

Parish Profile

June 2021



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
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St. Mark's
Episcopal Church



Our Search Process

In late January 2020, the Vestry held a weekend retreat facilitated by The Reverend Dr. James B. Lemler to examine St. Mark's mission and leadership in a time of transition; consider areas of congregational vitality and growth; and envision next steps for the development of the church. Through a set of exercises, the Vestry determined that St. Mark's has a congregation committed to serving the less fortunate in our community, to fellowship and to unconditional welcome to all, but has been missing vibrant leadership to help us grow and face the challenges of the future. We agreed that our work during the retreat had laid the foundation for our search for a new priest and we committed to holding follow up meetings to conceive our evangelism plan and prioritize our many ideas for growth and renewal at St. Mark's. All of our enthusiasm about the future was put on hold because of the pandemic.

When The Reverend Canon George Brandt informed us that he planned to retire in December 2020, the Vestry built on its work at the retreat and engaged in a series of congregational discussions and surveys to refine our sense of community and mission and to exchange ideas as a parish community about the qualities of a priest that matter most to us. These are:

A priest who will roll up his/her sleeves, take on the church's challenges and help us grow.

A priest who not only supports our parish ministries but also participates in them.

A priest with a demonstrated ability to provide inspirational preaching and teaching.

A priest who will challenge us to grow in the knowledge and understanding of our faith.

A priest who is committed to pastoral care and who can connect with our parishioners in a meaningful way.

A responsible steward who works in partnership with the Vestry to manage the affairs of the church.

With our shared vision affirmed, St. Mark's is prepared to call a priest who will lead us in the next chapter in the life of our church.

Blessings and Challenges

Fellowship is a strength at St. Mark's. We justly pride ourselves on being a warm and welcoming place to worship and on many of the enduring friendships that have been made here. Communicating this ideal outside the church walls has been a challenge, however, and as stated earlier having a priest who will be an active member of our community and increase our profile as a source of outreach is important to us.

We have dedicated and talented parishioners who volunteer their time and talents to keep the church running. As with many other churches, this group tends to be relatively small, and we seek a priest who will be able to incorporate other parishioners into the various ministries of our church.

However, like many other Episcopal churches in the Diocese and across the country, we are growing older as a congregation rather than growing in size. We have seen our pledging units decline in alignment with national trends and therefore we seek a priest who can help us rebuild, innovate and grow the congregation.

In addition, St. Mark's has experienced various episodes of conflict between members of our parish and former priests. While these periods of conflict have been challenging for many members of our parish, importantly they have offered us an opportunity to reflect on what type of worshipping community we wanted to strive for. Beginning in 2018, St. Mark's vestry held two separate retreats which focused on conflict resolution within our our parish as well as on developing a plan for spiritual growth and renewal. In 2019, we began a nearly two-year period of congregational healing under the caring and capable guidance of our Interim Priest, The Rev. Canon George Brandt.

Key Parish Statistics

Communicants in Good Standing	65
Number of Pledging Families	32
Average Sunday Attendance (2019)	52
Easter Sunday Attendance (2019)	121
Christmas Service Attendance (2019)	180
Baptisms (2019)	2

Worship and Liturgy

“God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

St. Mark’s has a tradition of services based on the liturgical richness of the Book of Common Prayer. Prior to the Covid -19 pandemic, St. Mark’s held services on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. and at 10:00 a.m. We are currently holding a combined service at 9:00 a.m. in compliance with Covid-19 protocols for social distancing.

Sunday 8:00 a.m. Traditional Eucharist

This is a quiet, contemplative and traditional one hour service featuring Rite II Holy Eucharist and Sermon. There are no hymns sung or other music played most Sundays.

Sunday 10:00 a.m. Family and Choral Eucharist

This vibrant service is designed for both families and those who appreciate rich traditional music. The choir and organ music have been an important part of this service.

In addition to these traditional Sunday services, St. Mark’s holds special services during Holy Week, Easter and Christmas.

Holy Week services have included the reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday, a Maundy Thursday service, Good Friday service with stations of the Cross, and three services on Easter Sunday.

At Christmas, St. Marks has held two services on Christmas Eve at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Parishioners are given candles prior to each service which are lit when the lights are turned off during the singing of “Silent Night”.



