



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.

FORGIVENESS

FATHER SEAN MULLEN

It's surprising that in *The Book of Forgiving*, the very first occasion for forgiveness that Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes about is not some experience of the oppressive cruelty of the South African apartheid regime that he or his friends or his family suffered. It was witnessing the abuse that his father visited upon his mother. The need for forgiveness in this world is vast and deep; it is deeply personal, but societies, too, need to know how to seek forgiveness and how to forgive.

And yet, who is talking about forgiveness? Where will you find people seeking forgiveness? Where will you find people offering it? The most trite cliché on the topic expresses some of the worst advice on it: that we should forgive and forget. The church today seems so often in need of forgiveness herself that it's actually easy to forget that she is supposed to be a haven and a school for forgiveness.

Insult and injury are everywhere today, creating an environment of endless need for frequent, voluminous, and energetic forgiveness-seeking and forgiveness-offering. But somehow, there doesn't seem to be much forgiveness being sought or offered.

Jesus taught explicitly and radically about forgiveness (How many times must we forgive? Seventy time seven.) And his works of healing were often an avenue for forgiveness (What's easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Take up your mat and walk?). One of his last words on the Cross was a cry of forgiveness (Father, forgive



them....). Forgiveness is not an optional extra of the Christian faith: it is part and parcel of the Christian life, and without both giving and receiving it, we are not opening ourselves up to God's grace, and as a result, we fail to live the lives God calls us to.

Archbishop Tutu wrote that "forgiveness is the only way out of the trap that injury creates." (*The Book of Forgiving*, p. 36), and he

encourages us to cultivate a mindset of forgiveness, rather than a mind-set of grievance. And he tells us that we do this not in order to find the way to forgive a particular act, but in order to be more forgiving people. (p. 218). I turn to Archbishop Tutu because he has almost unparalleled credibility on the matter of forgiveness, but I'm afraid his argument to promote a culture of forgiveness is not carrying the day at the moment.

Desmond Tutu turned to Jesus because Jesus also has unparalleled credibility on the matter of forgiveness. Ask the woman caught in adultery (Have any condemned you? Neither do I.). Ask the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. Ask the repentant thief at Calvary, or the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the Cross. Jesus didn't just teach about forgiveness, he carried forgiveness in his heart and shared it with those who were in need of it. He still does.

The need for forgiveness—both the giving of it and the receiving of it—is all around us, generally being ignored. And the more we ignore it, the more stuck we get in traps that injure us sorely, the more we get mired in the quicksand

mindset of grievance, it sucks us deeper and deeper into our own bitterness.

We often say that Lent is a time of repentance. And repentance is not an act of self-flagellation: repentance is a method of transformation, a path toward wholeness that leads past forgiveness every time.

Archbishop Tutu laid out what he called a Fourfold Path of Forgiveness. The four steps of forgiveness, he wrote were these: Telling the Story; Naming the Hurt; Granting Forgiveness; Renewing or Releasing the Relationship.

This Lent I hope you will open your life and your heart to the grace of forgiveness. Perhaps you need to seek forgiveness from someone you have wronged. Perhaps you need to offer forgiveness to someone who has hurt you. Perhaps you need to ask God's forgiveness. Perhaps you don't know what you need, but you know that you are stuck in a trap and you can't get out. Perhaps you sense in your own heart the tendency to cultivate grievance rather than forgiveness. Perhaps you need to tell the story of your injury or insult. Perhaps you need to name the hurt you are carrying, or you gave caused. Perhaps you are not so far from being able to grant forgiveness. Perhaps you can renew the relationship that was harmed, or perhaps you can release yourself from the pain of its grip.

The church's sacrament of Reconciliation is meant to invite each of us into a more intentional space of forgiveness-seeking and forgiveness-granting. The rite assumes our need to seek forgiveness from God, but it often leads past forgiveness that needs to be offered to others, too. This Lent we will restore the regular availability of the clergy on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in the Lady Chapel to be available to hear confessions and offer the sacrament of Reconciliation. All of the clergy at Saint Mark's are also available by appointment to hear confessions. If you are making a first confession, or if it has been some time since your last confession, it is often a good idea to meet with one of us for discussion beforehand. Please do be in touch with one of us.

