The second clause of our parish mission statement asserts that we are a community that “serves in love.” We remember that Jesus told his disciples that “I am among you as one who serves.” And we realize that if we are to constitute the Body of Christ at work in the world, we must understand our lives, our ministry, and our work as a ministry of servanthood. It can be useful to stop and ask ourselves, “How are we serving?” Or maybe, “Who are we serving?” We ask these questions of our parish as an organization, but we also might each ask them of our own selves. Or, more basically, we might each ask ourselves, “Am I serving?”

Of course, there are many, many ways to be of service in a parish community. Here are a few that come to mind, and on which our parish community depends:

- Servers at the altar facilitate the worship of God in the Mass. Dozens of people in the parish—both children and adults—take up this service every week, at weekday Masses and on Sundays.
- Office Volunteers serve this community by helping us complete administrative tasks, and by providing a welcome to those who come to the Parish Office.
- Ministry Residents are part of the diocesan Servant Year program, which invites young adults to consider what service to and in the church is all about, and to engage in that service for a year.
- Singers in the choirs and other musicians serve God in their music making.
- Volunteers at the Food Cupboard serve our clients who depend on us for their grocery staples.
- A handful of folks every week provide hospitality after Sunday Masses, serving food and drink to those who gather after Mass.
- Ushers and lectors serve in these important capacities in Sunday liturgies, enabling our proclamation and worship.
- Soup makers and volunteers serve the hungry every Saturday morning, providing nourishment and warmth, and acknowledging a measure of dignity in those whom we are called to serve.
- Teachers and leaders of Christian formation serve God and the church by helping to form us in discipleship.
- Neighbor Care cluster leaders are following the greatest commandment and serving their neighbors.

Nearly everything we do as a parish is a kind of service to our city, this parish community, or to the triune God, whose service is perfect freedom, as the Prayer Book puts it. Many of you have other ways of serving, too, that are not connected to the parish. Unquestionably, Saint Mark’s strives to be place of service, where many are serving, and many are being served.

As individuals, we can deepen our commitment to Christ, to his church, and to Saint Mark’s by asking that simple question, Am I serving? Or, more specifically, Who am I serving? Or How am I serving? These are elementary questions for those of us striving to live a Christian life, and addressing these questions is not all that complicated either. On the other
side of the question mark, if you can’t answer these questions at all, which is to say that if you can’t identify any way you are being of service to others—out of the goodness of your heart (as my mother always says)—then maybe it’s time to think about how you could be serving here at church, or somewhere else where you can make a positive difference in someone’s life, or where you could be offering your prayers and worship to God.

Remember, too, that our mission statement urges us to serve in love. Service is an act of love, especially when it’s done for Jesus’ sake, whose servanthood was one of the ways he showed his love to his friends. I have found in my life that when you join your service to the service of others, that’s where love thrives, and Christ is made all the more plainly present.

**On Stewardship**

**THOUGHTS FROM THE RECTOR**

All around the Episcopal Church and other mainline Protestant denominations, one of two typical patterns is unfolding: in many places fewer people are giving less money to the church for the work and ministry of the Gospel, and in some small number of places fewer people are giving more money. For the church in some ways the important question is not how much money people are giving, rather it’s how many people are giving.

For many years, even as the total amount of giving has gradually gone up, the number of families or individuals who actually make a pledge of financial support to Saint Mark’s has hovered around 170-180. Attendance has increased, and the church has grown in many ways, but the number of pledging units has not moved much (a “unit” can be a family, a couple, or an individual). More than once, our only goal in a stewardship season was to try to increase the number of pledges received. But we never made it much beyond the usual range.

This year we again hoped that the time had come to move past the old threshold and beyond 200 pledging units. The total amount pledged so far for 2020 has increased again, past $510,000. The average pledge is for just over $2,650 a year. As I write, we are within just two or three pledges of reaching our goal of 200 pledging units, and I have every confidence that we will reach and, I expect, surpass that goal!

