

Nov. 1, 2024

Hello and Happy Season of Gratitude,

I am so grateful for the community of Christ that we worship and serve together.

I have been so busy enjoying the fruits of our community through our weekly worship, weekly coffee hour, Peace Vigil planning and event, Bible Study, Community Outreach, Annual Appeal, and Vestry. It fills my calendar and heart to be among the good works and love of Christ that we share. Are you filling your calendar and heart?

Going Deeper and Wider as We Become More Welcoming

At a recent retreat focused on Deeper and Wider, with the Vestry of St. Mark's and the Vestry of Trinity we were asked as two groups to consider one thing we would like to add to our church, one thing we would like to increase in our church, and one thing we would like to stop doing at our church. Our Vestry identified:

- **Add** more "Friendly Conversations" and consider doing coffee hour upstairs at times. Friendly Conversations are held during Coffee Hour and have been either conversations with a focus or a parishioner sharing a story of their life experiences.
- **Increase** our Social Media presence with up to date announcements and images of us across social media platforms.
- **Stop** assuming that ministering must include the priest. What does it mean to rethink or increase our understanding of the laity as church and ministers to each other.

This was an interesting and surprising take away for all of us on Vestry. The first two seem like easier undertakings, but the third...whose job is it to minister and what is ministry. This seems to tie me back to the very reason I offered myself as Warden. What have I done to ensure our spiritual community is continuously focused on the mysterious and all-encompassing love of Jesus Christ? Am I living my life knowing that Christ is calling me to minister through my gifts and talents? Am I resting and waiting for others? for the Priest? The Catechism (the foundational beliefs) of the Episcopal Church tell us:

Q. What is the mission of the Church?¹

A. The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q. How does the Church pursue its mission?

A. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

¹ BCP, p 855-856

Q. Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

A. The church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

We are thrilled to have a $\frac{3}{4}$ time Priest, but I beckon each of us to consider ourselves as ministers of Christ. In so doing, we then have our full membership, even the youngest of our children at St. Marks and at Trinity, to minister and act as the Body of Christ. Because we have been taught:

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

So, as you fill your schedule for the month and fill your heart with gratitude in this season of Thanksgiving, I welcome conversations with you and among you about any of these topics. I am available by phone at 508-838-9363 or by email at Warden@stmarksfx.org.

In gratitude,
Christine