



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.



“Last year, the Alleluias went into the black box and they never came out.”

FORGOTTEN ALLELUIAS

— FATHER SEAN MULLEN —

For several years now—among all the veils of unbleached linen on crosses, the violet ribbons, and the sombre vesture—one of the accoutrements of Lent at Saint Mark's has been a black box that is brought out during the homily at the Family Mass.

Items are placed into, or taken out of, the black box as aids in teaching the lessons of the church during this time of year. Typically on the Sunday before Lent, the children of the parish create colorful expressions of the word *Alleluia!* in Crayola calligraphy to place inside the black box, as we “bury the Alleluia,” hiding that exuberant, uniquely ecclesiastical exclamation of joy from ourselves, in a deliberate wink of self-deception, until the use of the word is restored on Easter Day and our Alleluias can be freed from the black box. But last year, the Alleluias went into the black box and they never came out.

They are still there. I checked.

How many Alleluias were suppressed in the past year of pandemic that have never escaped their various prisons? How many Alleluias were never even begun? How much joy has been shut up, slapped down, stepped on, squelched, swallowed, or stolen in the past year? And do we think that the loss of so much joyfulness comes at no cost, that we can just pick up where we left off, and never mind the deficit of delight as though it was only ever whipped cream—something that would have been nice but we don't really need?

My soul withers a little in the absence of joy. Doesn't yours?

And yes, Easter came last year. (Easter comes every day to those who need it.) But still, there are those Alleluias sitting in the bottom of a black box. There's no vaccine to restore those lost or forgotten Alleluias. What is to become of them? What else is stuck in the bottom of that black box with those imprisoned Alleluias?

Joy is a natural outcome of Christian faith in the way that bubbles are a natural outcome of fermenting grapes. Done right, you won't get one without the other. But we have just spent a full year in which our joy was at least a little stunted, maybe a little mangled; and the Alleluias got stuck in our throats, since they'd never really been freed from the black box. The Psalmist coined one of the most concise summaries of the Gospel message I know: *"weeping may spend the night, but joy cometh in the morning."* The hard part is that sometimes the night lasts longer than we expected it to—longer than it was supposed to.

Sometimes the night seems to drag on, as it has this year. So long that many of us forget that there were Alleluias that never got said, or sung, or even let out of their box.

But joy does come in the morning. And those unsung Alleluias will yet see the light of day. Jesus is explicit that he came to us so that his joy might be in us and that our joy might be complete.

My faith has brought me to joy more often than I could possibly recount. But I'm aware that the past year has often felt as though I have one foot stuck in that darn black box where there are Alleluias trapped beneath the weight of this pandemic—and my own foot. One of the promises that is coming into view, as more and more of us receive the vaccine, is that we will finally get unstuck: joy cometh in the morning.

We won't have the kind of unfettered Easter we'd like to have this year.

We won't be completely unrestricted or unmasked yet. But we are getting there. And although some of them are still unreleased, we have not lost track of our Alleluias either. Weeping has spent the night, but joy cometh in the morning. And there is no way that black box can keep those Alleluias hidden away much longer. Their effervescence will eventually overpower whatever it is that keeps the lid on.

And joy will arise from the darkness, as sure as Christ is risen from the dead!



POST-PANDEMIC PLANNING

Every aspect of ministry has been affected in some way over the past year by the pandemic. Now that vaccinations are being administered widely, and an end is in sight, we continue to plan for ministry without restrictions. We are working on the assumption that the summer will mark a turning point, and that by the coming fall we'll be able to undertake many ministries without substantial restriction. Won't it be good to gather again for worship and fellowship? Won't it be good to be able to bring children together here at church? Won't it be good to offer unrestricted ministry to the hungry and the homeless who are part of this community of faith in so many ways? *Won't it be good to sing together again?!*

Thankfully, we'll be welcoming Mother Brit Frazier at the beginning of May. Her ministry will be most welcome! And the timing of her arrival means that she will be with us to begin to put in place the first steps of rebuilding, and restoring, reimagining, and revitalizing ministry here.

We very much hope that we will be able to hold Choir Camp at the end of July, and that it will serve as the pivot on which a return to in-person ministry with children will swing. We hope that in the fall we can expect to have children's ministry taking place in its various ways: choir, formation, acolytes, etc. Children belong at Saint Mark's, and it has been hard on us to go so long without them here.

