



# The Evangelist

*The Episcopal Church of St. Mark the Evangelist*

[www.saintmarksftl.com](http://www.saintmarksftl.com)

Winter 2020



## ADVENT SUNDAY 2020

*(Excerpt - Fr. Johan's Advent Sermon - which he begins by discussing the reasoning behind a pared down Christmas celebration in 2020)*

However, here at St. Mark's there are three pressing factors that necessitate we move away from a typical Advent observance. 1) THIS YEAR (2020 - 2021) is an unprecedented....health crisis which may or may not fade away within the next 6-12 months; 2) St. Mark's as an organization has been in transition. The Head of School is new and ... by all accounts is doing extremely well - which is encouraging. But on the church side we have moved away from one person embodying both the role of School Head and Rector - and now we have an Interim priest who is BY DEFINITION - here today and gone tomorrow. The question that looms is "how long will TODAY last"? 3) An issue that confronts every Episcopal Church: The Episcopal Church is in significant decline and the statistics compiled over the last four decades (1980 to present) bear that out.

- **OVERALL MEMBER DECLINE:** In 1980 - 2.5 million baptized members; In 2019 - 1.6 million members.

- **AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE:** Since 2000 the average Sunday attendance has dropped by 40%. (2019 - 515K) to (2000 - 850K)

- **Baptisms** - providing a sense of our future: (1980 - 55K+ to 2019 - barely over 17K+) In my 15 months at St. Mark's there has been one baptism (performed by non-members on the beach....in the rain!)

- **Marriages** - (1980 - close to 39K per year, in 2019 - barely over 6K+).

Year to year there have not been extreme changes, however they are extremely significant when taken in context over the past 40 years. These statistics from the Growth & Decline in the Anglican Communion (Rev. Dr. David Goodhew), and they show the Episcopal Church as a brand is dying a slow but sure death.

Whether at St. Luke's in Ohio, St. Mary's By the Sea in New Jersey, All Saints in Pasadena, or St. Mark's on East Oakland Park Blvd - the issue remains the same! We must ask the question - what are we doing OR better still NOT DOING that is allowing our particular brand of Christianity to become obsolete?

There are three words that summarize the Advent Sunday gospel: **WATCH** - **WAIT** - **WORK**.

You and I....must STAY AWAKE - we must KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS - if you want to use the latest most popular term in our lexicon we must be WOKE. JESUS *long before* any modern movement - was calling on us to be woke to any human injustice!

On this Advent Sunday in 2020 I am calling for the St. Mark's constituents to not just be aware - I am calling on us to get woke. William F. Buckley, the American public conservative intellectual founder of the National Review, said: **Industry is the enemy of melancholy.**

So, I am asking for your help as we put together a **ST. MARK'S TASK FORCE ON GROWTH AND RECTENTION**. I

am looking for 3 to 4 people who will study (for the next 6 months) what has worked in the Episcopal Church and what has not. For example the Diocese of London was in deep decline up until 1990 and since then has revived. Why? How has their growth come about? This is NOT going to be an ongoing group but one that - by late spring/early summer 2021 - will issue a report to the Vestry and the Search Committee that hopefully will be informative for this organization. Most importantly we must stay alert/shake off our sleep and see the circumstances - the waters in which we swim.

**The Reverend**

**Johan Johnson, Ph.D.**

Interim Rector

[jjohnson@saintmarks.com](mailto:jjohnson@saintmarks.com)

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## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Join us on Thursday, December 24 for our Christmas Eve Drive-In worship at 5:00 p.m. on our school's athletic field. We will celebrate the Holy Eucharist (communion wafers only), in compliance with our social distancing protocols. For a complete schedule of all worships, please see the last page of this newsletter. We look forward to having you worship with us. ***All Are Welcome!***

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## DISCERNMENT IN THE SEARCH FOR OUR NEXT RECTOR

For several months, a group of your fellow parishioners has been meeting over Zoom to discuss our future. We are the committee tasked with discerning the needs of our community here at

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St. Mark's while searching for our next permanent rector.

It is common to assume that our search for a new rector would follow the normal course of an employment search with advertisements of the position, reviewing of resumes, and interviews, and that this process should be quick. We learned early on that the search for a priest is different. Discernment is a central part of our committee's job.

Discernment requires self-reflection, prayer, and conversation long before we receive any applicants. The goal is to prepare ourselves and our community for a new pastor by confronting our expectations for clergy and our hopes for our community. We have found that before we can turn our focus outward we need to look inward to identify our weaknesses and strengths as a parish. We are finding that discernment demands observation and perception. It rewards us with spiritual maturation.

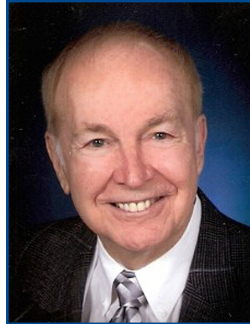
This process is harder than it sounds. The passage of time is a key part of discernment since it demands growth, yet we know that some members of our parish may feel like the process should move forward at a faster pace. There have been moments when our discussions have become tense. We are learning how to do the hard work of maintaining our personal bonds when we disagree. Recently we spent time discussing conflict resolution and forgiveness through the lens of Matthew 18:15-22. Conversations like these are showing us how to manage conflict and to move forward in spite of our differences of opinion.

