

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Annual Report 2020



Rector's Report
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Ministry and Committee Reports

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Rector's Report

I hardly know where to begin. Of all the rector's reports that I have written or will write in my career, I have to think this will be the most bizarre, God willing.

I began my year with a lovely vacation in January following a record-breaking Advent and Christmas season in terms of attendance. The new year seemed poised for more of the same, and the Shepherds Ministry hosted a Sunday evening party filled with newcomers who were looking to move more deeply into the life of the church. Sunday services were hovering around 100-115 attendees, ministries were being imagined and reimaged with new leadership talent arising to try to tackle some of the issues in both the parish and in the community. By every available metric, I would have said that St. Mark's was healthy, growing, even thriving.



And then two things happened in rapid succession. A beloved member, Mark Heffron, died unexpectedly on February 14, 2020. The tear in the parish was palpable, and his funeral was a massive outpouring of grief and faith. The parish lost a beloved son, and we were all much diminished because of it. Then four short weeks later, the senior warden and I suspended in-person worship about a week before the diocese did the same to every parish. Within 36 hours, Sara and I moved our entire community online and began the process of teaching the parish how to access daily online prayer, Sunday services, Sunday School, campus ministry,

adult education, and even a few fun activities like Film Club and Pub Trivia. It was an immensely heavy lift, but we managed it about as well as a church could.

And even with all the pride that comes with managing change well, there was also the grief — grief at losing those things that make us distinctive: coffee hour, live music, strong and life-long connections, passing the peace, and of course the Eucharist. I also carried for most of the year a grief that our amazing work over the last five years would be someone undone by this pandemic. I'm grateful that in these last few months, that fear seems to have subsided and, if anything, I begin to feel that we will have weathered this pandemic with aplomb and will return better able to be a nimble parish community during new and uncertain times.

This year, the parish also lost Deacon Ned Howe as well as long-time member Harry Moseley. While the parish worked diligently to find a way to memorialize Harry in a safe way (Ned had a private family interment), I think it is important to name the grief that comes with being unable to use the familiar rites of the church to say goodbye to people we love. While we were able to do wonderful ritual work, it must be said that it is not the same as we were accustomed to, and that grief will stay with us for a while. In addition to Ned, Harry, and Mark, we said goodbye to the wonderful Bill Wainwright, may he rest in peace.

I'm incredibly proud of the entire staff and their ability to execute Drive-by Blessings, Advent Walkthroughs, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany kits for prayer at home, as well as countless drives for money, hygiene supplies, and diapers for those vulnerable folks who are particularly impacted by Covid-19 — not to mention between 10 and 15 Zoom choices for worship or study each week. Put another way, the staff and ministry heads have helped us creatively answer God's call to be the church even in this insane time.



In addition to daily worship, St. Mark's has tried to make sure to plan events to help address the isolation and loneliness of so many of us during lockdown. Kathy Katter and I have been hosting weekly Happy Hours via Zoom each Thursday. John Hickey has hosted a weekly Film Club for most of the year where participants watched films on their own time and met Friday evenings to discuss them. On Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, members of St. Mark's gathered on Zoom to celebrate and keep each other company during this strange time. This is just another example of the ways that we had to get clever this year to help keep us all sane and connected.



The pandemic effectively halted conversations in the vestry about what to do with our 1949 building. I mentioned in last year's annual meeting that this would likely be the challenge of my tenure as your rector. How naive that was! Even during this pandemic, the vestry — along with round table input from the parish — has explored the possibility of developing the green space in exchange for either a new or renovated parish hall. This conversation is ongoing and nothing is decided, though I do think we have a much better sense of the problem right now. Look for a resuming of this conversation once the worst of the pandemic subsides and we are able to turn our attention to middle and long-range planning rather than simply keeping our community safe and together.

Matt Phillips, our intrepid Director of Campus and Youth Ministries, will be leaving us in July to attend seminary and continue to work on his ordination to the priesthood. This leaves a massive staffing hole in our life. Matt has worked with me for, I think, six years at two different parishes, and in that time, we have developed a shorthand for our work, and I never spend one

second worrying that he won't be doing excellent work with our young people — from preschool all the way through college. I know it will be impossible to replace Matt, though, of course, I wish him well. At our pre-pandemic growth levels, St. Mark's was approaching the need for a second priest, and I had thought we might be able to put off replacing Matt for 6-12 months while we searched for a priest to take over his work and also help with the liturgical needs of the parish. I'm now not certain that this is possible or even wise. So, when Matt leaves, it will require quite a bit of wisdom and cleverness to figure out the best way to have his duties executed while also trying to put together a five-year staffing plan rather than trying to make it all happen piecemeal.

Just as Matt goes to seminary, so does another member of St. Mark's: Nathan Self. We should be proud that, as a parish, we are doing so much to support people in their vocations to the priesthood and diaconate. Additionally, we have supported a seminarian intern Hunter Farrow who is finishing his degree and looking to begin the ordination process. He has been a huge help during the pandemic, and I'm pleased he will continue to be a member at St. Mark's with his wife Elizabeth.