We hope that the fall will also bring a return to our full schedule of worship and prayer, both on Sundays and during the weekday, and a return to offering hospitality following Sunday services and major feasts. Yes, we have been keeping a full round of daily worship here, but it's not everything we are called to do!

Outreach ministries have adapted and even expanded during these many months of pandemic. We'll be reviewing these ministries to see what needs further adjustment or expansion.

Neighbor Care clusters have relied mostly on electronic communication, but it will be good to be able to gather groups together, and foster neighborliness more naturally: face to face!

Our musicians have proved themselves to be exceptionally adaptable and resourceful. But the effect of this pandemic on the core music of the church—voices raised to God's praises—has seemed to add insult to injury. We pray that we will be able to sing together in various configurations, including congregational singing, this fall.

Among the various truths and realities this pandemic has laid bare is the reminder that the church's ministry is a ministry of togetherness—a ministry of community and communion. As a body we are diminished when we cannot be together, and even as individual members of the body, we fail to thrive as we ought to when we are kept apart so drastically. And while we are deeply grateful for the ways that technology keeps us together, we are also mindful of the loss of proximity and nearness to one another. Thankfully, Christ is always near to us when we ask him to be (and even when we don't). And in some ways, perhaps, we have needed Christ to be ever more close at hand over this past year: I know I have.

Let us pray that the summer months will provide us with the chance to plan and prepare for greater togetherness, and a new phase of growing ministry, so that we can continue to carry Christ's love into the world.

UPCOMING AT SAINT MARK'S

MARCH

- 28 Palm Sunday**
Low Mass with Blessing of Palms at 8 a.m.
High Mass with Blessing of Palms at 10 a.m.
- 31 Office of Tenebrae at 7 p.m.**

APRIL

- 1 High Mass on Maundy Thursday at 7 p.m.**
- 2 Solemn Liturgies for Good Friday at 12 noon**
- 3 The Great Vigil and First Mass of Easter at 8 p.m.**
- 4 Easter Day**
Low Mass at 8 a.m.
Family Mass at 9 a.m.
High Mass at 11 a.m.
- 5 Parish Office Closed for Easter Monday**
Low Mass at 10 a.m.
- 25 High Mass for St. Mark's Day at 10 a.m.**
Sidewalk fellowship to follow

MAY

- 2 Welcoming Mother Brit Frazier**



We'll recognize her new ministry among us at the High Mass, and have an opportunity for sidewalk fellowship following to meet her and husband Mark. It will be such a joy to welcome them to our parish community!

Virtual Choral Evensong premiere at 4 p.m.

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 5 p.m.
In person and live-streamed

- 13 High Mass for Ascension Day at 7 p.m.**

- 31 Parish Office Closed for Memorial Day**
Low Mass at 10 a.m.



ST. MARK'S DAY

April 25 is the Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, our patronal feast, and it falls on a Sunday this year. Normally this would be a great excuse for an extra-exuberant celebration, but of course we will still be observing pandemic protocols. We will celebrate the feast with High Mass at 10 a.m., and it will be possible to attend in person or online. Expect some sidewalk fellowship that day, and a schedule of sidewalk fellowship soon, to tide us over till we can get back to more fulsome hospitality!

WINTER CLOTHING MINISTRY THROUGH THE SATURDAY SOUP BOWL

Knowing that our neighbors experiencing homelessness have had to deal with a severe strain on resources during the pandemic, Saint Mark's Soup Bowl, with support from the Vestry, bought new winter hats and gloves and resourced blankets, socks, and masks to accompany them from generous donors. The 2021 Winter Clothing Ministry began the last week of November and concluded Saturday, March 20.

ITEMS DONATED WINTER 2021



STEWARDSHIP AT SAINT MARK'S

ADDIE PEYRONNIN, STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

Recently, I was in the backseat of my aunt's car, my mother in the passenger seat. I was experiencing the sudden, sickly reminder that I don't do well in the backseat of any car. So I passed the hour and a half trip with my eyes closed—listening to, but not participating in, the memories of friends they'd loved. "Did you see Mrs. So-and-So's beautiful obituary?" "Wonder what happened to X?" "Z's daughter is doing so well!" I began wondering if this kind of casual genealogical chatter is a lost art.

I think about storytelling a lot. Especially this year, a year in which Zoom has replaced handshakes and hugs, and we are so desperate for intangible, spoken connections to bind us to the people and places we love.

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

OUR HEARTS IN CHRISTIAN LOVE;

THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS

IS LIKE TO THAT ABOVE.

