carol Morehead

Class meets February 5, 12, 19, 26

This four week series is designed to help younger children enter into the mystery of Holy Eucharist. We will spend time looking at the Liturgy of the Word and Table, touch and handle the holy hardware, make communion bread, and talk about the deep mystery of joining with angels and archangels each Sunday as we gather in praise and thanksgiving.

Youth Confirmation

Confirmation leaders Gary Chambers and Patrice Oliver accompanied youth confirmands as they took a church tour to learn about the history of St. Mark's with Agatha Wade, serving as docent.

Youth confirmands pictured from left to right: Jordan Rubiola, Mac Kuykendall, Lilli Kuykendal, and Ryan Tanner.

Feast of St. Marks,
Confirmation Sunday
April 30 at the 9.00am
service for youth.



Vestry Election Results

What a fabulous Annual Meeting we had on November 6! Over 200 people came to hear reports from your Rector, Senior Warden, Treasurer, and Stewardship Co-Chairs, and to vote for a new Vestry class, our class of 2019. We even tasted wonderful pies and cheese straws while waiting between rounds of voting. The three ballots needed to select the class speaks to the quality of the candidates brought forward. The meeting was energetic and upbeat, and we actually had time to talk with our friends and those sitting around us.

Many thanks to Craig Stokes, Junior Warden, who explained the discernment process and introduced those standing for Vestry. Due to three rounds of ballots, I think the annual meeting was a record for longest at one and a half hours! The 11.15am service was shortened considerably, but there was an upside. The reason it took three ballots to elect a class is because all of the votes were very close. Any one of our eight candidates would be wonderful Vestry members.

I want to take this opportunity to thank St. Mark's parish for the support they have given me this year. I also want to thank Craig Stokes, Junior Warden, and the entire Vestry for their hard work and accomplishments this year. As I said in the Annual Report, we are truly a community in all that we do; welcoming new members, praying for our sick and rejoicing together at Parish events. St. Mark's will continue to grow in community because of our great staff and because of you, our dedicated members.

I truly love St. Mark's. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you.

Blessings and peace,

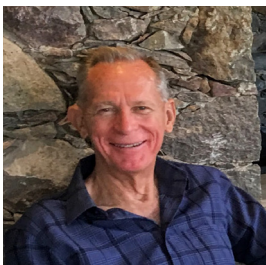


Cathy Dawson, Senior Warden



Vestry Class of 2019

Our thanks go to all who offered themselves for Vestry election this year. The 2019 class is pictured below.



Gary Chambers



Anne Connor



Kate Crone



Mike Duffey



Kelly Ranson

Living God's Vision 2017

We're off to a strong start since the Pledge Ingathering on November 13. Thank you to all who have brought or mailed in your pledges already!

For those member who haven't pledged yet, please make it a priority as we plan our programming for next year. If pledging online is your cup of tea, we've made it easy on our website at stmarks-sa.org. Click on the Give menu or use the My Account button at the top of the home page. Pledge cards are also available at the front desk and in the Parish House.



As of November 22, we've received 209 pledges that put us at 68% of our 2017 pledge goal of \$1,714,000.

Your generosity determines what we can accomplish together in 2017.

As a planning document, our budget includes a 5% increase from this year to enable us to live into the vision we have discerned together. This vision requires the steady support of those who are long-time members in addition to those who are members, but not yet pledging or giving. Our budget reflects:

- Investment in our programs and activities to equip us to live into our core vocation
- Enhancement of our capacity to attract new members through young adult and family ministry.
- A restart of our planned giving program, assisting members to think about estate considerations and a lasting legacy.

Financials

Make gifts toward your pledge at www.stmarks-sa.org, click on the Give menu; or make your gift by mail. Contact Priscilla Briones at pbriones@stmarks-sa.org or 210-226-2426 with questions about your giving to date. Contact Dina Aboul Saad at dsaad@stmarks-sa.org or by phone to discuss stewardship, annual and endowment gifts, and planning giving.

2016 FINANCIAL REPORT as of 10/31/16

83% of annual budget	Actual (YTD)	Budgeted (YTD)
Pledge Revenue	\$1,411,862	\$1,487,540
Non-Pledge Revenue	\$132,895	\$114,180
Open Plate/Seasonal Giving	\$29,638	\$27,568
Other Rev (parking lot, fees, carryover)	\$379,465	\$348,440
Endowment/Fund Revenue	\$332,886	\$245,745
Total Revenue	\$2,286,746	\$2,223,472
Total Expenses	\$2,171,709	\$2,242,254
Over/(Under)	\$115,038	- \$18,782

\$1,617,346 in 2016 Pledges • 329 Pledges • Average Pledge is \$4,916 • Median Pledge is \$2,600

Clergy at St. Mark's

Parish Clergy: The Rev. Elizabeth Knowlton, Rector; The Rev. Carol Morehead, Associate Rector for Liturgy, Adult Formation, and Pastoral Care; The Rev. Matthew Wise, Associate Rector for Outreach, Family Ministry, and Parish Life

**24 hour pastoral care
emergency phone
210-507-0256**

Making a Gift of Their Service: The Rev. C. Douglas Earle, Assisting Priest; The Rev. Mary Earle, Assisting Priest; The Rev. Dr. John Lewis, Co-director, St. Benedict's Work+Shop; The Rev. Dr. Jane Patterson, Co-director, St. Benedict's Work+Shop

Senior Tea



Remembrance Sunday





In Remembrance and Thanksgiving (thru November 17, 2016)

MEMORIAL FUND

Sally Buchanan by Eleanor Jordan
Jimmy Cavender by Barbara & Elkin McGaughy
Christine Deep by Anthony Deep
Dr. & Mrs. John L. Matthews by Eleanor Jordan
Jamie Maverick by Barbara & Elkin McGaughy
Howard Mitchell by Betty Mitchell
Grove Marshall Ramsey by James & Diane Ramsey, Grove
Marshall Ramsey

SPECIAL GIFTS

To St. Cecilia Guild in thanksgiving for the Jazz Mass by
Martha Steves
To St. Mark's in thanksgiving for the Lay Eucharistic Ministry
and for Kathy & Bill Wassberg by Ellen Dickson

To St. Mark's in honor of Ralph Voight, a thoughtful, kind &
fine young man by Mollie & Bartell Zachry

Cafe Kairos, Wednesdays and Thursdays 5.00pm-6.30pm

DECEMBER 7-8
Pizza
Caesar Salad
Chocolate Chip Cookies

DECEMBER 14-15
Chicken Tenders
Tater Tots
Corn
Garden Salad
Cake

DECEMBER 21-22
Beef Lasagna
Caesar Salad
Brownies

JANUARY 4-5
Cheese Enchiladas
Rices & Beans
Tossed Salad
Tres Leches Cake

JANUARY 11-12
Asian Chicken Stir Fry
Steamed Rice
Egg Rolls
Cake

JANUARY 18-19
Beef Enchiladas
Rice & Beans
Garden Salad
Chocolate Cake

JANUARY 25-26
Pizza
Caesar Salad
Assorted Cookies

Photos in this Issue

Cover photo: Eric Nelson

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