In short, what this means is that at Saint Mark’s more people are giving more money to the work and ministry of the Gospel. Not only does this dynamic run counter to the patterns that are widely observed elsewhere in the church, more importantly, this pattern is a sustainable one. When more people are contributing to the life and ministry of a parish community everyone can imagine a positive future that lies ahead. This is an extremely important dynamic as we press on with ministry that is fruitful, holy, and sustainable.

The leadership of the parish continues to be committed to working to increase our capacity for ministry, which sets us up for a virtuous cycle of growth and increased engagement with one another and with the world around us that so needs Christ’s ministry of love. Thank you to all of you who help us to achieve that with your financial contributions, and especially to all those of you who have pledged to support this work through the year!

Servanthood is often connected in our culture to class distinctions (as it is in so many cultures). And Jesus’ servanthood is one of the many ways he disrupts our expectations of how God might be at work in the world and in our lives, as we take up the work and ministry of service. Every aspect of Jesus’ Gospel aligns the Lord of Life with the lowly, the humble, the working, and the poor. The implications for the church are unavoidable—our lives should be thus aligned as well. When we don’t know how to do align ourselves more nearly with the lowly, the humble, the working, and the poor, the first thing we can do is to ask ourselves, Who am I serving? A faithful answer will always lead us to a good place.

In my years at Saint Mark’s I have seen that the more we serve, the healthier we are as a parish community. Thanks be to God for all of you who serve in love here on Locust Street!

**THE BARNABAS SOCIETY**

Philadelphia is an old city, and the churches of Philadelphia are its most enduring communities. To the east of Saint Mark’s there are to be found a number of churches that were part of the story of the founding of the colony of Pennsylvania, the establishment of this nation, and the emergence of the Episcopal Church. This is the city in which churches can and should take the long view!

The Barnabas Society is intended to be a vehicle to help Saint Mark’s continue to take the long view of ministry of Philadelphia. When you include the parish in your estate plans, you help ensure that this parish will continue to be a part of the life of this city for ages to come. In the past year, about a dozen individuals or families have made their commitment to that long view explicit by joining the Society, which is intended to provide a way to thank those who make such a commitment and to encourage others to do so.

Please consider including Saint Mark’s in your will, or making another type of planned gift to the parish, and joining the Barnabas Society. For more information, please contact Fr. Mullen.
DATES TO REMEMBER

FEbruary
2 4 p.m. Solemn Evensong & Benediction
4 6:30 p.m. 20s/30s Simple Supper
9 10 a.m. Annual Parish Meeting
12 6 p.m. Evensong sung by Trinity College Choir, Melbourne
17 Parish Office Closed, Presidents’ Day
   Low Mass at 10 a.m.
23 4 p.m. Rededication Recital by Robert McCormick, organist
25 6 p.m. Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
26 Ash Wednesday
   Low Mass at 7:30 a.m.
   Sung Mass at 12:10 p.m.
   Choral High Mass at 7 p.m.
   Fridays in Lent
   Beginning February 28
   5:30 p.m. Evening Prayer followed Stations of the Cross at Saint Mark’s

March
1 4 p.m. Evensong & Benediction
3 6:30 p.m. 20s/30s Simple Supper
   Wednesdays in Lent
   Beginning March 4
   6 p.m. Stations of the Cross and Lenten Programming at Church of the Crucifixion
25 7 p.m. Choral High Mass for Feast of the Annunciation
28 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. 20s/30s Lenten Quiet Day

Lenten Program at Saint Mark’s
This Lent, Saint Mark’s will journey to the Church of the Crucifixion on Wednesday evenings to meditate on the passion of Christ. We will begin with Stations of the Cross at 6 p.m., a beautiful, simple devotion that evokes walking the path of the crucifixion with Jesus. We will then gather for a simple supper of bread, made using a recipe from our RISE bakers, and soup. During the meal we will keep silence while we listen to meditations from mid-century theologians and writers like Dorothy Day, William Stringfellow, Pauli Murray, Daniel Berrigan, Thomas Merton, Howard Thurman, and Walter Wink.
Join us for nourishment, community, prayer, and the strengthening words of those who have gone before us seeking to put the love of God in action in the modern world. They lived, worked, prayed, and wrote at a time in which modern life felt like a crisis. How might they speak to us to teach us more about our crucified Messiah?

