

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Johnstown, PA



Parish Profile

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PRAYER FOR OUR SEARCH



Gracious and loving God, you know us better than we know ourselves. Guide the Discernment Committees, Vestries, and people of St. Francis-in-the Fields and St. Mark's through this time of transition and discernment. We pray that your Holy Spirit continues to open our hearts and minds to new opportunities and ideas; so that we may follow where you lead – knowing that Jesus Christ walks with us each step of the way.

Empower each and every member of the Discernment Committees to use their gifts for ministry to the fullest; to share their thoughts openly and honestly; to respect the opinions of others; and to encourage humility, patience, and joy.

Finally, instill in all the people of St. Mark's and St. Francis in-the-Fields a glorious vision of the future; that, guided by your Holy Spirit, we may be united in love — with warm hearts, enlightened minds and open arms – so that we may gladly accomplish the mission to which you are calling us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from priest Search Committee Prayer, Christ Church, Winnetka, IL

Welcome

The vestry and parishioners of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church prayerfully offer this parish profile to persons who may be considering a call to be our next priest. This overview will furnish information about the life of our church: who we are, where we are going, and who will lead us.

Vision

Our full-time priest-in-charge of nine years has retired (she is now serving us part time) and St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Johnstown, PA, has begun the discernment process. At the recommendation of our Bishop, Ketlen Solak, St. Mark's is planning to share a priest-in-charge with St. Francis-in-the-Fields, 30 miles away in Somerset, PA. Sharing a priest is a new concept for us, one which brings hope and



excitement, questions and concerns. We put our trust in God as we examine who we are and who we aspire to become as a parish.

St. Mark's is a church community that welcomes all persons as children of God. We want people to feel lovingly included, to experience healing of their brokenness and to be blessed with spiritual growth in their journey with Christ. It is important that each individual feels a sense of belonging and support, especially our LGBTQIA+ members. The priest whom we call will model Christ and be loving, compassionate, approachable and a good listener. Pastoral care to our sick, shut-ins and those requiring spiritual comfort is vital. Everyone matters.

Worship is the heart of our spiritual life together. We cherish our Episcopal identity within the Anglican Communion. We hold dear its beautiful liturgies; its foundation in scripture, tradition and reason; its diversity of theological understanding and its inclusivity. Post COVID our lay worship ministries need a reset as do other lay ministries and activities. We seek a priest who can help us reorganize, recruit and energize our laity. These ministries have the potential for increased roles supporting a shared priest.

COVID precipitated other changes at St. Mark's. Through a technology grant from the Diocese, we were able to develop a digital ministry and offer worship when we could not be together in person. We currently have one service a week with each other. Mindful that our priest will be shared, the desire to have multiple services again has been expressed. Virtual services continue enabling us to extend the reach of our worship. Additionally, we have virtual meetings, which many find helpful. Other activities have been modified or have not resumed.

Our few children need to be fully included in the life of the church with Christian formation classes, children's sermons, and opportunities to participate in worship and service ministries. Adult Christian education through scripturally sourced sermons, classes and Bible/book study is essential to the spiritual development of our congregation. We wish for an excellent preacher, teacher and communicator who can kindle love for Christ in all our parishioners from children to adults.

We are searching for pastoral leadership that will infuse our church with enthusiasm and a renewed sense of discipleship. We want to increase our membership. We are eager for a dynamic resourceful leader who can empower and help us move forward with new ideas and programs. We desire to flourish in our Christian faith, sharing our love and gifts with the greater community. Our future lies in living out our mission, "Sharing Christ's love unconditionally through transformational worship and service."

Who We Are

Like many parishes beginning the search process we wanted to be able to share our story. To obtain some of the necessary information a survey was carried out in September 2023. Approximately 48% of members in good standing (31 parishioners) participated.

The demographics show that we are an aging parish with 71% of the respondents over the age of 50. No one in the 20 to 30 age bracket participated in the survey, which accurately reflects the lack of activity by this age group. Fifty-two percent (52%) have been members for 10 years or more and 59% are moderately to very active. Over a third (33%) are lifelong Episcopalians; another 41% are former Roman Catholics or other denominations. Most of us live within 10 to 20 miles of church; a small number live in the downtown section of Johnstown. A few (10%) travel 20 to 30 miles to attend Sunday services and participate in other activities. The map (Figure 1, page 6) shows our location. Appendix A contains additional demographic information obtained from the Parish survey.

The majority of us have been together at St. Mark's for many years and we see ourselves as a church family. We are very committed to the life of this church and have a positive feeling about it. We enjoy fellowship with one another. This is evident on Sunday morning especially at coffee hour after the 10:00 AM service. We welcome newcomers and strive to readily integrate them into the life of the church.

In terms of worship, respondents to the survey showed an appreciation for a variety of liturgies with 70% indicating a preference for Holy Eucharist Rite II. Our current priest-in-charge has made an effort to introduce us to more modern liturgies in *Enriching Our Worship*, as well as contemporary hymnals such as *Lift Every Voice and Sing* and *Wonder, Love and Praise*. In addition, the survey told us that the sermon is a very important part of the service.

One of the greatest concerns expressed is lack of growth. Our numbers have been dropping steadily and the percentage of young adults and families with children is extremely small. As with many churches, the pandemic had a negative impact on participation, although we continue to provide a hybrid service (both in person and online) each Sunday. We recognize that our children represent the future of the church, and that growth depends on offering worship and programs that will attract them. Likewise respondents expressed concern about the need to grow the budget.

Our survey showed us what our priorities are; the most important one is to continue to be a church which welcomes all persons as children of God. We want to maintain St. Mark's as a loving, inclusive and nurturing parish for all members. Worshiping together, receiving the Sacraments, being part of a parish community, and community outreach are also priorities. We want to make our church grow and fulfill its potential to be the Light of Christ in our community. We need direction and planning.

Our survey identified our strengths, challenges, opportunities, and goals.

