



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.

THE STORY OF EVERYTHING

— FATHER SEAN MULLEN —



In college, I had an English professor who asserted that John Milton was the last man on earth to know everything there was to know. His somewhat flippant position was that Milton was possessed of the greatest mind of his time at just about the last moment in history when a person of sufficient intellectual capacity could, perhaps, know *everything* there was to know. Milton died in 1674, having gone blind, but maybe knowing *everything* there was to know.

At a conference recently, I heard a noted theologian comment that part of what religion does is to provide the story of everything, absolutely everything. The Christian religion has never made any promise that its adherents could someday comprehend or understand *everything*—not even John Milton. But we are shaped by a faith narrative that is meant to *include everything*: From the expanding edges of the universe, to the depths of the deepest black hole, to before time, and to the end of time and thereafter, all times and ages, the beginning and the end; nothing is left out.

Milton wrote beautifully about the painful part of that narrative, when the crowning glory of God's creation—we humans—chose selfishness over obedience, and in the act learned to internalize shame. He described our estrangement from God this way:

*...disproportion'd sin
Jarr'd against natures chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair musick that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
In perfect Diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.*

We live in a world that is deeply confused about many things. In part, this is because we have become a globally interconnected world that shares no story of everything. In fact, we have often been swayed by the arguments that tell us that our national, cultural, ethnic, and religious narratives are in competition with one another. We have become accustomed to the

struggle for dominance of one story of everything over another. All the while, we convince ourselves that our sin is not disproportioned. I would call the current state of the corporate human condition one of deep discord in most places.

We can see that discord played out at many levels. We cannot even agree on the narrative of what's happening around us now, in the moment, on the ground among us, or in our "natural" environment, let alone agree about what the past might have meant or what the future could hold. And in many quarters, we are being encouraged to think that the way to resolve the self-apparent conflict is to engage in a new battle for dominance, and settle the question, once and for all. We forget that the very phrase "once and for all" emerged as a description of the ministry of Jesus on the Cross, where he died, *once and for all*: an indication that this event was momentous in the story of everything, and meant to be decisive and inclusive of everything and everyone.

But still we live in confusion and discord. To borrow a thought from today's newspapers, we suspect that there must be somewhere an unredacted report that tells the truth of everything in an unbiased and objective way. And it is confounding to us when so much that's happening around us suggests that no such report on everything exists, and if it did, we would discover that it is neither unbiased nor objective. In the meantime, we argue about what might or might not be behind the parts we cannot see.

Having sung in church my entire life, and having found God to be very present in the midst of music, it feels to me as if Milton was onto something with his assessment that by sin and selfishness we "broke the fair musick that all creatures made." And we are living with that broken music now. The poem is undergirded by a universalist tendency that appeals to me—that we are all in this one story together, and that in Christ, God has given us something once and for all, no matter who we are. Though I admit that I see that it's difficult to make this one story work for everyone without drifting toward a colonialist dominance. But if we have to find a metaphor, at the moment I'll take music over Christian soldiers marching as to war. I also find it appealing that Milton insists on mentioning our "first obedience" and our "state of good," which is the state in which and for which God made us: our natural state, if you ask me.

I do believe that the Church is the inheritor and librarian of the story of everything, and I say this without needing to claim dominance over any other such story. The truth of the church's story does not rest on its ability to dominate. And since it includes the astounding understanding that "my power is made perfect in weakness" the truth of Christ's story of everything may actually rest in part on its refusal to dominate anything or anyone.

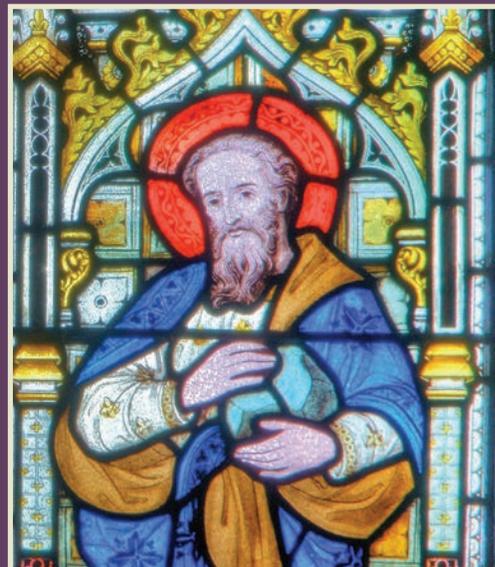
If John Milton knew everything there was to know, maybe we should cling to the prayer that is voiced at the end of the poem I've been referring to, which leads us back to music, which expresses a hope for this life as well as the life that is to come, and which rests, I think, on the assumption of our natural state: the "state of good."

