



# THE LION'S MARK

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR SAINT MARK'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

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

## ET INCARNATUS EST

— FATHER SEAN MULLEN —

### I AM SLOWLY TURNING INTO MY FATHER.

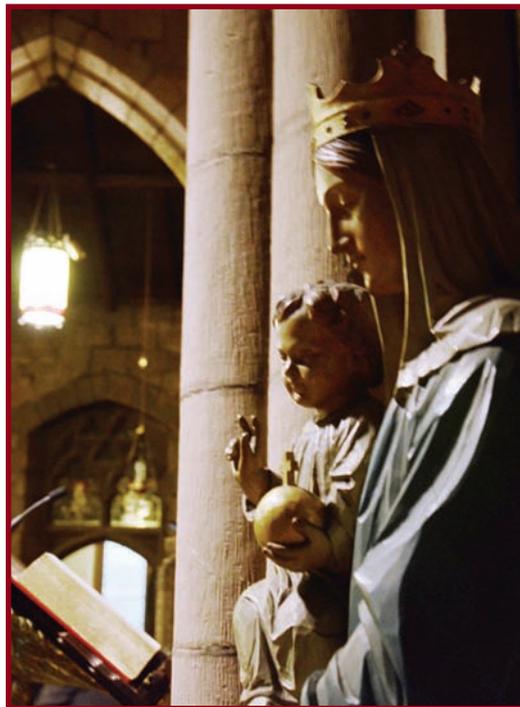
I reminisce about what the New York City subway used to cost and I now refer to the subway lines by their old names (the way he has done for years). Sometimes I am a little nostalgic about the Church's liturgy, the way my dad has sometimes been too.

My father was brought up in the old fashioned Anglo-Catholic tradition. You did what you were taught to do in those days, and you didn't take shortcuts. One of the things you were taught to do was to genuflect at that point of the Nicene Creed that you say, "and was made man." In the Latin version of the Creed the words are "et incarnatus est." The parallel moment came in the old version of the Mass when the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel were always read at the conclusion of the Mass—the "Last Gospel"—and everyone genuflected at the climactic words of that prologue, "and the Word was made flesh."

These days we bow at Saint Mark's when we get to those words in the Creed. And we don't often have the Last Gospel (though sometimes we do at the 7:30 Mass and on All Souls Day). I suppose we have taken a few short cuts, for which I am generally unapologetic—so the transformation into my father is incomplete; he'd be happy without the short cuts, I'm sure. But we do remember why we bothered to do something different at these words. We are pausing to take notice of one of the great mysteries of God's love: the mystery of the Incarnation, God taking on human flesh to dwell among his creatures, in the midst of his creation.

We live in a world that does not much appreciate or want mystery. Mysteries are things to be solved by clever detectives, not matters to be lived with in our culture. But the ancient Christian culture that we have inherited saw things differently. It saw the mysteries of God's love as things to be lived with and celebrated even though they would never be solved, could never

be solved; a solution was never what was wanted for the mystery. In the face of the mystery of God's love, what's wanted is not a solution, but love in return. Part of our mission in the Church is to present this possibility to those who seek the love of God.



We are not, in the Church, trying to figure God out in the way that researchers are trying to figure out the history of the universe or to find a cure for cancer in the lab. We are, rather, encountering the mystery of God's love face to face, day by day, in order to offer love in return. We do this at the altar and in service to one another, especially those in need. In both cases, we are deliberately setting out to come into the presence of the living God and love God back, even as we feel God's love.

It's a pattern in religion that often our forebears had insight into the love of God that we have lost track of or forgotten. Often they were more comfortable with the mysteries, which is why sometimes it's not so bad to turn into your father or your mother—you might discover something you would otherwise have lost.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day here at Saint Mark's it's not a problem for me if I turn into my father, because on those holy days we keep the ancient tradition of genuflecting at those words of mysterious love, "and was made man," and "the Word became flesh." We revel in the mystery of the Incarnation as we celebrate it as lavishly as we know how to do.

