



THE LION'S MARK

NEWSLETTER FOR SAINT MARK'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

A COMMUNITY THAT GATHERS IN FAITH, SERVES IN LOVE, AND PROCLAIMS HOPE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

I WILL LIFT UP MY HANDS

— MOTHER ERIKA TAKACS —

One of the unusual things that I find myself thinking about in my life as a priest is the beauty of people's palms. Every day in my ministry I turn from the altar and look out upon a row of people kneeling at the altar rail to receive communion, their palms open as flower petals. I have decided that the beauty of the human palm is vastly underappreciated. There is something quite wondrous about the sight of a hand turned soft-side up, the tender, naked expanse of skin facing up to heaven.

The gesture of an open palm is a sign of vulnerability, for sure - hands extended, palms exposed and vulnerable. But the gesture is also a sign of hope and expectation, as if the person is saying, "Here, here are my hands, open to receive the grace that surely is coming." The open palm can also be a gesture of availability, of open-heartedness. One of the priests who has always inspired me, Mother Margaret Guenther, writes in her book *The Practice of Prayer* of her own habit of placing her hands palm side up when she is listening to someone in a pastoral situation. She says that just leaving her hands on her knees, palms up and open, helps her to feel more present spiritually, more available to hear what cares or joys her parishioner is hoping to share with her.

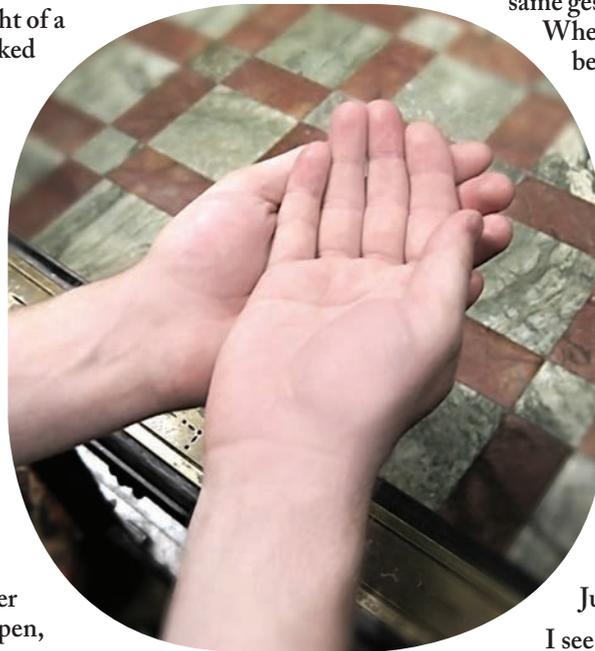
In a world where so many of our neighbors are faced day after day with closed fists, crossed arms, or hands raised in defiance or denial, the sight of our palms opened to receive Holy Communion reminds us of the posture we are to assume in the world. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to be the open-handed ones, ones who reach out our hands, palms facing to heaven, to acknowledge our needs and our desires, even our sins. We are to be the ones who unfold our fingers to hold the heart of someone we call neighbor, who open our palms in hopeful expectation. At the altar rail, each time we open our palms to receive the bread of heaven, we practice what it looks like to be vulnerable, open, and hopeful, so that when we rise from the rail and step out into the sunlight, we will be able to live our lives in a vulnerable, open, and hopeful way. At the altar rail, we stretch out

our palms (or open up our mouths - what a beautiful gesture of humility and hope that is!), and we receive into our own bodies the great mystery of the body of Christ, given for us - and then Christ sends us into the world to repeat that gesture, time and time again.

This summer, I've been particularly moved to see that same gesture surrounding our Saturday Soup Bowl.

When late in May we realized that we would not be able to host our Soup Bowl in the midst of our parish renovations, Kenny Pearlstein and other Soup Bowl leaders approached the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion at 21st and Chestnut Streets. And they, by the grace of God, responded with a gesture a lot like the stretching out of hands, palms open and inviting. Of course! Of course we can see how God might be working in this situation. Of course we can see the potential for grace. Of course we are hopeful and expectant as we look for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They responded with open hands, reaching out - with a resounding Yes! - even before they knew all of the details, hosting our Soup Bowl for most of June and July with true generosity of spirit.