The process of discernment has been uplifting as well. Our conversations have shown that we have the potential to develop new ministries. New leaders are emerging. All of this is showing each of us how to take ownership of creating the church that we want rather than waiting for a new rector to address every issue and offer every solution.

Over the next few months, we will continue our discernment process as we move into the next phase of our search. We will share our discoveries with you

and while the specifics of our discussions are confidential, we invite your thoughts about spiritual development and your hopes for growth as a community here at Saint Mark's.

**Terry Gaw and Sarah Weitz**  
*Search Committee Members*



## CALLING ALL PARISHIONERS

God has called us together here at St. Mark's from all eternity. Oh, it's true we have arrived from innumerable different places: geographical, psychological, and spiritual. We are rich or poor, black or white, from New York or Jersey, progressive or conservative or whatever. However, unknown divine forces have drawn us in this moment to St. Mark's, and selected all of us to worship in love, as one.

Our wonderful Episcopal Church, however, desires that we all participate in prayerful transforming celebrations based on themes drawn from the gospel and proclamations.

As examples, Jesus provides our theme for the first Sunday of Advent when he exclaims in the gospel: "I say to all, 'Watch!'" The gospel of the second Sunday in Advent presents John the Baptist proclaiming a baptism of repentance which sets the stage for Jesus baptizing us in the Spirit. The baptist identifies himself on the third Sunday: "I am the voice of one crying in the desert." We also identify ourselves, and cry from our own deserts, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" On the fourth Sunday, the community of St. Mark's will burst into Christmas song and joy.

The lector is central to these celebrations and themes. Christ is calling the

lector not just to read but to convey these themes with the accuracy and drama the texts warrant. Jim Sentman and myself conducted a training session for all who wished to proclaim as lectors at St. Mark's on Wednesday, December 9. This training was held in the church as well as for those that wanted to participate online. We will keep you posted for our future lector training opportunities. Thankfully, our St. Mark's lectors and ministers will be training and working to lead us with new energy into a more Christly new year.

**Norm Carroll**  
[www.spiritualsummit.net](http://www.spiritualsummit.net)

## SPECIAL NOTICE

### 2021 Offering Envelopes

have arrived.

We will have them available beginning, Sunday, December 20.

*Thank you for generously supporting St. Mark's!*



**Explore. Play. Learn.**

**Thursdays and Fridays**

**9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

For a tour, reservations or more information, please contact:

**Mrs. Francia Willberg,**  
**MMO Director**

**954-334-0117**

**[mmo@saintmarks.com](mailto:mmo@saintmarks.com)**





**ANNUAL CHURCH AND SCHOOL THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE**

Around the holidays, especially, it is important that we help those who don't have enough to eat. That is why this year, our school's student councils (lower and middle) held a Thanksgiving food drive to help people who need support. We collected over 3,000 pounds of food in total. When we looked at all the cans we had collected, the cans filled up the entire truck! We helped so many families get something to eat this Thanksgiving.

During the food drive this year, kids brought in cans to their homeroom in the morning and put them in a spot in the classroom. Then the teacher counted the cans and typed out on a shared digital form the number of cans that the class had collected. The church also helped collect the cans. Anyone with a donation could drop the cans off in a box in the church. After the food drive, all of the students who brought in cans got to participate in a free dress down.

All of the cans collected go to the Pantry of Broward. Each month, the volunteers there give out some food for people who can't buy their own. The food we collected will help all of the people who need the Pantry of Broward. Mrs. Cynthia Floria reported that this year's food drive collected 3,016 pounds of food. The Pantry was thrilled with our contribution to alleviate hunger during this holiday season.

**Julia Weitz, 5th grade**

My source(s) for this article include:  
[www.thepantryofbroward.org/](http://www.thepantryofbroward.org/)

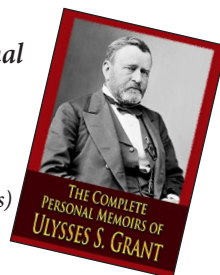


## ST. MARK'S BOOK CLUB

The Book Club meets on the 4th Thursday of each month from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. If you are interested in learning more about the Book Club please contact Mrs. Dorothy Seibert at (954) 990-7966.

**JANUARY 28TH**

*The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*  
 by Ulysses S. Grant  
 (There are various editions)



"Grant's memoirs are reputed to be the best of this sort of literature . . . Grant's writing is clear and informative, but I do recommend this book to a general audience. . ."

Amazon Reviewer



**SAINT MARK'S**  
 EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND SCHOOL

## 2021 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

We will hold our Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 31, 2021 virtually. Committee Chairs and Wardens are asked to submit their annual report to Kelly Harris at [kharris@saintmarks.com](mailto:kharris@saintmarks.com) by Monday, January 11, 2021.