*O may we soon again
renew that Song
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long
To his celestial consort us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endles morn of light.*

When we sing and say what "we believe" in church, we are renewing a song of everything—from beginning to end—that we believe is true. We cannot comprehend, understand, or master everything told by that story, but we can be included in it, and we are. We seek no dominance, and we rejoice in the love of a commodious God whose mind and wisdom have room for more than we can imagine. And we join Milton in hoping that some day we will all learn to sing again "that undisturbed Song of pure content." Let us pray for it.

(All quotations from "At A Solemn Musick," by John Milton, c. 1645)

THE BARNABAS SOCIETY



The Barnabas Society was launched in March, with the intention of recognizing those who have included planned gifts in their wills or estate plans, and encouraging further planned giving to the parish. If you have included Saint Mark's in your will or other estate plans, or have another kind of planned gift in mind, we'd like to include you in the society. For more information about the Society you can contact the Rector. You can always designate Saint Mark's as a beneficiary in your will, trust, or estate by including language to this effect: "I give, devise, and bequeath to Saint Mark's Church, Locust Street, (insert amount, percentage of estate, nature of gift, or remainder of estate) to be used at the discretion of the Rector and the Vestry, (or for a designated purpose)."

Remember that not all planned gifts are made as part of estate plans. You can plan and make a capital gift while you are alive and kicking! For instance, if you have an IRA and you are over 70 and half years old you can make a transfer of funds from your IRA of up to \$100,000 in a given year and the full amount of your gift will be transferred directly to Saint Mark's. The gift counts toward your minimum distribution requirements and will not be counted as taxable income at the end of the year. We always have capital projects that we are working on or saving for, and we can work with you to direct your funds to a particular project that's important to you. Please contact Mary Campbell, the Financial Secretary, or Fr. Mullen for more information about making this kind of gift to Saint Mark's.

DATES TO REMEMBER

JUNE

- 1 Parish Picnic, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Held at Gloria Dei (Old Swedes')
- 2 Choral Evensong & Benediction, 4 p.m.
- 4 20s/30s Simple Supper, 6:30 p.m.
- 9 Choral Evensong & Benediction, 4 p.m.
- 10 Parish Election

JULY

- 4 Parish Office Closed for Independence Day
Low Mass at 10 a.m.
- 17 Selwyn College Choir, Cambridge Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 29 Summer Choir Camp begins

AUGUST

- 2 Last day Summer Choir Camp



MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

ROBERT MCCORMICK



TRANSITIONS

The “choir season” comes to an end in June (the final Sunday for the Boys’ and Girls’ Choir is June 9, and for the full Parish Choir, June 23), though we have quite a number of important liturgical occasions between now and then. On June 9, following Evensong & Benediction, both choirs and as well as choir families will gather for a banquet to enjoy each other’s company, to offer thanks for the privilege of making music together to the glory of God, and to express appreciation for several of our music staff who are moving to new ventures and new places over the summer. Staff singers Robby Eisentrout (bass) and Allie Faulkner (soprano) will be moving to Michigan to pursue graduate studies. Allie was one of the first “hires” I made as Saint Mark’s new Organist and Choirmaster in 2016, and Robby soon followed. They have both given tremendous service, and Allie has also been a vocal coach for our boy and girl choristers (she is as good a teacher as she is a singer). Staff singer Helen Hass (alto) is moving to the Denver area. Helen has been with us for only a year, but she has made a significant contribution in that year, singing beautifully and offering excellent leadership. All of these three singers exemplify an important trait I value when seeking staff singers: they bring not only musical excellence, but personal commitment and dedication to their vocation and to the choir as a whole. They are all wonderful people as well as first-rate musicians. I’m grateful to all of them and will miss them hugely. Clara Gerdes has served as organ scholar at Saint Mark’s since September of 2015, and it has been the joy and privilege of all of us to watch her musicianship grow and mature over those years. After graduating from the Curtis Institute in May, she will begin graduate studies at Yale University’s Institute of Sacred Music in the fall, where I am sure she will go from strength to strength.