Fridays in Lent are days of special devotion. It's long been our custom to walk the Way of the Cross in the church after Evening Prayer on Fridays in Lent, and we'll continue that practice this year. Each Friday at 6 p.m., just before we walk the Stations of the Cross we'll give a short reflection on forgiveness and we'll introduce an exercise intended to help you think and pray about forgiveness. Please join us if you can.

Archbishop Tutu reminded us that we cultivate a culture of forgiveness one person at a time, one day at a time. We can each contribute to cultivating such a culture by using a little time each week to reflect on forgiveness, to seek it out when we need it, and to offer it when we need to, and to break free from the traps of injury and insult, and discover joy!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

- 6 4 P.M. EVENSONG & BENEDICTION
- 16 7 P.M. CELLO CONCERT
performed by Dominique de Williencourt
- 25 7 P.M. THE ANNUNCIATION
Choral High Mass

APRIL

- 3 4 P.M. EVENSONG & BENEDICTION
Holy Week at Saint Mark's
- 10 PALM SUNDAY
Regular Mass Schedule
- 13 7 P.M. THE OFFICE OF TENEBRAE
- 14 7 P.M. MAUNDY THURSDAY
Choral High Mass
Vigil before the Sacrament to follow
- 15 12 NOON GOOD FRIDAY
Solemn Liturgies
- 16 8 P.M. THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER
- 17 EASTER DAY
Regular Mass Schedule
- 18 EASTER MONDAY
Parish Office Closed
Low Mass at 10 a.m.
- 19-21 & 26-28
12:45 P.M. CURTIS SPRING
CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
- 24 PONTIFICAL HIGH MASS
with Confirmation
- 25 ST. MARK'S DAY

MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

ROBERT MCCORMICK

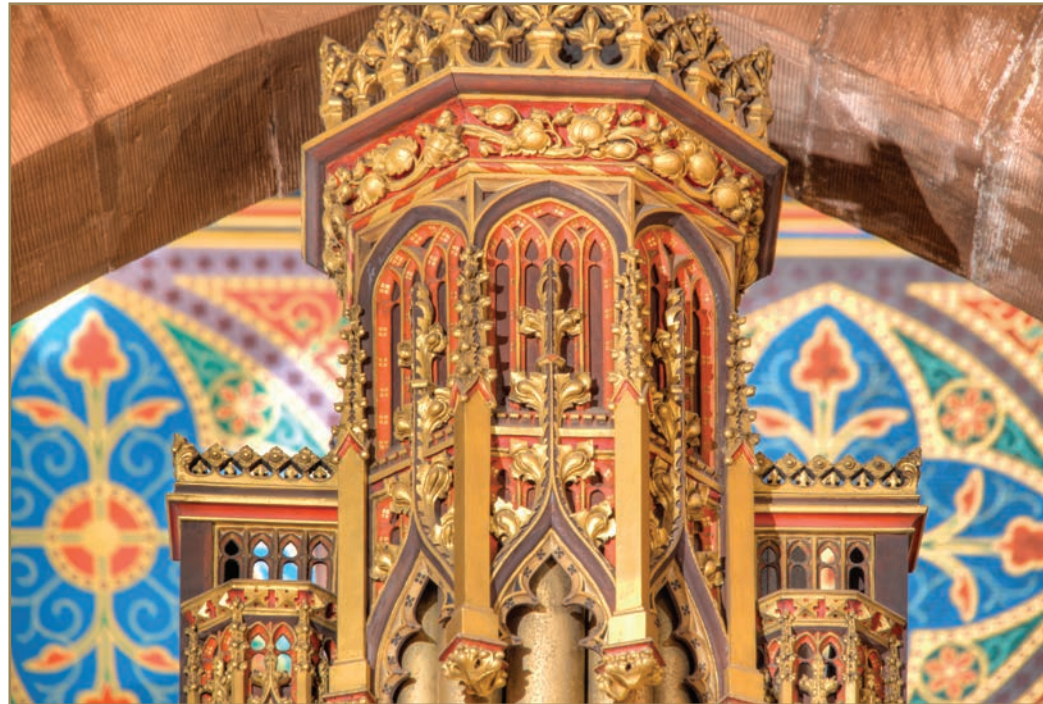
At the beginning of Advent, especially following a beautiful service of Advent Lessons & Carols, things were beginning to feel almost like “old times” for our choirs (except for the still-necessary presence of masks for singing), with the weekly round of rehearsals and services back in full swing. The Saint Mark’s Singers, our newest choir, sang a marvelous inaugural concert on the afternoon of the Fourth Sunday of Advent, under the direction of Bryan Dunnewald. I was so glad that event could go forward, but it was the last choral singing in church until after the New Year, it turned out, due to the rapid rise in cases of the Omicron variant. Not singing for Christmas liturgies was dispiriting both for Boy & Girl Choristers and the adults of our Parish Choir. Yet, of course, God is always good, and praises of the Christ Child still were offered fervently.

