



The Grapevine

St. Mark's Episcopal Church



September 2026

A Note from the Wardens – September 2026

It is wonderful to see everyone in church each Sunday, especially when we celebrate Morning Prayer. The fact that our numbers remain strong even without a permanent priest-in-charge is a testament to the strength of our St. Mark's parish family. As the front page of our service bulletin rightly states: "Ministers: The People of St. Mark's!"

We have been blessed to have Holy Eucharist regularly. Our Missioner for Small Churches, Rev. Kim Karashin is doing a super job scheduling supply priests. Fr. Norm Erb-White and Fr. Regis Smolko have been with us several times. Canon Wes Smedley will serve us again this month and Rev. Kim has been here frequently.

We don't have any updates for priest-in-charge search however, Richard and Colleen hope to meet with Canon Wes Smedley (Canon to the Ordinary for Clergy and Congregational Care and Transitions) after the service on Sunday the 13th. They are hoping to get his take on the situation, find out what is being done to search, and see if there are any other options. Please continue using the prayers for the search found here.

Our Annual Meeting is Sunday, September 27 with a Potluck. Be thinking about something to share. The Blessing of the Animals and Bake Sale is Saturday, October 3rd and the Bishop will be here on Sunday, October 11th.

Please read Richard's report from the Buildings & Grounds Committee on the next page. They have been very busy which, again, is evidence that St. Mark's continues to stay strong and moving forward!

Peace, In Christ,
Colleen and Lisa

Sharing Christ's love unconditionally
through transformational worship and service.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

335 Locust Street
Johnstown, PA 15901
814-535-6797

stmarks@breezelinebiz.net

Web site
www.saintmarksjohnstown.com

Our Staff:

Priest:
Verger: Cindy Leap
Organist: Dolly Lopresti
Treasurer: Pam Hysong
Secretary: Joanne McKinley
Sexton: Nikki Forsythe

The Vestry:

Senior Wardens:
Lisa Bell-Loncella
Colleen Curry
Junior Warden: Richard Burkert
Secretary: Doug Zawiskie
Treasurer: Pam Hysong

2026

Lisa Bell-Loncella
Richard Burkert
Tina Grata

2027

Donovan Pendell
Doug Zawiskie
Colleen Curry

2028

Louise Mead
Valarie Schultz
Cynthia Frank

*Please remember
St. Mark's Church in your will.*

From the Buildings & Grounds Committee

The Building Committee of St. Mark's Episcopal Church is pleased to report that we have solved our long-term sewage compliance issue. When public sewers were upgraded on Locust Street in front of the church several years ago, St. Mark's Church was required to pass a pressure test to make sure that ground water was not infiltrating into the sanitary sewer lines. We knew that we would not pass the pressure test and that we would need to make expensive repairs to the system. The sewer line in the Parish House is at least nine feet under the concrete slab floor, and might need to be excavated! In January 2025 a monthly penalty of \$100 began to be added to our bill.

Earlier this year, we began the effort to comply with the sewer mandate. Working with consultants, we learned that the church building and parish house have a total of three sewer connections. The Vestry hired B&M Excavating, who made upgrades on two of sewer lines and helped us to secure a waiver on the third line in the Parish House. We are now in compliance!

There was considerable concern about the financial impact of this project. In the end, we expended some \$20,081 - less than feared but more than we can afford. These funds came out of the church's investment account. The Vestry of St. Mark's asks supporters to consider making a special, one-time gift to the church to repay funds from the trust account. We depend on earnings from the trust fund to support our church programs.

Our Building Committee is currently planning other work this year – masonry and roofing repairs. A section of the exterior stone wall on the church's east façade partially collapsed this spring, and several stones need to be replaced. In 2008, we repointed most of the masonry joints in the bell tower, but did not have funds to do masonry repairs elsewhere. There are numerous mortar gaps and holes that allow water to penetrate, and it's only a matter of time until we have other wall failures.

We have found a good mason, Chris Rose, who has given us a proposal to repair the church wall and replace missing mortar in other sections of the church exterior. Chris Rose also inspected the Parish House and will replace the caulk around the Parish House windows before leaking causes damage to the building exterior. The Vestry has approved his proposed fee of \$2,000 for this project, and work will begin soon.