Over the summer, I will enjoy some vacation in late June and the first couple of weeks in July, and will lead the King’s College/Wilkes-Barre course of the Royal School of Church Music from July 22-28. A number of our boy and girl choristers will be attending that course, which draws choral singers from all over the country, children and adults alike. Our own Saint Mark’s Choir Camp will be held the following week, July 29-August 2. It is a fruitful time for many of our boys and girls to prepare for the coming year, and also is a vehicle of recruitment for our Boys’ and Girls’ Choir. Please help us spread the word, both about the Choir Camp as well as our chorister program for children in general, which is open to boys and girls ages 7 and above. I am always happy to discuss the program further with anyone who’d like further information: don’t hesitate to reach out.

Work continues on our organ. At the time of writing, just under 65% of the organ is playable, and I hope that that percentage will increase week by week. Organ curator Steve Emery and his matchless crew are working tirelessly to that end. Recitals to celebrate the restored instrument have been scheduled for the 2019-2020 season, including concerts by former Saint Mark’s musicians Scott Dettra and Joshua Stafford, a concert for organ and brass (with players from the Curtis Institute), and a recital by yours truly.

The summer is also a time of planning and preparation for the year to come. Both choirs will return just after Labor Day. I cannot find the words to adequately express my gratitude to them: volunteers, professionals, children, and parents. They give so much and work so hard, and I hope all of them enjoy a little down-time over the summer.

But before that, I’ll see them and you in church for the remainder of Eastertide, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity, and Corpus Christi!

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

DANIEL RUSSELL

*“What is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle close together
because you love each other?”*

— T.S. ELIOT, ‘STRANGER’

Over the past two years, the Neighbor Care initiative has quietly been weaving its way into the fabric of Saint Mark’s. Parishioners have probably heard of meetings happening, been contacted by a cluster leader, and maybe even attended a Second Thursday Coffee Hour at the Bellevue.

However, some aspects of Neighbor Care continued to be a little mysterious to me and the broader parish. So, I decided to sit down with Father Stephen Moore who is responsible for coordinating the Neighbor Care ministry to learn more about the origins of Neighbor Care, how it has developed, and its future.

DR: Hi Father Moore, thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Shall we start at the very beginning? Where did the idea for Neighbor Care come from?

SM: My pleasure! The idea for Neighbor Care came from the last parish I ran in Australia. It was spread out over a large geographic area in rural New South Wales. It encompassed about 100 square kilometers and seven distinct, geographically-dispersed communities each with a church. Pastorally, I needed to find a way to try to hold that network of communities together in faith and care. Since a traditional parish-wide pastoral care program was impractical because of geography, I set about creating a ministry of care and support with the help of parishioners within each of those communities with their own community leaders, whose parallels

would be the cluster leaders in Saint Mark’s.

But “neighbor” in that Australian, rural setting was very different. Most people were farmers. They were on large farms and, naturally, vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather. When it wasn’t a drought, it was fire - when it wasn’t fire, it was a flood. A ‘normal’ season of predictable weather was the exception. As well as that, farmers work in isolation and they’re fiercely independent. After two suicides, I realized that as a parish we were not doing enough to reach out. We needed something local, faith-inspired, responsive, and which was closely accessible to these individual communities. And so I set up a ministry of care and support that had many of the characteristics of the Saint Mark’s program, but that was community-based. I encouraged and provided guidance to those groups to adopt a more intentional form of neighborly care that was based on this mutual conviction of co-dependence.

DR: What was your experience taking this concept from a rural, geographically dispersed context to the condensed, urban environment of Philadelphia where Saint Mark’s is located?

SM: To be honest, I wasn’t really sure whether this style of ministry could work in an urban setting. The same principles apply but the expression of it is very different. When I started to re-evaluate the Neighbor Care program in an urban context, I immediately realized it would require a segmentation of the parish into neighborhood-based clusters as opposed to a specific worshipping community like in Australia, and that’s where the zip code combinations came in. We could segment the parish by density of population which reflected specific neighborhoods.

DR: How do you view your role as the coordinator of the Neighbor Care ministry?

SM: Well, my role is sort of passively active. It’s engaged but not involved. Lovely contradictions there! I’m very conscious that each of the cluster leaders needs the freedom to express neighborliness in their terms. We all understand what it means to be a caring neighbor, but how they live out that neighborliness and how they encourage

others within their cluster is utterly up to them. The difference they are making speaks for itself.