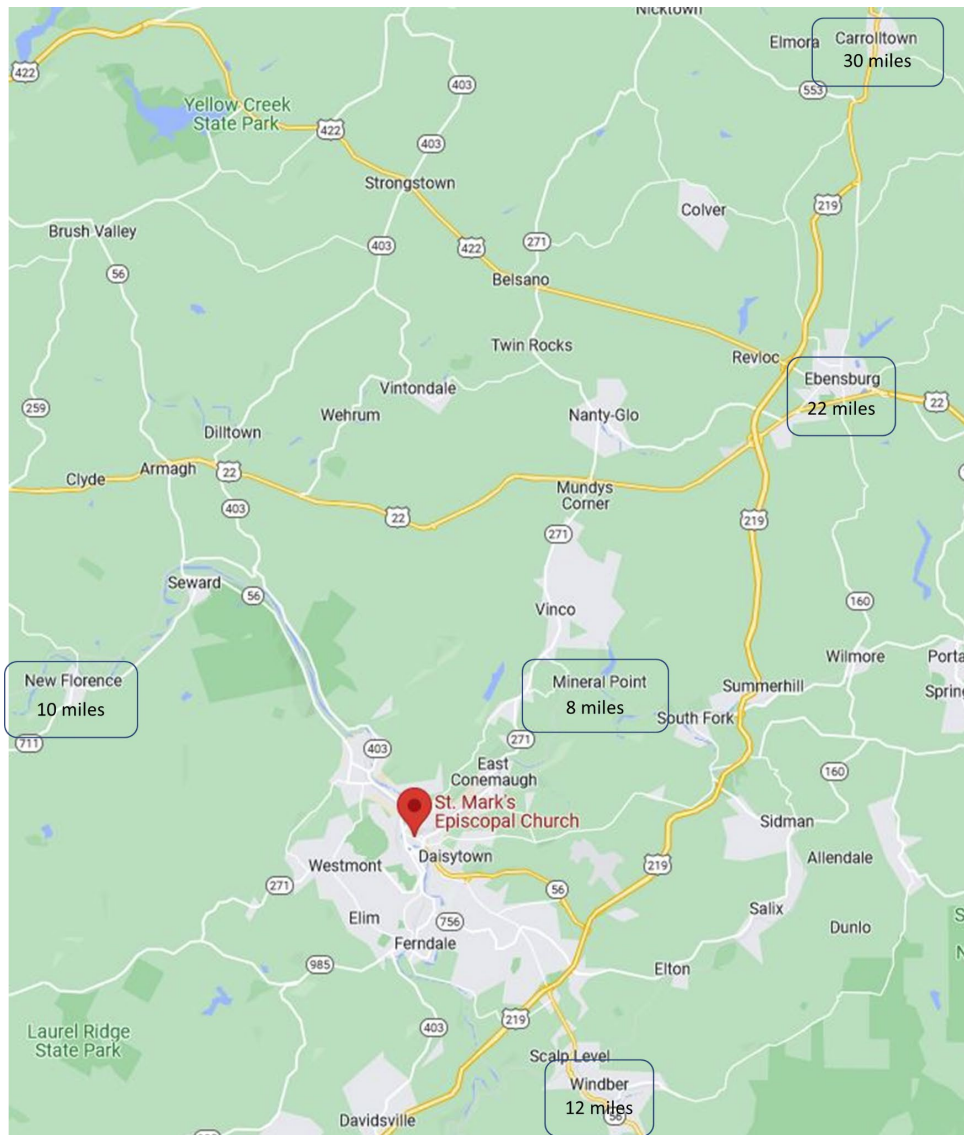


Figure 1. Most parishioners live within 5 to 20 miles of St. Mark's in downtown Johnstown. However, some travel up to 30 miles from locations such as New Florence, Carrolltown and Ebensburg.

STRENGTHS

Episcopal Tradition

The Episcopal Church tradition with its heritage of the Via Media (middle way) based on scripture, tradition, and reason; its diversity of theological understanding and practice; and its loving inclusion of all persons is our greatest strength. Often it is our beautiful liturgy and *The Book of Common Prayer* that speaks to a person's soul and tells them that this is their home.

Laity

Our strong core of laity has come forward to share their time, talents, and treasures, supplementing our retired priest who is now part-time. We have developed and implemented a Zoom ministry

enabling virtual worship, Bible study and meetings. Our laity serve as administrators for our website and Facebook page, publicize our events, and create our monthly newsletter, *The Grapevine*. St. Mark's is a committed, caring community with a tradition of service and outreach to Johnstown and beyond. We have hosted a variety of local organizations for their meetings, we provide funding and serve at Saturday's Kitchen (a downtown Johnstown soup kitchen) three times a year, and we also operate a Pet Food Pantry which helps low-income families feed their pets. We have supported local organizations, and Episcopal Relief and Development.

Location

We recognize our downtown location as an opportunity for ministry to our neighbors. We have inherited a magnificent worship space in our historic building in which a person can sense the lives of all the saints that have preceded us. We have added air conditioning and made our facilities handicap friendly. Our beautiful labyrinth courtyard which contains our Memorial Garden welcomes everyone to a restful sacred space. Since we are the only Episcopal Church in the area, we are a central location for residents from the hilltop suburbs and outlying communities.

CHALLENGES

Declining Membership

Ours is an aging congregation in an aging community that has experienced census-count declines due to economic factors and migration from the city to the suburbs. The recent pandemic exacerbated this. While there are recent indications that these trends are stabilizing, fewer people currently live in the Johnstown area.

Financial Situation

We have been relying on the interest generated from our trust funds to supplement our annual budget. In recent years we have been drawing funds from the principal as well. Our priest-in-charge is now part time since her retirement, and many of our church activities revolve around fundraising for facility repairs and other issues. Sharing a priest-in-charge with St. Francis-in-the-Fields will be financially prudent. It is hoped that growth in church membership will in turn help the church gain financial security. This will enable greater focus on service and outreach.

Impact of COVID Pandemic

As with many churches and organizations, the COVID pandemic negatively impacted participation. Prior to the pandemic, we had four services a week. We currently have just one service at 10 AM on Sunday. Now, even with the return to in-person worship and continuation of virtual services, attendance remains decreased. Members who preferred the other service times do not attend and others, discouraged, have drifted away. Community outreach and fundraising activities have been curtailed; others have not resumed.

OPPORTUNITIES

The leadership of St. Mark's believes the parish has some unique opportunities. It is the only Episcopal Church in a 30-mile radius, an area that has a population of approximately 140,000 people. We continue to become a new church home for members of the Roman Catholic, other denomination churches, and the LGBTQIA+ community as we strive to be a fully inclusive church that

unconditionally shares Christ's love. We believe that the Episcopal tradition possesses inherent strengths, among which are beautiful worship styles, a respect for reason, and a welcoming acceptance of all. While our finances and attendance have declined, we do have a consistent number of pledges and regular support each year.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church is seeking a new priest who in turn sees challenge as opportunity. He or she must be loyal to the Episcopal Church of the United States, fully present, supportive of diversity in belief and practice, and comfortable with and supportive of efforts to make St. Mark's an open and welcoming parish.