St. Mark's Buildings and Grounds Committee

Richard Burkert, Junior Warden; Sam Buchan; Mike Teore; Penn Whitlow

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Prayers for our Search

Prayer for Guidance during our Discernment Process

Gracious and loving God, you teach us that things happen in your time. As we continue to wait for clergy candidates, encourage us, the people of St. Francis in the Fields and St. Mark's Episcopal Churches, to grow steadfastly in our ministries to love and serve our neighbors by sharing the Good News in Jesus Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, we open our hearts and minds to new opportunities and ideas, following where you lead — knowing that Jesus Christ walks with us each step of the way. As this discernment period evolves, empower the members of our Vestries and Discernment Committees to share their thoughts openly and honestly; to respect the opinions of others; and to encourage humility, patience, and joy.

Finally, instill in us a glorious vision of the future: one where we are united in love and ministry in fulfilling the mission of our baptismal vows; through our savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer for a New Priest

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, we humbly ask you to supply your grace to all priests who are called to the ministry of your peoples. Fill them with the Holy Spirit, the truth of your doctrine, and clothe them with piety so that they may faithfully serve where they are called. Open their hearts to the possibility and consideration of a new path whereby they may serve you. We beseech you to guide to us, the pastor you would have shepherd your people at St. Francis in the Fields and St. Mark's. Open the hearts of these parish families to acceptance of your choice for us, so that together, we may increase our faith, devotion, and obedience, and be prepared to readily do the good works you have planned for us to do. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

News of Note

Annual Meeting & Elections to Vestry

Our Annual Meeting on Sunday, September 27 following the 10 AM service with a ZOOM option. At this meeting we review the State of the Parish. The principal order of business is the nomination and election of new members to the Vestry. We have two positions to fill. The Nominating Committee, led by the Jr. Warden is seeking nominations to Vestry. Please give prayerful consideration to potential nominees. If you discern a call to serve on Vestry, please contact the Junior Warden, Richard Burkert _____

Saturday's Kitchen — Saturday, September 19th

St. Mark's will be serving at Saturday's Kitchen on September 19th. We are in need of at least 6 volunteers to help at assemble dinners and serve. Please contact Kitty Batrus.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 3th

In celebration of the **Feast of St. Francis** we will hold our annual Blessing of the Animals with a bake sale in the Courtyard from 10 AM to 1 PM.

Bishop Ketlen Solak's visit to St. Mark's — October 11th

The Bishop's visit will be Sunday, October 11th. If you would like to be confirmed or received, please speak to Lisa Bell-Loncella. Call the office (814-535-6797) to learn more about classes.

We'd like to get the church all spiffed up for Bishop Ketlen's visit. We've scheduled a clean-up day for Saturday, September 26. You can find more information elsewhere in the *Grapevine*.

Diocesan Convention

The 161st Annual Convention of the Diocese of Pittsburgh will be held Saturday, November 14 at Trinity Cathedral from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You can find more information about Convention is on the next page. Prayerfully consider this opportunity to participate in the life of the Diocese. Deputies from St. Mark's are Colleen Curry and Mike Teore. More information about Convention can be found elsewhere in this issue of the *Grapevine*.

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Readers and Greeters – September & November 2026

Sunday	Readers	Greeters & Ushers
September 6	Donna Carosi & Donovan Pendell	Tina Grata & Richard Burkert
September 13	Richard Burkert & Joann Lacko	Joann Lacko & Colleen Curry
September 20	Colleen Curry & Pam Hysong	Melisa Babalonis & Aiden Barlow
September 27	Tina Grata & Doug Zawiskie	Sam & Heidi Buchan
October 4	Lisa Bell-Loncella & Donna Carosi	Amy & Penn Whitlow
October 11	Donovan Pendell & Pam Hysong	Tina Grata & Richard Burkert
October 18	Joann Lacko & Richard Burkert	Melisa Babalonis & Aiden Barlow
October 25	Doug Zawiskie & Tina Grata	Sam & Heidi Buchan
November 1	Colleen Curry & Donna Carosi	Amy & Penn Whitlow

If you are unable to read or usher on the day you are scheduled, please find a substitute or let Colleen Curry or Lisa Bell-Loncella know so a sub can be found in a timely manner.

