The Grapevine

St. Mark's Episcopal Church



November 2026

A Note from the Wardens – November 2026

Our new Vestry had its first meeting on Thursday, October 15. Following opening prayer with *Lectio Divina* Bible study and approval of the minutes of the September meeting, the Vestry began the process of selecting officers. Doug Zawiskie accepted nomination of several members to serve as Senior Warden. Richard Burkert, who has been managing numerous buildings and grounds projects, agreed to stay on as Junior Warden for another year. Amy Whitlow offered to serve as Secretary and Pam Hysong will remain as Treasurer. After selection of officers, outgoing Senior Warden Lisa Bell-Loncella handed the meeting over to Doug.

Other members of the Vestry help to keep the affairs of the parish running smoothly. Colleen Curry will continue to coordinate the Readers and Greeters and the schedules of our monthly Supply Clergy and the Lay Worship Leaders. Louise Mead will continue her awesome job of communications within the congregation and toward the community. Although she no longer serves on Vestry, Tina Grata has graciously agreed to continue coordinating the Sunday Coffee Hour Hosts and share responsibilities with Heidi Buchan for Hospitality.

At the Annual Meeting, Lyssa Nickle shared more about our growing Children's Church. You can read more about it elsewhere in this issue of the *Grapevine*.

For more details from the Buildings and Grounds Committee see Richard Burket's report on the next page.

Pam, Dolly, Colleen and Lisa, with guidance from Rev. Kim have been coordinating our worship services. Rev. Kim has scheduled clergy to serve at least two Sundays each month. Thanks to Colleen, Doug, Lisa and Pam for leading Morning Prayer on the Sundays when we are without a priest.

The Vestry had their annual retreat on Halloween. Led by Rev. Kim Karashin the session focused on Core Vocation. What is it, and why is it important? How can we identify our church's core vocation? We'll share more in upcoming issues of the *Grapevine*.

Attendance has remained steady – even when we have Morning Prayer and our traditions continue. St. Mark's has strong leadership that keeps us going!

Peace in Christ,
Doug, Richard, Colleen and Lisa

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
335 Locust Street
Johnstown, PA 15901
814-535-6797
Email:
stmarks@breezelinebiz.net
Website
www.saintmarksjohnstown.com

Our Staff:
Priest:
Organist: Dolly Lopresti
Treasurer: Pam Hysong
Secretary: Joanne McKinley
Sexton: Nikki Forsythe

The Vestry:
Senior Warden: Doug Zawiskie
Junior Warden: Richard Burkert
Secretary: Amy Whitlow
Treasurer: Pam Hysong

2027
Richard Burkert

2028
Donovan Pendell
Doug Zawiskie
Colleen Curry

2029
Louise Mead
Valarie Schultz
Cynthia Frank

2030
Donna Corossi
Amy Whitlow

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

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

Junior Warden's Report

St. Mark's Church Receives $10,000 grant from Diocese

The Building Committee has taken on and completed several projects this past summer, the largest of which involved connecting our sewer lines to the City's new sewage system. For a number of years, the Vestry has known that its lateral lines were required to pass a pressure test to make sure that water was not infiltrating into the sanitary sewer line.

Working with consultants, we learned that the church building and parish house had a total of three sewer connections. We hired B&M Excavating, who made upgrades on two of lines and we received a waiver on the third line. We are now in compliance!

In the end, we expanded $20,081 on the project – less than feared but more than we can afford. Unfortunately, these funds came out of the church's investment accounts, from which the congregation takes earnings to meet our annual expenses. Proceeds from these accounts supplement income from pledges and event fundraising; it helps to pay the bills.

We are pleased to report that we applied for and received a grant of $10,000 from the Growth Fund of the Diocese of Pittsburgh to help repay funds taken from our endowment. In the near future, we will be writing to the congregation to ask that they consider a one-time donation to help us repay critical funds to the endowment.

Other building needs have been addressed recently, as well. The east wall of the church suffered a minor collapse, and we hired a mason to make this repair and to repoint other areas where water could penetrate the building. The mason also caulked joints in the church and parish house.

We also plan something that will enhance the beauty of our church. During the past year, volunteers from the parish cleaned and landscaped the courtyard and east façade of the church. An over-mature pear tree that was heaving up the labyrinth was removed. The Vestry has contracted with Stuver's Riverside Nursery in Riverside to plant a Rainbow Pillar Serviceberry tree and 12 assorted perennials in the planting bed bordering Locust Street. All plants are native species and the serviceberry will provide food for birds.

Richard Burkert

Junior Warden

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.

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. Mark's and St. Francis in the Fields. 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.

Children's Church is Growing!

Our Children's Church began three years ago on the first Sunday of Advent in the "Children's Corner" of the Fellowship Hall. The children meet from the beginning of the service (10:00) and join the congregation at the Peace to celebrate the Eucharist. Lyssa Nickle-Madden pioneered our program out a desire to offer a program of faith formation for her two children. Soon they were joined by three more and just before Easter this year a fourth family has joined. We now have seven members of our Children's Church!