Transitioning to Realm
In the coming month, Saint Mark’s will move to a new record keeping solution called Realm. For the past 10 years, Saint Mark’s has worked with ACS Technologies, a leader in church database management, to organize the parish’s records and finances. Realm is their newer platform and offers a wealth of tools and resources in addition to an improved user experience. Realm will primarily serve the administrative needs of the staff but will also offer exciting opportunities to support the ways parishioners get involved at Saint Mark’s. This move will serve both staff and parishioners in a variety of ways, including:

1) An update to the administrative tools that clergy and staff use for the daily operations of the parish, including information management and finances.
2) Online giving will now be easier with a more streamlined user interface.
3) We are adding more ways to communicate and connect as a church, while leaving our current methods in place.
4) Parishioners will have greater ease to update their contact information and decide how much they wish to make Realm part of their experience at Saint Mark’s. But we certainly hope you do!
The hope is that we can take the parish’s database from simply being a repository of information and turn it into a holistic approach to ministry that strengthens the community of Saint Mark’s.
Children’s, Youth, and Family Ministries

Father Kyle Babin

Have you noticed the increasing number of children and youth moving to the front of the church for the sermon at the 9 a.m. Family Mass? Have you noticed that children are also regularly present at the 11 a.m. High Mass, and that we had a number in attendance at this past Christmas’s Midnight Mass? It’s a thrilling sign of how God is at work in children, youth, and family ministries at Saint Mark’s. Attendance is high during Sunday formation, with forty-six children and youth actively engaged. It’s important to recognize the comprehensive picture of formation for children and youth that is happening before our very eyes. It begins with the Mass, where children and youth are not sent off to a private gathering place for their own service or liturgy, but are actually being formed by God in the Mass itself, along with other generations of believers. This is significant. The sermon at the 9 a.m. Mass, tailored specifically for all ages, works together with ritual, Scripture, and music to shape new disciples of Christ. Formation on a different level continues at 10 a.m. on Sundays, engaging both head and heart in our various formation classes. We have thirty-nine Sundays of formation this program year, and all are designed with specific formation goals in mind. You can find these goals on the parish website, as well as lesson topics for each formation class. Formation also occurs on several weekday afternoons for choristers in the Choir of Boys and Girls. Finally, formation moves beyond the parish walls in outreach and service, and there are various opportunities to engage in such service during the program year. Mass, formation classes, choir (for some), and service go hand in hand to create a rich experience in deepening the faith of children and youth at Saint Mark’s. Parents, Sunday formation leaders, and parish staff are planting and watering the seeds of faith in a collaborative enterprise, but we know and trust that it is God alone who will take those seeds and give the growth. Let us continue to pray for that growth.

Family Events

We have a full slate of family events through May. You can find more details on these in the children, youth, and family ministries brochure at the back of the church or saintmarksphiladelphia.org/families.

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER AND RACE
Tuesday, February 25 from 6 – 8 p.m.
Join us in the Parish Hall for tasty pancakes, breakfast meats (and non-meats), concluding with pancake races for children and youth!

YOUTH SERVICE MORNING AT THE SATURDAY SOUP BOWL
Saturday, March 14 from 6:15 – 9 a.m.
All youth (ages 11 and up) are welcome to serve our brothers and sisters at the Saturday Soup Bowl. Parents are encouraged to join their children for this event. Please let Father Babin at kjbabin@saintmarksphiladelphia.org know if you plan to attend.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH PASSION PROCESSION
Sunday, April 5, 2020 in the Saint Mark’s Garden from 10 – 10:45 a.m.
During formation time, children and youth from the parish will reenact the final events of Jesus’ life in the form of Stations of the Cross, with reflections and meditations. All are welcome to attend as we enter into Holy Week.
JOURNEY TO PINE RIDGE