***NOTE: Greeters - Please be prepared to count the offering money after the service! Thank you.

For a listing of the readings see <https://www.lectionarypage.net/#september> We are using Track 1 for the Old Testament lesson & the Psalm through November 22.

Worship Schedule September 2026

Sunday, September 6 th	Morning Prayer with Lisa Bell-Loncella
Sunday, September 13 th	Holy Eucharist with Canon Wes Smedley
Sunday, September 20 th	Morning Prayer with Pam Hysong
Sunday, September 27 th	Holy Eucharist with Rev. Kimberly Karashin
Sunday, October 4 th	Morning Prayer with Doug Zawiskie
Sunday, October 11 th	Holy Eucharist with Bishop Ketlen Solak



For those who are not aware, our diocese produces a monthly e-letter titled *Grace Happens*. If you are not already a subscriber go to <https://www.episcopalpgh.org/resources/grace-happens/> and you will be redirected to the sign up page.

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Special Thanks to René Fetchkan & Trish Corle

When you have a chance, walk around to the side of the Church next to the bank. It has been beautifully landscaped through the generosity of Rene & Trish.

Their landscapers, Westwood Lawn Care did an awesome job Pulling the weeds, cutting back the decorative grasses, trimming the bushes, and adding fresh mulch.

Thank YOU!!!



June Clean-up—What an Awesome Job!

Back in June Trish and René coordinated another clean-up project in the courtyard! They were assisted by Julia Nesbitt, Kitty Batrus, Valarie Schultz and Amy Whitlow with help from Mike Teore.

The team did an amazing job! They cut back the trees—especially the overgrown arborvitae — and bushes, pulled weeds, trimmed the ground



cover in the memorial garden, mulched the flower beds and planted marigolds in the planter at the front of the courtyard.

A few weeks earlier Sam and Heid Buchan cleared ALL the weeds and moss that grow up between the pavers in the labyrinth.

St. Mark's Offers a Helping Hand

For the last several years, our Mission donations have gone toward the purchase of animals for distribution through Heifer International. These animals provide an opportunity for families to supply food for themselves and possibly others. Some of these items, like the chicks and ducks, honeybees, and goats, are the source of nourishment like eggs, honey, and milk. The



sheep can be sheered for wool. They provide the prospect of sustainability not just this week's dinner.

We here at St. Mark's would like to designate September as Mission Month. All money collected this month for Mission will go toward the purchase of animals through Heifer International. The more donations, the more animals we can send!

Here are some of the gifts we could provide. Please be as generous as you are able!



Goat \$120

The gift of a goat provides milk, cheese and butter for nourishment. On small farms, goats are often the key to a family's survival.

Flock of Chicks \$20

Your gift of a flock of chicks will provide a family in need with a starter flock of 10 to 50 chicks and training to empower them to turn your donation into a lifetime of opportunity.

Sheep \$120

The wool sheep provide is a valuable resource, providing warm clothing for families and children living in harsh environments. Sheep can also provide milk for hungry families.

Honeybees \$30

A Heifer honeybee gift donation includes a bee package, hive, box and training in beekeeping techniques. When you buy bees for a family in need, your gift increases the global honeybee population to support the environment.

Flock of Ducks \$20

Donate ducks to help reduce world hunger and poverty. Your flock of ducks gift donation helps families in need with eggs for nourishment and a reliable income.



Saturday's Kitchen

St. Mark's will be serving at Saturday's Kitchen September 19th from 10:30 to 12:30.

We are in need of at least 6 volunteers to help assemble the dinners and serve.

Please call or email Kitty Batrus.



FALL CLEAN UP **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26** **9:00 AM TO 12 Noon** **Rain date on October 10**

Bishop Ketlen will be here Sunday, October 11th. We want the church to look nice for her visit.

Even with the amazing clean-up job in June, the weeds have cropped up and the plants have grown like crazy. The courtyard and garden beds in front of the church are again in need of a little pruning and weeding.

We'll gather at 9 AM to get started on the clean-up. If we need more time, we set aside Saturday, October 10 as the rain date.