My recent experience with my mother and aunt surprised me by how powerfully it made me wish for the kind of intergenerational community that comes of living in the same region for a lifetime, with families you've known beyond your own lifetime. It's the kind of community of neighbors (and not always friends, and maybe that's the point!) that Wendell Berry, my most beloved author, brings to life in such a transcendent way.

Except the thing is when this occasional homesickness hits me, I remember that's exactly what I've found at Saint Mark's — "a community that gathers in faith, serves in love, and proclaims hope, through Jesus Christ." So goes our succinct yet powerful mission statement. And I know I'm not the only one.

The wonderful thing about a place like Saint Mark's is that this mission statement is lived, and lived large. Somewhere in Philadelphia right now, I hope and pray, there is a person pulling on a pair of boots given through the Saint Mark's boot giveaway and thinking, "There are people there who love me."

Elsewhere, perhaps an exhausted young family with a new baby (or maybe someone who has lived in solitude for the last 11 months) is thinking, "There are people there who love me!" And every year when

we listen to the parish necrology, or hang the AIDS memorial altar frontal, there we are loving those people, whether they are in our living memory or just in the stories we tell—and maybe not even there, but loved all the same.

The word stewardship may bring to mind uncomfortable thoughts about money—how much can I afford to give and is that enough? Memories of weekly "Stewardship Talks" from the lectern through the month of October, or maybe just a vague sense of "oh, that happens in November." But storytelling, combined with the foundational knowledge of a community that loves—not just you and me but everyone, period—is what the year-round ministry of stewardship is truly about. We have so many stories to tell about Saint Mark's past (some still waiting to be told!), and nearly as many to share about where we are now. It's the honoring of those stories and people in them, as well as expressing our hopes for our future, that I hope might inspire our thoughts about stewardship not only this year, but every year.

I invite you to join me in this celebration of stories—maybe call a friend you miss from Coffee Hour and say, "You know, I've never asked you how you came to Saint Mark's. Would you share that with me?" Or send a YouTube link of a hymn you love to the person you used to regularly share a pew with and ask "I can't wait to sing this with you again...which is your favorite?" The stories that come may not always reflect us at our best, individually or corporately. They may not all be interesting. But they're all important, and together they represent an extraordinary community that serves so many and so much...through Jesus Christ.

ADULT FORUM

MOTHER NORA JOHNSON

Join us every Sunday at 11:30 a.m. on Zoom for lively conversation and the best attempt we can make at fellowship without meeting in person. Pour yourself a cup of coffee and enjoy the community we all miss. The Adult Forum in April will finish up our series of drawing from the curriculum for Confirmation classes to guide the topics of the Forum. We will finish out the program year by exploring the succession of feast days at the end of May into June.

APRIL 11 - FORMATION IN COMMUNITY: THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

How is the Episcopal Church connected to other churches that trace their origins to the Church of England? What does it mean to be Anglican? What does our tradition have to do with the colonial history of the British Empire and how do we work through that history in the present day?

APRIL 18 - FORMATION IN COMMUNITY: WHAT IS THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

This will be a discussion about how the larger church is shaped and governed, and how our history informs our ministry in the present day.

APRIL 25 - FORMATION IN COMMUNITY: SAINT MARK'S DAY

At this writing it's hard to know whether we will be celebrating confirmations, receptions, and baptisms as a parish as we would normally do on our patronal feast day. But our Sunday Forum on St. Mark's Day will be a celebration of our community and of those who are undergoing preparation for those sacraments among us.

MAY 2 - FORMATION IN COMMUNITY: COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Would you like to know more about how the process of preparing for confirmation, reception, and baptism has shaped those who have been studying with us? Come hear a bit about what our class has been doing and how its members have been shaped by this process.

MAY 9 - ROGATION SUNDAY

What is Rogation Sunday and how and why do we celebrate it? Come hear about the customs of the church and the theology that leads us to pray in thanksgiving for all of creation.

MAY 16 - WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

This is a forum for all of us, for questions about anything related to our faith. We'll answer them together. There is nothing too large or too small to ask. Bring your knowledge so you can help others and your questions so you can elicit wise responses.

MAY 23 - PENTECOST

What do you understand and believe about the Holy Spirit? This will be a discussion of theological and artistic representations of the Spirit, with an emphasis on our shared life of prayer and praise.

MAY 30 - TRINITY SUNDAY

17th century poet John Donne describes the Trinity as "bones to philosophy but milk to faith." We'll look at the larger "Litany" from which this description comes, and ponder Donne's approach to trinitarian theology.