Music at St. Mark's

Music at St. Mark's is a very important and vital ministry that plays a prominent role in the life of our parish. Our prized Aeolian-Skinner organ, donated in 1952 as a memorial by members of the parish, is a centerpiece of the music program at St. Mark's. Our talented organist, Anthony Rispo, studied organ at The Cleveland Institute of Music. A classical organist, composer and songwriter, Anthony has performed at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and at West Point's Cadet Chapel and has held posts as organist at The Church of the Holy Family in New York City; St. James Episcopal Church in New York City; and Emanuel Lutheran Church in Pleasantville, New York. |



Before the pandemic, our music program enhanced the spiritual life of the parish through sacred choral music sung at our 10:00 a.m. Sunday worship service by both a professional choir and parishioners. During the early months of the pandemic when our church was closed, our Music Director recorded hymns and voluntaries each Sunday which were streamed on You Tube and Facebook. These recordings were very well received and helped the congregation maintain a strong sense of spiritual community.



This year, as part of our Easter Sunday celebration we engaged a four- person choir that provided beautiful and spiritually uplifting music to the congregation. We also recently held an Evensong Service sung by a professional choir and preceded by a organ concert given by our organist.

Ministries at St. Mark's

Outreach Programs

In answering God's call to love and serve one another, St. Mark's parishioners donate their time, talent and treasure to our many outreach partners.

The Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry

The Pantry provides critical support to underserved men, women and children in our area, including weekly supplemental groceries, bi-lingual nutrition education, free medical screenings, and assistance in accessing federal food aid benefits. For anyone who faces a mobility challenge, the Pantry delivers groceries carefully tailored to dietary needs. During 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, food insecurity reached crisis proportions across many communities in our area. As the largest weekly feeding program in northern Westchester, the Pantry served over 68,000 people in 2020 for an average of 320 households per week.

Since 1991, St. Mark's mission to the Pantry has taken many forms. In addition to church funding, before the pandemic related restrictions, our parishioners collectively provided hundreds of volunteer hours each year, serving as Board members, working at distributions centers, and delivering food to homebound seniors.



Emergency Shelter Partnership

St. Mark's is a founding member of the Emergency Shelter Partnership (ESP), a group of local houses of worship dedicated to supporting homeless men and women of northern Westchester County with dignity and compassion. St. Mark's, along with partner synagogues and churches, take turns providing meals and overnight shelter for two weeks at a stretch during cold weather months (November through April). The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant adverse impact on many houses of worship's ability to provide shelter while maintaining health and safety protocols this past winter. With its spacious Parish Hall St. Mark's immediately increased its commitment to the ESP to seven straight weeks.



Ministries at St. Mark's Cont'd.

St. Ann's Church in the Bronx

As our “sister” parish, St. Ann’s has long been a focus of our Outreach ministry. Before the pandemic, each Sunday a dedicated team of volunteers collected bread and other food, donated by various local merchants, and delivered the items to St. Ann’s in time for their weekly parish luncheon. A special delivery at Thanksgiving included dozens of frozen turkeys and other holiday foods. In addition, every June St. Mark’s hosted St. Ann’s for a BBQ on the grounds of the church, bringing together the two parishes for a relaxing day of fellowship, food and worship.

Community Center of Northern Westchester

The Community Center of Northern Westchester (CCNW) provides food, clothing, ESL classes and a variety of other services free of charge to under-resourced households in northern Westchester. Before the pandemic, we delivered unsold items from our annual rummage sale and individual donations from parishioners throughout the year to CCNW’s clothing store. In 2020, St. Mark’s participated in CCNW’s Holiday Food Drive, collecting frozen turkeys for families to prepare a celebratory meal at home. In addition, St. Marks has participated in the CCNW’s Share the Warmth Program, through which we have collected and donated brand new pajamas, blankets, hats, gloves and socks for kids. To date, approximately 1,000 children in the area have received Share the Warmth packets.

Prison Ministry

We have a parishioner who volunteers her time for this ministry. In person visitation was suspended due to Covid-19 but was sustained through written communication and work on behalf of inmates’ needs including collecting and donating soap and face masks to protect the inmates’ health. The women at the Bedford Correctional Facility greatly appreciate this outreach effort as it helps them maintain ties to their families and communities.



Ministries at St. Mark's Cont'd.