Bring your favorite yard tools: gloves, rakes, and small garden tools. We will supply bags and boxes for the weeds and other trimmings. If everyone can do a little, we can get it done.

The more workers, the less time it will take to get the job done!



House Hunting

Our Sexton, Nikki Forsythe is looking for a new home. She has to move in October. She is looking for a single family dwelling with 2 bedrooms where pets are allowed. She would like to stay in the Ferndale area but Moxham or Roxbury are also possibilities. If you know of a place in these neighborhoods, call the Church office.





Annual Parish Meeting

Date: Sunday, September 27, 2026

Following the 10:00 am Service

Nomination of Vestry Members

Election of Vestry Members

Report on the State of the Parish

Pot-Luck Brunch at the Parish Meeting

We are planning a Potluck Brunch following the 10:00 am service in the Parish Hall before the meeting. All members of St. Mark's are invited to attend.

Think of your favorite breakfast casserole, sausage biscuits, quiche, pastries, fruit. Yum!!

An email will be sent in the coming weeks with more information.

Blessing of the Animals & Bake Sale



**Saturday, October 3, 2026
10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
In the Church Courtyard
Rain or Shine**

Bring your pet for a special blessing. All types of pets are welcome. Please keep dogs on leashes and other species gently restrained. Baked goods will be for sale.

Note: We need volunteers to provide homemade items for our bake sale and to staff the bake sale table during the event. Please contact the church office if you can help.

Calendar and Hospitality Committee Tentative Plans for the Coming Months

September:

- Saturday's Kitchen (9/19)
- Annual Parish Meeting (9/27)
- Fall Cleanup (9/26, rain date 10/10)

October:

- Blessing of the Animals & Bake Sale (10/3)
- Bishop's Visitation (10/11)

November

- Diocesan Convention (11/14)
- Calendar Committee Meeting (11/17)
- Halupki Harvest Dinner (11/21)
- Thanksgiving (11/27)

December

- Advent Quiet Day (12/6)
- Greening of the Church (12/20)
- Blue Christmas (12/21)
- Christmas Eve Services (12/24, 6PM)

January

- Lessons & Carols (1/3)
- Feast of Epiphany (1/6)
- MLK holiday (1/18)
- Parish Finance Meeting (1/17)

News from the Diocese



The 161st Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh

Diocesan Convention:

The 161st Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh will be held on Saturday, November 14, 2026, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 328 6th Avenue, Pittsburgh.

Nominations for Diocesan Leadership Positions:

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh is welcoming nominations of clergy and lay persons for election to membership on various governing bodies and committees of the Diocese. The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for elections to be held at the Diocesan Convention on November 14, 2026.

This year we will be electing:

- One lay person to the Board of Trustees
- One clergy and one layperson to:
 - the Standing Committee
 - the Cathedral Chapter
 - the Committee on Constitution and Canons
- One lay person to the Regional Disciplinary Board
- One person (clergy or lay) to the Commission on Ministry
- At the District Level
 - **District 4** 1 lay person for Board of Trustees
 - For Each District: One clergy and 1 lay person for District Chair and Vice Chair

For more information on the work of the Boards and Committees, please [click here](#).

Multiple candidates for open positions are accepted and encouraged. All positions carry a term of three years (ending in 2029) except for the Standing Committee which has a four-year term (ending in 2030).

The 2026 Nomination Form with submission instructions is available here in [PDF](#) or [Word](#).

More details about our 161st Annual Convention, as they become available, are available at <https://www.episcopalpgh.org/resources/2026-diocesan-convention/>



St. Michael's of the Valley, Ligonier and St. Francis in the Fields, Somerset, are partnering again to host Holy Hikes of Southwestern Pennsylvania, an official chapter of [Holy Hikes](#). Last year representatives of other congregations in the Diocese joined them for a number of hikes.