JUNE 6 - CORPUS CHRISTI

This feast day made its way into the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar through the prayers of a mystic, St. Juliana of Liège. Come learn about her life and her influence on St. Thomas Aquinas, who wrote many of the prayers and hymns we now use for this day.





OUTREACH

AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTNER & SERVE

CHARLIE MILLER AND GABI MACHADO

MOTHER ALEJANDRO AT CHURCH OF THE CRUCIFIXION



Mother Jessie Alejandro, born in Puerto Rico, came to Philadelphia at just 7 years old. She has spent most of her life involved with ministering to God's people in many ways: from starting Mother's Mission ministry in Kensington addressing the opioid epidemic, working as a pastor in the nondenominational church, to travelling Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, to now being an ordained Episcopal priest as of October last year.

She is the first Latina priest in this Diocese since the 1990s, and as a mother of four and grandmother of

eleven she was able to complete an alternative route to the priesthood, through a program Bishop Gutiérrez created specifically to support those who do not have the time or financial resources to pursue a theological education. Since being appointed the Hispanic missionary, she has already established a weekly "Giving Tuesday" Free Market featuring fresh produce, bread, canned food, rice, dairy, eggs, frozen meat, juices, soft drinks, etc. She has also set up a bilingual children's library, and clothing boutique for all those who are in need. On Sundays, she celebrates a Spanish Eucharist service live-streamed through the local Latinx/Hispanic Radio 'Philatinos' at 4 p.m. Her preaching is lively and powerful. Her vision for the Church of the Crucifixion is one where worship is central, and the "community comes together to help each other out, to share the love."

Our partnership with Mother Jessie grew out of our outwardly driven mission, and has worked smoothly through our relationship with Philabundance. The very first Tuesday that we dropped off over 700 pounds of food from Philabundance to Crucifixion, 320 people showed up. The following Tuesday, 342 people. The third Tuesday, 720 people. Seeing so many people lined up outside of the church is heartbreaking. The need is great, but we are glad that we can help this important ministry in such a meaningful way.

The year 2021 has brought about a unique opportunity to expand the outreach ministry of Saint Mark's in new and Spirit-filled ways. Specifically, the decades-running Food Cupboard, allowed Saint Mark's to leverage an existing partnership with Philabundance, in order to provide fresh groceries to more people in need. On Tuesdays and Fridays, teams of volunteers from Saint Mark's head to the Philabundance Hub in southernmost part of Philadelphia and wait in a line of church vans to pick up at least 700 pounds of food.

On Tuesdays, food is delivered to The Church of the Crucifixion (8th & Bainbridge); and on Fridays it is delivered to St. Simon the Cyrenian (22nd & Reed). But here's the amazing part: this didn't start from scratch! The Senior Warden from St. Simon's, Paul Ronald Jackson, had an existing hot food ministry, so now, a bag of groceries is given to every person who comes for a hot meal on Saturday—that's about 50 households every week. At the Church of the Crucifixion, we are working with Mother Jessie Alejandro, Hispanic Missioner to South Philadelphia. Read on to find out more about these inspiring and mission driven disciples.

PAUL JACKSON AT ST. SIMON'S



Paul has been attending St. Simon's for 12 years and began serving free meals simply "because we didn't have a food ministry, so we just started with 2 days a month." At the beginning of the pandemic, he shifted to serving his neighbors Tuesday—Sunday, providing a hot meal to between 50 to 100 people a day. Post-pandemic, he hopes to return to the original model of folks coming into the building and sitting down for a meal and fellowship. When asked what the future holds, he responded with "there's such a need, I don't think we can go back to two days a month." Paul has even bigger plans: he's already working on opening a homeless shelter for 20 men in the church's lower level and a day care for local families in the upper level. When asked what keeps him going, he shared "St. Simon's has been neglected a long time and now it's getting the attention that it needs." His most immediate goal is to secure a full-time priest for the parish. After a year of planning some type of joint ministry with Saint Mark's, he is happy that we are partnering with and learning from one another, adding "this is the way it's supposed to be, helping each other." Amen!

NEIGHBOR *Care*

GROWING AS IT SERVES

FATHER STEPHEN MOORE

This unique organization began in June 2017 as a clerically overseen networked parish ministry run at the local level by lay leaders in their home neighborhoods that regularly gathers, prays, and helps parishioners. Its caring role is founded as a structure of kindness, serving to strengthen the ties of neighborliness that bind us together.

