



ANNUAL REPORT 2024
Saint Mark's Episcopal Church
Capitol Hill

March 1, 2023 - February 2, 2024



Our Mission: St. Mark's is an open community, welcoming people wherever they are on their faith journey. We celebrate the gifts of God that empower us to engage boldly in the struggles of life and to care for others with love, justice, and compassion.





A Note from Our Rector, the Reverend Michele Morgan

Numbers: An important statistic for all churches is to track weekly attendance and how it shifts over time. Here is where we stand for 2023 compared to past years, through the last Sunday of the year, 12/31/23. We have had a total Average Sunday attendance (ASA) of in-person attendance for our three services of 10,551. To understand the impact of COVID-19 on the parish, between 2007 and 2019, our average annual attendance was 14,916. In 2019, it was 14,753.

One example of Growth: Support for our music program has brought additional vitality to St. Mark's. By supporting the music director, our choir is growing – with 20-30 year olds! Funds for a tenor section leader enabled the choir to sing more challenging pieces and support one another. We put money into challenging and beautiful musical works. We made space in our calendar for concert performances that generated revenue and brought more people in, some of whom have joined the church and the music program. The music fits within their interest, and in such a transient community as DC, it allows them to make connections based on mutual interests. From that connection, the choir has become a community, with members showing up for one another and serving as a model for other groups in our congregation.

Plan to continue to invite people in: For the past 8 years, we have taught a class we call *Belongings*. I want to start moving people along not just to give them an idea of belonging but also to give them a chance to believe and to answer a question of how that might help us behave. Our goal this year is to use our already existing *Belongings* class and create more access to teaching about Believing using our worship planning, other adult education classes, and how we worship. The last side of this triangle would be how we behave using the lens of our social justice, our service projects, our sermon seminars, and all those ways that we are the ways that move towards discipleship, forgiveness, and wanting to invite more good into our lives. We will continue to find re-invigorated ways to live into the why of our fellowship, discipleship, and service. The ultimate goal is to invite people in not just because we are a great place to come, worship, and have fellowship but because of our goals to live into belonging, believing, and behaving.



Message from the Vestry

The St. Mark's community is energetic and in 2023 has resumed the practices that were correctly set aside during the COVID pandemic. In-person worship attendance is up this year over 2022. Passing of the communal wine chalice during the celebration of the Eucharist has resumed as has the blessing of the laying on of hands.

Our Sunday School enrollment is 31 children. Oversight and management of this program has moved into the hands of Caleb Nelson Amaker, our director of youth and family ministries. Of special note this year is the service trip by five of our high school students to Navajoland in Utah. Born from association with the ministry of former seminarian Joe Hubbard, our Navajoland volunteers worked with the Youth Minister to send a team of young people and adults to Utah for mutual service, mutual listening and mutual learning with our indigenous brothers and sisters. While Joe is no longer at St. Christopher's mission, this initiative went forward to fulfill its intended purpose.

Music and social justice programs continue to be among the strongest initiatives that give purpose to the parish. The Chancel Choir and the Children's Choir not only contribute to individual Sunday worship services but also offer unique Evensong services, stand-alone concerts and the festive Service of Lessons and Carols during Advent.

Efforts to carry our beliefs into the wider world inspire the work of our Service and Social Justice (formerly Outreach) Board. The needs of Afghan refugees and the crisis of immigrants on the U.S. southern border moved St. Mark's parishioners to work with local partners to house and support those in dire need.

In support of housing efforts in our city as well as nutrition programs for the homeless population, St. Mark's continued steady support for Everyone Home DC through both direct funding and participation in various drives such as those for annual school supplies. Housing also is part of the agenda for the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN). Each month the community, especially our young parish members, prepare 150 meals for the Salvation Army's Grate Patrol.

Most recently in December, the Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence returned to St. Mark's for its 11th year. We are a pilgrimage church and a sacred space for those impacted by gun violence and St. Mark's is uniquely called to service for those grieving a loss.

Overall in 2023, the St. Mark's elected leadership in partnership with the clergy are focusing on belonging, stewardship, outreach and growth. Emerging from the challenges of COVID and the passing from this world of several long-time members, the vestry is conscious of the positive momentum evident at St. Mark's. We are determined to celebrate this experience and continue the positive trend in the year ahead.

Highlights from Music

The St. Mark's music program builds on decades of gifted and dedicated leadership and talented volunteers. The choir launched 2023 with the musically-demanding Evensong in February. This highly popular program continued in June highlighting Howells **Magnificat** and **Nunc dimittis** (gospel canticle) from the Gloucester service. December always concludes with the festive Service of Lessons & Carols on the first Sunday of Advent. These services challenge the choir's musicianship skills while helping to inspire others and help them connect with the Divine.