At this point, I usually try to cast a vision for what the next year will probably look like. The truth is, in this year, I really don't know. But here are some hunches I have:

- We will likely hire a part-time, interim, person to handle the most important duties that Matt performs, while we look into our middle term staffing needs.
- We will begin meeting in person for worship — likely at reduced capacity or outside — sometime this spring.
- Holy Week will be mainly online with some in-person supplementary events, much like Advent.
- This summer, the vestry will decide what is needed to address our building needs, very likely involving some kind of development on our green space. While not the entire vestry agrees with me on this assessment, I have not seen anything that makes me think our long-term physical plant issue can be addressed without a pretty massive influx of cash.
- When we return to full strength, perhaps this fall, our Sunday numbers will be slightly down after a year of online worship. I hope I am wrong about this, but I believe we need to be prepared for this to be the case.
- We will end 2021 in a strong financial place, given the wild generosity of the parish coupled with excellent budgeting and good financial stewardship from our past treasurer Bruce Jacobs and our future treasurer Jason Shimko.
- Our new bishop will cast a compelling vision for healing in our diocese that will include strengthening individual parishes and perhaps some unique partnerships.
- We will have some community stress and trauma to address after the months of isolation and anxiety of this pandemic. St. Mark's will be a center of healing for the after-effects of Covid-19.
- Your staff and clergy will be super worn out from 18 months of absolute insanity.

Last, I will say this. We have done the impossible — kept a parish together when we literally could not meet together. This must surely be the work of the Holy Spirit. While I would give anything to shake your hands on the steps of our beloved church, I am grateful that we have had only two Covid cases in our entire parish and no deaths as of yet. This is something to rejoice about. We will be together again, being a light to the East Side just like we have been for over a century.

To God be the glory,
Fr. Burch

Senior Warden's Report

Dear People of St. Mark's,

When I became senior warden two years ago, I was advised by a certain past warden to whom I'm married that my primary responsibility was to make sure worship took place every Sunday.

2020 started well enough. We had coverage for Ian as he wisely took a vacation in a warmer climate. February saw us beginning a holy Lent. Then, the pandemic. Those first weeks of March, it dawned on us that all things "in-person" needed to cease. That time seems distant, but it was key to our relative success.

What I most recall is the speed of our pivot to online worship. Thanks to Ian and Sara and Matt, we didn't miss a beat. It took about a month for even the least tech-savvy among us to find a way in. We employed our musicians and added their beautiful talents to our weekly worship.

I especially like the coffee hour roulette that happens. I know some log off after Zoom worship and flee to other things, but it expands my sense of community and connection. I wonder if there's a way to replicate it once we're back in person!

When we do come back together, we will be a different church than when we last worshipped in person. We will be missing some much-beloved members, and we will feel their absence anew and, perhaps, even more keenly.



Our walk-through memorials for Harry Moseley and Bill Wainwright were in stark contrast to the funeral we celebrated for Mark Heffron. Those memorials provided inspiration for how we could celebrate Advent and Christmas. The vision and effort of Ian and Sara allowed us for the first time to safely open the church for the “Stations of the Manger” experience and communion distribution.

With regards to the staff, we decided early on to keep paying everyone, even if their work was either greatly diminished or not needed. We procured a PPP loan to cover some of those costs.

We’re indebted to the wise and timely work of Bruce Jacobs, our outgoing treasurer. He kept a careful eye on funds and communicated our situation clearly to vestry. We are fortunate to have members keep up their pledges, even when our community hasn’t been able to gather.

In the midst of this, the vestry wrestled with a proposal to develop our property in order to attain a safer, ADA compliant facility. A task force was formed to consider options. Ian held online information sessions to help the congregation see what we were considering and to gather some feedback.

After months of fraught vestry discussion, we decided to pause our consideration of development until we get past the pandemic. We struggled with the danger of inertia, weighing it against a concern for congregational buy-in. To that end, the Development Task Force will

continue to meet, and explore all reasonable options, in hopes that, when we are back together later this year, the vestry will be better able to make a decision about how to proceed.

Meanwhile, I am thankful for our church community. We are a healthy and caring parish and I thank all of you for continuing to be “present “ as best you can. May we continue to do God’s work in this world.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Katter
Senior Warden

Formation Programs

Adult Formation

Sunday morning Adult Formation education ceased when the in person church services closed in March due to the dangers of Covid-19 transmission. The parish for years has been accustomed to robust and varied offerings after services on Sundays, summer series with special guests, and Lenten studies. None of those happened in 2020 due to Covid. Instead, once we figured out how to meet remotely, we launched evening Bible studies on Daniel, Esther, and Revelation, with 3-7 members attending. We hired the Rev. Dr. Kristin Guidero to teach us about heresies on four Sunday evenings, with about 10-15 people in attendance. And we opened up an online book study club on Thursday evenings with about 7-12 people in attendance. We read books about spirituality, prison and its racist antecedents, Anglican theology, and interfaith understanding. I’m incredibly proud of our online offerings and imagine that some kind of online learning will continue even after the pandemic allows us to return to in person learning.

Submitted by Fr. Burch

Bible Study

The Wednesday afternoon Bible Study has been meeting for around 15 years. Over the years we have read both books of the Old and New Testament. During normal times we share tea, cookies, and fruit along with our study. But meeting by Zoom has cut out those pleasures. Attendance runs around 6-8 every Wednesday with participants even from out of state. No

outside participation is necessary. We read and discuss together during the weekly hour. We always welcome new members. It is a joy to study the Bible and apply it to our everyday lives. Come and try it out.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Children's, Youth, and Campus Ministry

St. Mark's faced many challenges in the year 2020 and our Children's, Youth, and Campus Ministries were no exception. Throughout the year we have adapted our ministries to continue offering our youngest members opportunities for worship and formation, even during a pandemic.

Children's Ministry

With in-person worship services suspended, our Sunday School and Nursery were paused as well. Beginning in March, we have offered several online offerings for families. We have posted 60 Bedtime Bible Stories to our YouTube channel, along with seven sing-along videos. We also began sharing weekly editions of The Sunday Paper Junior in our newsletter, The Lion's Mane.

On June 14, we held our first Children's Chapel on Zoom. Since then, we have offered Children's Chapel or Virtual Sunday School for 10 children from six families every Sunday morning. Together we sing songs, listen to stories, and offer prayers while learning more about God and our relationships with God and our neighbors.