Quartets resumed singing for High Masses on the Second Sunday of Christmas, and full choirs are expected to return at the beginning of February, with February’s Choral Evensong & Benediction moved to the last Sunday of the month to allow both adults and children to sing that liturgy safely. I remain grateful for the steadfast commitment of all our singers, ages 7 and above!

That will be in the rear view mirror by the time this issue reaches readers, and indeed, soon we will be turning our attention to music for Lent, Holy Week, and the Triduum (Great Three Days). As always, music has been selected for all liturgies with careful attention to its appropriateness for the day, season, and liturgical function, but also to

“bring out of our treasure what is old and what is new.” Music by Palestrina and Charles Villiers Stanford is sung and played alongside newer works by our own James Testa and living composers such as Judith Bingham, David Hurd, and Margaret Burk (among many others); additionally, we have the honor of premiering new choral Mass settings written for us by Joshua Hartman and David Carpenter.

The Saint Mark’s Singers resumes rehearsals as well in preparation for their spring concert, further



details of which may be found elsewhere in this issue. Bryan Dunnewald tells me 38 persons are registered for the Singers, and I am thankful for all of them, not least Bryan and his tremendous leadership in getting a new choir off the ground and already flourishing in such an uncertain time.

As ever, I wish to convey to all parishioners and friends of Saint Mark’s how I do not take for granted the privilege of serving God in such a faithful and loving parish, with such steadfast leadership. Even in the darkest days of the pandemic, this has helped to keep me inspired, encouraged, and from despair. Thanks be to God.



CHILDREN'S FORMATION

MOTHER BRIT FRAIZER

In any parish formation program worth its salt, there has been—at some stage of its development—careful consideration of the curriculum that will be followed in teaching, learning, and exploring the Christian faith.

There are at least as many curricula out there as there are denominations, and in some traditions, competing resources present youth leaders and formation directors with several opportunities for intensive review. Good curricula are always marked by some basic characteristics. They are accessible to both teachers and learners, offering points of connection for different teaching and learning styles. They build on themselves, providing a foundation of knowledge mastery that invites more nuanced and exciting advancement as certain skills and ideas are understood. They are adaptable, offering breathing room for additions or adjustments that suit the life of the worshiping community (Anglo-Catholic churches, especially, often must supplement existing materials to welcome young people into some of our feasts and ritual). And they offer opportunities for both breadth and depth when it comes to walking a young person through scriptural and theological concepts. It is helpful to be equipped to spend time on both basics and more advanced investigations of Christian life and tradition.

But below these fundamental hopes for good formation materials, the singular most important question a good formation director asks of a curriculum is simple: “Does this resource welcome young people into the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” Other good questions include: “What does this curriculum teach us about Jesus?” “How do these

materials preach the love of Christ?” “How does this program connect the Gospel to the everyday lives of children and youth?” and “Does this material encourage children and youth to ask good questions about their faith?” When the answers to these questions are along the lines of “yes” and “the joy of the Good News,” you’ve got a great start. A good curriculum is not so much about its flashy illustrations or slick marketing materials, but about how thoroughly its materials are animated by the love of Christ.

It is a joy at Saint Mark’s to dig into this love of Jesus in our formation program this year. Each of the distinct curricula in use in our three current classrooms is solidly built upon the joy of the Gospel, and our faithful leaders are engaging their own creativity and gifts to bring these materials to life each Sunday. This year, we have placed a particular emphasis on learning about the Bible. After all, the Bible is where we first learn the story of Jesus in all of its majesty, and it is a book (or a “library,” as we learn) meant for each of us as we grow closer to God in faith and prayer. Through Godly Play, our youngest Schola kids are invited into an imaginative encounter with scripture. Physical objects like wooden blocks, sand, felt, and figurines help build the story in a touchable, accessible way, and guided “wondering” invites children to imagine themselves in direct relationship to the story.