The hiking season runs from May to October on the third Saturday of each month starting at 10 AM. This gives folks from farther away in the Diocese time to get to the trailheads. Look for announcement with details about each hike on the [Diocese](#) Facebook page a week or two before each hike. The hiking schedule for 2026 is:

The hiking schedule for 2026 is:

Saturday, September 19, 2026 - 10:00 am - [Kimberly Run Natural Area](#) (Somerset)

- South East trails off South parking lot - 2.5 miles ; easy

Saturday, October 17, 2026 - 10:00 am - [Laurel Hill State Park](#) (near Somerset; Pump House Trailhead)

- to Jones Mill Dam - Pumphouse Trail to Martz Trail to Water Line Trail - about 3 miles
- easy (except Water Line trail which is more difficult but downhill)

During the hike, we hold a service of Holy Communion, stopping along the trail to read the scripture and say the prayers, while sharing the Eucharist at the end of the hike or at another appropriate setting along the trail. It's a lovely way to have a worship service!

In addition, we believe this is an important opportunity for members of the Diocese to invite friends, family, and neighbors—especially those who might not want to attend a Sunday morning service—to something a bit different. We have found it's a wonderful way to build community beyond our four walls.

If you are interested in participating this year, please contact our ministry team member [Katie Ong](#). You can also look for information about upcoming hikes in the "Events" section of the [St. Francis website](#) and on its [Facebook page](#), as well as on [St. Michael's Holy Hikes webpage](#) and its [Facebook page](#).





St. Mark's Episcopal Church
335 Locust St.
Johnstown, Pa. 15901
814-535-6797



ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

Many thanks for the many contributions from our generous donors: Carol Harp, James & Carol Bezek, Vince & Donna Rzasa, Chris & Delbert Hess, Linda Cordes, Valerie Kasper Wilson, Carol & Lou Shaffer, Theresa Kosaber., Tim Cicotello, Cathy & Bill Sampson, Annett Kristofco, John & Betty Gritzer, Marion Gaydos, Dennis & Carol Loushe, Helen Petruska, Sharon Flick, Helen Mishler, Karen Orner, Yvonne Lucas and Liz Pavlosky for their continued support.

We were able to assist 85 Families and have helped 5 emergency walk ins since August 13th.

Totals for the month of August were:

Dog and Puppy Food 417 lbs.
Cat and Kitten Food 763 lbs.

Grand Total From January through August:

5,688 lbs. Dry Dog Food and 10,795 lbs. Dry Cat Food

During the Month of September the Pet Food Pantry will be open
September 17th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Cynthia Greig and Joanne McKinley



2026 Weekly Altar Flowers & Monthly Altar Candles

Donation price is \$30 a Sunday for flowers and \$8 a month for candles.
Please contact Joanne in the Parish Office with your requests.

We have openings for the following dates:

9/6 (1), 9/20 (1)
10/4 (1), 10/18 (1), 10/25 (2)
11/1(1), 11/8 (1), 11/15 (2), 11/22 (1)
12/6 (1), 12/20 (1), 12/27 (2)



Animal Pet Food Ministry

The First Collection of the month will be for our Animal Pet Food Ministry.



BUILDING FUND CAMPAIGN

Your extra collection on the second Sunday of the month goes toward the sewer remediation project described in the Building Committee's report.

A special "thank you" to everyone who has supported our many projects!



Missions

All families of the church are encouraged to donate \$1.00 or more on the **3rd Sunday** of each month for Missions.

Outreach/Pastoral Care

All families of the church are encouraged to donate \$1.00 or more on the **4th Sunday** of each month for our Pastoral Care needs.

Vestry Meeting

September 24th

6:30 PM in person & via Zoom

DONATE ONLINE

Pay your pledge or donate to our special collections online using PayPal or a Credit Card. Go to the Donate page of our website <https://saintmarksjohnstown.com/give-to-support-st-marks-and-its-ministries/> to make your donation.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER						
		1	2	3	4	5
6 10:00 AM Morning Prayer II Church & Zoom	7 	8	9	10	11	12
13 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist II Church & Zoom	14	15	16	17 Pet Food 10:00 am to 1:00 pm	18	19 Saturday's Kitchen 10:00 to 12:00
20 10:00 AM Morning Prayer I Church & Zoom	21	22	23	24 Vestry Meeting 6:30 Church & Zoom	25	26 Fall Clean Up Rain Date: 10/10
27 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist II Church & Zoom Parish Meeting	28	29	30		9/27 Parish Meeting Election of Vestry Members Report on the Parish	