GOALS

- **Visibility**

We want to share our unique Episcopal identity with the wider community. We need to tell people who we are as we continue our current ministries and begin new ones. We want people to experience our beautiful liturgies and our heritage based on scripture, tradition, and reason. We want them to know that we offer a spiritual home to all.

- **Growth**

We want St. Mark's sanctuary to be filled every Sunday in joyful worship. We want larger numbers, especially young families, drawn to us because they experience our loving acceptance of people's differences. We hope for new members to join us in leading a Christian life as we live out the Baptismal Covenant through worship and service.

- **Education**

We want to provide quality education opportunities for all ages and attract families with children and older youth so we can provide a solid foundation based on the Episcopal tradition, equipping them for their futures. We want parents to receive support and guidance to grow healthy families. We want to provide opportunities for education, discussion and spiritual development for adults.

- **Fellowship and Service**

We want to provide fellowship and service opportunities for all ages. We want to engage all our members, especially newcomers.

- **Elder Ministry**

We want to honor and include our older members, those present with us on Sunday morning and those absent. We want to be aware of and address their spiritual and physical needs.

Worship

Our worship services have varied over the last ten years. At present we offer Holy Eucharist with music at 10 AM. We use Rite II most Sundays and Rite I on the 4th Sunday. We have incorporated liturgies from *Enriching Our Worship* for the Eucharist and frequently use the psalm from *The Saint Helena Psalter 2004*. Prior to COVID, we offered a Wednesday noon, Saturday evening service and early (7:30 AM) Sunday service. Some parishioners have expressed interest in these services returning. All services, Sunday and special occasions are available by Zoom for those who prefer to attend remotely. The virtual option has made it possible for parishioners to attend when traveling and even when not well enough to attend in person. During COVID we offered Compline via Zoom. More recently we have been meeting once a month for Compline (with a virtual option).



In addition to regular Sunday worship St. Mark's has many beloved traditions.

On the fourth Sunday in Advent, we gather for the greening of the church following a shared meal after the service. On December 21st, the longest night of the year, we offer a *Blue Christmas* service, a quiet meditative service offering strength and comfort in the love of Christ Jesus to those for whom the Christmas season is a sad and lonely time.



The schedule of our **Christmas Eve** service has also varied. At one time we offered two services, a family service in the early evening followed by a midnight service. As our membership has decreased, we now offer a single service in the early evening which includes special music. The church is beautifully decorated with flowers, the manger and candles and returning families join us for the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child.

Some years we celebrate the arrival of the Magi on **Epiphany** Sunday with a Three Kings' Cake at coffee hour.

The schedule for **Holy Week** is a reminder of the transition of Jesus's entry to Jerusalem on a donkey, the Last Supper with the twelve disciples, the crucifixion, and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. We celebrate **Palm Sunday** with a procession of the palms and reading of the Passion at the end of the service. In recent years, we have offered The Reconciliation of a Penitent with the Litany of Penance on Monday followed by a Service of Healing on Tuesday. We have celebrated the middle of Holy Week in many ways including a Taizé service and an *Agape* dinner. The **Maundy Thursday** service of Holy Eucharist includes a ceremony of foot-washing service and ends with the solemn stripping of the altar. We have observed **Good Friday** with the Good Friday Liturgy followed by Stations of the

Cross. As the Altar Guild gathers on Saturday to decorate the church, we begin with the service of Holy Saturday.

On **Easter Sunday** we fill the sanctuary with flowers and candles as we celebrate the Resurrection and new life. The service is especially festive with returning families who join us for fellowship at a special reception. The children hunt for eggs following the worship service.

We celebrate the birthday of the Church and the gift of “tongues” on **Pentecost** when our parishioners who speak foreign languages share with us the reading from the Acts of the Apostles and everyone wears red.

We observe Christmas in July on the Sunday closest to the 25th. We set up the Christmas tree, bring out the white hangings, read the Christmas lessons and sing carols. We also collect personal care products for the residents of a local care facility.

One Sunday each summer we have an outdoor worship service and **picnic** in our courtyard.

On or near **The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi** we have a Blessing of the Animals.

Our service of **Community Common Prayer** is an offering of varied worship to the Greater Johnstown Community. Among the most popular have been a Labyrinth Walk, a Taizé service, a Service of Thanksgiving and a special service for the celebration of the 130th anniversary of the Johnstown flood in May of 2019.

Ministries, Service and Outreach

At St. Mark's we have many and varied ministries. Our ministries are guided by Christ's bidding that we love God and love our neighbors ... as God loves us.

WORSHIP MINISTRIES



Worship is the center of our life at St. Mark's, and many contribute their time and talents to the ministry of worship. Our dedicated **Lay Readers** and **Lay Eucharistic Ministers** serve at all services as readers, chalice bearers and acolytes. Some are also licensed to lead Morning Prayer and have been called on to lead our Sunday worship several times in the past three years. Prior to COVID, our **Lay Eucharistic Visitors** carried the Sacrament to our home-bound parishioners. We hope to bring back this important ministry that connects the home-bound to Christ and the parish. One of our members is a novice sister in [The Anglican Order of Preachers](#).

Music is an important part of our Sunday worship. The mission of the **Choir** is to enhance the Sunday service, and other special days, with music for thought, insight, comfort, joy, inspiration, prayer, or just a reflection of God's beauty. Our choir has participated in the annual Festival of the Nativity, a three-day celebration with sacred music by area church choirs and musicians. The choir's weekly rehearsals and occasional parties provide opportunities for fellowship. St. Mark's has a

three-octave set of **handbells**. For special music a small ensemble can be formed to accompany the choir.

Our **Altar Guild** prepares and tends the places for worship. Their work is an offering of their time and talents and a ministry of love undertaken in the name of Christ. The work goes on quietly behind the scenes. The Altar Guild has a special role as the priest's liturgical partner in making the worship of the parish run smoothly.

Our **ushers** provide an important service in the life of the church. They greet fellow worshippers and visitors, distribute the Sunday bulletins, and make a record of Sunday attendance. A separate team of **counters** receive the offering, count the money, and prepare the deposit.