Our Friends at St. Francis in the Fields gifted us a set of Godly Play materials. Storytelling using child-friendly language and materials, "wondering questions," and play are the basis of this Montessori based approach to faith formation with Children. Lyssa began by sharing stories from the Old Testament. More recently the curriculum has followed the lessons in the lectionary.

We always welcome volunteers to assist. You do not need to be a teacher or know much about the Bible. Just be there. Please reach out to Lyssa Nickle-Madden at 229-630-2499 or by email at lyssanickle@hotmail.com if interested.



Readers and Greeters — November & December 2025

Sunday	Readers	Greeters & Ushers
November 1	Colleen Curry & Donna Carosi	Sam & Heidi Buchan
November 8	Pam Hysong & Joann Lacko	Tina Grata & Richard Burkert
November 15	Lisa Bell-Loncella & Donovan Pendell	Melisa Babalonis & Aiden Barlow
November 22	Doug Zawiskie & Colleen Curry	Sam & Heidi Buchan
November 29	Dona Corosi & Tina Grata	Amy & Penn Whitlow

https://www.lectionarypage.net/ We are using Track 1 for the Old Testament lesson & the Psalm.

If you are not able to read or greet on the assigned date, please make arrangements to swap with someone or contact Colleen Curry so a replacement can be found.

November Halupki Dinner

Back by popular demand, we will be hosting a take-out Halupki Harvest Dinner again this fall. The date is **Saturday, November 21**. We are asking for donations & volunteers to help.

Volunteers Needed:

- Friday, November 20th to help cook and roll Halupki (2 to 3)
- Saturday, November 21st to serve (need 6)

Donations:

- HALUPKI
  - **CABBAGE - 20 heads**
  - LARGE ONIONS - 10 (Provided)
  - EGGS - One dozen large (Still need)
  - TOMATO PASTE - 10 cans (6 ounce) (Still need)
  - KIELBASA - 10 pounds (Provided)
  - SAUERKRAUT – 10 bags (1 pound) (Provided)
  - TOMATO SOUP – 20 (10.75 ounce) (Provided)
  - RICE – Must be River Rice or Long Grain Rice – 4 bags (16 ounce) (Provided)
  - VINEGAR – 40 ounces (Provided)
  - GROUND BEEF – 25 Pounds – We are asking for monetary donations to cover the cost of the ground beef. (Thanks to all who have contributed so far)
- HALUSHKI
  - **CABBAGE – 50-60 pounds (Provided)**
  - LAWRYS SEASONED SALT – One 8-ounce container (Provided)
  - KLUSKI NOODLES – Eight bags (8 ounce) (Provided)
  - MARGARINE – 6 pounds (Or Butter) (Provided)
- PIEROGIES – Heidi will boil/ sauté all the pierogies and onions on the day of the dinner
  - PIEROGIES – We need in total approximately 400 pierogies. Heidi has already made 100 pierogies. Trish and René have graciously offered to purchase the remaining 300 pierogies.
  - MARGARINE – 6 pounds (Provided)
  - LARGE ONIONS - 6 pounds (Provided)
- ASSORTED COOKIES
  - Will need 320 cookies – 250 provided so far. We still need ~ 70 cookies.

- We are looking for a volunteer or two to help on Friday during the day and six people for Saturday.
- Please have your donations at the church by Wednesday, November 18th.
- If donating cookies, please have them at the church by Friday (11/20).



Looking Forward to Advent

Advent this year starts right after Thanksgiving, on Sunday, November 29th. As we move from the fall into Advent in preparation for the coming of the Christ child, many of us will begin to think about a special Advent practice. Here are some resources you might want to consider. These are all free but require either having an email address or access to the Internet to download materials.

- *AdventWord* is a global, online Advent calendar. Join an international community in prayer to explore the mystery and wonder of Advent! In its eighth year, Christians around the world are joined together as each day of Advent invites a focus on a particular word drawn from the lection-ary. (https://adventword.org/en/home/)

- Forward Movement offers several Advent meditation guides. It's not too late to order the hard copy versions. May are also available in Kindle and Apple Books format. Check here for the Advent and Christmas offerings:
  https://shop.forwardmovement.org/product-category/resources/advent-christmas
- For more resources, see the Advent Resources page on our website:
  https://saintmarksjohnstown.com/advent-2025-resources-for-study-and-worship/

Calendar and Hospitality Committee
Tentative Plans for the Coming Months

November
- Diocesan Convention (11/14)
- Calendar Committee Meeting (11/17)
- Halupki Harvest Dinner (11/21)
- Deadline for Stocking Stuffer (11/23)

December
- Lessons & Carols & Greening of the Church (12/13 or 12/20)
- Christmas Eve Services (12/24)
-

January 2027
- Annual Parish Budget Meeting (1/24)



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.



Holiday Food for Families

During the Month of November, St. Mark's will provide families who request assistance with the food items necessary for a holiday meal. If you know a family who might benefit, please call the office and share this information. Beginning November 1, we will accept donations of turkeys and turkey breasts, hams and also non-perishables in order to assemble boxes for at least 5 families.