We have also kept many of our St. Mark's traditions alive. In August, we renewed our partnership with Lake Park Lutheran Church and All Peoples Church to offer Virtual Vacation Bible Camp for over 50 young people in Milwaukee. We expanded our Advent wreath making activity by creating and distributing Advent/Christmas/Epiphany bags to 46 families of all ages. Thanks to the incredible work of Jane Lacy and our families, our Virtual Christmas Pageant received raving reviews!

Virtual Sunday School will continue in 2021 as we wait for the return of in-person worship. If your child would like to participate in Virtual Sunday School, or if you are interested in joining our wonderful group of Sunday School teachers in the future, please email matt@stmarksmilwaukee.org

Youth Ministry

St. Mark's youth group, RESPOND also made the transition to meeting online in 2020. Throughout the pandemic, youth in grades 7 through 12 have met twice each month on Zoom

to share reflections, read and discuss passages from scripture, play games, write and offer prayers, and more. Thanks to our co-leader Zach Nichols who guided us, we have also held socially distanced and masked walks to enjoy fellowship outside together. In 2021, we plan to offer more outdoor meetings as well as continue to meet online.

If you are interested in your youth joining RESPOND, please email matt@stmarksmilwaukee.org.

Campus Ministry

Our Campus Ministry continued in 2020 with a few changes. St. Mark's has offered weekly and monthly opportunities for our college students to gather on Zoom to pray, worship, and be in community with one another. We read Evening Prayer together on the first Sundays of each month and meet for Discussion Night on the second Tuesday of each month. We also read Noonday Prayer every Wednesday and meet for Cafe discussions at noon on Fridays during the school year.

At Marquette University, Canterbury Fellowship has continued to meet. We meet each Wednesday at 4:15 p.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Family to share fellowship before reading Evening Prayer together. We plan to continue all of these offerings into 2021 and hope to hold a few socially distanced gatherings outdoors when the weather permits.

For more information about any of our campus ministries, please email matt@stmarksmilwaukee.org.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Phillips, Director of Campus and Youth Ministries

Liturgical Programs

Acolytes

As acolytes, members of the church take an active leadership role during worship in a variety of roles: carrying the Cross or torches, censuring the sanctuary with incense, assisting a thurifer, and serving at the altar.

We currently have eight acolytes: four adults and four youth. Our acolyte program continues to be on pause during the pandemic. Once in-person worship resumes, we hope to increase both our youth and adult members of the acolyte team. If you are interested in joining us or learning more about this ministry, please reach me at matt@stmarksmilwaukee.org.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Phillips, Director of Campus and Youth Ministries

Altar Guild

While the Altar Guild activities have been modified during much of this year, we continue to prepare the sanctuary for our Sunday morning services according to the liturgical seasons to include holy days, Lent, Advent, baptisms, weddings and funerals. We maintain the vestments, linens, vessels, candles and the supply of wine and wafers.

As our life together changed, we were grateful for the opportunity to take an active role in preparations for the Candlelight vigils, Advent Walkthroughs and Christmas Eve vigil by illuminating the courtyard, brides walk, the church and the walkway Christmas Eve. We were especially pleased to be able to prepare and provide the communion kits during the walkthroughs.

We have been fortunate through gifts from parishioners and our allocated funds to replace many of our worn linens, refurbish our silver tray, chalices, patens, brass collection plates and purchase Fr. Burch a winter clerical cap. This year, we are hoping to replace well-worn vestments.

I appreciate the commitment of our team members Peter Batchelder, Marian Byers, Jayne Heffron, Jane Shero and Nathan Self who remain actively involved and offer creative ways to fulfill our duties. I encourage anyone interested in learning more about our Altar Guild to talk with me or any member of our team. We look forward to the time when we all worship together in person again!

Submitted by Meg Edwards

Eucharistic Visitors

Eucharistic Visitors are those members of the parish who take communion to those who can't come to church for any reason. We are around six members who are trained to take the sacraments to the members home or hospital. They also share news from the parish to keep up their spirits. Unfortunately this ministry has been temporarily halted during Covid-19.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Flower Guild

2020 was a very different year for our flower guild. We had just entered Lent, when there are no altar flowers, when Covid-19 hit. Until we began having cantors and instrumental music with Zoom Sunday services, there were no flowers. Once those began, we managed to have summer flowers on the altar for the filming every Sunday, thanks to the generosity of several parishioners, who offered their garden flowers to us.

We also provided flowers and arrangements for a vigil, a very small funeral plus Advent greens including the Advent wreath and Christmas flowers and plants, in all cases just one or two of us at a time, with masks, working in a large open space. Christmas flowers were done by only one couple and three additional members.



Normally we have a schedule covering three or four months at a time, members signing up for a date for which they will be responsible for purchasing and arranging altar flowers. Holidays normally involve all members who are available.

Members of St. Mark's Flower Guild are Georgia Cain, Helen Chou, Kathy Katter, Doris Kiely, Travis Trott, Donna Whittle, Judy Young, Jamie Zingler and Ron Zingler.

We would be happy to have new members join us. New members are given an orientation session of one Saturday with a present member. Then they can sign up when the schedule comes out. It is not necessary to sign up for several weeks; once in a while is fine.

For 2021 we are expecting to do Palm Sunday and Easter flowers, all depending upon the diocesan rules, which determine how many of us can work and how much of the church will be used.

After Lent, we'll go back to altar flowers for the Sunday Zoom services, done by one or two of us. When we finally return to regular services, we'll have our regular duty schedule of when we work and interested parishioners may join us.