DR: What has been the biggest challenge you have found with Neighbor Care?

SM: In the beginning the biggest anxiety for cluster leaders was the number of participants at their meetings. I don’t think it’s as much of a concern now, but early on cluster leaders wondered, “Why are so few people coming?”

In a neighborhood of 30 parishioners, for example, only 8 or 10 would attend - what about the other 20? Cluster leaders would feel their efforts futile and say, “Why aren’t the

others here? We do all the things - we write, we ring, we do all we can, and yet, only a few come.” There’s no failure in that. It is about being visible, being present, actively demonstrating this structure of kindness throughout the parish and being available to anybody. Those are the key characteristics. It’s not about everyone attending meetings.

What is repeatedly demonstrated is that Neighbor Care is valued by those who choose to be engaged. Its strength is that it’s a loose enough organization that all can take part as they wish, or take advantage of when they like.

At its core Neighbor Care is mission-oriented by seeking to expand the servanthood of the Church and the reach of the Gospel, functioning as an active expression of discipleship in meeting the Biblical injunction to serve one’s neighbor. At the same time, it seeks to strengthen membership of Saint Mark’s by giving greater meaning and depth to belonging to this community.

DR: What has been the most surprising thing?

SM: The most surprising thing to me is the depth of engagement that people are asking for; people really want, and are receptive to, engaging in thoughtful conversations surrounding their faith. We have passed through the early hospitality stage with its “small talk” questions to deeper questions - “Who is God to you?”, “What does discipleship mean?” Then there is the big enduring question - “Who is your neighbor and how you define that person?” That level of

NEIGHBOR
Care

depth and preparedness to engage, that it should happen so soon and so richly, is a surprise but then, that's the nature of Saint Mark's. It's become incarnational in its expression and purpose and, increasingly, sacramental.

Another surprise in conceiving Neighbor Care was that I thought of it more as a practical care and support structure but it's evolving into something where support is faith-related, too. I'd love to think this was the Holy Spirit at work, moving people to feel confident and safe in asking these otherwise difficult questions in a setting among fellow worshippers who happen to also be neighbors. It really moves me that we've created an atmosphere of trust between individuals bound by being part of the same worshipping community that encourages them to search for more. That evolution has really taken me aback and suggests a broader future than the original concept.

For cluster leaders, this is providing its own challenges and they are all interpreting this development in a number of ways. We've written a prayer for Neighbor Care and we

have now Compline at the end of each meeting. Again, these two activities, prayer and Compline, are only possible because people see these meetings as expressions of faith as well as opportunities for hospitality, care and support. And that's a wonderful thing.

DR: What do you see for the future of Neighbor Care?

SM: For the future of Neighbor Care, I'll draw a loose parallel here that sees the parish community as a massive family. As we grow numerically, we are vulnerable to being like third cousins rather than brothers and sisters. We must remain a neighborly family in spite of being so many – thanks be to God that we are! Neighbor Care can continue to help bridge the gap size creates, especially through the "Invite, Welcome, Connect" initiative. Neighbor Care can serve a real purpose in connecting newcomers to Saint Mark's and consolidate the connection for those who are more regular participants. I feel there's a key role for Neighbor Care here.

The other area of growth is in fostering lay leaders, each exercising faithful ministry to their local community. We now have a group of parishioners who are demonstrating their willingness and capacity to take responsibility for their immediate community, not only through worship and at the meetings, but also in overseeing the provision of care and support in its many forms within their neighborhood. That's a new characteristic for Saint Mark's, at least in this sort of structured way. Of course, we have lay leadership for other programs, but this has its own unique features. As Neighbor Care begins to work in concord with other ministries in the parish, we're forming a level of leadership, which has got who knows what potential that God may inspire.

DR: Thank you for taking the time to talk about Neighbor Care and its role in the life of Saint Mark's. I look forward to interviewing others involved with Neighbor Care in the coming months to continue to learn about this new and vital ministry of the parish.