In Young Disciples, late elementary and early middle school children are spending lots of good time learning about the Bible in its fullness. Each Sunday, they are holding and reading from the same Bibles that adults read. They are learning about what we mean by the Old and New Testaments, the languages in which the Bible was first written, how to locate books of the Bible, and what we mean by chapters and verses. The more familiar kids are with the Bible, the more empowered they are to pick one up and read it! With our older youth in Connect, the Bible is met with freshness each Sunday as we make connections (as in the program’s name...) between scripture and daily life. No question is too big, too small, or too difficult to tackle together, and fruitful discussions emerge from every lesson. What a gift it is to meet children and youth of all ages with the Word of God, broken open and meant for each of them.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE GRID

BUILDING A NEW CHOIR WITH TAPE & TELEPHONE POLES

BRYAN DUNNEWALD



From the outset we knew that a key part of the Saint Mark's Singers' mission would be to draw members from inside and outside the Saint Mark's congregation, engaging our local community through a shared love of singing. Recruiting these newcomers was the most daunting aspect of getting the Singers started—where do we find new Singers?

I set out to recruit via four methods: 1) online/social media 2) church announcements 3) targeted emails, and 4) 250 paper flyers affixed to lampposts around Philadelphia. My goal was to have a choir of 16–20 members for the first year, and to have 4–5 of those be new to Saint Mark's. I figured the majority of these recruits would come from church announcements and targeted emails.

After launching all of these recruiting methods in late August, our first few members started trickling in. The first Singers were, as suspected, from our own congregation. However, as the month wore on, I started receiving inquiries from outside the parish; first one or two per week, then four, five, six! For each outside recruit I asked how they heard about us. To my amazement, everyone said they saw our flyer on a lamppost or telephone pole, scanned the QR code, and sent me an email. Not a single person came to us through social media, emails, or online advertising.

For those who were able to make our first concert, Red Velvet Christmas, you saw just how well this old-fashioned recruiting method worked. Of our 32 members, 17 had no prior connection with Saint Mark's! Of the 17 newcomers, 15 found us through paper flyers and two were recruited via word of mouth. We now have 38 members for the Spring, and our current members are bringing in new recruits themselves.

Every week when the Singers head to the garden for *Bota con brio*, I am always touched by how, in just a few months, our Singers have made new friends with each other. From the beginning our new choir came together: an outsider would have no way of knowing who was a Saint Mark's member and who was a newcomer. I am looking forward to our next concert on May 15 and rest easy knowing we've built a strong culture of friendly people who love to sing together.

THE FORUM IN LENT

The traditional disciplines of Lent—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—are often imagined in the negative, as “doing without” our usual freedoms. This year, perhaps because of the extended pandemic and the sense of turmoil around us, it may be harder than ever to remember the invitation we are given in Lent to draw closer to the God who loves and heals us freely. Can repentance be a form of rest? We will explore Lenten disciplines and themes this year from the perspective of healing and repair, asking for new strength so that we can move forward joyfully as the people of God. Please consider joining us in the Parish Hall at 10 a.m. any Sunday in Lent, or for the whole series. We’ll be sharing forms of strength and renewal as a way of repenting for the disorder that keeps us separate from the love of God.

MARCH 6: WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Often what’s hard about facing the season of Lent is the sense that we have to “accomplish” some form of repentance, or work ourselves into a specific emotional state in order to feel that we have repented. In this workshop we will talk more about what it means to give our wills over to God, and how resting in what God wants and how God sees us is in itself a kind of transformation. Think of this as a reset for the season, a giving over of our own ideas about spiritual life so that we are free to love as God loves.

MARCH 13: HOW DO WE FAST?

Giving up chocolate for Lent can be a wonderful spiritual exercise, but it can also get stale. How do we learn about deeper ways of letting go? What might we refrain from this season that would actually allow God to reach us in new ways? What, in other words, is the difference between a fast and a fitness challenge?

MARCH 20: PRAYER AND REPENTANCE

Is it hard for you to maintain a spiritual practice? Does prayer become one more item on a list of ideas for self-improvement? What would our lives as praying people look like if we surrendered the act of prayer itself to God? In this workshop we will be looking for new practices and new attitudes that help us to be open to God’s desire to be with us.

MARCH 27: JOY IS REPENTANCE

Every Lent we observe what we call “Laetare Sunday.” Sometimes we think about this day as a loosening of restrictions, as though we needed a little break before the heavy lifting of Holy Week. That may be important, but let’s talk about some deeper understandings of joy and rejoicing. Our working hypothesis for this session will be that rejoicing is repentance on some level: a sign that we are seeing things as God sees them and not as the world tells us to see.