I see this gesture again and again in our city and especially here at Saint Mark's. And I truly believe that in this place and in our time, it is an extremely meaningful and important gesture. Of course life is complicated. Of course the details won't always work out perfectly, and of course sometimes the answer will ultimately be a No. Of course sometimes we will show ourselves to be vulnerable and find a harshness we could never have expected. And of course there will be moments when being fully present and available to someone else's needs will be nearly impossible. But no matter the final decision or the ultimate outcome, we will be enriched as individuals and as a community of faith if our first response to the world is one of openness and expectation. For with God nothing is impossible, with our God who brings light out of darkness, joy out of despair, life out of death. May we always keep our palms open to receive God's grace, our hearts open to receive his word, and our lives open to receive all the good gifts that God has to offer us.



DATES TO REMEMBER

AUGUST

Sat 6 **Soup Bowl returns to the Parish Hall**

Sun 28 **Father Mullen returns**

SEPTEMBER

Mon 5 **Labor Day**
Parish office closed
Low Mass, 10 a.m.

Sat 10 **St. James School 5K Fun Run & Walk Plus Kids 1-Mile**
8 a.m. Boathouse Row
Visit stjamesphila.org/run to register and for details

Sun 11 **Homecoming Sunday**
The Choir of Boys & Girls and the Parish Choir resume
Parish Picnic following the 11 a.m. Mass

Wed 14 **Holy Cross Day**
20s/30s Simple Supper, 6:30 p.m.

OCTOBER

Sun 2 **Blessing of the Animals, 2:30 p.m.**
Choral Evensong, 3 p.m.



THE FERNANDA GUILD AT SAINT MARK'S

Thursday, June 30 marked the second official meeting of the Fernanda Guild at Saint Mark's. The Fernanda Guild was begun earlier this year as a way for the women of our congregation to come together for fellowship and service both to the church and to the wider community. On the 30th, we met with a representative from Nationalities Service Center in Philadelphia. NSC works tirelessly to help settle and support refugees in the Philadelphia area. Their staff and volunteers do everything from picking up the refugees (or refugee families) at the Philadelphia airport to helping them shop and set up medical appointments. The NSC offers translations services, English as a Second Language programs, and therapeutic services for refugees who have been subjected to torture. At our meeting, we put together care packages for refugee women who are currently working with the NSC. The packages included toiletries and feminine care products – items that are desperately needed by these women but are often so pricey as to be outside of their very limited budgets. This evening was an important example of what the Fernanda Guild can be here at Saint Mark's – a group that not only supports the women of Saint Mark's through get-togethers and fun, social activities but also helps to support the women of our city, especially those who are most in need. If you are a women at Saint Mark's and are interested in the Fernanda Guild, you are most welcome to join us for a dessert reception at the home of Mother Takacs at 7pm on Thursday, August 25.

20S/30S: SIMPLE SUPPERS AND MORE

Over the past several years, the 20s/30s group at Saint Mark's has established a practice of monthly Simple Suppers – a simple home Eucharist followed by a light meal, good conversation, and fellowship. This year, we will continue that tradition with an interesting twist. Every other month, our Simple Suppers will be held here at the church, and instead of being just social time, they will include intentional discussions about our faith and our lives. One month we'll talk about what it's like to be a young person of faith in a largely secular world. Another month we'll discuss a book, or a movie, and what it reveals about the nature of human beings and of God. We'll talk about trending national or local topics and how we can respond faithfully as Christians. We'll talk about love and sex, money and food, and what it means to be an Episcopalian who worships at 1625 Locust Street, Philadelphia, in the year 2016. All of these events will be held on the second Wednesday of the month (this is a slight change from our pattern last year when we met on the third Wednesday). The first Simple Supper of the year will be on Wednesday, September 14 (the Feast of the Holy Cross), at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Kara and Jeff Cochran. Our next meeting, on Wednesday, October 12, will be held at Saint Mark's and will be a chance to share your thoughts and experiences of what it's like to be a young Christian in the world – in your workplaces, with your friends, and in your dating life. There's a lot to talk about, so much to share, and always such good food! All 20s/30s are always welcome.

10:00 FORUM

The Sunday Forum is more than a place for something called “Adult Education.”