EDUCATION

We have not offered **Children's Worship** for the last several years. Until recently there has been only one family with small children. Recently, however, the number of young children under the age of 10 has tripled. One of our parents has responded to a call to develop a children's church.

Adult education is often supported by food and fellowship and is mostly lay-led. At one time we had a **Soup & Study Group** which met on weekday evenings at various venues. Members shared a meal and discussed a chapter in their latest book. The **Coffee Shop Bible Study** met in a local coffee shop and discussed the readings for the following Sunday's service. With time these lay-led gatherings for study and reflection transitioned to other opportunities. Prior to COVID, a group gathered between the services for *Lectio Divina* focused on a reading from the daily lectionary. When we pivoted to virtual worship, our adult education programs pivoted as well. We joined **The Good Book Club** during Epiphany to study the Gospel of Mark, the Exodus story and the stories of Ruth and Esther (using the program from ChurchNext for the last one).

We have offered **Advent and Lenten Quiet Days** for eight of the last nine years and since COVID recently included a virtual option.

Confirmation classes for youth have been offered by a lay member of the congregation. Our Priest-in-Charge has been responsible for preparing the adult confirmands.

There is a small **Cursillo** community at St. Mark's that was active in the work of renewing Cursillo in the diocese. Our parish has hosted one of the diocesan-wide Ultreyas.

PASTORAL CARE

St. Mark's **Pastoral Care Ministry** focuses on feeding the hungry and meeting extenuating needs of a downtown population. We depend on our parishioners and friends to provide contributions of money, supplies and time to support this ministry. Gift cards from local grocers are available in nominal amounts and are given to those in need. Pastoral care provides referrals to social service agencies in our area. As needs are assessed, some assistance is provided with utilities, housing referrals, rent payments, transportation costs and emergencies. Small services include running errands, grocery shopping or rides to appointments. Meals are provided to a member just home from the hospital or someone who needs support. All parishioners are considered pastoral care ministers.

During November, Pastoral Care provides families who request assistance with the food items necessary for a holiday meal. We accept donations of turkeys and turkey breasts, hams and non-perishables in order to assemble boxes for 10 families at Thanksgiving. In addition to donations, church volunteers help assemble and deliver the meal boxes.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

The ECW of St. Mark's includes all the women of the parish with the assistance of many of the men. Several fundraisers throughout the year support the needs of the church and the greater community while providing opportunities for fellowship. The monies raised are used to support the work of the Pastoral Care Ministry, provide meals for Saturday's Kitchen, contribute to the priest's discretionary account, the United Way, Mom's House, the Women's Help Center and other local organizations. Additional support is given through Episcopal Relief and Development.

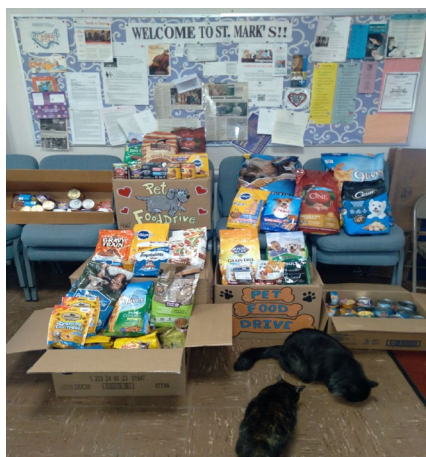
FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

The **Fellowship Committee** has not been very active since COVID. However, in the last year we have resumed Coffee Hour following the Sunday service and more recently begun having pot-luck luncheons for special occasions. We look forward to having even more fellowship events in the future.



SERVICE AND OUTREACH

Animal Welfare/Pet Food Pantry Ministry



Our Animal Welfare Ministry follows the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi by reaching out to show love and compassion for all God's creatures. We work in alliance with various local organizations committed to humane treatment of animals and strengthening of the human/animal bond. This ministry is funded through donations from individuals and outside organizations. Our Pet Food Pantry aims to help low-income individuals and families maintain and care for their pets by providing supplemental food, treats and occasional toys for dogs, cats, puppies and kittens. Volunteers from our parish and community staff the Pantry. Our pantry serves over 150 families each month. In a typical month we help feed 168 dogs, 22 puppies, 490 cats and 120 kittens. During 2023 we distributed a total of 11,830

pounds of dry dog food and 12,956 pounds of dry cat food.

Saturday's Kitchen

Saturday's Kitchen is a group made up of interdenominational churches in the area that serves meals on Saturdays and Sundays at St. Vincent de Paul Family Kitchen in downtown Johnstown. Three times a year we provide funding and volunteers to work preparing and serving food. In addition, during the Christmas season, parishioners have donated personal hygiene items, gift bags and homemade cookies which we give to Saturday's Kitchen as our part in providing their clients with a joyful Christmas.

Christmas Stocking Stuffer Project

Our Christmas Stocking Stuffer Project is conducted in coordination with over 20 churches and one synagogue and provides holiday stockings to over 200 patients at Torrance State Hospital. Parishioners donate personal hygiene items, snacks, candies, books and puzzles.

Rental of our Parish Hall and Kitchen

Our Parish Hall and Kitchen are available for one-time or recurring rental by outside individuals and groups.

Celebrate Johnstown

The city of Johnstown utilizes several downtown venues to offer family-oriented entertainment and activities on New Year's Eve, known as First Night in other communities. St. Mark's has opened its doors to the community, providing our beautiful sanctuary (decorated for the Christmas season) and our parish hall for several sets of entertainment. We have hosted a magician and all varieties of musicians. The proceeds from the refreshments we sell go to Pastoral Care.

Staff / Administration/ Governance

All our dedicated staff work part-time but give generously of their time and talents. The office is managed by the Parish Administrator who works four days a week. The other part-time paid staff includes our retired priest-in-charge, sexton and our organist-choir director. All other tasks are carried out by volunteers. Our volunteers serve as administrators for our website and Facebook page, publicize our events, and create our monthly newsletter, *The Grapevine*.

Our current priest-in-charge retired in 2021 as required by Canon and serves us part-time. She provides a regular service at 10:00 AM each Sunday in addition to special holy day services, last rites and marriages. We continue to offer as many services as possible online.

The Vestry is composed of the priest-in-charge and nine lay persons who serve in staggered three-year terms. The lay persons are elected at the annual parish meeting held on a Sunday in September. Two wardens, the Senior Warden appointed by the priest, and the Junior Warden elected by the Vestry membership, serve one-year renewable terms. The Vestry also elects a secretary and treasurer (may or may not be a member of the Vestry). The Vestry meets monthly throughout the year and is responsible for faithful administration of financial affairs, maintenance of the Parish property and oversight of financial obligations to the clergy and lay employees. In addition to the Annual Parish Meeting in September, a special meeting is held in January to authorize withdrawal from the trust fund if needed to meet budgeted expenses.