APRIL 3: SACRIFICE AND GIVING

How can sacrifice be a form of rest? How is sacrifice connected to freedom and joy? How does giving change us? Does it change the world? These are humbling mysteries, but we gather as a church in Lent in part so that we can begin to learn how to lay down our lives. In this Forum we will explore that mystery together with care and love.

APRIL 10: PALM SUNDAY NO FORUM

APRIL 17: EASTER SUNDAY NO FORUM



FORGIVENESS, FRIDAYS, & STONES

Fridays in Lent are days of special devotion. At Saint Mark's it's our custom to walk the Way of the Cross, also known as the Stations of the Cross, after Evening Prayer on Fridays in Lent, and we'll continue that practice this year. Evening Prayer is said at 5:30 p.m. Stations will begin at about 6:05 p.m.

This year, Fr. Mullen will offer a short, five-minute reflection on forgiveness in between Evening Prayer and Stations of the Cross, beginning about 6 p.m. His reflections will also refer to an exercise in forgiveness that everyone is welcome to participate in this Lent: using stones that we can carry with us as a way of focusing our attention on our need to seek forgiveness and/or offer forgiveness.

We harm one another with insult or injury, and when we do, we end up in what Archbishop Tutu calls "a trap." The trap is this: that by the ways we hurt each other we bind ourselves to one another with resentment, anger, bitterness, and hostility. When we take aim at one another with resentment, anger, bitterness, and hostility, we delude ourselves, thinking that the one at whom we have aimed our animus will suffer a deserved penalty. We fail to see how much we suffer ourselves as a result of carrying those destructive feelings with us; we do not realize how heavy they are.

The key to unlock the traps that we find ourselves in as a result of insult and injury is forgiveness.

We also undermine our relationship with God through the things we do that we ought not to do, and things we leave undone that we ought to have done. These sins of commission or omission put us in a trap that prevents us from loving God as God loves us, and from accepting God's love as God intends for us.

The key to unlock the trap that prevents us from loving God and accepting God's love is also forgiveness.

This Lent you will find a pile of stones near the Font. They are small enough to carry with you, but big enough to be a slight nuisance if you carry one in your pocket, or in your hand, or in your purse. These stones represent things for which you may need to seek or offer forgiveness. The forgiveness you need may be from God. Or you may need to seek forgiveness from or offer forgiveness to another person.

You'll also see that there are two boxes near the Font: one marked "Seek Forgiveness" and the other marked "Offer Forgiveness". The object of the exercise is to carry the stone until you are ready to set it down in the appropriate box - until you are ready for the forgiveness you need. You may need more than one stone.

The basic exercise is simple. Take a stone and hold on to it. Carry it with you for a while. Use it as a way to think of forgiveness that you need in your life—either forgiveness you need to ask for, or forgiveness you need to offer.

As you hold the stone, think about the reason you need forgiveness. If there is someone from whom you need to seek forgiveness, maybe you should carry the stone with you until you have asked for forgiveness. If there is someone you need to offer forgiveness, maybe you should carry it with you until you are ready to do so.

Maybe you pick up the stone at the beginning of Mass and use it as a way to be specific about something for which you need to ask God to forgive you. If you can earnestly seek God's forgiveness, maybe you can put the stone down on your way out. Or maybe you need to carry it with you all week, or all of Lent.

Be clear about what the stone represents. You might need to talk to the stone. You might need to tell God about the stone. You might need to write on the stone, or give it a name. You might need to wash it, or bandage it, or yell at it. Just don't put it aside and forget about it, we do that all the time anyway, and the point of the stone is to draw your attention to it. And don't just throw the stone away; don't just toss it in the river, not if you can help it.

When you are ready for forgiveness, bring the stone to whichever box you think it belongs in: Seek Forgiveness, or Offer Forgiveness. Maybe you need to say a prayer when you set your stone in the box, or light a candle. Maybe you'll be ready to pick up another stone and work on another piece of forgiveness that's needed in your life. Maybe you need to take two or three more stones. They do add up!

Forgiveness is very near the heart of Jesus' teaching and ministry, but we often don't have good ways of practicing forgiveness; we don't know where to find it or how to offer it. Use the Forgiveness Stones as a way of forgiving and being forgiven.