As part of God’s call to look outward beyond the walls of this parish, Saint Mark’s is planning an intergenerational journey to the Pine Ridge Reservation, home to the indigenous Oglala Lakota people in South Dakota. Adults and youth (ages 12+) will personally connect and pray with the Oglala Lakota, learn firsthand about the legacy of displacement and cultural erasure of indigenous Americans implemented by the U.S. government and Christian missionaries, and understand through careful listening how we might further collaborate with the Oglala Lakota and other indigenous communities in the future.

The Oglala Lakota people, many of whom live on the Pine Ridge Reservation, have an extraordinary cultural and historical legacy. Pine Ridge is also home to great tragedy, the infamous site of Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 where 250-300 Lakota men, women, and children were slaughtered by the 7th Calvary. Widely recognized as the closing chapter of the so-called “Indian Wars,” the massacre ushered in an era of reservation living for many indigenous people in America. Since then, the Oglala Lakota have struggled with oppression and grinding poverty in unprecedented and unimaginable ways.

The Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission (PREM) in the Diocese of South Dakota, who have graciously welcomed a partnership with us to make this trip possible, has been working with the Oglala Lakota on Pine Ridge since the mid-1800s. Jeremy Hutcheson and Father Babin are in dialogue with Father Ed Hunt, an Episcopal priest and Supervising Presbyter of the Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission.

We are undertaking this trip with a great sense of humility and prayerful consideration. The journey hopes to be a spiritual and educational experience grounded in regular prayer and guided conversations. In partnering with PREM, we intend to build intentional relationships and participate in meaningful dialogue, open our hearts and minds to the troubling oppression of indigenous peoples in the United States, and experience a different expression of the Episcopal faith in indigenous communities.

Join us for an information session on Sunday, February 16 at 1 p.m. (following High Mass) if you are interested in participating or supporting this trip. If you would like to attend this information session or have any questions about this proposed journey, please contact Father Babin at kjbabin@saintmarksphiladelphia.org.

RISE BREAD RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups warm water
- 1 tablespoon of honey/agave nectar/maple syrup
- 1 ½ teaspoons “good” salt
- 1 tablespoon Active Dry Yeast
- 3 ½ - 4 ½ cups flour

METHOD

1. Combine the water, honey, salt and yeast in a glass bowl. Let sit for 5-10 minutes until there’s some bubbling foam stuff on the top.
2. Next, add a bunch of flour (I used regular white organic flour). Keep kneading until it is no longer sticky. You want your dough to be sticking to itself, not your fingers, so keep adding flour and keep kneading until that happens.
3. Form the dough into a loaf shape. Cover with a towel and let sit on the counter for 20 minutes (or on top of the preheating oven if your kitchen is cold). This is the time to set the oven to 400 degrees.
4. After 20 minutes to 1 hour, cut slits in the top of the dough and bake for 16-25 minutes. Variations can be made by adding garlic and oregano, or cinnamon and raisins . . . or whatever you dream up!

“Come. Join me in my comfortable kitchen. I’m baking bread today. While the dough rises, there will be time for us to talk. I’d like you to be my companion today, com-panion in the original sense of the word: someone who breaks bread with me. While the bread rises, we can talk about our lives. Like me, you are seeking companionship on your journey—especially in your journey of faith… you are seeking the reality of God in the world around you… I, too, have searched for signs of God’s presence in the familiar surroundings of my daily life. And there I have discovered how God is present to us in the most ordinary things, even in something as ordinary as a loaf of bread. Come. Let me show you this truth: where a loaf of bread is made and broken, that is where we find God.” - Mother Alice Downs
Are you looking for a way to meet your fellow parishioners and learn more about your faith in a relaxed atmosphere? The Sunday Forum takes place at 10 a.m. in the Parish Hall every week. You can grab a cup of coffee, have a seat, chat with your neighbor, and join a compelling conversation. This is a wonderful way to connect with Saint Mark’s and with God, whether you have been part of this parish for years or are just walking in the doors this week.