Post-covid, we shall have a sign-up calendar in the parish hall for those wishing to sponsor Sunday flowers for a birthday, anniversary, thanksgiving, etc.

Submitted by Judy Young

Lay Readers

In “normal” times, lay readers read the day’s designated Old and New Testament lessons. The ministry involves clearly and articulately presenting these texts to the congregation. According to some guidelines, “By virtue of these readings, the laity joins the ordained clergy in bringing the liturgy to life.” Well, this year, we added many services and required many lay readers, often casually summoned by the host of the service. Thank you to all who stepped up throughout the year, whether in the early months or online.

Submitted by Kathy Katter

Music

When the pandemic struck last March and overthrew our way of Sunday worship, all of us at St. Mark’s, and in the larger worshipping community, were perhaps, initially at a loss and some of us, perhaps, fell into despondency. But after a short time, taking heart from Christian life and practices during other historical events which have caused similar disruptions in customary worship, we gathered ourselves together—just as Christians had done during the plagues of Medieval and Renaissance times, and wars, and persecutions, and we pluckily reinvented the Sunday worship service and re-imagined our community in an online world. The Zoom services started and not long after, toward the end of June 2020, we began having music in our Zoom services: a prelude, a hymn, and a vocal solo.

1. The Choir In my report last year, I was very excited about our choral tone, our expressivity, our blend, and I was excited about the trajectory of growth in the musicality of the choir, in our growth in repertory, moving to the highpoint of Episcopal and Anglican choral music for the service: the Cathedral Anthem. We were at the point of performing our first Cathedral Anthem, the great *O Thou, the Central Orb* by Charles Wood, when the pandemic hit. Furthermore, Ian had something special planned for Holy Week: at his request, I had lined up, a Dixieland jazz band for Passion Sunday, for our procession into the church from the green space; and we also had in place a

percussionist for the orchestration of the reading of the Passion. Further, Matt Ernst, principal trumpet with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, had been lined up to play the trumpet for the celebration of the resurrection, for Easter at St. Mark's, and some wonderful Holy Week choir music was purchased and we were about to start practicing it. But sadly, we were unable to celebrate these festivals as a community in the church. However, the time is coming when we will be together again, and we will experience the exhilaration of worshipping with our beloved friends. The pandemic will someday come to an end, and we will return to life as before, by God's grace.

The choir has begun performing in virtual space: each of us sings at home and sends the recordings of our individual voices into a hub, Xai's computer, where she, with her technical music wizardry, produces what we hear as a virtual choir, all singing at once! (You can even see our faces; and the last song had some additional video during solos!) We have recorded two such pieces, and are planning another for the first Sunday of Lent.

Section Leaders: Our section leaders (hereafter SLs), who lent stability and surety to our choir, have continued to provide beautiful music of the highest quality. And, of course, thanks to the anonymous benefactors who have made this all possible. During the covid-time, the (SLs) and I have been romping through the sacred solo voice repertory and this has allowed us to provide vocal music (with appropriate seasonal/liturgical texts) when the choir is in the beginning stages of mastering the virtual choir medium, and can't produce a piece yet every week.

During the pandemic, we have welcomed one new singer, Danny Koplitz, who before the pandemic directed our children's choir. They replace Sam Mullooly, who left us around May, for a church choir nearer his residence. Xai and Austin Bare were recruited by St. Paul's with its higher music budget and stipend for choral scholars; but they remain close to St. Mark's. Xai and Austin love the people of St. Mark's and its spirit of acceptance and joy and support, as they have told me, and would welcome coming back at some point. Nevertheless you will see and hear them on occasion as schedules permit.

At this time the choir, as made up in the virtual choir, seems to number ten. Two health professionals, Dr. Elizabeth Jacobs and Ginny McCullough have been occupied at the medical front and have been unable to participate. I anticipate, however, that when we open up again, we will be close to fifteen members, our number just before the pandemic hit.

2. The Organ: The organ and piano are being kept in good tune and in good repair.
3. The Artist in Residence Program: The Artist in Residence Program is on a covid-prompted hiatus. There are fewer performance opportunities at St. Mark's and, in

fact, everywhere. And graduate students, who barter or pay for use of our building for concerts in exchange for providing music at our services, have been unable to play at concerts or services when none are allowed. After the pandemic has run its course, I will be prepared to re-establish the program to its former vigor. (Remember our classical guitarists and the string and flute players?)

4. Penultimately, here are six questions that were provided to the ministry leaders, which, answered, might further inform the material already provided in this report on the Music Ministry of St. Mark's as it has occurred during 2020 to 2021.

What did you achieve?

We have kept the choir together, working as a unit; however, in a manner, it seems, quite dissimilar to the practice and culture of choirs as they had been accustomed to before. Not singing together in the same room adjacent in a choir formation makes it hard to blend. Xai should be praised for her ability to blend singers miles apart. The joy and fun of working, singing, laughing, praying together has been taken away. Here is a choir, absent the fun of being in a choir...yet joying in singing in at least this minimal way; loving still at a distance, their choir member friends.



We have learned and achieved a new way of providing music to the parish. Recordings of singers, instruments, and of the organ and piano have been our mode of presentation. Each musical medium requires different approaches and distances from microphones, different volumes, requires a different level of attention, attention to sounds as they might be heard as recorded, not as live. It's more difficult because musicians have to listen to the live sound that they make and to the recorded sounds that the recordings make. That is, they have to imagine these sounds and listen at the same time to their own non-technologized sounds.

Did you start something new?

It was all largely new. Attendance at the Zoom service seemed essential to see what worked and what didn't. But a zoom service is nothing like a live service. You don't see the people's faces in all their nuance. Michael O'Hear told me that his well-practiced

and formerly funny jokes at Marquette Law School over the online school all seemed to fail. He couldn't read his crowd anymore, his students whom he taught through the Zoom lenses (LOL)...all subtlety in facial expressions was lost the zoom...dynamic nuance was also gone...