A SALVE FOR BURN OUT

FATHER STEPHEN MOORE

One of the dominant characteristics of the pandemic has been the near-universal sense of feeling burned out to varying degrees. The stress of 2020 and 2021 has been relentless and exhausting, and it's small wonder that it's taking its toll.

Writing in *Faith and Leadership*, Executive Director of Leadership Education at Duke Divinity David Ordom says: "It is a complex condition that can manifest any of three distinct symptoms: exhaustion (a depletion of mental or physical resources), cynical detachment (a depletion of social connectedness) and a reduced sense of efficacy (a depletion of value for oneself)."

Many people are experiencing collective, long-term grief. Because they have experienced so many losses, they may fall into patterns of silence and withdrawal—something often seen in those living alone.

Neighbor Care has almost accidentally emerged as a salve to burnout.

This simple and quite unremarkable loose-knit "structure of kindness" provides a forum to the far reaches of the parish for anyone who is hard-pressed to be heard, and then creates a space to listen to others. To be intentionally heard is to be affirmed and valued.

What do your neighboring parishioners hear in your stories? Are the themes clustered around exhaustion, isolation, helplessness or something else?

In these gatherings as neighbors, parishioners for almost five years have come together to share and engage and, in a trend that's now distinct since 2021 in three of the seven clusters, to pray. These groups regularly meet to pray Compline, with participants sharing the leadership. The Ben Franklin Cluster also convenes daily for Morning Prayer, and in the North West Philadelphia Cluster every member of the group is named in a prayer list for each day of the month.

According to David Ordom, the key is to share and encourage listening to each other, including those outside the church walls.

"This is not therapy but rather a skill that congregations need to practice with each other and the community in these stressful days."

As we listen to each other, themes will likely emerge that provide clues about how to support each other through burnout. Simple courses of action for each symptom are compassion and agency, respect and understanding.

In a moment when daily life is so difficult, I wonder if church is instead a place where we listen carefully to God and each other. Where we feel loved and replenished and go out into our everyday life sharing that compassion with everyone we meet.

Lovingly supporting each other through burnout is not just at work within congregations but might be a critical calling for all Christians, whatever their communities. Such love, which is a source of healing and the motivation to look out for each other amid shared losses, is grounded in and sustained by God's eternal love for each of us and for us finds its medium through Neighbor Care.



ON A COLD, GRAY, DAMP MORNING...

GAETANO PICCIRILLI, MEMBER OF
THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Just weeks before lockdown, I began serving on the Stewardship Committee. I am not entirely sure how this came about, as nothing in my faith background lent itself to outwardly expressing anything more than the minimum requirements for engagement. I was, and still often am, uncomfortable discussing faith publicly or semi-privately. Except for debates with friends, most of my life I avoided any meaningful discussions on faith. I skirted Bible studies, I would leave events early when possible, and when I couldn't, I'd become silent. Simply, for nearly 30 years, I never felt at ease.

Somehow, pre-pandemic March 2020 was different. In writing this, I have attempted to understand why or how. I have arrived at two plausible explanations. One explanation is, that when he asked, Father Mullen mistook me for someone else. When Father Mullen approached me, I had no place to run on a grey, cold, and damp February morning. I was trapped in a pew with my children, and you cannot tell a priest that he is mistaken on sacred ground (it's against the rules).

EITHER HE MISTOOK ME OR IT WAS
SOMETHING ELSE.

My pre-March 2020 Sunday routine, which had developed over years, comprised: an early bus ride with my son, drop him off at rehearsal, wait quietly in the church until Family Mass, or grab coffee elsewhere, then the Family Mass, and Schola had become a pattern. The routine was modified when my wife and our twin daughters began to attend regularly.

Over time, I began to hum the Schola songs like "Francis you will wander" around the house, and even at work. When my mother died in 2017, Saint Mark's offered me a place to contemplate and remember her. I enjoyed pancake suppers before Lent. I also got to volunteer time with my son in preparing soup or baking for the less fortunate, and cleaning St. James Church for the Christmas holidays. I traveled with my son and the Boy and Girl Choristers New York City to sing, along with the adult Parish Choir, at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue.

Even when the weather was grey, cold, and damp, like it was the morning Father Mullen approached me, Saint Mark's began to feel warm and welcoming. I was "received" into the faith. Rather than feeling awkward and uncomfortable, I spoke. I attended Evening Prayer, workshops, and extracurriculars.