**February 2: What is Candlemas?**
What don’t you know about the history and liturgy of this feast? Come ask questions and learn about traditions both religious and secular.

**February 9: Annual Parish Meeting, no Forum**

**February 16: An Introduction to the Lectionary**
Do you know how the readings for our Sunday Masses are determined? This class explores the practice and spirituality of following a lectionary, or calendar of readings.

**February 23: The Gospel of Matthew**
Our lectionary calls this “Year A,” and it directs us to focus on the Gospel of Matthew. Join Mother Johnson for a reflection on some of Matthew’s characteristic themes.

Author, theologian, and civil rights leader Howard Thurman wrote a revolutionary little book in 1949 called *Jesus and the Disinherited*. In it, he addresses key questions about whether Christianity has something to say to people who “stand with their backs against the wall.” In Thurman’s telling, Jesus has a great deal to say, all of it crucial for us to hear. This Lent, the Saint Mark’s Sunday Forum will discuss Thurman’s book. You don’t have to have read the book to keep up with our discussions, but of course you are invited to do so. Each week will cover one brief chapter. Come learn more about a powerful teacher who influenced a generation of civil rights figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Pauli Murray.

Here is the schedule of conversations:

**March 1 (Lent I) Jesus: An Interpretation**
In the first chapter of Thurman’s book there is a startling statement: “To those who need profound succor and strength to enable them to live in the present with dignity and creativity, Christianity often has been sterile and of little avail.” Come hear about Thurman’s unique understanding of Jesus’s commitment to the powerless and the dispossessed.

**March 8 (Lent II) Fear**
Injustice leads to isolation and helplessness, Thurman teaches. “It is a climate closing in; it is like the fog in San Francisco or in London.” How do the teachings of Jesus address the kind of fear that destroys souls?

**March 15 (Lent III): Deception**
“The pattern of deception by which the weak are deprived of their civic, economic, political, and social rights without its appearing that they are so deprived is a matter of continuous and tragic amazement,” Thurman writes. Come hear how Jesus teaches a radical approach to truth that turns this dynamic upside down.

**March 22 (Lent IV): Hate**
Howard Thurman connects hatred both to powerlessness and to isolation: “much of modern life is so impersonal that there is always opportunity for the seeds of hatred to grow unmolested.” In this session we will talk about Thurman’s Christ-centered understanding of hatred, injustice, and human dignity.

**March 29 (Lent V): Love**
How do relationship and reconciliation as Jesus teaches them address the fundamental structures of injustice? This session will conclude our discussion of Howard Thurman’s writing with a look at the “love ethic” that is central to the gospels.

**April 5 (Palm Sunday) Sunday of the Passion**

**April 12 (Easter Sunday) no Forum**
As I write, I am reflecting on the recently-completed Advent to Epiphany cycle, and I’m grateful to all our singers (both children and adults), organists, and choir parents, for their invaluable roles in making music (and facilitating that music-making) in this place, especially at such holy times of the year. It wouldn’t happen without a huge amount of commitment, dedication, and hard work. They have my enormous thanks and appreciation.

The beginning of February brings the Feast of the Presentation, Candlemas, which falls on a Sunday (February 2) this year. While the ceremonies particular to the day will be offered at the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses that morning, the combined choirs will sing Solemn Evensong & Benediction at 4 p.m., including the ravishing Gloucester Service of Herbert Howells. I hope that many will be able to join us for that liturgy.

The final recital in our organ’s rededication series is by yours truly on Sunday, February 23, at 4 p.m. I have chosen a broad array of repertoire to display many of our organ’s distinctive sounds and ensembles. Highlights include works by important American composers (and rough contemporaries, friends in real life) Calvin Hampton and McNeil Robinson, a piece by French Canadian composer Rachel Laurin, my own adaption of the overture to Verdi’s opera Nabucco, and Max Reger’s monumental Fantasy and Fugue on the Chorale “Hallelujah! Gott zu loben”. The recital will conclude with an improvisation on themes chosen by Fr. Mullen, but not revealed to me until just before.

