



THE LION'S MARK

THE NEWSLETTER OF SAINT MARK'S CHURCH

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RECTOR'S MESSAGE

In recent years American churches have tended to look toward corporations for management, organizational, and communications models, on the theory that churches can and should learn from the things that corporations do well. One aspect of this mimicking of corporate models can be seen in the adoption of "mission statements" by churches: brief articulations of what we do and why we are here. As someone who is wary of aping of corporate America, I am reluctant to lead Saint Mark's down that path.

It is the case, however, that when it comes to mission statements, corporate America took the idea from the church, and the church is only just beginning to reclaim "mission" as her own paradigm. You can find reasonable mission statements throughout the New Testament: Any time Jesus tells his disciples to "go" somewhere and do something, or when Saint Paul proclaims "We preach Christ crucified". Our beloved previous rector, Fr. Alton, used to say that the mission of this parish was to "pray without ceasing," (it would be hard to be clearer or more concise than that). As the Vestry and I began to undertake the process of strategic planning, it seemed time to focus on the mission of this parish and to be sure that we could articulate a shared understanding of that mission. So in the course of several retreats and through conversations with the parish at large we drafted and refined a statement finally settling on this:

Mission Statement:
Saint Mark's is a community
that gathers in faith,
serves in love,
and proclaims hope,
through Jesus Christ.

We think this statement says a few things about us as a parish.

It says that we identify ourselves as a community: a group of people called together.

It uses three verbs that we think capture much of what we do.

We gather to worship, pray, learn, eat and drink, and to enjoy one another's fellowship.

We serve each other and those in need through ministries like CARITAS, the Food Cupboard, the Soup Bowl, grief support and pastoral care.

We proclaim by word and example, as best we can, the transforming power of God's love for his creation.

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It identifies the three great concepts of faith, hope, and love, as central to our self-understanding.

It grounds everything we do in Jesus Christ.

We believe that this mission statement ought to endure for a good long while. It seems comprehensive and congruent with the mission of the church throughout the ages. We hope the things this statement says about Saint Mark's will always be true. But of course, we cannot say everything we hope to say about our parish in a few lines. We felt it was important to say a bit more. We wanted to articulate our sense of vision for the parish at this time, and we wanted to identify crucial values that make this parish what it is. To accomplish those goals, we drafted these statements of vision and values:

Vision Statement:

Saint Mark's is a welcoming church that seeks to grow through spiritual nourishment, evangelism, and outreach, bearing witness, in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, to God's grace, in Philadelphia and the wider church.

Values Statement:

Saint Mark's is a loving community that values:
reverent sacramental worship
gracious hospitality
generous outreach
comprehensive Christian formation

Every word of those statements was carefully considered, discussed and prayed about. I could discuss in detail what I think we meant by each phrase, but it's better that the statements should speak for themselves. Or, if they don't, why not take a few minutes to discuss them with a member of the Vestry or with me or Paul. We'd be very happy to talk about any of these statements and what we think they signify.

You will notice that our vision statement says that we are a church that seeks to grow. We see evidence, in fact, that we are already growing in several ways: spiritually, numerically, and in financial health. We believe that this growth is a sign of God's active and exciting work among the people of this community, and we believe that God intends for that growth to continue. We hope that most of you share this sense as well as our conviction that growth should and will continue. The process of strategic planning is an important part of attending to that growth. God already knows what wonderful things are in store for this marvelously gifted parish community. It remains only for us to do our part as God's workers in the vineyard to help build up his kingdom, and see. May God bless us as we do!

Father Mullen

BOOK CLUB SETS UP SPRING SCHEDULE

St. Mark's Book Club meets the third Saturday of each month at 11 am in the Library. The sessions are open to all and coffee and lively discussion are always in evidence. The upcoming selections are interesting and exciting:

April 19. Nominated for the 2005 Booker Prize, *On Beauty* by English writer Zadie Smith is a comic novel of family drama providing the reader with an irreverent look at campus politics, political correctness and the ways different generations regard race and class.

May 17. *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen. In 1932 America is in the early years of the Great Depression. Jacob is 23 and just shy of getting his degree in veterinary medicine from Cornell when he learns that his parents have been killed in an accident. Emotionally and monetarily stranded, with nothing to lose, Jacob jumps a train and finds himself traveling with the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth, a menagerie of exotic and soulful creatures.

June 21. *The Language of God* by Francis Collins. Collins, a pioneering medical geneticist who once headed the Human Genome Project, adapts his title from President Clinton's remarks announcing completion of the first phase of the project in 2000: "Today we are learning the language in which God created life." Collins explains that as a Christian believer, "the experience of sequencing the human genome, and uncovering this most remarkable of all texts, was both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship." This marvelous book combines a personal account of Collins's faith and experiences as a genetics researcher with discussions of more general topics of science and spirituality, especially centering around evolution.

A DIANE MEREDITH BELCHER RECITAL

Friday, May 9th

Be sure to mark your calendars now for what will surely be a wonderful evening of music on Friday, May 9th at 8:00pm at Saint Mark's. Diane has been performing throughout the United States for over two decades, and it is a rare treat to hear her in a full recital in Philadelphia. The concert will be free and open to the public, so bring your friends and spread the word.