THE ZOE PROJECT

Since early January, Saint Mark's Zoe Project team has been deeply involved in the testing phase of an idea for ministry that

was carefully crafted for a year and a half after a grant was received from the Lilly Endowment through the Zoe Project program: gathering young adults (aged 21 to 35) around the baking of bread for prayer, fellowship, and service. Our team has made great strides in the past several months, and in doing so, the vision of this ministry has been clarified in many ways. On March 31, five of our team members traveled to Brooklyn to attend a Zoe-sponsored "Soul Salon." This interesting event was a chance for the Saint Mark's team to interact with other Zoe Project teams from across the country and to be refreshed in the midst of often challenging on-the-ground ministry. The Soul Salon evening offered fantastic food, creative discussions, and most importantly, an affirmation that our Saint Mark's team is right on track and doing well in the implementation of its vision for ministry. Members of our team left encouraged that the ministry in which we have been involved at the Church of the Crucifixion is exhibiting many fruits of the Holy Spirit's guidance, despite obstacles, difficulties, and unexpected detours.

Most recently, Saint Mark's team has settled on a name that will help communicate something of the team's hopes for the ministry that is beginning to engage young adults in Philadelphia. While several names have been tried on for size since the Zoe Project's inception, our Zoe

team has returned to a name initially suggested at the beginning of the project: *Rise*. This name does several things:

- *Rise* communicates the Christian belief that through the resurrection of Jesus, what is old is being made new, and hope for radical change in the midst of despair and darkness is indeed possible. In Christ, the old leaven of malice and evil, of hope lost and of humanity gone astray, is being transformed into the bread of sincerity and truth, of a desire for a new way of being human in the world that works for the good of all people, in accordance with God's hopes for the world. And so, the Zoe Project ministry is eager to play some part, along with other parishes in our diocese, of bringing new life to an abandoned church in south Philadelphia while engaging in young adult ministry in a fresh way.
- *Rise* is directly related to what happens when bread is baked: flour, salt, water, and yeast mixed together must rest in order to rise and become a beautiful loaf of bread, something new, wholesome, and delicious.
- *Rise* suggests that young adults, both church and unchurched, are eager to gather in solidarity, to rise up in order to effect positive change in the world, whether through acts of social justice, service, or outreach. In the case of Saint Mark's Rise ministry, young adults gather for empowering discussions and workshops during the rise-time of bread being baked, and freshly baked bread is given away in order to address issues of food insecurity in Philadelphia.

While *Rise* continues to gather regularly at the Church of the Crucifixion, we are planning towards an official kick-off in the early fall. More details will be revealed over the course of the summer!

10 A.M. FORUM

MOTHER NORA JOHNSON

JUNE 2: NO FORUM

JUNE 9, 16, AND 23: READING SCRIPTURE

Join Professor Roy Clouser for a series on the Holy Scriptures. How do we know scripture comes from God? What does it mean to use words like “inspired” and “infallible” when we speak of the Bible? Bring your questions and your curiosity for a valuable and informative series.



NEW MUSIC STAFF

Saint Mark's is pleased to announce two additions to the music staff for next year.



Bryan Dunnewald will return to Saint Mark's as Interim Assistant Organist & Choirmaster. Bryan is well-known to us, having served here for three years as Organ Scholar while he was a student at the Curtis Institute. Currently studying orchestral conducting at the Mannes School of Music in New York, he will split his time between Philadelphia and New York when he takes up his duties here. Bryan recently conducted Saint Mark's Choir in his own setting of the Mass, which he composed for the parish in 2017.

Bryan will be providing assistance in all areas of music, from playing to assisting in leadership of the Parish Choir and the Boys & Girls Choir.

We are happy also to announce the appointment of a new Organ Scholar, Christopher Oak Martin, who will begin his studies in organ performance at the Curtis Institute at the same time he joins us this coming fall. Oak will follow the same path that Bryan took from the Interlochen Arts Academy, from which he will graduate this spring. He was a chorister in both the Georgia and Atlanta Boy Choirs, and he has served as Organ Scholar at St. Bartholomew's Church in Atlanta. We look forward to welcoming Oak to the block when he moves to Curtis and takes up his responsibilities here.



ORGAN PROJECT UPDATE

The organ was played for the first time publicly on Easter Eve, with about 65% of the instrument reinstalled. Work on reinstallation continues throughout the spring, and most likely through much of June.

We are looking forward to our series of rededication recitals on Sundays at 4 p.m. as listed below:

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|-------------|---|
| OCTOBER 20 | Scott Dettra |
| NOVEMBER 17 | Josh Stafford |
| JANUARY 19 | Organ with Brass, featuring David Bilger, trumpet |
| FEBRUARY 23 | Robert McCormick |

20s/30s MINISTRY: RECENT EVENTS

Saint Mark's young adult ministry continues to grow and meet regularly for fellowship during our monthly Simple Suppers. In April Mother Johnson led a rich discussion on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In May young adults gathered for a potluck at the Community House of St. James School, hosted by Ministry Resident Angel Nalubega.