This Christmas I hope you will be with us to worship at Saint Mark's. Wherever you are I hope you will have a deep encounter with the mysterious wonder of God's love in the Incarnation of his Son. And although you may have to revert to some older paradigm to do so, I hope you will not worry to much about solving this mystery (which is unsolvable anyway) and instead you will just drop down to your knee and do your best to love God back, who loves you and who gives you his Son to be your Christ, your Friend, and your Savior.

# 10:00 FORUM

— MOTHER NORA JOHNSON

If you haven't taken the opportunity to join us for the Saint Mark's Sunday Forum at 10 a.m. in the parish hall, why not give it a try? We have a wonderful range of topics for discussion in the coming weeks, and a warm, welcoming environment for discussion and learning. This is a great place to learn more about living a Christian life, and a great place to meet people in the parish or catch up with old friends. Grab a cup of coffee, take a seat, and come when you can. We'll be looking forward to your arrival!

## ADVENT: SAYING YES AND SAYING NO

All during Advent the Forum will be meeting to talk about how this season may be shaped by our "Yes" to God and our "No" to whatever keeps the presence of Christ from being manifest in us. We'll have poems that help us reflect on this topic, a deep discussion of the ways we might open to God in prayer, further exploration of our use of technology ("tech fast" in Advent, anyone?) and more thoughts about affluence and Christian practice.

**NOVEMBER 29: "SAYING YES AND NO IN A LIFE OF SERVICE."** How do you think and pray about your service commitments? How do you know what's too much? How do you know when you are being invited into something new?

**DECEMBER 6: JOSHUA CASTAÑO, "FAITH AND TECHNOLOGY: WHEN DO WE SAY NO?"** How does the use of technology help us live a Christian life and how does it get in the way? What choices do you make about the Internet? About cell phones? Does technology force us to "keep up" or does it help us move forward?

**DECEMBER 13: MOTHER NORA JOHNSON, "AFFLUENCE AND ADVENT."** We've been having some important conversations about what we own, what we need, how we make choices about spending our time, money, and energy. Come talk about how these issues impact us during Advent, known elsewhere as "The Holiday Season." How do Christians see God in the rush of material indulgence at this time of year?

**DECEMBER 20: "SAYING YES TO GOD IN PRAYER."** Join members of the parish as we talk about what praying feels like, and what it means to be "open" to God in prayer. This time of year is known among us as the time when "Mary said yes." What does "Yes" look like for us?

There will be no Sunday Forum on December 27.

## UPCOMING FORUM THEMES FOR 2016

### JANUARY: DYING WELL

What kinds of end of life questions do Christians face? How does faith change as we get older? How have Christians traditionally prepared for death, and what practices might we adopt in our death-denying culture?

### FEBRUARY: DISCERNMENT

Being able to tell what comes to us from God and what comes from our own distorted imaginations is a key skill that Christians need but may not always know how to discuss. How do we know what God is calling us to? How do we know that our sense of right and wrong is grounded in God? What should we do and not do? What is a "real" experience of God in prayer?

### MARCH: FORGIVENESS

This month we will talk about forgiving and being forgiven, the practice of the

Sacrament of Reconciliation, the history of "Confession," and what it means to be a community of forgiveness.

### APRIL: HEALING

We hear many stories of healing in the Scriptures but Christians are sometimes sharply divided about the practices of healing in the life of the Church. Did you know that our parish offers anointing and healing prayer every Wednesday and Friday after the 12:10 Mass? We'll spend much of this month talking about the place of healing in Christian life. How do we think about illness and suffering that doesn't go away?

### MAY: GIVING TESTIMONY

We will explore Christian testimony: evangelism, mission work, engagement in activism, and the sometimes-excruciating practice of talking to one another truthfully about how we experience God acting in our lives. Do Episcopalians talk about these things? How?

### JUNE: HOSPITALITY

Saint Mark's practices hospitality at the Soup Bowl, the Food Cupboard, Coffee Hour, and every time an usher greets a newcomer or a member of the parish reaches out to someone they don't know. What's so Christian about hospitality? How can we do it better?



# AN UNEXPECTED ADVENTURE

SAINT MARK'S ADVENT PAGEANT  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13 • 2:00<sup>PM</sup>

Join us as we prepare for  
the coming of Christmas.  
Children especially welcome.



