

WELCOME INTO ST. MARK'S

Almost a half-century ago, a flyer addressed to

“Interested Pagans, Bored Christians, and Others”

appeared on the doorsteps of Capitol Hill. Obviously this wasn't just another traditional pitch for a church. The flyer reflected a new energy emanating from a 19th-century edifice that, like many of the row houses around it, was perceived by some as past its prime. The author was a new rector who — with a small but determined band of parishioners — worked to reinvigorate a moribund parish. They brought a then-revolutionary approach to Christian education into the church, along with modern dance, plays, concerts, art shows, and social activism efforts. They preserved the late-Victorian beauty of the building but ushered out the fixed pews in favor of flexible seating that allows worship services to be set up around a central, movable altar. That act itself may be the ultimate in historic restoration work, for it harkens back to practices of the earliest Christian communal worship.

Today our nave is where we live as a congregation and a community. It is where we worship in the round but also eat, dance, celebrate theater and the arts. This flexible space is a reminder that all aspects of life, from baptism to burial, take place in the presence of God.

On behalf of St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill, I extend a warm welcome.

As a progressive community, we are a people who value differences of opinion and encourage their expression. Both skeptics and believers find a home here. We pursue inclusivity, extending a wide welcome to all and daring to engage the discomfort of disagreement. We acknowledge ambiguity, not trusting that there is an answer for everything or “the” way to do anything. Rather, we boldly follow the paradoxical path: by looking squarely into the dimness of uncertainty, we can discover truth.

We are delighted that you are interested in us. We hope that you consider returning and finding your place here. But wherever you may go, we wish you love and peace on your journey.

The Reverend Paul R. Abernathy, Rector



St. Mark's Episcopal Church 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 care for others with love, justice, and compassion.



An Introduction to the St. Mark's Community

Our 148-year-old parish is home to more than 700 active members. About 30% live on Capitol Hill, another 30% come from Northern Virginia, and the rest come from elsewhere in Washington and the Maryland suburbs.

One glance at the weekly calendars posted outside the church reveals something of the array of activities that bring us together. St. Mark's communal life rests on "Five Pillars" summarized here. For more information, see the individual brochures for each pillar, or visit our website at www.stmarks.net.

WORSHIP

We welcome everyone to participate fully with us. Our nave is set up for worship in the round, allowing us to face one another across the Communion table. We offer two Sunday services, during which sermons are presented in distinct ways: The format of the 9 a.m. service moves the sermon from the middle of the Eucharistic ritual to the end—to what is termed Sermon Seminar, and once the preacher is done, listeners are invited to share their comments and questions about the message. The 11:15 a.m. service is conducted in traditional form, with the sermon integrated within the ritual.

Occasionally, we meet at 10 a.m., to celebrate the Eucharist as a united community.

St. Mark's approach to worship is reflected in the invitation to the table offered every Sunday morning:

"Wherever you are in your faith journey; whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe, you are welcome at this table. Though we celebrate according to the rituals of the Episcopal Church, this is God's meal, not our own." We have music

*"Whatever you believe,
whatever you do not believe,
you are welcome at this table."*

program which including both adult and youth choirs.

Our co-chairs of the Worship Committee would be happy to talk to you about St. Mark's in general and our services in particular. For more information about Worship, visit our website at www.stmarks.net/worship/index.html.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We value a discipline of Christian education called "functional education." A system that allows us to make sense of our lives and religion, it begins by drawing us into an examination of personal, real-life situations and moves us increasingly toward broader theological questions. Classes in the adult program might include a look at our lives as

men or women, family or marital relationships, an examination of life transitions, or perhaps, ways to recognize the sacred in our lives. Drawing from authors such as Verna Dozier, Marcus Borg and Bill Moyers, a class might explore the complex differences between faith and belief. The Sunday school program serves children from pre-kindergarten age through high school. Classes for the younger children are modeled on the Montessori approach and teens come together for Sunday classes and also for camp-outs, lock-ins, worship

participation and outreach activities.

Our Co-Directors of Christian education (known as 'formation' in some parishes) would be delighted to speak with you about our program and how you might get involved. For more information about Christian Education, visit our website at www.stmarks.net/christian_ed/index.html.

OUTREACH

In response to the Christian message, we seek to serve others in our neighborhood, in our city, and in the world. Opportunities range from a commitment of just a few hours to more extensive efforts. For example, the St. Mark's community works regularly with the Capitol Hill Group Ministry to provide shelter to a homeless family each July and each month

with the Church of the Brethren to provide casseroles to feed those who are hungry; with Samaritan Ministries we have helped to renovate and furnish apartments for people in transition and with the Episcopal Diocese of Honduras we helped rebuild an impoverished community devastated by Hurricane Mitch. The Outreach Board coordinates and supports the efforts of parishioners so if you have an idea you'd like to implement, please contact them. For more information about Outreach, visit our website at www.stmarks.net/outreach/index.html.

THE ARTS

Dance, theater, music and the visual arts have been integral to the life of the parish for more than 40 years. Like Christians before us, we look for ways to express out faith and values through all the art forms — bringing together adults and children both inside and outside the church. Today our artistic expressions flow through The St. Mark's Players, our resident theater group; the St. Mark's Dance Studio and Dance Company; the Music Studio, where students of all ages can pursue a desire in to learn to play piano, organ, or to sing, and the St. Mark's Yoga Center which offers classes at a variety of times.