The organ is fully playable, of course, and sounding wonderful. There is still some behind-the-scenes tweaking and refining underway, and my gratitude to curator, Steve Emery, and consultant, Jonathan Ambrosino, remains as heartfelt as ever.

Ash Wednesday is February 26, and in addition to High Mass at 7 p.m. sung by our choir’s staff singers, a quartet sings at the 12:10 p.m. Sung Mass. The First Sunday in Lent, March 1, we will hold a promotion ceremony for many of our boy and girl choristers at Evensong & Benediction. Our curriculum includes six different “ranks”: probationers (the newest children who are just beginning to get their toes wet by attending rehearsals), novices (who begin singing for Sunday services), junior choristers (who receive surplices and wear medals with light blue ribbons), intermediate choristers (dark blue), advanced intermediate choristers (red), and senior choristers (yellow). (In addition, head choristers wear medals with black ribbons.) Many of our children have been preparing since the autumn for promotion to the next level, so this ceremony will be a joyful time to celebrate their progress and accomplishments. Please do come and support them as we sing God’s praises together!

My prayers are with our entire parish community for a wonderful 2020.
On December 19, Saint Mark’s 20s/30s group gathered in the Parish Kitchen to bake 400 cookies for the Saturday Soup Bowl’s Christmas Breakfast. 20s/30s member Andrea Haines reflects on her experience in that project.

As part of the 20/30’s group, I was able to come together with a bunch of like-minded young Episcopalians and give back to the community through baking. Baking, which for me brings back fond memories of Grandmom’s house in Northeast Philadelphia during the holidays, in an oversized apron, covered in flour, and sneaking chocolate chips while Grandmom pretends not to notice. I think for most people the Christmas holiday brings a whole gambit of sensory impressions: the smells of sugar browning, the notes of Christmas music on the radio, the vision of firelight crackling in the hearth, the feel of rosy cheeks and frostbitten noses and toes in the winter chill, and the minty-fresh taste of peppermint candy canes.

It was a beautiful thing to come together at Saint Mark’s and share in an old tradition made new. We found ourselves up to our elbows in gooey dough, measuring and pouring the ingredients closest to us in our neighbors’ bowls until we had bowls and bowls of chocolate chip cookie dough. We passed these onto the scoopers and the bakers, and somehow after taste-tasting a cookie (or ten), managed to bake four hundred cookies for those experiencing homelessness of our community.

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I was one of the lucky ones able to serve at the Soup Bowl that Saturday, and I witnessed the same sensory holiday spirit that morning. Music was cranking from speakers and regularly blasted Christmas classics. Smiles were met with smiles as we served a special breakfast of eggs, potatoes, and ham. Breakfast smells wafted, attendees drew some very impressive Christmas cards, and of course, mountains of cookies were enjoyed throughout the Parish Hall. It’s funny how Yuletide hedonism can be witnessed in the most unlikely of places, and then again maybe Saint Mark’s is the most believable place to witness such joyful things.

### Upcoming Events

**Simple Supper at Member’s Home, Tuesday, February 4**

We will begin to gather at 6:30 p.m. After a simple Mass at 7 p.m., we’ll enjoy a potluck dinner and conversation together. Please email 20s30s@saintmarksphiladelphia.org for the address and to RSVP.

**Simple Supper in the Parish Hall, Tuesday, March 3**

We will begin to gather at 6:30 p.m. After a simple Mass at 7 p.m., we’ll share some food, and engage in a discussion on penitence.

**Quiet Day at the Church of the Crucifixion (620 S. 8th St., Philadelphia), Saturday, March 28 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Go deeper this Lent with a day of prayer and silence. We will gather at 9 a.m. for Morning Prayer, followed by periods of silent prayer and contemplation, interspersed with meditations. We will conclude with Mass and a simple lunch of soup and bread.