SAINT MARK'S CHURCH  
PHILADELPHIA



One of the things we spend a lot of time talking about in Schola is the rhythm of the liturgical calendar. Each week before our prayer time, we move an arrow along a circle of colored blocks, from the green of ordinary time to the violet of Advent to the bright white of Christmas Day. Our children know this calendar like the backs of their tiny hands – they know what it means to see the green cloth week after week during our prayer time, they know the red of Pentecost comes from the flames of the Holy Spirit, and they surely know that the liturgical color for Advent and Lent is violet, not purple.

So it only makes sense that at Saint Mark's, we take time in December not for a Christmas Pageant, but for an Advent one. After all, our students would be disappointed to see the baby Jesus arrive when the calendar still tells them that it's violet

time. And our Advent pageant, borrowed from St. Paul's Church in Auckland, New Zealand, is all about the violet time. Instead of telling the story of Jesus' birth, it tells the wonderfully imaginative story of the time when all of the company of heaven learned of God's plan to send his Son to earth. Needless to say, the conditions God sets forth for this child and this birth are surprising to the angels, and they need some convincing to see how this improbable plan – a tiny child, a virgin mother, a birth in a stable – might actually work.

Please join the students from Pre-Schola, Schola, and the Boys and Girls Choir for the Saint Mark's Advent Pageant, An Unexpected Adventure, on the third Sunday of Advent, December 13, at 2 p.m. You will leave filled with hope and expectation – in other words, filled with the gifts that the season of Advent brings.



MOTHER ERIKA TAKACS

# CONFIRMATION CLASSES



Would you like a chance to explore your faith more deeply and learn more about the Episcopal Church? Have you been baptized or confirmed? Were you raised in another tradition and are you thinking about becoming an Episcopalian? Is this your first encounter with a faith community of any kind? Saint Mark's will be offering Confirmation classes beginning in January and running up until March. Class takes place in the library, upstairs over the parish hall, every Sunday at 1 p.m. Mother Nora Johnson (njohnso1@swarthmore.edu) coordinates the class and all members of the parish clergy would be happy to talk to you about participating. This is a great opportunity to experience Christian formation whether or not you are specifically preparing for Confirmation or adult Baptism.

## SCHEDULE

All meetings take place in the Library, upstairs over the Parish Hall, at 1 p.m.

December 6 and January 10: Meetings for anyone who wants to ask questions about Confirmation, Baptism, joining the Episcopal Church, or trying out classes this year. Come to one meeting or come to both.

Sundays January 17 through March 13 and April 3 through 17: Weekly classes for participants, with a break for Holy Week and Easter.

Monday, April 25: Saint Mark's Day. Confirmations, Baptisms, and Receptions take place during the Bishop's visit at the 7 p.m. Mass.

## MATCHING THE PITCH

SIMON THOMAS JACOBS

For many centuries, great spaces have inspired great music. One has to think only of the numerous canticle settings by Herbert Howells, each dedicated to their respective cathedrals, churches and chapels, to realize what an impact a wonderful building can have on the composition of a piece of music. At Saint Mark's we are blessed with our own beautiful space and one that, as a liturgical musician, I find consistently inspiring.

As the Advent and Christmas seasons approach there is a wealth of excellent repertoire from which to choose. Sometimes, however, the sheer volume of wonderful and appropriate music is almost overwhelming, making it difficult to make selections that are "just right." In programming the music for our service of Advent Lessons & Carols on Sunday, November 29th, I was unable to think of a work for the choir to sing in the Lady Chapel. For those of you unfamiliar with this service, the choir processes throughout, singing at different "stations" within the church, the Lady Chapel being one of them. When I first ventured into the Lady Chapel for a noonday Mass a few weeks ago, I was almost overcome when I saw the space for the first time—surely one of the great treasures of any religious building in the country (if not the world!)—and immediately the text of the plainsong vespers hymn *Ave Maris Stella* came to mind:

*Hail, star of the sea,  
Nurturing Mother of God,  
And ever Virgin  
Happy gate of Heaven.*

In my opinion, one of the most elegant settings of this text is by the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), the combination of text and music seeming perfectly suited to the exquisite Lady Chapel at Saint Mark's.