Have you moved or changed your contact information, please let us know: 954-563-5155 or [stmarkschurchandschool@gmail.com](mailto:stmarkschurchandschool@gmail.com). Thank you for supporting St. Mark's Episcopal Church and School.



**SAINT MARK'S**  
 EPISCOPAL SCHOOL  
 FORT LAUDERDALE, FL EST. 1959

**CAMPUS OPEN NOW!**  
 Come see what makes  
 our students smile!

**ON CAMPUS OPEN HOUSE**  
 Thursday, February 4th at 8:30 am

**VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE**  
 Thursday, February 4th at 5:30 pm

Contact us at (954) 563-1241  
[Saintmarks.com](http://Saintmarks.com) • 1750 E. Oakland Park Blvd, Fort Lauderdale

**EACH CHILD. EACH DAY.**







## QUEST FOR PEACE

Many years back my family stopped exchanging Christmas presents, and I rarely give holiday gifts to friends any longer. I do love Toy Drives and Christmas Tree Angels so that I can find gifts for children who really value them. But if I were giving gifts to family or to my many friends this season, I know what it would be: a T-Shirt that would read: **I survived 2020!**

What a year. With a pandemic and political pandemonium, most of us are totally stressed. I wear a night guard to keep me from grinding my teeth, and my dentist tells me he has never had to make so many of these night guards before, so I know the stress is wide-spread, and I'll bet you feel it too. A peaceful night's sleep simply doesn't exist for me any longer.

The familiar phrase pray for peace, has taken on a new meaning, since perhaps now we mean pray for peace of mind rather than for peace and good will among men. In Advent we can recall from the scriptures one of the names for the Christ as the Prince of Peace. How very much more must the Joy, Hope, Love, and Peace of the Advent season mean to us as 2020 comes to a close and we await a new, better phase of our lives.

Through the years I firmly determined not to decorate for Christmas until December 1st, though later I relented to "after Thanksgiving." But this year my husband Rob, as I believe many people nationwide, had the urge to start a happy holiday season as soon as possible. I relented, and by mid November he had our house decked for the holidays. I shouldn't admit it in a church publication, but now besides our four Christmas trees (my husband is very enthusiastic about decorating), the house is filled with teddy bears,

elves, and cardinals (the bird, not the prelate). Drive by our house on 6th Avenue in Oakland Park and you'll see the loveliest crèche figures in town, I'm sure.

However, I even went so far as to begin Advent early: Since I was a boy my family has always had an Advent wreath of five candles on our table, but this past Thanksgiving was the first time my mother was permitted outside of her assisted living facility since the pandemic began and to come home for the day. Though the three of us skipped the turkey in favor of chicken pieces and ate safely on the screened porch rather than in the dining room, I did light the first of the Advent candles on that Thursday before the beginning of Advent. Though premature, I knew it would bring **joy** and perhaps **hope** to my mother to see and enjoy the familiar Advent wreath.

Hope is the first candle to light on the first Sunday in Advent, followed by Peace, and ending with Love. These three candles are traditionally purple,

and on the third Sunday in Advent the pink Joy candle is lit. Finally, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day the white Christ candle completes the season.

While we all recognize that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, as I write these words I am not focusing on the Christ candle or the Love candle, but the Peace candle. How we long for Peace: in our wrung hearts and our stressed minds, in our church and our community, in our divided nation, and in our mistrustful world. But with God all things are possible. God always gives his Son to us to save us. The Prince of Peace is always here.

So I have hope that through God's love we will attain, or perhaps re-attain, the peace that we long for as the year 2020 closes. My new year's resolution is not to stop grinding my teeth but to remember to put my faith in Emmanuel, God with us, as Advent always reminds us.

**Jim Sentman,**  
*Parishioner*

## CHRISTMAS 2020 EPIPHANY 2021

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sat. & Sun., December 12/13

Saturday: 5:30 p.m. service

(*Evening Prayer & Holy Communion*)

Sunday: 8:00 & 11:00 a.m. services

### ADVENT BEACH PRAYER\*

Mon., December 14

8:30 a.m. service

### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sat. & Sun., December 19/20

Saturday: 5:30 p.m. service

(*Evening Prayer & Holy Communion*)

Sunday: 8:00 & 11:00 a.m. services

(*Lessons + Carols & Holy Communion*)

### ADVENT BEACH PRAYER\*

Monday, December 21

8:30 a.m. service

### CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Thurs., December 24

Drive-In: 5:00 p.m. service

In-Person: 9:00 p.m. service

### CHRISTMAS DAY COMMUNION

Fri., December 25

9:00 a.m. service

### CHRISTMAS SUNDAY COMMUNION

Sat. & Sun., December 26/27

Saturday: 5:30 p.m. service

(*Evening Prayer & Holy Communion*)

Sunday: 8:00 & 11:00 a.m. services

*Christmas Offering requested*

### CHRISTMAS SUNDAY II COMMUNION

Sat. & Sun., January 2/3

Saturday: 5:30 p.m. service

(*Evening Prayer & Holy Communion*)

Sunday: 8:00 & 11:00 a.m. services

### FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Wed., Sunday, January 6

8:30 a.m. service