Vestry:

Lisa Bell-Loncella, Sr. Warden

Richard Burkert

Sue Kelly

Mike Teore, Jr. Warden

Tina Grata

Cindy Leap

Lyssa Nickle-Madden, Secretary

Colleen Curry

Catherine Anne McCloskey

A Brief History



The first Episcopal presence in Johnstown began with a small group of laypersons, led by Henry Mackey, a licensed lay reader. In 1855 Bishop Potter sent The Reverend R.W. Oliver to create a mission.

In November 1872, the cornerstone for St. Mark's Episcopal Church was laid on Locust Street in Johnstown Borough. Completed in 1874, the new building could seat 260 people. In time there would be a nearby rectory. The congregation's debt was quickly paid off.

Tragically, these two new buildings were swept away on May 31st, 1889, after an upstream dam near South Fork collapsed during a sustained heavy downpour. This catastrophe, the well-known

Johnstown Flood, was responsible for the deaths of 2209 persons including Saint Mark's priest, Alonzo Potter Diller, his wife, and two children. Approximately one-half of the entire membership of Saint Mark's Church perished in the Flood.

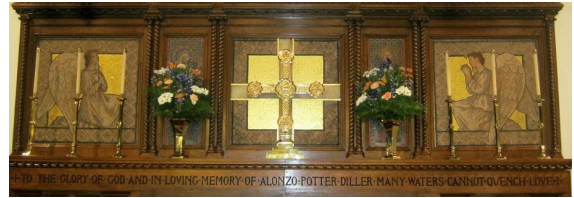
Those who survived continued meeting in a temporary wooden structure furnished by the Red Cross, a small building quickly dubbed "the Ark." After the disaster, Clara Barton of the American Red Cross decided to build "Red Cross Hotels" to house the homeless. Bishop Whitehead of Pittsburgh gave the site of Saint Mark's Church on Locust Street to the Red Cross authorities for their first hotel. Subsequently, the property was returned, and on October 19, 1890, the cornerstone for the new Saint Mark's Church was laid.

On May 31, 1891, Bishop Whitehead consecrated the new (present) church. The reredos of the newly dedicated church bore the inscription "Many Waters Cannot Quench Love" (Song of Solomon 8:7). The rebuilt church housed two items recovered from the 1874 building: the original bell and the wooden body of the present Lady Chapel Altar.



Many of the appointments in the church are memorials to the 1889 Flood victims.

For about twenty years Saint Mark's sponsored a mission church, the Church of All Saint's. Consecrated in 1890, it primarily served the residents of the Moxham neighborhood of Johnstown.



In 1904 an adjacent rectory was completed, the "Ark" was removed, and a parish hall was constructed. In May 1958, both the old rectory and the 1904 parish hall were demolished to make way for the present parish hall.

As the Johnstown community was rebuilt, its steel mills were expanded and modernized. The local economy broadened and became more diverse. The city itself soon underwent a growth spurt culminating in the City of Johnstown's having a peak population of 67,327 in the 1920 Census.¹

In 1936 and 1977, flood waters again devastated the community. While no communicants perished, there was extensive property and personal loss. Damage to the church and parish hall included the loss of records, church artifacts, vestments, and office equipment. Each time, under capable clergy leadership, with the help of the congregation and our Diocesan leadership in Pittsburgh, Saint Mark's was restored.



The Saint Mark's bell was cast in 1885 by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore. Hung in the tall tower at the rear of the 1874 church, it was swept away in the 1889 Flood. It was later recovered and installed in the new (present) church. In the 1960's the bell and tower cap were taken down for safety reasons. The bell was placed in the courtyard adjacent to the church. Using the church's capital funds plus a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, the original tower cap was replicated anew, and the Saint Mark's Bell was hung once again in 2008 as part of a major church rehabilitation.

See Appendix B for the complete list of clergy serving St. Mark's since 1855.

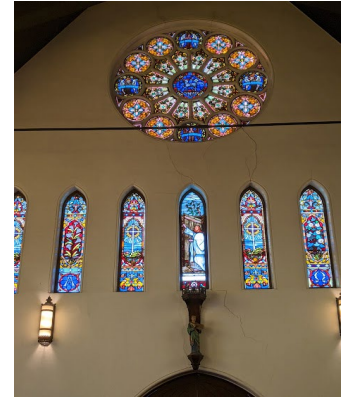
¹ The population of Johnstown according to the latest 2022 US Census data is 18,238.

Facilities

St. Mark's Episcopal Church is a stone church built in the English Gothic Revival style. The ground plan is cruciform and provides a seating capacity of approximately 300 people. The stained-glass windows are some of the most beautiful in the Johnstown area. The three panels above the main altar reflect the theme of the Risen Christ. The rose window includes the Lamb of God and the four Gospels.



In 1904 an adjacent rectory was completed and a parish hall was constructed. In May 1958, both the old rectory and the 1904 parish hall were demolished to make way for the present parish hall which houses Saint Mark's offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, kitchen, and restroom facilities. In 1994 the Memorial Garden for the interment of cremated remains was built along the church wall of the courtyard. The parish hall received a major rehabilitation in the late 1990s.



As a finishing touch to the parish hall remodeling, an anonymous donor provided for the construction of a thirty-foot Chartres-style **labyrinth** laid into the stone pavers in our courtyard. The single winding path allows us to let go of the clutter in our lives and to open ourselves to God's presence. This walking meditation is available at all times. People often stop here to experience the peaceful sacred space.



The Johnstown Community

The Johnstown region, still known for its massive steel mills and a legendary disaster, has emerged in the post-industrial era as a desirable community that has close access to outdoor recreation, and possesses surprisingly well developed cultural and educational offerings. The cost of living, particularly the cost of housing, is low.

The economic diversification of Johnstown is particularly remarkable. New high-tech companies in the Johnstown area include [Concurrent Technologies](#), [Chan Soon-Shiong Institute of Molecular Medicine](#), [JWF Industries](#) and others.

Johnstown has also become a regional medical, educational, and cultural center. [Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center](#) is the largest employer in the area. Johnstown also hosts several research-oriented medical and engineering programs and facilities. The [University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown](#), [St. Francis University](#), and [Pennsylvania Highlands Community College](#) are all located in the Johnstown Area.