Did you change the way you do things?

Yes. The virtual choir is very different from a real hearing of sounds as made. Conducting hand motions are not helpful at all. The nuance has to be spelled out in dynamic marks and signs penciled in a score and sent out to the singers. The intuition of singers to sing as one, like a murmuration of starlings who take flight identically, at the identical time, even though they may be a body of individual starlings covering a whole field. That sort of sensitivity is not possible through the digital-scape, through the miles of transmission of electrons. So that has to be dealt with. To that end we have picked choral pieces that are homophonic, that might line up more easily than the independent voices of polyphony.

How many participants do you have?

See above, the last paragraph under choir.

What plans do you have for 2021?

I would like to become somewhat knowledgeable about the technology that we are using so that we can turn it to our advantage. So that this notion of recording many-voiced music may be extended perhaps, after the epidemic has gone, to a shut in service or may be used somehow in evangelism. Yes everything is different, but it has produced something of value: why have we grown by, I think, nine members during this pandemic time? Something good is going out on the wires and cables. If our choir could get very adept at virtual recordings we could do one every week, or do something like lessons and carols. And these skills we develop may have advantages in other ways than we are thinking now. And all the skills that we are developing may be used in evangelization, for spreading the gospel. We may not want to just drop everything we have learned. Maybe we should use it, keep it alive, expand the ministries accordingly.

What do I plan for myself?

During these Sundays I have been listening to about three or four services from other churches and have been collecting ideas for music pieces to purchase. Dvorak's Biblical songs just came in yesterday and Danny is planning to sing some of them. Also I have gathered a number of pieces by women composers for organ. Women-composed music for organ has proliferated since I was in undergraduate and graduate school. (Or maybe women were under-represented or under-encouraged.) There are a number of outstanding women composers for organ that have been published in the last twenty-five years. Brenda Portman, Florence Peterson, and even Fanny Mendelssohn: they weren't taught when I was in school.

I intend to re-ignite my choir plans from the opening paragraphs of this report, and Steve Rohde and I have suggested to Ian an Adult Education talk or series of talks about the organ. We can record these and they can be archived for anytime use, or we can just Zoom them?

5. Finally, let me sincerely thank all those who have contributed to the Liturgy and Music program at St. Mark's. Thanks go to all my dear choir singers, to the section leaders, soloists, and the musicians who provided Christmas music Christmas Eve: Steve Rohde, Kelly Glostott, Andrew Arndorfer, Ian Burch and his mother, Susan. And to all the members of the parish whom I have talked with on the phone, emailed and have had coffee with at various places when it was summer and we could be covid-compliant in the outdoors. We have all kept each other sane in this crazy time.

This has been a stream of consciousness sort of report...

I'm just writing what I'm thinking...

I'm usually a bit more formal...

If any time were right for a bit of informality,

maybe that time for me is now....

In any case, I am yours truly,
Steve Wolff, Music Director

Ushers

The ushering ministry is strongly tied to St. Mark's in-person services. One of our primary duties is welcoming newcomers and established parishioners on Sunday mornings. In a typical year we have five teams of four ushers on a weekly rotation. I'm looking forward to 2021, getting back to our church building, reorganizing our teams, and creatively looking at our ministry. We can always use new team members and are open to new ideas. We did not have a long "ushering" season in 2020. But I do want to thank everyone who did usher: Krysta Benson, Sandy Boltz, Steve Butcher, Georgia and John Cain, Virginia Chappell, Barbara Costanzo, Bill Florescu, Bobby Gilbert, Bill Hunt, Steve Martinie, Marilyn McKnight, David Miyama, Ellie Mixter-Keller, Andrew Muriuki, and Ron and Jamie Zingler.

In Remembrance

I would also like to give a very special thanks for Harry Moseley and Mark Heffron. St. Mark's lost two wonderful parishioners and ushers in 2020. They epitomized the idea of Christian hospitality. Harry spent many years as St. Mark's head usher and greeted so many with his warmth. He wrote a letter many years ago about what's important about ushering. I cannot share it here, because it is in a drawer at the back of the church. I refer to it when I usher and share it with others. Mark has a special place in many of our hearts because of his humor and

friendliness. He was always reaching out to newcomers whether he was officially ushering or not. They both welcomed newcomers with an ease and a grace sent from God.

Submitted by Mary Ross

Community Mission

Common Ground

Common Ground (CG) is a coalition of churches, colleges, and small businesses whose purpose is to bring greater justice to people in the greater Milwaukee area. Some of our issues or projects this year include an extensive non-partisan Get Out The Vote campaign that made over 15,000 calls in the metro-Milwaukee area. During this time of Covid, we had volunteers who helped the Milwaukee Health Department with supporting people sick with Covid who were home alone by phone contact. We also had doctors who served on call with Covid-19 at home patients by phone.

Every year we participate in a Friends of Common Ground Fundraiser which always raises at least \$20,000 from our parish alone.

Anyone who would like to become an active citizen of our community is welcome to join our CG group here at St. Mark's. Contact Michelle Mooney or Jennifer O'Hear.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Diaper Drive

Like most everything else, this year's diaper drive looked much different than our previous three diaper drives. We collected diapers at November's drive-by blessing, and the parish also generously donated money to be used toward diapers. In mid-January, we delivered 6,090 diapers to our partner organizations. We also forwarded donated funds to be used for purchasing diapers as needed. Between donated diapers and monetary gifts, we were able to supply nearly TEN THOUSAND diapers to Milwaukee area families! The bulk of the diapers and funds were given to Robyn's Nest and HOPE Network, with smaller amounts going to Riverwest Food Pantry and All Peoples Church.