With a return to steady in-person workshop services, the choir, with soloists and guest instrumentalists, reprised the Earth Mass (Missa Gaia) in October. This moving piece was augmented with recorded animal sounds and projected images. The multi-movement work was spread throughout the service and was intended to both celebrate the gift of creation and the Feast of St. Francis. Missa Gaia also encompassed the blessing of the animals – an event only slightly less chaotic than the annual Christmas Nativity pageant. The Children's Choir has been invigorated this year with the support of the director Judith Rautenberg.

The St. Mark's music director, Jeff Kempeskie, takes his role as mentor and advocate seriously. He assisted one choir member, soprano Logan Clark, who auditioned and applied for a Master's program in Vocal Performance. She was accepted into and is now studying at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff. She credits much of her success to her experience singing at St. Mark's.

Overall, St. Mark's is blessed with a corps of incredible choristers who participate in a steady stream of weekly rehearsals and Sunday morning services. It is common for choir members to sing at both morning services to ensure that each voice part is adequately covered. As a testament to the vitality of this program, many new members of the St. Mark's community shared that it was the music program that drew them to this parish in the first place.



Highlights from Social Justice

For 2023, the Service and Social Justice Board worked during the Lenten Season to craft a Mite Box campaign focused on the needs of displaced and unhoused people, hunger, and injustice. The campaign raised almost \$2,000. Work was ongoing with local partners to house and support Afghan refugees and to respond to the crisis of migrants bused to Washington from the southern border. St. Mark's is an active participant in Good Neighbors Capitol Hill, and the community has become one of the primary suppliers of the free store for migrants at Capitol Hill United Methodist Church.

Thanks to the advocacy parishioners, St. Mark's has rejoined Samaritan Ministry – a faith-based community organization addressing poverty and homelessness through workforce development and other services which we initially helped found.

The parish continued support for Everyone Home DC through both direct funds and promotion of various drives and monthly prepared 150 meals for the Salvation Army's Grate Patrol.

The Incarceration Justice group sponsors letter-writing to those in prison and brought Poet Ambassadors to St. Mark's from Free Minds Book Club. In October, the Board sponsored a screening of the film "Redemption," about justice-involved returning citizens. Many men who were featured in the film, and the film producer, joined the discussion with Washington DC City Council Member Charles Allen about issues surrounding public safety, gun violence and incarceration.

One of the longest-lived partnerships at St. Mark's is the one with Sustainable Villages Honduras. Project leader Roy Lara visited the parish in October to share his mission for sustainable agriculture work in Honduras.



Washington Interfaith Network (WIN)

St. Mark's maintained its active WIN member role through financial support and parishioner participation in programs and advocacy events with DC councilmembers and municipal staff. The WIN Realm Group now has 68 St. Mark's members. WIN's major areas of impact in 2023 and St. Mark's engagement include:

Affordable & Public Housing

Through relationship with the residents of the Potomac Gardens Senior Housing community, WIN supported their self-advocacy with the DC Housing Authority addressing overdue maintenance and organizing with other public housing advocacy organizations for resident rights awareness during renovations, resulting in a model MOU submitted to DCHA in October.

Demanding that housing developers and the city provide affordable housing developments at the Chevy Chase Library and other locations in Ward 3 Northwest DC.

Climate

Supported the Healthy Home Act – legislation to help 30,000 low-income residents improve energy efficiency and make their homes safer.

Public Safety

Acting as part of a community coalition of 100 residents (26 from St. Mark's) focusing on the city's budget priorities, WIN secured commitments from City Councilmember Charles Allen (Ward 6) to support Black Equity Through Homeownership (BETH) initiatives, DC Housing Authority accountability for safe and secure public housing, and implementation of climate change actions.



Highlights from Our Life Together

Our parish life together embraces an extensive range of activities from adult and youth education classes and Bible study to social events and the arts and pastoral care.

Adult and Youth Christian Education

Programs at St. Mark's include issues-based experiential classes as well as discussion groups, meditation, prayer and Bible study for both adults and youth. The opportunities available in 2023 cut across all these options and included programs such as the following:

- » *The Dream of God: What it Really Means to Follow Jesus*: an exploration of the challenge to follow Jesus founded on the writings of Verna Dozier, one of our most celebrated members and both a gifted author, theologian, and prophet.
- » *Faith in Action*: An exploration of discipleship and personal ministry exploring small and larger actions that individuals can take to live out their faith on a daily basis.
- » *Economic Inequality Reading Group*: Centered on nine books by diverse authors to understand economic inequality in the United States.
- » *The Belonging Class*: a program especially designed for newcomers as they consider St. Mark's a spiritual home but open to all parishioners interested in building community.
- » *Why is Buddha/Buddhism So Cool?!*: This class looked into a greater understanding of Buddhism and what Christians and non-Christian can learn from this faith tradition.
- » *Wrestling with the Angel*: This class explores spirituality, faith, philosophy, and ethics.
- » The youth Sunday School program has 31 registered students with 8 volunteer teachers and 7 assistant teachers for the Catechesis program. Three middle and high school events were added to the calendar and the year concludes with the annual Christmas pageant. In addition, a craft activity for students is organized each month as is a family-centric Eucharist.
- » Six students participated in the February – April Confirmation class and were ultimately confirmed during Bishop Mariann's visit in April.
- » Two "Parents Night Out" events took place in March and November, with 15 to 20 children taking part in each session.