With the diversification in the economy, some residents have been left behind. A significant and growing disparity in income, education, and other factors exists between residents of the City of Johnstown, and those who live in adjoining, higher-lying suburbs.

Johnstown supports a wide variety of cultural organizations. The [Pasquerilla Performing Arts Center](#) (PPAC), a concert/theatrical venue on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, attracts high-quality performers. The [Johnstown Symphony Orchestra](#) performs its annual concert series at the PPAC and at the Grand Halle located in the Cambria City neighborhood. The [Bottleworks Ethnic Arts Center](#) offers exhibits, events, performances, and classes that celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the area. The Bottleworks Ethnic Arts Center and the Heritage Discovery Center ([Johnstown Area Heritage Association](#)) are located in the historic Cambria City section of Johnstown, which also boasts a variety of eastern central European ethnic churches ([The Steeples Project](#)). This neighborhood is emerging as Johnstown's cultural district.



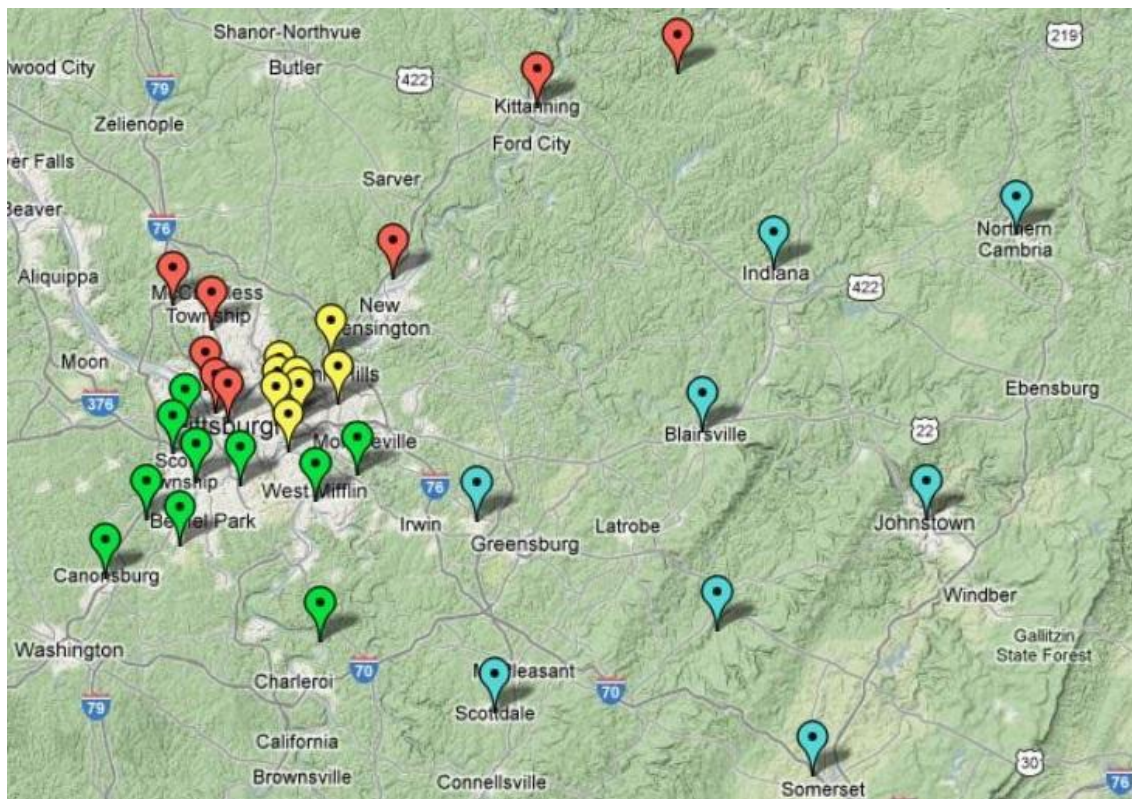
Diocese of Pittsburgh



The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh spans eleven counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Thirty-three active parishes participate in diocesan committees and activities. [Trinity Cathedral](#) located in downtown Pittsburgh is the Seat of the Diocese. [Sheldon Calvary Camp](#), [Shepherd Wellness Community](#), the [Community of Celebration](#), and a number of other organizations and institutions are also part of the Diocese. St. Mark's, Johnstown, is one of nine parishes in District IV – blue and one red at the top on the map below.

Our bishop is [The Right Reverend Ketlen A. Solak, DMIN](#). She was ordained and consecrated a bishop on November 13, 2021. She is the ninth bishop of Pittsburgh. Bishop Ketlen's predecessor, The Right Reverend Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D., retired in September 2021. Bishop Ketlen's most recent visit to St. Mark's was Sunday October 8, 2023.

The diocese is a spiritual home for persons who hold varying theological perspectives and are drawn to diverse styles of worship but are united in the love of Jesus Christ and His mission. More information about the Diocese can be found on the Diocesan website at www.episcopalpg.org.



Stewardship & Finance

The financial picture for St. Mark's has strengths and challenges.

St. Mark's Church has some wonderful assets. We own the church building, parish hall and parking lot. St. Mark's is still repaying a loan from the Diocese for renovations to the parish hall done in 1999. We have no indebtedness to banks or mortgages on any of our property.

The Finance Committee conducts an annual Stewardship Campaign. In the fall a letter is sent to all parishioners soliciting pledges to support the operating budget. In 2023, we received 20 pledges for a total of \$62,512. We are blessed to have investment funds that have a total value of approximately \$310,000. Access to these funds without an overriding parish vote is restricted to 50% of the earned interest. Interest monies generated by these funds are utilized to supplement the pledges. In recent years we have had to draw funds from the principal as well in order to balance the budget. This is not a viable long-term solution for St. Mark's future.

Our budget has been approximately \$105,000 in recent years. Most of our budget is spent on operating costs (salaries & associated personnel expenses, utilities) and upkeep (building maintenance). We have very little remaining to spend on programs and we solicit weekly for additional contributions for special ministries including outreach programming.

In 2021, our priest-in-charge retired as per Canon, moved out of the rectory, and is currently working part-time until we find a new leader. While we still own the rectory, it is rectory is in need of major repairs. With permission from the Diocese, we are in the process of putting it on the market.