This year's streamlined operation did not require much assistance from other parishioners (other than from diaper delivery expert Maggie). As we look ahead into 2021, however, I would like to explore how we can expand this ministry to support families experiencing diaper need on a year-round basis. If you would be interested in helping with this effort, please email me at frizzellbrooke@gmail.com.

Submitted by Brooke Frizzell

Outreach Committee: Transitioning into the Future

The St. Mark's Outreach Committee raises funds for outreach distribution and determines which organizations receive those funds. In recent years, fewer organizations have been funded allowing for larger donations with more significant impact. Primary consideration is given to nonprofits where there is parishioner participation. Articles in the St. Mark's Lion and email messages feature community-based organizations and encourage parishioners to volunteer their time and talent as well as monetary support.

2020 Activities

Special Events and Financial Disbursements

The Outreach Committee traditionally organizes two special events annually (Corn Roast at Downer Avenue Bicycle Races and the Halloween Pumpkin Sale) raising \$8,000-\$10,000 annually for disbursement. Due to 2020 pandemic restrictions the Corn Roast was cancelled, and the Pumpkin Sale was restructured as a three-week, noncontact event based on the honor system; \$4,500 taken in.

Additional dollars for community needs, separate from the Outreach Committee's work, came from the Rector's Discretionary Fund and a St. Mark's online fundraiser.

Recipient organizations included The Gathering, Riverwest Food Pantry, East Side Senior Services, and the Hospitality Center of Racine. Parish dues to Common Ground were also paid, specifically through funds raised by the Pumpkin Sale.

Direct Service and Supply Drives

The Outreach Committee continued its arrangement with The Gathering to provide volunteers for a set number of community meals, encouraged individual volunteer opportunities with East Side Senior Services and The Gathering, and recruited for involvement in Common Ground.



Several parishioner-led supply drives were conducted throughout the year. These include, but were not limited to, Diaper Drive, back-to-school supplies, pantry donations, pillow case construction, Christmas gifts for seniors, and community meal supplies.

Rethinking Outreach at St. Mark's

Restructuring

In early 2020, the Outreach Committee recognized the need to connect more effectively with parishioners, to collect and act on ideas for additional parish outreach, and to secure additional parishioner involvement. The pandemic put a hold on our initial plans for parish-wide exploration. However, with further discussion and internal evaluation, the committee agreed it is time to restructure how outreach is approached, accomplished and communicated at St. Mark's. To that end, information is now being gathered on how other parishes "do" outreach, with the intent to develop options for St. Mark's; and a proposed change in how outreach activities are funded has been passed by the vestry and will be voted on at the January 2021 Annual Meeting. (See below.)

Funding for Outreach

In view of fundraising and direct service limitations imposed by the pandemic, and in view of the desire to strengthen the connection with the parish at large, the Outreach Committee

requested that the vestry include a portion of the dollars traditionally raised by Outreach Committee events in the church's 2021 general budget. These funds would be targeted for Community Outreach, with the understanding that additional dollars would be raised during 2021 to enhance that line item. The amount of \$3,000 was proposed and passed by the vestry for 2021 budget inclusion.

Outreach Committee Membership, Goodbys & Thank Yous

The 2020 Outreach Committee included Steve Butcher, Alex Cain, Charles Camilli, Carolyn Davies, Bill Florescu, Andy Martin, Ellie Mixter-Keller, Michelle Mooney, Harry Moseley, Ginny Schrag and Ron Zingler. We said goodbye to three of these members during the year: Alex Cain, youngest member, moved to Portland, Oregon; Andy Martin, longest-serving member, resigned; and Committee Chair, Harry Moseley, died after a lengthy illness. Each had a strong personal commitment to living out their faith in the world and each is missed.

Special THANK YOUS to Andy Martin for your faithfulness and commitment to serving others; to Ron Zingler and Bill Hunt for creatively organizing the 2020 Pumpkin Sale; and for all parishioners and friends who hauled pumpkins, participated in supply drives and direct service opportunities, and donated to fundraisers throughout the year.

Submitted by Ginny Schrag

Pillowcase Makers

The Pillowcase Makers made 328 brightly colored pillowcases for the Women's Resource Center shelter, part of Community Advocates. Though the group didn't meet after March, some sewing did continue from homes so we were able to still provide a good number of pillowcases. The needs of the shelter have changed and some individuals are making face masks for them. Sewists included Kris Devitt, Mary Hensel, Michelle Mooney, Jane Shero, Jamie Zingler, and Judith Miller. Until the shape of the pandemic is known, group meetings for 2021 are on hold.

Submitted by Judith Miller

Community Life

Note: Fr. Burch wrote about a few Community Life endeavors that were introduced this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. See the Rector's Report for more information.

Coffee Hour

Along with everything else this past year, coffee hour got off to a great start. Lots of people contributing and even more enjoying the after-mass gatherings in the Parish Hall. Sadly, that all came to a screeching halt mid-March. As with most things, you don't quite appreciate it until it's gone. I think we've made the most of our online, Zoom coffee hours, but it's just not the same. Coffee and snacks always taste better when someone else makes them for you!

I look forward to the day when we can meet again in person, although coffee hour, as we know it, may still need to be put on hold. The truly important thing will be celebrating Eucharist together. Until that time, stay healthy, stay positive. This too shall pass.

Miss you all.