The June Simple Supper will take place on Tuesday, June 4, at Saint Mark's and will be focused on the topics of food insecurity and food justice.

On Thursday, July 18 at 6 p.m., the 20s/30s group will host a Young Episcopalians Garden Party at Saint Mark's, to which young adults from neighboring Center City parishes have been invited.

Simple Suppers are potlucks. While all are encouraged to bring a dish, you should feel free to show up if your plans change at the last minute and even if you have not RSVP'd. For more information on Simple Suppers, please email 20s30s@saintmarksphiladelphia.org.

EASTER GIFTS

This Easter, our worship was enriched by a number of significant gifts used in the liturgies, that you may or may not have noticed. It was, of course, the first Easter that we have celebrated with the Font in its new position, made possible by a gift in memory of Richard Swayze. You might also have noticed the following gifts for which we are grateful and give thanks to God:

New kneelers at the High Altar were needlepointed by hand by parishioners using a design by Davis d'Ambly. The hands that made all those stitches belong to Pam Covey, Isabelle Benton, Bob Brano, Dara Morales, Diane Kontomus, Maja Forsnes, Addie Peyronnin, Mary Jane Barrett, and Karen Hoepfinger. Many thanks to each of them! Addie Peyronnin and Walter Peterson oversaw the construction of the kneelers. A gift from the estate of Fr. Joe Wildsmith made this project possible, and he is memorialized in embroidery, along with a number of others, on the back of one of the kneelers.

A large and imposing candle stand for the Paschal Candle was used at Easter liturgies for the first time. The oak candle stand is nearly seven feet tall. It was designed by Davis d'Ambly, who also polychromed and gilded it. It bears four shields depicting a scallop shell (symbol of pilgrimage), a pillar of fire (like the one that led the children of Israel through their exodus), a pomegranate, and a honeybee (both symbols of the resurrection). The Paschal Candle stand is a gift made by a donor in memory of Fr. Michael Becker, the XIth Rector of Saint Mark's. A memorial inscription is soon to be added to it.

A beautiful aspersorium of American silver was recently acquired and given to the parish by Bob Brano in memory of Richard Swayze. Used to carry holy water in processions, the sterling silver aspersorium was made in about 1880 in San Francisco by Schultz and Fisher.

Many people will not have noticed a small wooden step-stool of very solid construction that was made by hand by parishioner Micah McGraw. The stool allows us to reach the Crucifix on the High Altar during liturgies of the Triduum on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. It also allows us to reach the top of the Paschal Candle stand at the Great Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday.



CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

FATHER KYLE BABIN



On Palm Sunday, the weather cooperated with our planned Passion Procession in the parish garden. This unique event was devised last year through the creative efforts of former Ministry Resident Max Woolley. Coordinated this year by Madeleine Harris and Gabi Machado, seven youth were arrayed in costumes depicting persons in the Scriptural accounts of Jesus's passion, and another nine were dressed as clergy who in ancient times led processions between various stations associated with the passion of Christ. Schola children, their families, and other adults joined in as participants in this abbreviated form of the Stations of the Cross. It was a moving way to begin Holy Week.

On Easter Sunday, the church garden was filled with children and families as we held our annual Easter Egg Hunt. There were many new faces this year!

On Sunday, May 5, four youth were confirmed by Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez during his visitation to the parish. Congratulations to these youth on their recommitment to Christ after three months of preparation!

We also held a youth lock-in for kids ages 11 and up on Friday night, May 10. After dinner, games, and Compline, youth arose early on Saturday morning to serve at the Saturday Soup Bowl.

Saturday, June 1, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Gloria Dei (Old Swedes' Church), 916 S. Swanson Street, Philadelphia, is the parish picnic, where there will be plenty of games for children. The following morning, Sunday, June 2, we will be hosting a Family Open House from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This Open House is an opportunity for parishioners to invite friends to church in order to experience a typical Sunday morning at Saint Mark's, with an eye towards offerings for children and families. Children are also encouraged to invite a special friend to church with them that day.

Sunday, June 9, will be the final Sunday of children's formation until it resumes in September. During Pre-Schola, Schola, and Connect (10 to 10:45 a.m.), Father Babin will lead a conversation on the future shape of children's and youth formation at Saint Mark's. All parents with children aged 0 to 18 are encouraged to attend this discussion, to take place in the Choir Room.