It’s a meeting place in which newcomers (and shy people of all vintages!) can come together in a smaller group, with an opportunity not only to learn but to have a conversation, or at least a chance to say hello. It’s also a place for something we call “formation”: the cultivation of attitudes and habits and ways of thinking that help us develop as disciples of Jesus. We don’t necessarily live in a world in which our faith is at the center of our conversations, and we don’t necessarily live in a world that is urging us toward discipleship. We don’t, to be honest, live in a culture that has first and foremost the mission of spreading hope, or grounding hope in God’s truth. But here at Saint Mark’s we have the opportunity to become that kind of world, and we like to believe that the Sunday Forum is an important part of that becoming.

All that said, all you have to do on a Sunday morning is come at 10 and grab a cup of coffee and take a seat!

SEPTEMBER 11: SCHOOL SUNDAY

Join members of the staff at Saint James School to hear all about the wonderful work they do, and all about how to support them. This is a great chance to ask questions and to be inspired by how far the school has come since it opened as a middle school in 2011.

SEPTEMBER 18: HOPE

Mother Nora Johnson will lead a discussion about hope: what is it, and why do Christians have it? What does it mean to look ahead with hope in difficult times?

SEPTEMBER 25: SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Sean Mullen will tell us what his recent sabbatical was like, and what it meant to him, and what he has begun to imagine that it might mean for our parish. This first session will be about his journey along the Camino de Santiago, a medieval pilgrimage route through Spain.

OCTOBER 2: SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

The Camino, Part Two.

OCTOBER 9: SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

Mount Kilimanjaro. Come hear Father Mullen’s thoughts about the challenge of climbing the highest mountain in Africa.

FOR UPDATES AND MORE INFO ABOUT THE PROGRAM
YEAR VISIT SAINTMARKSPHILADELPHIA.ORG/FORUM



STARTING ON THE RIGHT NOTE

ROBERT MCCORMICK

I was delighted and honored to receive Father Mullen’s call to become your new Organist and Choirmaster, and it will be my joy to begin in that position on August 1. I have admired and respected Saint Mark’s for many years, and have visited on numerous occasions (including bringing my boy and girl choristers from Washington to sing twice).

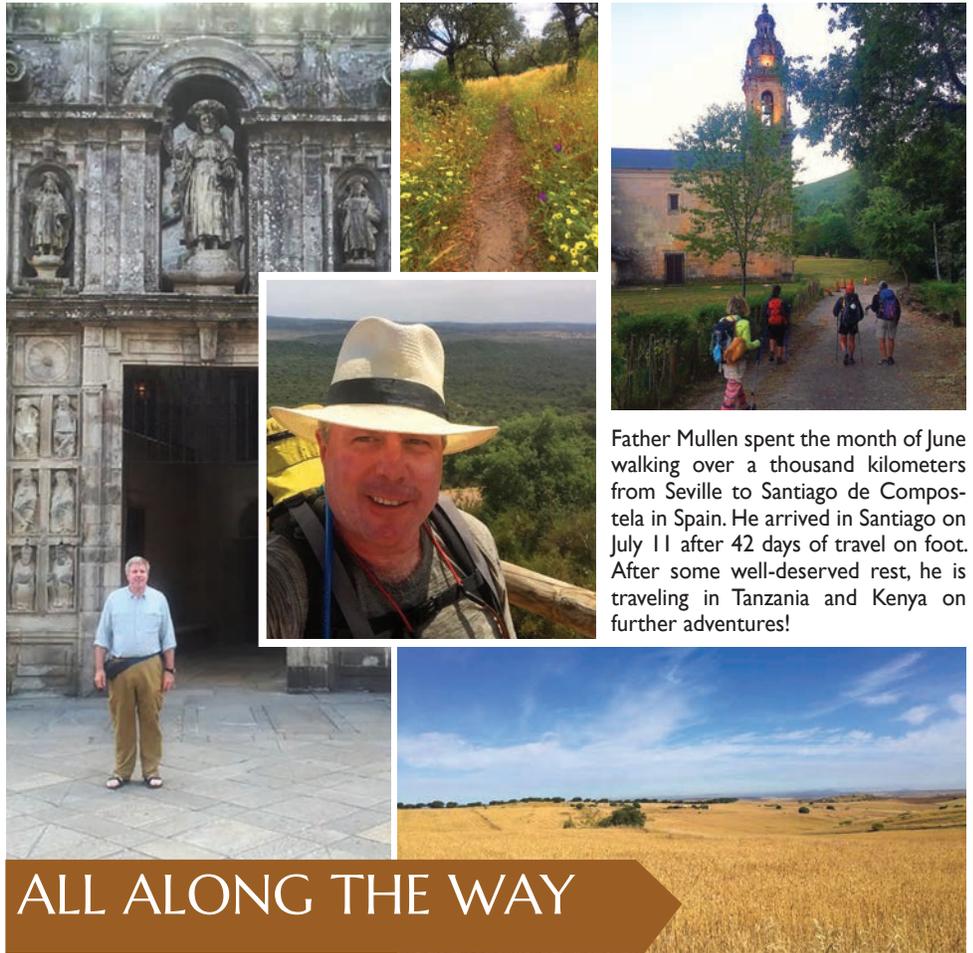
What a privilege it is to follow in the distinguished footsteps of recent predecessors Matt Glandorf, Darryl Roland, and Simon Thomas Jacobs, and I will seek to continue to build upon and strengthen the tremendous legacy each has left. My entire full-time career as a church musician has been spent in Anglo-Catholic parishes, first at Saint Mary the Virgin, New York City, and since 2008 at Saint Paul’s Parish, K