MINISTRY TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S' CHRISTIAN FORMATION (held during High Mass) has seen attendance grow since Epiphany, and our teachers have suggested the use of two curricula - one for older children, one for younger - which we've purchased and begun to use. Whenever possible, the class is now split into two groups, according to age; this will allow us to be more attentive to the particular developmental learning needs of our children.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL will take place June 23-27, 8:30 am to 5 pm every day. Children should always be dropped off and picked up at St Mark's. Breakfast and lunch will be provided each day, as will music, performed by Aron Dunlap. There will be regular field trips surrounding this year's theme, 'Son Harvest: Country Fair.' In both urban and rural environments, children will learn about ecology, take part in gardening, and get a deeper sense of God's gifts in the Earth around us. The next administrative meeting for Vacation Bible School will be March 29th at 11 a. m., in the Parish Hall. We need volunteers; please join us if you have any interest in helping out during some part of the period between June 23-27. The experience will be fun for all involved.

MINISTRY TO THOSE IN THEIR TWENTIES AND THIRTIES.

Our **20S-30S GROUP** continues to grow and diversify. In Lent we began what will be a continuing feature of this group, every other month - a discussion meeting centering on a certain topic, presented by a member of the group. At the inaugural 'discussion group', Adriel Trott spoke about concerns which face many people in our age group, in terms of an allusion to the story of Jacob wrestling with an angel. A good time was had by all. Pizza and beer were had by almost all (it being Lent). On the horizon for the 20s-30s group, we share an afternoon of ministry with the Temple University chaplaincy, to make soup for our Soup Bowl homeless outreach. We'll gather together on Thursday, March 27, at 7:00, to make soup in the Parish Hall kitchen. On April 13th, at 6pm, we have another 20s-30s Sunday Supper in the Rectory. Finally, on April 19th, we gather again with the Temple Chaplaincy to take part in a cleanup project at Bache-Marton public grade school, near the Art Museum. We'll help out between 10:30 and 12:30, followed by lunch. For further details, please subscribe to the 20s-30s email list, by mailing pfrancke@saintmarksphiladelphia.org.

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY FORUM

During Eastertide, the 10:00 Contemporary Christianity Forum will discuss images of the Resurrection, looking at how the post-Resurrection Christ has been classically portrayed by the Eastern and Western Church. Anne Brownlee, archaeologist and art historian at the University of Pennsylvania, Aron Dunlap, and others will lead discussions based on the features of various pieces. The images to be studied include the 'Resurrection' by Piero della Francesca (1412-1492); 'Supper at Emmaus' and 'Incredulity of Thomas' by Michelangelo da Caravaggio (1571-1610), and various Byzantine images, including frescoes and ikons.

SAINT MARK'S DAY – 25 APRIL

Our patronal feast is celebrated on Friday, 25 April with Choral High Mass at 7 pm, followed by a pot-luck supper. The preacher that evening will be Bishop Andrew St. John, former assistant bishop of Melbourne, Australia, and now the Rector of the "Little Church Around the Corner" in New York City. This is a time for us to celebrate our life together as a community. Please plan to come for an evening of worship and fun and fellowship. And bring s dish of food to share! The Rector is sure to line up a selection of Australian wines for the night!

ASCENSION DAY—1 MAY

On May 1, we celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord. We will honor the feast with a high Mass at 7 pm. Following the Mass there will be a wine and cheese reception. Please keep the date open and bring your friends.

SAINT MARK'S GARDEN DAY - 3 MAY

The St. Mark's Garden is one of the few green spots in center city and a joy to both parishioners and passers-by. The Garden Team works hard to keep this beautiful space looking its best throughout spring, summer and fall. As the garden awakens in the spring, much work needs to be done. The annual St. Mark's Spring Garden Work Day is Saturday, May 3rd (rain date May 17th) all day, beginning at 8:00 am Please come to the Garden on May 3 to join in the fun by helping to spread mulch, plant flowers, fertilize, weed, rake, sweep and trim. You don't have to be an expert gardener to lend a hand. Bring your energy, enthusiasm, and a pair of garden gloves, although we have extra gloves if needed. Tools will be provided but you may bring your own if you wish.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - 4 MAY

The Annual Parish Meeting of Saint Mark's will be held on Sunday, May 4th at 9:30 am in the Parish Hall. At this meeting a narrative budget for the past year is distributed along with other reports on the ministry and well-being of the parish. We expect that a report on the Strategic Planning process will be presented, and hope that we will have news of a definite plan to move forward with a Master Plan for historic preservation, space utilization, and maintenance needs for our three historic buildings. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend this meeting!

NEWCOMERS WELCOME - 4 MAY

Saint Mark's is blessed by an atypically high number of visitors, and our Newcomers Committee continues to work to with our greeters to give these people a lasting sense of welcome. We do this by asking new people to sign our visitors' book, writing letters and/or emails to those who sign it, and then inviting that group to dinner at the Rectory. 48 people signed the visitor's book in recent months. The next Newcomers' Dinner is Sunday, May 4th, at 6pm at the Rectory (adjacent to the church, 1625 Locust Street). All recent newcomers to St Mark are warmly invited to attend.

MISSION TO HONDURAS

The planning for the Honduras trip is coming along very well. We are planning on leaving June 7 and will run a drop-in clinic for four days in a needy village outside of San Pedro Sula. The Episcopal Diocese of Honduras will coordinate exactly where we will work, and while that decision has not yet been finalized it is done in a place that has some relationship with the Episcopal church. Our team of missionaries is nearly complete - it looks like we will have around 15 people traveling. The group consists of Paul Francke, Kent John Pope, plus an additional core made up of St. Mark's parishioners, PCOM (Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine) students and graduates, and St. Joseph's Hospital physicians. In addition to bringing all personnel, we also need to bring all our own supplies. Pharmaceuticals, instruments, and supplies are all being donated by area hospitals and charities. We expect to face a diversity of medical needs - we will do all that we can with whatever we have.

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