Over the last couple of months, more leaders have taken over the local clusters and a new cluster – for those who have left the parish but retain a strong spiritual relationship with Saint Mark's – has been formed.

Joining the leadership are: Bill and Zita Kreindler (Center City North cluster), who have taken over from David Marshall, a founding leader of Neighbor Care and who played a major part in building up the ministry; Elena van Stee (Schuylkill), taking over from another founding leader, Lindsey Bingaman. Isabelle Benton and Aileen White, also long-time supporters of Neighbor Care, have taken over from Angela Bilger to run the Main Line cluster; and Anna Marchini and Barbara Mische have succeeded Kevin Greene in running Fairmount cluster.

Cluster leaders continuing in their current roles are Davis Dure (North West Philly), John and Ted Schmiechen (South Philly), and Kevin Hook (Ben Franklin).

Fr. Stephen has started a new cluster, the Expats, for those retaining strong connection to Saint Mark's after leaving the parish, enlarging the definition of 'neighbor' beyond local identity: participants so far include former parishioners now living in Kenya, Wisconsin, Virginia, Alabama and Washington, DC.

The unique pandemic pressures have brought out the best in Neighbor Care, despite obstructing its capacity to gather in person. The crisis has seen its caring role flourish, enabling parishioners to be supported and find another source of hope in times of sickness and need that is essential to healing and wellbeing.

Examples of care in the last few months range from meeting the needs of the incarcerated to hospital visits; flowers on the recovery from surgery; birthday cards; snow-clearance; meals prepared and delivered to those unwell or recovering from the birth of a child; the delivery of medications; and the collection from home for attendance at Saint Mark's. Each is a small, neighborly thing that makes a big, personal difference.

Main Line cluster held Compline each Wednesday evening throughout Lent, while Kevin Hook sent out weekly spiritual reflections and prayers on Lenten themes to his Ben Franklin group. Elena van Stee is continuing the tradition at Schuylkill of topics for the monthly meetings; the North West Philly group is using its meetings as a book review; and Center City North is discussing Julian of Norwich for spiritual insights to be gained when isolated during a pandemic. South Philly members are supporting a local food drive.



Psalm 34

Anglican Chants by Herbert Howells (1892-1983) and Sir Edward C. Bairstow (1874-1946)

MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

ROBERT MCCORMICK

This issue of The Lion's Mark will appear during Holy Week, and the music for that week's liturgies will be much closer, compared to last year when no choirs were permitted (or congregations, for that matter!), to the full musical tradition we cherish at Saint Mark's. I've learned that, after years here and other Anglo-Catholic parishes, I took the ability to render elaborate music for the Holy Week rites somewhat for granted, and I hope and pray I'll never do so again! Of course, musical forces will still of necessity be greatly reduced, and due to limits on singing and rehearsal times, there will be less music than we might consider ideal—and, with God's help, we will again be blessed with in years to come. This means not only simpler and briefer choral music, but most painfully, still no congregational singing, especially hymns. Oh, how I miss them, and I know so many of you do as well. Yet we have come so far in a year, and I am grateful. *Seeing several dozen of you in the pews again is hardly last among things for which I am thankful!*

Quartets continue to sing for Masses on Sundays and holy days, and perhaps by Holy Week we will be able to expand slightly. It seems unlikely, though, that the pattern of small ensembles will change much through the end of the "season," Corpus Christi, but as I have written before, our broader music program remains intact, and we all hope and pray that the return of the full choir will not be too far in the future. Our boy and girl choristers continue to meet up to four times weekly via Zoom, and that time is largely spent preparing for "virtual" Choral Evensong, with children and adults recording their parts individually at home to form a virtual choir. Our next Evensong will be the first Sunday in May, and again I must offer enormous thanks to Bryan Dunnewald, Assistant Organist & Choirmaster, for his technical expertise, and to Daniel Russell for much behind the scenes assistance. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will again be sung by a quartet following the Evensong webcast, and that helps us maintain a liturgical and musical pattern as close as possible to our norm. Additionally, after Easter, we hope to resume small in-person rehearsals of choristers age 12 and older, as will be permitted by diocesan guidelines.

I regard all of this as an enormous blessing, yet I continue to long for the day when we can again pack the church and the choir stalls. That day will come; I am sure of it, and I miss it hugely in the meanwhile. I continue to pray for our parish and for all our parishioners, and I look forward to seeing you all again as soon as it is safe.