Registrations are still being accepted for Summer Choir Camp, and the early bird reduced registration fee is valid until July 1. Please help us spread the word about this exciting week of music-making, formation, and fun!

Help Us Stay in Touch

We are continuing to compile contact information on children and families in the parish, which will help us keep track of children as they progress through our various formation programs. If you have children aged 0 to 18, please be in touch with Father Babin (kjbabin@saintmarksphiladelphia.org) to ensure that your family's contact information is current. Or you can access the online "Children and Family Census" form by scanning the following QR code. Thank you for your cooperation!

THOUGHTS ON STEWARDSHIP

JAY BLOSSOM

When I was 23 years old, I got my first car—an inexpensive Honda Civic that I drove for the next 10 years. I had spent the previous year really wanting a car, even praying for a car.

Back then I lived in a town that wasn't transit friendly, and I relied on friends to give me rides.

That got old very fast.

So, before I bought my car, I prayed, "God, if you provide a car for me, somehow, I will always offer rides to other people." I knew how embarrassing it could be to ask, and how I had longed for people to offer to drop me off at my place on their way home.

When I was able to get that little Honda, I tried to be careful always to think, "This is God's car, not mine." And as often as I could, I offered other people rides, or even let them borrow the keys. It was God's car.

It's a little harder to do that with everything else in life—especially things that are even

more valuable to us, like our time and even our whole heart. But I think it's also a good spiritual discipline.

When I was 23, I didn't deserve a car. No one owed me anything. It was a gift from God. I still try to think about that all the time. I don't deserve the blessings that I have! So I try to hold onto things lightly.

This can be a challenge. It's not easy to be generous when you're afraid for the future, or when you've worked long hours to afford something special, or when you're in debt. So thinking of your possessions and your time as not your own, but God's instead, can be a spiritual discipline to work on, to aspire to, rather than something that you just switch on. My aspiration is to get into the zone of seeing what I have is a gift from God. Like the lilies of the field, and the ravens in the air, I am trying to let my Heavenly Father clothe me and feed me.

A PROCESS OF REFLECTION
ON STRENGTHENING
THE PARISH

A COLONY OF HEAVEN

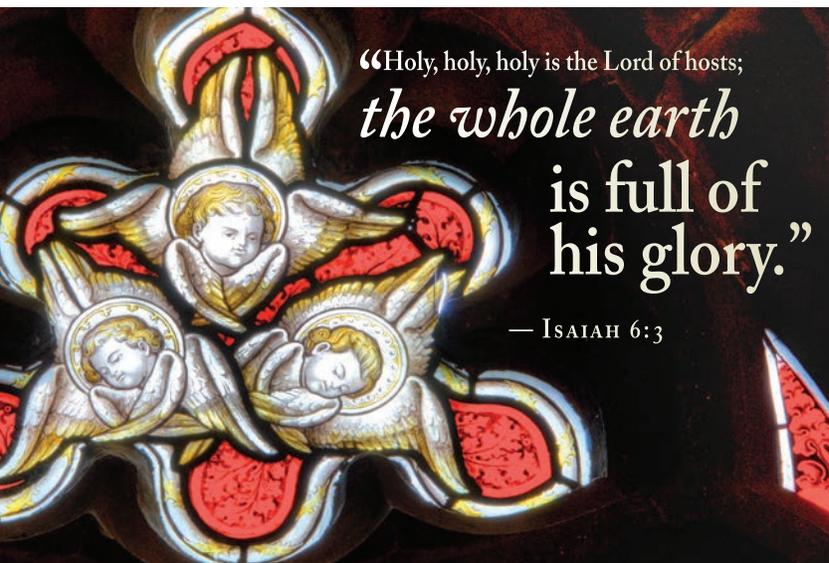
INVITE—WELCOME—CONNECT

Blue information cards have been mentioned regularly in church for months now. We are trying to be highly intentional about making contact with newcomers and visitors, and about updating information of regular worshippers and members if and when it changes. Blue information cards are on clipboards on the Ushers' Table in church, and by the bulletin board in the Parish Hall. If you meet someone new in church or at Coffee Hour feel free to point out the information cards, and ask them to fill one out!



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PHILADELPHIA

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“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth
is full of
his glory.”

— ISAIAH 6:3