Saint Mark's is also blessed with one of the finest pipe organs in the city. In most cases the instrument is heard leading hymnody and accompanying the choirs, but in January it will be heard in the performance of one of the great masterpieces of all organ repertoire. Composed in 1935 Olivier Messiaen's *La Nativité de Seigneur* ("The Birth of our Lord") takes excerpts from scripture as the basis for nine musical meditations on the birth of Jesus, using his unique and colorful harmonic language to paint vivid depictions of the Christmas Story. In a world where Christmas preparations begin in August and are over almost as soon as December 25th has past, this performance on Friday, January 22nd at 7:30 p.m., during the season of Epiphany, is intended not only to present beautiful music by one of Western Classical music's most devout and spiritual composers, but also to remind us of the power and importance of the incarnation in our lives as Christians.



A DAY OF PRAYER  
WITH LANCELOT ANDREWES

## ADVENT QUIET DAY DECEMBER 12

This Advent, spend a quiet day praying in the Anglican tradition. Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) was a leading preacher of his day and an important shaper of the English Church as it weathered the political and religious controversies of the Reformation. Andrewes was a chief translator of the King James Bible and the author of several deeply inspiring books about prayer.

Above all, Andrewes was a gifted user of words, and he knew how playing with words could open up the experience of prayer. It was said that he spent hours each morning praying privately, often with his collection of manuscript writings.

Inspired by Andrewes, we will spend this day exploring the power of words to help us shape the way we pray. We will make lists and litanies, we will have time for silent contemplation, we will enjoy a simple lunch and we will marvel in the resources God has given us—in Andrewes and in his remarkable writings—for growing closer in this Advent season.

### ADVENT QUIET DAY SCHEDULE

9:30	Sacrament of Reconciliation available in the Lady Chapel.
9:50	Prayer before Prayer. A quiet meditation in preparation for Mass. Come to the Saint John's Altar and you will find a written reflection to help you quiet your mind and heart.
10:00	Low Mass at Saint John's Altar
10:45	"A Perpetual Bethlehem": Lancelot Andrewes and the Eucharist. Meditation by Mother Nora Johnson.
11:45	Lunch
12:45	Making Lists. For whom do you pray? For what are you grateful? What gifts have you been given? From what do you most need protection? We will explore the way that Andrewes used lists as an aid to prayer.
2:00	"Directions to Prayer." Using walking meditation, puns, and other resources from Anglican tradition, we will spend this period practicing prayer as perhaps Andrewes might if he were among us today.
3:00-3:15	Closing reflections.

# PARISHIONER PERSPECTIVE

Libby Espey

*The Stewardship Committee has asked members of Saint Mark's to reflect on the reasons for their participation and support for the various ministries of our parish. Our first contributor is Libby Espey, who serves on the usher's guild, the hospitality team, and the garden team. With the help of her husband Todd she is busy fulfilling her retirement dream of creating a large rose garden at their home in Chester County.*

## COMING HOME *by Libby Espey*

In 2003, I told my friend Nick Bisaccia that I was looking for a church home, and he told me about his church, Saint Mark's. The beauty of the music at the 11 a.m. Mass and the friendly atmosphere at coffee hour convinced me to return the following week, and I knew soon that my search for a church had ended. I met people at that coffee hour 12 years ago who have become close friends. The hospitality of Saint Mark's coffee hour made me feel truly welcome.

Saint Mark's brings me a sense of belonging to a community. I married Todd Reider at Saint Mark's in June 2010, and our grandson Augustus was baptized here in September 2014. Sharing those happy moments with my friends at Saint Mark's made me realize how much the church has touched my life.

When I served on the Buildings and Properties Committee I learned how challenging it is to preserve and maintain a 19th century building. Each time I approach the communion rail, I think of all the souls who have worshiped at Saint Mark's in the last two centuries, and all those who have yet to be born, who will someday be at the same communion rail. Preserving the building for the future generations is of primary importance to me.