The current economy limits opportunities for financial growth. We have not had a capital campaign for almost two decades, with the last being in 2005 for the bell tower. Most recently, we received a grant from the Diocese to upgrade our Wi-Fi and add Wi-Fi in church to allow us to broadcast services via Zoom.

The church treasurer reports to the Vestry at the monthly meetings. Our investments are monitored in conjunction with the trust department advisors at a local bank. St. Mark's underwent an independent full outside audit (Kline Kimlin) in 2016.

We eagerly hope that the calling of a new priest will be accompanied by a revitalization of the parish, bringing with it financial growth and opportunities for ministries, service, and outreach.



Concluding Thoughts

Because St. Mark's and St. Francis-in-the-Fields parishes will be sharing a priest, the candidate will need to be able to encourage and build lay leadership. We need a priest who is grounded spiritually and strives to create a church community where all feel accepted as a child of God. The new priest must provide compassionate pastoral care and articulate spiritual teaching. Because of financial losses, the new priest will need to be financially prudent.

Sharing a priest with St. Francis-in-the-Fields has positive aspects; sharing clergy is fiscally responsible and it is also practical in terms of the shortage of clergy. Sharing a priest also presents new challenges. There is a concern that Johnstown and Somerset are different communities with differing needs. There also is concern about the scheduling of worship services. Yet, throughout this process, the Discernment Committees of both parishes have worked closely. In the process, we have learned that our parishes have more similarities than differences and we are very respectful of each other's differences.

We look forward to the loving presence and guidance our new priest will provide, and to the revitalization of St. Mark's as a community sharing love unconditionally through transformational worship and service.





Acknowledgements

THE SELF-STUDY COMMITTEE

- Louise Mead, Co-Chair
- Colleen Curry, Co-Chair
- Kitty Batrus
- Lisa Bell-Loncella
- Richard Burkert
- Lyssa Nickle-Madden
- Dotty Venet
- Amy Whitlow

THE DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

- Richard Burkert, Co-chair
- Colleen Curry, Co-chair
- Kitty Batrus
- Lisa Bell-Loncella
- Cindy Leap
- Catherine-Anne McCloskey
- Doug Zawiskie

CONTACT INFORMATION

St. Mark's Discernment Committee
stmarksepiscopal7@gmail.com

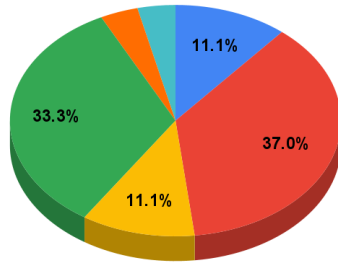
St. Mark's Website
www.saintmarksjohnstown.org/

Appendices

APPENDIX A: PARISH DEMOGRAPHICS FROM THE SURVEY

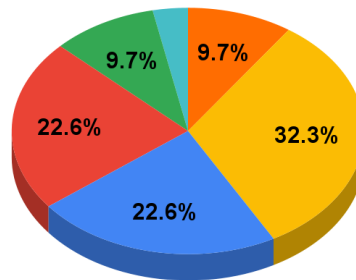
How would you describe yourself?

- Still Searching for Spiritual Home
- "Cradle" Other Christian Denomination
- Teen/Adult Affirmation* of Christian faith * Decision to accept Jesus into your
- "Cradle" Episcopalian
- Prefer not to answer
- 1 more



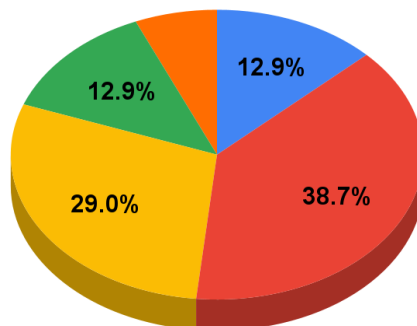
How long have you been worshipping at St. Mark's?

- 11-15 years
- 26+ years
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 16-25 years
- Less than a year

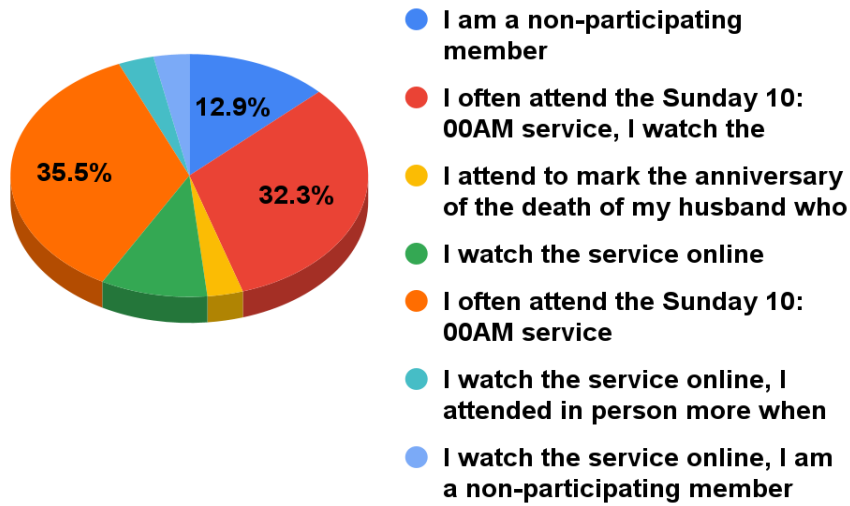


Activity level other than attending worship services

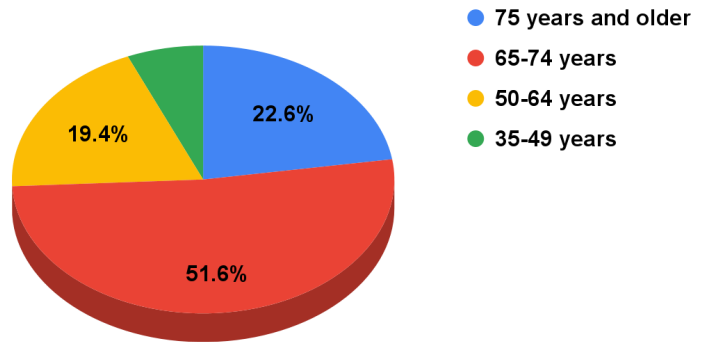
- Not at all
- A moderate amount
- A little
- A lot
- A great deal



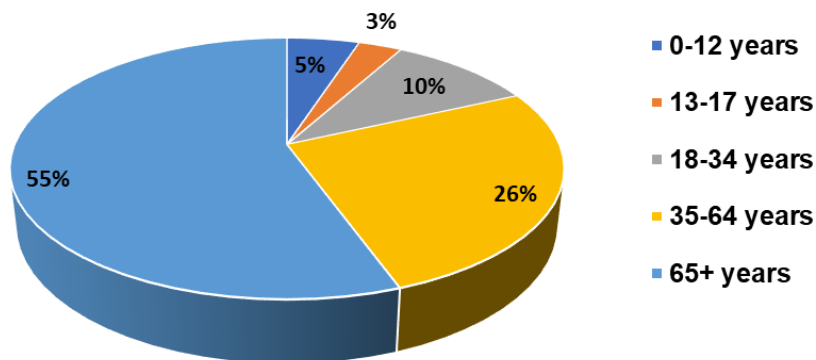
Which describes how you worship at St. Mark's?