Adult Education

Before the pandemic, Adult Education and Bible Study was typically held on Sunday mornings from 9:00-9:50AM in the Parish Library. Past readings have included "Synthesis", a lectionary guide following the Revised Common Lectionary as well as "The Gift of New Creation" by Thomas Ehrich. Adult Education has not met in person since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, but members have continued to work on a project concerning St. Mark's history. For this project, they have reviewed cartons of archival historical materials, including inventories, memorial notes, tour guides, photographs, slides, meeting minutes, committee membership records and architectural drawings, and scanned them for safekeeping.

Children's Education/Sunday School

The Children's Christian Education Program for the liturgical year 2018-2019 encompassed 12 children under the tutorage of two dedicated Sunday School teachers who taught monthly lessons during the 10 a.m. service until the children returned to the sanctuary during the Peace to join their families for Holy Communion.

During the pandemic lesson plans were continually mailed out to families with children in Sunday School to keep them engaged with the Children Christian Foundation Program at St. Mark's.

Faith and Justice Initiative

Following the death of George Floyd and protests during the summer of 2020, a group of parishioners came together to form a new Faith and Justice Initiative (FJI) at St. Mark's. The purpose of the FJI is to foster discussion around the Christian response to injustices in our world.

In June, the FJI distributed a letter on racial justice to St. Mark's parishioners, encouraging them into our Baptismal Covenant and work for a world in which we better seek and serve Christ in all persons, love our neighbor as ourselves, strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

As the FJI continues to develop and evolve, it invites all interested parishioners to become involved in this initiative.

Parish Life

Fellowship and Hospitality

In our New Priest survey, parishioners indicated that “fellowship” was a key reason why they continue to be a part of the church. St. Mark’s has long prided itself on being a welcoming congregation and the hard work and energy of the Hospitality Committee sustains that pride. St. Mark’s hosts a weekly coffee hour after the 8:00 a.m. and the 10 a.m. service where parishioners socialize with one another while enjoying delicious treats prepared by members of the parish. In addition to the weekly coffee hours, St. Mark’s hosts multiple events throughout the year including the Annual Meeting Brunch in January, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, Easter Egg Hunt, Recognition Sunday brunch, Welcome Back picnic and culminating in the Christmas Dinner. Several years ago, St. Marks published a recipe book “The Hungry Lion” which was a compilation of parishioners’ recipes, many of which had been handed down through the generations.



Parish Life Cont'd.

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild is a group of dedicated members who prepare the altars for the services at St. Mark's throughout the year, supported by the clergy. The members also maintain the sanctuary, the chapel and baptistery along with taking care of the silver and brass and the vestments and linens used at all services.



Flower Guild

The Flower Guild prepares the church for liturgical seasons and festivals. Each week the long-standing members select and arrange flowers for the altars as well as prepare special Easter and Christmas decorations for the entire church.

Rummage Sale

The St. Mark's rummage sale is an annual two-day event held in September where the parish hall is filled with clothes, household goods, furniture, tools, artwork, and other items donated by parishioners. This event raises thousands of dollars for our church and more importantly is an opportunity to serve those in need in our surrounding communities.

Our rummage sale has been run by a dedicated husband and wife team for years with scores of parishioners volunteering to set up, staff the sale and break down tables and displays when it's over. In addition, parishioners enjoy fellowship throughout the two days by enjoying meals prepared by members of the parish and donated by local restaurants.



History of St. Mark's

St Mark's Anglican worship dates back to 1761. In that year, a mission church called St. George's was established on a plot of ground on East Main Street in Mt. Kisco.



With the advent of the railroad, the community around Mount Kisco began to grow rapidly which supported the building of a new church closer to the center of town. In 1905 The Reverend Egisto F. Chauncey purchased a plot of land at the intersection of Main Street and North Bedford Road and in 1910 the cornerstone for the present building was laid. An inscription in Latin can be found on the cornerstone: "St. Mark's Church Mt. Kisco, NY 1910. Where There is No Vision, the People Perish" (Proverbs 29:18). These words continue to guide our parish today. St. Mark's was consecrated on St. Mark's Day, April 25, 1917. In 1991, St. Mark's was added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Buildings and Grounds

St. Mark's present building was designed by the renowned architect Bertram Goodhue in the style of a medieval English country stone parish church.

The church interior features intricate wood carvings on the wall of the chancel, the rood screen and the pulpit. Above the altar, a triptych painted by Hildreth Meiere depicts the Transfiguration. Flanking the high altar is the Resurrection Chapel which includes stained glass windows and mosaics crafted by Tiffany's. The altar, stained glass windows, lectern and mosaics that form the Chapel of the Resurrection were brought to the current structure from the original St. Mark's and installed under the supervision of Tiffany studios. The chancel also houses a magnificent Aeolian-Skinner Organ. The church grounds include a Columbarium built in 1961 and a Memorial Garden which was added in the 1970s.