Jamie Zingler

Community Garden

The St. Mark's Community Garden is a cooperative effort between the parish and the community. We have around 12 plots of various sizes in our green space. Only natural or organic pesticides or fertilizers are allowed in the garden. Members rent their plots every year and, in return, they are watered and receive mulch every other season. Plots are available each spring and church members get preference. See Jane Shero or Michelle Mooney if you are interested. Special safety steps must be taken because of Covid-19.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Cooking Crew

The Cooking Crew is made up of about 20 folks who take meals to those who have had babies, are ill, or have lost a family member. Each event has people sign up for a particular occasion. Meals are not elaborate — just good hearty food. A sign-up is held over the internet each time by Deacon Michelle Mooney and opportunities to sign up are shown. You may also

sign up to be an alternate in case a need for a replacement might come up. This is one of the most concrete ways for parishioners to show compassion for those in special need. If you'd like to join the list of cooking folks, contact Michelle Mooney to be put on the list. All are very welcome!

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Garden Guild

Garden Guild was so lucky during the pandemic — fresh air, masks, and social distancing allowed us to meet during the growing season. Pulling weeds never felt so good!

Volunteers included Colleen Berge, Barbara Costanzo, Meg Edwards, Marilyn Hamilton, Jayne Heffron, Michelle Mooney, Gretchen and J.R. Ponzer, Ginny Schrag, Nathan Self, and Jamie and Ron Zingler. A fabulous group and I am grateful to each of them.

We didn't take on any new projects, but we kept the garden beds and pots looking fresh and colorful, and received many compliments from both parishioners and church neighbors. Turns out lots of people in the neighborhood are watching and appreciating the care we give our church!



God willing, the pandemic will fade this summer and we can gather again to work, including in the courtyard memorial garden that has some areas that need renovation. And we will continue to improve the planting on the Belleview side of the church, making it more colorful and attractive to both people and pollinators.

We welcome newcomers regardless of garden experience — Tuesday evenings from 5 to 6:30 pm starting in late May. Please call or email me if you have questions.

In the meantime, if you are interested in gardens, plants, etc. check out the home gardeners group on St. Mark's Facebook page.

Hope to see you soon in the gardens!
Jane Shero

Men's Fellowship Group

The St. Mark's Men's Fellowship group meets on the third Saturday of each month at St. Mark's for breakfast and conversation. We start the coffee and food prep about 8 am and eat about 9 am. We catch up with each other for about an hour, and then clean up. If there are seasonal tasks related to the life of the congregation, we help get those accomplished.

We met in January and February at St. Mark's in customary fashion. We took down the Xmas trees from the high altar in January, and we ran the Shove-Tuesday-on-Sunday Pancake Breakfast.



In March, the group sponsored a retreat at one of the Forest Cottages at the Green Lake Conference Center over the weekend of March 13-15. We had a great time — talking around the table, on a walk around the grounds, by the fireplace in the cottage — and drove back on Sunday to a changed world.

From April to September, we took a break from in-person meetings during the pandemic. In October, we started taking outdoor walks together, starting with an excursion to Havenwoods State Forest. We continued this in December and January with walks in different Milwaukee County locations, and will plan to continue this on the 1st Saturdays of the month in 2021. When we emerge from the pandemic, we will resume breakfasts on the 3rd Saturdays of the month with donuts, excessive bacon, and your own contribution of presence.



An incomplete list of the folks that you might encounter at a breakfast or walk, looks something like this — Dan Buckler, Bill Florescu, Ron and Jamie Zingler, Nick Katter, John Cain, Steve and Sue Rohde, Michelle Mooney, John Hickey, Michael O’Hear, Jyoti, Patrick Peczerski, Joe Glostott, Steve Wolff, Daniel O’Hear, Andrew Muriuki, Bill Hunt, Kyle Potter, Skrauss, Craig Frizzell, Owen O’Hear, Tom Piacentine, and yours truly.

If you’re looking to have a bite to eat and/or walk about, and to connect with folks at church — you are most welcome! If you’d like to get on the mailing list for the group — send me a note at vkatter@gmail.com or give me a call at 414-403-4596.

Respectfully submitted,

Vince Katter

Pastoral Concerns

The Pastoral Care Team is a small group of 3-4 that tends to the care of church members who are in special or chronic need that requires some extra attention. Help could be a special note, a visit, a lunch out, or a phone call. The group has had to find new ways to connect because of the Covid pandemic. We have one new member this year, Marian Byers.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Prayer Team

St. Mark's Prayer Team, operating as always through email, continued the ministry we have done since its inception. We've continued to pray on a daily basis for members of the congregation, their relatives, and their friends, when we are requested to do so. In the past year we've prayed for bereavements, illnesses, hospitalizations, and surgeries; and joys such as births and marriages.

The team continues to have 14 members: Mary Beth Alvarez, Virginia Chappell, Barb Franczyk, Janet Martin, Ellie Moseley, David Platcow, Lynda Read, Steve Rohde, Mary Ross, Sandi Tunis, Genevieve Vassell, Mary Bellis Williams, Steve Wolff, and myself.

Susan Rohde, Prayer Team Head

Quilting Circle

Every baby and young child at St. Mark's receives a quilt at their baptism. These quilts are made by a few women and men who love to find outlets for their creativity. We are looking forward to having about four baptisms in the coming months. You do not have to be experienced to do machine quilting, and anyone interested is very welcome. We meet one Saturday morning a month. Right now we have not been meeting together because of Covid, but hopefully we'll be able to return by perhaps summer. Talk to Jamie Zingler or Jane Shero if you think you might like to join. Everyone at any skill level is encouraged to join.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Shepherds Ministry

The Shepherds Ministry committee works to make sure each visitor to the parish is welcomed and woven into the life of the parish. During this year of online worship, we have had very few visitors, and instead of moving the newcomers to the Shepherds, the rector has taken charge

of welcoming and meeting with newcomers virtually. The Shepherds hosted an amazingly successful newcomer party on a Sunday evening in March just before Covid closed down the church and looks forward to hosting parties more like that in the future. For now, the Shepherds are on a Covid hiatus and will return to their work when our doors open again for in-person worship.