Soon after I began attending Sunday Mass, I started to work in the garden. I lived in the city at that time and found the Saint Mark's garden to be a place of healing, renewal, and retreat. I am no longer in charge of the garden, as I have moved out of the city, but I still enjoy working and listening to the people who stop by to chat over the garden fence. The first word in the Rule of St. Benedict is "listen," and working in the garden helps me to remember the importance of listening to what others have to say. Working in the garden always makes me feel closer to God.

I would love to undertake helping to organize a garden outreach to the Center City neighborhood surrounding Saint Mark's. We at Saint Mark's are blessed with one of the largest green spaces in Center City. I am sure many people living in the apartments nearby would welcome a chance to work in the garden. It is important to find ways to bring them into our sacred green space and let them know that they are welcome to volunteer in the garden even if they are not presently part of the congregation.

# THE DOVE TREE RETURNS

PATRICK KEOUGH

I recently walked into the Starbucks on 18th and Spruce to find it already decked for the holidays, red cups and all. Though I don't believe the absence of snowflakes and reindeer on their cups to be an endorsement of communism or a sign of the apocalypse, I do find it a bit premature. That said, I want to assure you that the appearance of an evergreen tree in the back of the nave on the first Sunday of Advent is not an attempt to rush us into the Christmas season, but rather the continuation of a great Saint Mark's tradition: the Dove Tree returns! The tree will be unadorned but for paper shaped doves with an item written on the backs, such as a child's size hat and pair of gloves. If you so choose, you may purchase the item, wrap it, attach the dove so that we know what is inside, and bring it with you to the church on the third Sunday of Advent, December 13. The Dove Tree gifts will be distributed to families who visit the Food Cupboard. I hope you will participate in this integral Saint Mark's outreach ministry.



## FATHER MULLEN ELECTED TO STANDING COMMITTEE

At November's Diocesan Convention, the rector was elected to a five-year term on the diocesan Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is a 10-member body of advice and counsel to the bishop and the wider Episcopal Church, and shares in the oversight of the stewardship of the diocese's resources. Please pray for Fr. Mullen and the other members of the Standing Committee as they continue their important work on behalf of our diocese.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### NOVEMBER

- 29**      **Advent Sunday**  
*Bishop Bill Franklin joins us to preach at the 11 a.m. Mass*  
*A Procession of Advent Lessons and Carols, 3 p.m*  
*Rectory Open House, 4 p.m.*

### DECEMBER

- 6**      **Choral Evensong and Benediction, 3 p.m.**
- 12**      **Advent Quiet Day, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.**  
*RSVP to Mother Nora Johnson, [njohnso1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:njohnso1@swarthmore.edu)*
- 13**      **An Unexpected Adventure, 2 p.m.**
- 20**      **Greening of the Church, 1 p.m.**
- 24**      **Christmas Eve**  
*A Festival of Christmas Lessons and Carols, 4 p.m.*  
*Choral Prelude, 10:30 p.m.*  
*Solemn High Mass of the Incarnation, 11 p.m.*
- 25**      **Choral High Mass of the Nativity, 10 a.m.**

### JANUARY

- 3**      **Choral Evensong and Benediction, 3 p.m.**
- 6**      **Solemn High Mass of the Epiphany, 7 p.m.**  
*Potluck supper following*
- 16**      **Andrew Kellner's Ordination to the Diaconate**  
*Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, 10 a.m.*

## SUNDAY PASTORAL VISITORS

Beginning January, Fr. Mullen will convene a number of training and information sessions to gather a group of parishioners who would like to make pastoral visits to other members of the parish community who are sick or shut-in. These visits will normally be scheduled for Sunday afternoons, and will be organized by Fr. Mullen. If you are interested in participating in this ministry please speak with Fr. Mullen or look out for the announcement for information sessions to take place in January. We'll take on this new ministry during Lent and Easter and then evaluate to see how we might be able to do a better job of connecting to and caring for those who are sick, shut-in, or otherwise unable to be with us on Sundays or at other times.



## SAVING A TREASURE

FATHER SEAN MULLEN

It's been a couple of months since the scaffolding came down from around the church. But as they say, no job is finished till the paperwork is done. By the end of this year we will have filed all the reports that are required as a condition of the \$700,000 grant we received to help us undertake nearly \$1.5 million in historic preservation of the church. This project addressed urgently needed work on the roofs, masonry, and stained glass windows of the clerestory (the uppermost windows in the church). Most of the rest of the funding was provided by generous gifts from parishioners and friends of the parish.