Street, Washington, D.C. Despite growing up in the United Methodist Church (I was confirmed as an Episcopalian while an undergraduate at Westminster Choir College), I feel completely at home in the sacramental and catholic tradition of Anglicanism – it is simply my “native habitat”, if you will. Accordingly, I have no doubt that I will be deeply happy and fulfilled among you, doing my best to lead the worship of God through music. I greatly look forward to leading the extraordinary parish choir in a broad array of the finest liturgical music, and to that end we will have many superb returning professional staff singers, along with several new professionals joining the choir’s excellent volunteers. Additionally, I have been in communication with parents of the Boys and Girls Choir, and the number of their rehearsals will triple when the “season” resumes. Each child will elect to attend two out of three weekly rehearsals, held each Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoon. (This is similar to a pattern that has proven very successful at St. Paul’s, K Street, and I hope it will be the same at Saint Mark’s.) In addition to singing the 9 a.m. Family Mass most Sundays, the boys and girls will join with the Parish Choir to sing Evensong & Benediction monthly. If you know of any interested boys and girls ages seven and above, please help spread the word. (I can be reached at ramccormick@saintmarksphiladelphia.org.) I have set a goal of recruiting at least five new boys and girls over the course of the coming school year. It will be my pleasure to get to know all of you, and to partner in ministry with the organ scholars, staff, and clergy. Thank you very much for the support and prayers I know will accompany me as I begin my work.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES START AGAIN THIS FALL

Saint Mark's families get your calendars ready! Beginning in September, our family programming here at Saint Mark's will get into full swing. The Choir of Boys & Girls begins rehearsal the week of Labor Day in preparation for Homecoming Sunday on September 11. On Sunday, September 18, all of our families with children are welcome to join us in the Saint Mark's Garden for a Family Brunch. These brunches are always a great opportunity to get to know some of the other families with children here and to learn more about our Sunday morning faith formation for children (Schola and Pre-Schola), as well as the Boys and Girls Choir. Schola and Pre-Schola students will begin singing and praying and learning Bible stories the following week, on September 25. And in October, all of our families with children are most welcome to join us for a trip to that great autumn hotspot in the Delaware Valley, Linvilla Orchards, on the afternoon of October 15. Please put apple cider doughnuts, pumpkin picking, and all of these wonderful events on your calendars now! To find out more information about these activities or about our family ministries in general, please contact Mother Takacs.



Father Mullen spent the month of June walking over a thousand kilometers from Seville to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. He arrived in Santiago on July 11 after 42 days of travel on foot. After some well-deserved rest, he is traveling in Tanzania and Kenya on further adventures!



SAINT MARK'S CHURCH
PHILADELPHIA

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This summer the Parish Hall is getting a much needed renovation, including new flooring, paint, light fixtures, and room partitions. We look forward to dedicating and blessing the new space in the coming weeks.