Submitted by Fr. Burch

Spirituality and Aging

Spirituality and Aging is a group that meets once a month via Zoom to read and discuss books on how society often defines how we are seen after a certain age. We also discuss how we deal with these stereotypes that are not good for the elders or their families and other social institutions including the church. We have around 10 members and are always happy to have new members. Unfortunately the tea and cookies that graced our discussions can't be present since we have to meet by Zoom. We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 1-2:30 in the afternoon. Speak to Michelle Mooney if you are interested in joining.

Submitted by Michelle Mooney

Untitled Small Group Pilot Project with Kyle and Matt

Before the pandemic, St. Mark's hosted a Jesus+Beer gathering on the East Side. Branded as "Reclaiming Jesus," this gathering of 8-16 people in a pub offered friendship and lively discussions to spiritual seekers both within and outside the life of our parish.

Of course, after March 2020, we all had to retool our ministries. I decided to begin a "test run" of the small group ministry that parish leadership had been planning. I sought to adapt what I learned about discipleship groups in evangelical churches to both the culture of our parish and the necessities of the pandemic. With Matt's help, I gathered eight members and friends of St. Mark's Church to have weekly time-limited, moderated discussions about the spiritual life in general and following Jesus in particular. For the last eight weeks of ordinary time, we met on the lawn, around fire pits, and over Zoom. We meditated upon Scripture together, discussed visual art, shared music and poetry, and read works about Christians in the class struggle, and about Marian spirituality.

If you're interested in starting your own small group, talk with the rector! He'll be happy to coach you. I'm also happy to share with you the lessons I've learned from the past year as an online teacher, ministry leader, and meeting moderator.

Submitted by Kyle Potter

Women's Book Group

The Women's Book Group continues to do very well discussing books and sharing fellowship. We have about 12 members. Like everyone else, we switched over meeting on Zoom in the early part of the year. Sometimes Jackie Adams joins us from Indiana. Ellie Moseley joined in from her visit in Ohio.

In 2021 we plan to meet monthly on the 2nd Monday of the month, at 7 pm, on Zoom until it is safe to meet in person. All women of the church are invited to join us.

Ellie Moseley

Administrative

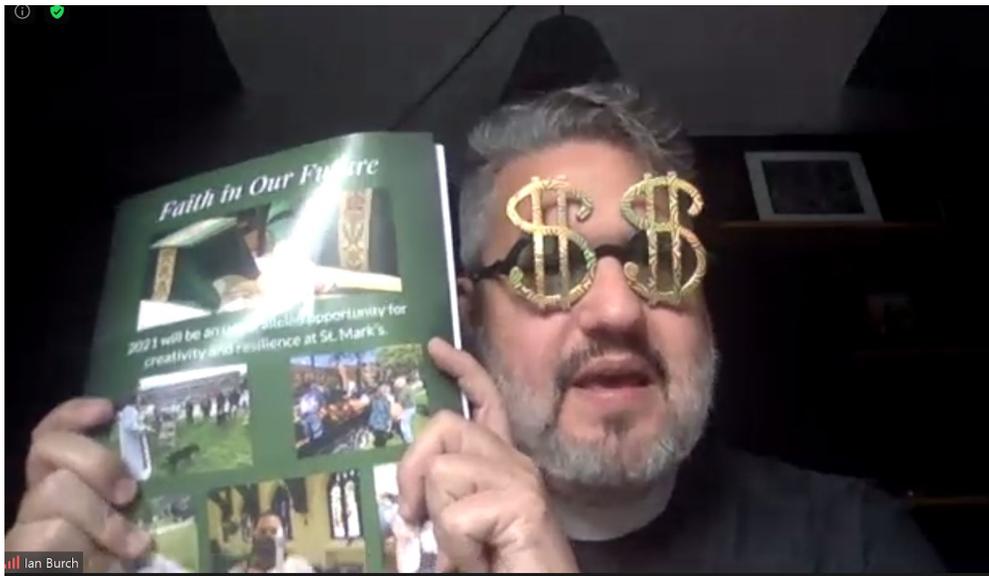
Building & Grounds

Due to Covid-19 there has been nothing to report for activity with the Building and Grounds Committee this year. The only subject explored this year is possible development of church grounds.

Submitted by Bill Hunt

Stewardship

Faith in Our Future, Stewardship 2021: Holding a Stewardship Campaign during a global pandemic, with fully virtual services and almost no opportunities to interact in-person, posed unique challenges. Knowing this, seven intrepid souls still said yes to the call to serve on the committee and I want to acknowledge and thank them for their work. Meg Edwards, Ellie Moseley, Charles Camilli, Laura Peters-Shimko, Craig Frizzell, Nathan Self and Hunter Farrow each brought talents and a willingness to do whatever was asked of them to the table.



Everything we did for this year's drive was done virtually and we mourned the loss of our face-to-face kick-off, wrap-up and in-person Ministry Minutes. We will never know for sure if it was despite or because of our pandemic conditions that parishioners' responses and pledges demonstrated such support for the continued operations and ministries of St. Mark's. What we are sure of beyond a doubt is that together we exceeded our \$270,000 goal by more than \$5000, we increased our total number of supporters to 90 including 13 new supporters and the average pledge increased by 9.3%. Any one of these data points would be astonishing. Taken together, they create a beautiful mural illustrating God's work in the world as lived by those at St. Mark's. The Stewardship Committee is grateful!

Submitted by Jayne Heffron, Chair