Survey respondents by age group

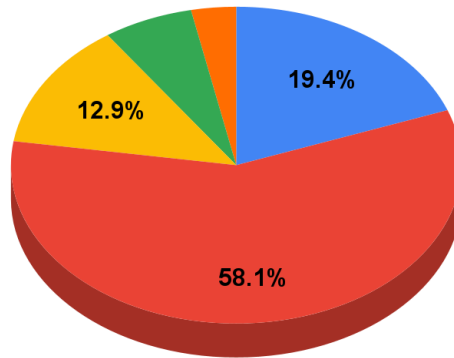


Percentage of active participants by age group in St. Mark's Parochial Report 2022



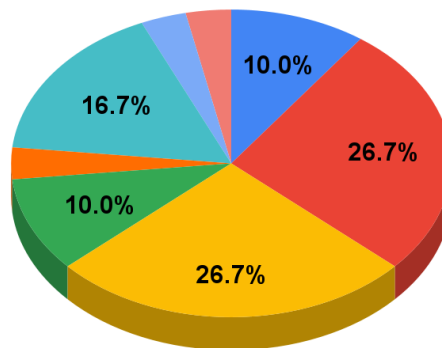
Marital Status

- Widowed
- Married or domestic partnership
- Separated or divorced
- Prefer not to answer
- Single, never married



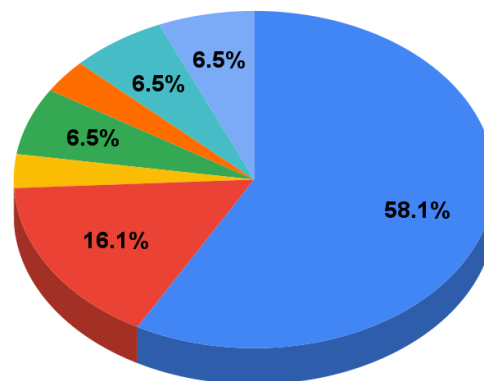
Education

- Prefer not to answer
- 4-year college graduate
- More than 4-year college graduate
- High school graduate or GED
- Trade/technical/vocational training, Some college or
- Some college or 2-year
- Trade/technical/vocational
- High school graduate or



Employment Status

- Retired
- Employed full-time
- Not currently employed
- Retired, but active professionally
- Employed part-time, Retired
- Prefer not to answer
- Employed part-time



APPENDIX B - ST. MARK'S CLERGY AND OTHER MILESTONES

November 1855, Christ Church Mission opened in Johnstown by The Rev. R. W. Oliver	
February 1857, The Rev. H. Mackay took charge for six weeks, then the mission was discontinued	
October 1857 to August 1858	The Rev. R. W. Oliver
October 1869 to January 1870 (1?)	The Rev. Benjamin Franklin Brown
January 1871 to November 1880	The Rev. George C. Rafter,
November 1872, Cornerstone laid and name changed to St. Mark's	
January 1881 to September 1881	The Rev. S. A. McNulty
March 1881, Charter granted by Diocese of Pennsylvania	
September 1882 to November 1884	The Rev. Henri Huff
April 1885 to May 1889	The Rev. Alonzo Potter Diller
November 1889 to November 1892	The Rev. John E. Bold
January 1893 to September 1893	The Rev. Peter S. Mesney
October 1893 to September 1896	The Rev. Daniel Lewis
December 1896 to September 1898	The Rev. Francis H. Smith
November 1898 to October 1900	The Rev. Sidney A. Potter
January 1901 to September 1902	The Rev. Douglas J. Hobbs
April 1903 to October 1904	The Rev. Robert Bakewell-Green
October 1904 to February 1908	The Rev. Arthur S. Lewis
May 1908 to May 1912	The Rev. Frederick A. Flewelling
September 1912 to December 1922	The Rev. James W. Diggles
May 1923 to January 1928	The Rev. Charles A. Strombom
March 1928 to July 1928	The Rev. George F. Davis
September 1928 to September 1951	The Rev. Edward L. Reed
September 1951 to April 1954	The Rev. Robert H. Booker
November 1954 to August 1961	The Rev. Lee W. Burnett
December 1961 to August 1969	The Rev. Douglas M. Kierstead
May 1965 to August 1966	The Rev. Robert L. Mitchell, Curate
October 1969 to November 1976	The Rev. Andrew Parker B. Allis
January 1972 to November 1974	The Rev. William Tapley, Associate
December 1976 to November 1977	The Rev. William Tafel, Interim priest
February 1978 to October 1996	The Rev. Charles P. Martin
December 1980 to November 1981	The Rev. Charles G. Taylor, Special Ministry
February 1983 to December 1984	The Rev. Larry Hill, Assistant
July 1987 to June 1989	The Rev. Ronald Sacco, Assistant
October 1996 to August 2000	The Rev. Paul Gennett
January 1998 to January 2009	The Rev. Marion Kush, Deacon
October 2000 to August 2001	The Rev. Linda Manuel, Interim priest
September 2001 to May 2005	The Rev. Alvin Kimmel
September 2005 to April 2006	The Rev. Martin Wright, Supply
April 2006 to January 2009	The Rev. Douglas Blakelock
January 2009 to July 2011	The Rev. Vicente Santiago, part-time Priest- in-Charge
July 2011 to October 2014	The Rev. Martin Wright, Regular Supply
November 2014 to March 2021	The Rev. Nancy L. Threadgill, Priest-in-Charge
April 2021 to present	The Rev. Nancy L. Threadgill, part-time Priest-in-Charge