The Co-Chairs of the Arts Council also support a visual arts group, needleworkers, and provide opportunities for craftspeople to show and sell. They would be happy to answer your questions about our artistic endeavors and put you in touch with

a particular group or artist. For more information about The Arts Program (including the choirs and the music program), visit our website at www.stmarks.net/arts/index.html.

PARISH LIFE

As with most things in life, not everything we do falls neatly into a defined category — and yet these aspects of our community are no less important to many of us. Parish Life, recognizes that there is a religious dimension to the social, support, and communications activities that bring us together. We encourage the many small groups and social activities that interested parishioners have initiated over the years. Some groups focus on the shared experiences among men, women, or gay people. Others meet to discuss books, watch movies, or organize fun events: at our annual summer Crab Feast, a kvetching parishioner is teasingly honored as “Crab of the Year” and joins past winners as members of the venerable “College of Crustaceans.” This Pillar also encompasses the many outlets we use (such as our newsletter, e-group and website) to spread the good news about how our community is striving to live into our faith.

The Co-Chairs of the Parish Life Pillar would be happy to talk with you about the groups who come together under the Parish Life banner as well as help you organize a social event you might have in mind.

For more information about Parish Life, visit our website at www.stmarks.net/parish_life/index.html.



Caring for Children — and for Those Who Raise Them

At St. Mark's we truly believe

that takes an entire community to raise a child. As a result, our youth ministry program is an active collaboration among parents, clergy, staff, Christian Education teachers, and parishioners of all ages. Children and youth at St. Mark's are invited to participate in weekly Sunday School classes, Worship roles such as acolyting and lay serving, monthly youth group activities, outreach projects, seasonal retreats, youth choirs, and other special events throughout the year.

To learn more about Youth and Family Ministries at St. Mark's or to find out how you can get involved with the Youth Ministries Council please visit www.stmarks.net/youth/index.html, or contact the Director of Youth Ministries Sian Jones at sian.jones@stmarks.net, or call 202-543-0053 x320.

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Make a Connection:

- **Visit us at the church**, which is located at the corner of 3rd and A St., S.E., directly behind the Adams Building of the Library Congress. The nearest Metro stop is Capitol South. Join us for Sunday services at 9 a.m. or 11:15 a.m.
- **Check our website** at www.stmarks.net. You'll see a number links to the latest news and other timely information posted on the upper right side of our home page, but don't stop there – follow the links found on the lower left side of the home page to learn more about St. Mark's Five Pillars (Worship, Christian Education, Outreach, Parish Life, and The Arts (which includes the choirs and the music program), as well as our Youth Program).
- **Call the church offices** (located around the corner from the church) at 202-543-0053.
- **Contact the Hospitality Committee** after calling the church offices (202-543-0053) or visiting www.stmarks.net/parish_life/newcomers.html for the names of the current Committee members and their contact information.

Living Inspiration:

A Quick Tour of the Nave by Q&A

Q. The building is beautiful — what do you call this style?

A. Some insist that it is Neo-Romanesque (or “Richardsonian Romanesque”), the label given to the late Victorian reinterpretation of ancient Italian architecture. And it is true that the rounded interior arches, echoed by both the windows and the massive sandstone altar, support this view. On the other hand, the building has some decidedly Neo-Gothic touches, particularly in its use of stained glass. Regardless of whether it fits any label other than Victorian eclectic, the interior's restrained elegance — with beautifully crafted details in wood, wrought iron, mosaic tile and molded brick — set off the jewel tones of the glass artworks.

Q. What can you tell me about the big stained glass window?

A. The window over the baptistry dates from 1888 and is one of the oldest and largest stained glass works ever produced by the studio of Louis Comfort Tiffany and the only one in Washington still in its original location. The center panel depicts “Christ Leaving the Praetorium” (i.e., the Roman governor's headquarters) moments after Pontius Pilate washed his hands of the matter; the design is a copy of an original work by 19th-century French illustrator Gustave Dore. The abstract border incorporates some Celtic-inspired designs, which Tiffany often favored.

Q. Are the other windows from Tiffany, too?

A. No, they're not. The large windows on the ground level are by a German firm, Mayer of Munich, and date between 1888 and 1931. The smaller windows in the clerestory (the level above) which date from 1905 to 1999, include works by Mayer and several American studios. One unfilled window remains, with temporary glass now 115 years old. We also have two very unusual windows featuring the winged lion of St. Mark: in both cases, our lions have red wings... something we've not found anywhere else.

Q. Where are all your pews?

A. We removed them in the mid-1960's so our services could be held “in the round.” The pews were replaced with interlocking chairs (these were purchased from 2004–2008) permitting a movable altar to be placed in the middle of the nave. We face the altar all around. On rare occasions the high altar is used for worship. A series of crosses and hangings, some made by parishioners, are above the central altar with some hangings for different liturgical seasons.

Q. Is that a fresco painted onto the high altar?

A. No — it's actually a painting and executed by Mayer of Munich on canvas, then shipped here to be affixed to the reredos (the area above/behind the altar). Thanks to the generosity of members of our gay organization, the Lambda Lions, it