Arts Programming

Following the departure of long-time co-chair Tracy Council, we welcome J.R. Randall, who joins Elin Whitney-Smith as co-chair. St. Mark's hosted three major exhibitions in 2023.

- » Christmas and Epiphany December 2022 through January 2023, <https://watercolordc.com/christmas2022/>
- » Ordinary Time Pentecost 2023, <https://photos.app.goo.gl/WiXgbqnf1G2SQqP8A>
- » Advent 2023 through Epiphany 2024

Classes included:

- » How to Photograph your Art: secrets of the professionals –
- » Stained Glass II on Zoom - <https://www.stmarks.net/stainedglass2023/>
- » Justice Beyond the Frame
- » Raven Beyond the Frame

Harvest “Saints & Sinners” Dance

St. Mark’s resumed a tradition of hosting an intergenerational harvest dance in October as was the case in 2022. Keeping with the “Saints & Sinners” theme, the costume party included special activities for the twenty-four children attending, an acrobat, plus food and dancing for all.

Bible Study and Meditation

This year Wednesday Bible Class is exploring historical and political “context” as the key to understanding the Bible. We meet September through May currently via zoom and will go hybrid soon. We have 10 - 15 members throughout the DMV, Eastern Shore, and the West Coast. The class date to 1985 and remain an integral part of enrichment programs. <https://StMarks.net/BibleClass>

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care may involve hospital visits, offering last rites, praying with those who so desire, visiting those who are very elderly, ill or infirm. Our clergy offer pastoral care on a daily basis as part of their ministry. There is also a group of devoted lay people who volunteer to be drivers, companions, and good listeners bringing comfort to those in need. St. Mark’s has specific programs that are pastoral in nature, such as the Laying on of Hands Ministry, the Caregivers Support Group, the Grief and Loss Group, Centering Prayer, and Monday Evening Meditation.

Pastoral care is not just for those suffering and in need; it is also for those who are celebrating the birth of a child or preparing to be married or any other happy occasion. The common denominator in all these ministries is people caring for each other, listening, checking in, making sure that connections are maintained. At its best, Pastoral Care is people supporting people spiritually, emotionally and in practical ways too. It is about being loving and compassionate to those around us.

The Dance Studio

Continuing to deliver on its central mission into its fifty-first year, the St. Mark’s Dance Studio is now led day to day by Dorothy “Dot” Walker, with longtime artistic director Rosetta Brooks moving to an emerita role. The programs in classical ballet, jazz, Pilates and chair exercise for students ages three through adult have grown in both scope and number. In 2023, the Dance Studio enrolled 100 children and teens through the Autumn and 28 adults. The annual dance recitals drew families from across the city and region to the St Mark’s nave to view the performances by 116 students in what is one of this community’s most joyous events.



2023 Financial Report

2023 Financial Results

	2023 Actual	% of Budget	2023 Budget
Pledge Income	\$846,798	103%	\$823,000
Non-Pledge Income	\$197,368	118%	\$166,050
Non-Budgeted Income	\$163,881	NA	NA
Total Income	\$1,208,048	122%	\$989,050
Administration	\$69,128	95%	\$72,610
Compensation	\$699,236	99%	\$675,009
Ministry Outside	\$69,984	100%	\$70,000
Parochial Ministry	\$27,463	72%	\$38,145
Property	\$211,571	98%	\$215,000
Non-Budgeted Expenses	\$148,124	NA	NA
Toral Expenses	\$1,195,507	106%	\$1,070,764
Surplus/Deficit: Total	\$12,542	NA	-\$81,714
Deficit: Budgeted Accounts	-\$3,215	NA	-\$81,714

These figures differ from our official “books” figure, because the “books” contain a distorted figure for interest income that corrects past accounting errors. The figures in this chart reflect the actual amount of interest income we received.

Parish Financial Condition (as of December 31, 2023)

- » All Checking Accounts: \$537,332
- » Vestry Checking Account: \$407,705
- » Vanguard Accounts: \$1,739,327
 - Endowment Accounts: \$1,223,139
 - Reserve Accounts: \$661,739
- » Liabilities: \$110,461
- » Equity Accounts:
 - Donor Restricted Funds: \$405,264
 - ◆ Endowment: \$384,767
 - ◆ Penniman: \$20,497
 - Vestry Restricted Funds: \$1,621,668
 - ◆ Endowment: \$838,372
 - ◆ Reserves: \$661,737
 - ◆ Satellite Funds: \$121,559
 - Building Improvements Value: \$7,964,569
 - Unrestricted Net Assets and “Net Income:” \$313,400







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