Buildings and Grounds Cont'd.

The church and its adjacent building cover approximately 20,730 square feet. The adjacent building includes the administrative offices, sacristy, parish hall library with a fireplace, a commercial grade kitchen, church school classrooms, music rooms and storage space. The approximately 500-square foot Priest's office features intricate wood carvings, a wood burning fireplace, and a bay window with window seat.



The Parish Hall adjoining the church is a spacious facility with high, wooden beamed ceilings, a stage area and a projection room. In 2019, we upgraded the kitchen with a view toward renting the Parish Hall to outside groups for large-scale events.



Buildings and Grounds Cont'd.

The Rectory

The Rectory is located at 31 Croton Avenue, Mount Kisco, NY on a quiet tree-lined street within walking distance of downtown Mount Kisco and the church. This historic neighborhood known as “Captain Merritt’s Hill” boasts several historic homes including a 19th century Victorian house featured in the film “Ragtime”. The two-story Federal style house is a single-family residence situated on approximately one-half acres of level yard. The 1930’s era home has four bedrooms, two and a half baths, an entry hall, formal dining room, living room with built-in bookcases and fireplace, a sunroom, kitchen with breakfast nook, butler’s pantry, attic storage, and a full basement with laundry and additional storage. Rooms on the first story feature moldings and high ceilings, and oak floors are on both stories of the house. There is a detached two car garage with paved driveway and a parking area for additional cars.



Financial Summary

St. Mark's is a fiscally responsible parish that has reported a modest operating surplus in each of the last four fiscal years. Although pledge income declined during this period, St. Mark's met its budget through diligent oversight of expenses and new revenue streams from rentals. Annually, the combined proceeds from rummage sales, music performances and community dinners have raised between \$10,000-\$15,000 annually. These events were placed on hold during the pandemic.

St. Mark's is privileged to have an endowment fund. Assets now total more than \$1.7 million and are conservatively managed. Investment policy permits up to a 5% draw annual on endowment income and capital gains.

The Community of Mount Kisco

Mount Kisco, the ‘Big Little Village’ covering a little over three square miles, is located in the northern half of Westchester County, New York. With a diverse population of approximately 11,000 people, including a sizeable Latino community, Mount Kisco is widely regarded as one of Westchester’s most vibrant villages and is known as a premiere destination for shopping, dining, entertainment, and recreation. Among the available recreational facilities are Leonard Park, a beautiful 116-acre facility with hiking trails, playgrounds, tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields, tennis courts and a large pool; the Boys and Girls Club with its Olympic size swimming pool; and the Saw Mill River Club with year-round tennis. Located 35 miles from New York City, it is also easily commutable by train or car.

Mount Kisco also offers high-quality medical care and education. Northern Westchester Hospital/Northwell Health, located nearby on East Main Street, is ranked as one of the region’s premiere hospitals. Mount Kisco is part of the Bedford Central School District, which serves students in the Villages of Mount Kisco, Bedford Hills, Bedford Village and Pound Ridge. The District’s academic programs are consistently ranked among the country’s finest, regularly graduating finalists and semi-finalists for National Merit Scholarships and recipients of Regents scholarships.

Finally, the surrounding areas of Westchester County offer numerous museums and cultural centers, a vast network of parks, nature preserves and hiking trails, historic sites, more than 50 golf courses and several small liberal arts colleges.



VILLAGE / TOWN OF
MOUNT KISCO
NEW YORK

www.mountkisco.ny.gov



Vestry/Search Committee

Our Vestry

Officers

Don Ford

Senior Warden

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Alexander Antes

Junior Warden

++

Jody Sherman

Clerk of Vestry

Members

Michael Dondiego

Grace Gibbons

Eileen Marks

Ann Natale

Bob Niedzwiedz

Ted Raymond

Elizabeth Schreiner

Rosemary Valenti

Contact Information

Candidates are asked to submit a letter of interest, resume and OTM portfolio to:

Elizabeth Schreiner stmarkssearchcommittee1@gmail.com

and

Canon Smith nsmith@dioceseny.org

We are receiving names until November 8, 2021.