Hearty thanks are due to Capital Campaign co-chairs, Ellen Charry and Kim Williams, along with the entire Campaign Committee: Isabelle Benton, Jay Blossom, Bob Hadfield, Don Roberts, David Marshall, and Mary Jane Barrett. Cynthia McFarland was very involved with this work on the committee before her death. Thanks, also, to the dozens and dozens of parishioners who made contributions – big and small – to this campaign!

Obviously there remains more work to be done on our historic buildings, both inside and out. The work we have just completed was guided by the Master Plan we conducted several years ago with John Milner Architects, and overseen by that firm. The Vestry and the Rector are discussing a number of other pressing concerns that we are prioritizing and for which we are considering funding possibilities. The completion of the Saving a Treasure project represents the conclusion of the largest program of capital improvements, and the largest fund-raising campaign the parish has undertaken in at least twenty years. The project also makes up the largest part of about \$2.3 million in capital improvements we have undertaken in the past several years. All this work enables us to continue to use our wonderful buildings for the dual mission of worship and service to which God calls us. Thank you to all of you who have supported this work in any way!

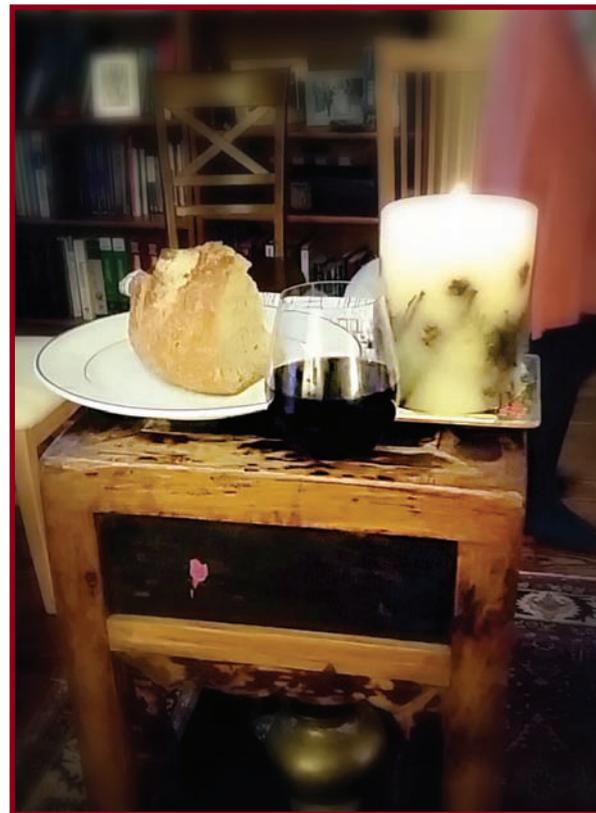
JOIN US!

# 20s/30s SIMPLE SUPPERS

## UP NEXT: ADVENT SUPPER

WED DEC 16 | 6:30 P.M., RECTORY

On Wednesday, December 16, at 6:30 p.m., the Saint Mark's 20s/30s group will gather in the Rectory for our monthly Simple Supper. As usual, we will take time for checking in and conversation, for sharing a beautiful meal, and for intimate home worship. But this month, the Simple Supper will take on a slightly different feel. We'll be gathering right in the heart of the season of Advent, and so it seems apt to use this time together very intentionally and prayerfully, in a way that will lead us to engage with some of the gifts Advent offers: silence and stillness, waiting and hope, light in the darkness. Our entire evening together will be within the context of worship and prayer, with not only our traditional simple Eucharist, but also prayers for candle lighting and the blessing of our meal, scripture reading and conversation during dinner, and a time for community prayer and reflection. Join us for this evening of holiness.



SAINT MARK'S CHURCH  
PHILADELPHIA

1625 LOCUST STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103  
WWW.SAINTMARKSPHILADELPHIA.ORG



The children's table at the Commitment Sunday brunch was the place to be if you wanted to hear tall tales from vestry member Brian Alvarez.