FATHER MULLEN WASN'T MISTAKEN.
I WAS DIFFERENT.

Saint Mark's gave me a home and so much peace, encouragement, engagement, and love. With a little faith from us, God set my family on the path to this wonderful place—a place I have physically missed these last 18 months. I suspect I am not alone. As we come back together, I hope we may express our gratitude for the gift that is Saint Mark's, its ministries and programs, its clergy and staff, our fellow parishioners, and the place Saint Mark's holds on Locust Street. In all of this, Saint Mark's impact on its parishioners, neighbors, and community is considerable. And, as with any impactful organization, funds from its constituency are necessary to ensure that even on grey, cold, and damp mornings, there is warmth, fellowship, and family.



20s/30s MINISTRIES

If there is anything that defines the lives of most of our 20s/30s ministry cohort, it is busyness. Whether this busyness comes from work, family, school, or some combination of the three, it is clear that the pandemic hasn't slowed many of us down in the daily demands of life in 2022. During our time together at the Simple Suppers of last fall and winter, a common theme emerged: how do we take time for rest? How can we devote more of our time to God without sacrificing daily obligations? What is our schedule supposed to look like as Christians?

Three opportunities will seek to speak into these questions as we move through Lent and into the Resurrection hope of the Easter season. First, our February Simple Supper will address the idea of a holy Lent. We will dig more deeply into how Jesus calls us to repentance, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, and there will be opportunities to reflect upon our own spiritual nourishment in this Lenten season.

There are also many who are interested in holding one another accountable for the season, and we will talk about creating a way to check in with each other to support our prayer and other practices throughout the forty days.

Second, a retreat is coming together at the convent of the Community of Saint John the Baptist in Mendham, New Jersey. The retreat will take place over two days and one evening (Friday into Saturday), and provide a gentle horarium of prayer, study, and free time on the convent's beautiful grounds. Stay tuned for more information available shortly.

Third, we warmly welcome all people in their 20s/30s to a new online Bible study. The study gathers on Zoom on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, spending an hour from 7 to 8 p.m. exploring a book of the Bible and its themes, history, structure, and wisdom. The first book in review is Paul's epistle to the Philippians. No preparatory work is necessary, and people of all levels of experience with Bible studies are welcome. Please be in touch with Mother Frazier if you would like to make sure you're on our 20s/30s email list where the links and any supplementary materials will be shared.

Background of Philippians

- Paul's Imprisonment
 - Where? When?
 - Rome
- The city of Philippi
 - A Roman crossroads
 - Acts 16
- Purpose
 - Epaphroditus' gift and return to Philippi (2.25-30, 4.18)



Morna D. Hooker, "Philippians: Introduction," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* vol. 11:470 (Abingdon, 2000)

OFFERING WELCOME

DANIEL RUSSELL

If your first time visiting an Episcopal Church was anything like mine, you likely found yourself having a “deer in the headlights” moment. When I was in high school, I visited an 8 a.m. Low Mass at my local Episcopal Church, and found myself quietly seated in a pew completely unprepared for what was about to happen. My upbringing was in the Baptist tradition, and as Mass began I was completely blindsided and mystified by the proceedings of a Rite I Mass with a group of seasoned Episcopalians. My bewilderment was obvious to everyone in the room. Thankfully, at some point during the Psalm an older woman scooted into my pew, and in a delightfully thick southern accent said, “Honey, we are here.” She put a Prayer Book in my hands, pointed to the Psalm verse on the page, and one might say that the rest is history.

I love to tell this story because in its simplest form, it is a story of grace and welcome—two things that should always be central to the church’s mission. It is these small, human interactions, where grace is offered and the true embodiment of welcome can be found.

If you visit Saint Mark’s on a Sunday morning, it is likely the first person you will encounter is an usher who greets you with the words *Welcome to Saint Mark’s* and hands you a leaflet. We currently need new volunteers to perform this most important task of grace and welcome to all who walk through our doors, both new and old. During Lent, we will identify and recruit new ushers and train them on how to best welcome newcomers and assist with the liturgy.

Please prayerfully consider if serving as an usher is a ministry you are called to and speak to a member of the clergy or myself. We hope that you will get involved, and with any luck, become an integral part of a newcomer’s story about their first visit to the church.



SAINT MARK'S CHURCH
PHILADELPHIA

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LENT
AT SAINT MARK'S