Items needed for Thanksgiving Dinner

Turkey	Turkey Breast or whole Turkey
Ham	Potatoes (white or sweet)
Stuffing	Gravy
Cranberry Sauce	Canned vegetables
Desserts	

Thanksgiving is November 26th so we ask that you bring in your items no later than Friday, November 20th.



Christmas Stocking Stuffer Project 2026

For many years we have joined with parishioners from other churches to provide stuffed Christmas stockings to the 335 patients of Torrance State Hospital. These patients are persons who require long-term in-hospital care for behavioral health disorders (mental illness). For many patients, this is the only gift they receive and is the highlight of their holiday season. The staff and patients greatly appreciate your efforts in making their Christmas a happy and memorable moment.

This year we have been asked to provide stuffed stockings for at least 15 men. To ensure that one patient does not receive substantially more than the patient sitting beside him, ***all participating churches have been given guidelines regarding the minimum number and types of items to be included in each stocking***. Please select from the required items or additional suggested donation items lists below for your donations. A box for your donations will be in the Parish Hall. ***Please make your donations on or before Sunday, November 22, 2026.***

Gift Items for One Stocking

(1) pair of ankle OR crew socks—any color (No High TUBE socks due to strangulation issues)
(1) bottle of shampoo OR stick deodorant OR bottle of body wash
(1) activity, word search, or cross word book, OR coloring book (no staples) OR playing cards
(1) bag of chips OR (1) pack of crackers OR (1) pack of cookies OR (1) snack cake
(1)big candy bar OR small handful of mini candy bars OR (1) box of individual powdered drink mix packets

M & M's—small bags
Chap Stick
Body wash
Deodorant (*No cans*)
Lotion (*No pumps*)
Card games, such as Uno, Skip-bo, Phase 10 or even card games for children
Small bags of cheese curls or Doritos
Crayons
Paperback books (*No romances*)
Blank Greeting Cards
Non-refrigerated pudding cups, apple sauce or fruit cups
Individually wrapped peppermint puffs
Sudoku books

***In order to protect the residents**, please **do not** donate glass or breakable items, aerosol cans, alcohol-based products, sharp objects, or notebooks with wire bindings. No batteries. No items with staples. Due to choking and swallowing issues, no nuts, hard candy or gum.*

Thank you for your generosity.
Louise Mead



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:

11/08 (1), 11/15 (1), 11/22 (1), 11/29 (1)
12/27 (1)

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



BUILDING CAMPAIGN

The extra collection for the second Sunday of the month is for our Building Campaign. Monies will go towards replacing the outdated Alarm System. Mark your envelope "Building Campaign" or use one of the Building Fund envelopes.



Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, November 11th 6:30
In Person & Over Zoom

Missions

All families of the church are encouraged to donate one dollar on the third Sunday of the month (Nov. 16) for our Missions Offering. Please be sure to mark your donation separately for MISSIONS.

Pastoral Care

All families of the church are encouraged to donate one dollar on the fourth Sunday of each month (Nov. 23) for our Pastoral Care. Please be sure to mark your donation separately for Pastoral Care.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
335 Locust Street
Johnstown, Pa. 15901
814-535-6797
stmarks@atlanticbbn.net

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

October was a very busy month!

We are very fortunate to have so many donors who continue to help our Pet Food Pantry. Many Thanks for the generous contributions from Carol Harp, Cathy & Bill Sampson, Jim & Carol Bezek, Chris & Delbert Hess, Valerie Kasper, Linda Cordes, John & Betty Gritzer, Dennis & Carol Loushe, Mrs. Yvonne Lucas, Theresa Kosaber, Annett Kristofco, Helen Mishler, Helen Petrunak, Wendy Arcurio, John & Sharon Flick, Carol & Lou Schaffer, Marion Gaydos (In Memory of Louise Kristofco), Donnas Rzasa, Tom Birk, Kathy & Bill Sampson, Joann Lacko, Doug Zawiskie and the Nardecchia Spay-Neuter Organization.

During the month of October, we assisted 92 families. We are finally seeing a decrease in the kitten population due to the various organizations who offer low-cost (sometimes free) Spay-Neuter Programs.

We gave out the following: in October:

Dogs Dry Food: Adult & Puppy 602 lbs **Cats** Dry Food: Cat & Kitten 977 lbs

Total amount of food given out from January through October:

Dry Food Dog 7,477 lbs Cat 12,485 lbs

Our Pet Food Pantry will be open on Nov. 19th from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm.

Many thanks to our volunteers for their continued support.

Cynthia Greig and Joanne McKinley

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
November						
1 Hoy Eucharist II 10:00 am Also on Zoom	**2**	**3** Election Day	**4**	**5** **PET FOOD PANTRY** **10:00 am - 2:00 pm**	**6**	**7**
8 Morning Prayer 10:00 am Also on Zoom	**9**	**10**	**11**  **VETERANS DAY** **Vestry Meeting** 6:30 in person & Zoom	**12**	**13**	**14**
15 Holy Eucharist I 10:00 am Also on Zoom	**16**	**17** CALENDAR MEETING 5:00 PM	**18**	**19** **PET FOOD PANTRY** **10:00 am - 12:30 pm**	**20** Prep Work! Halupki Harvest	**21** **HALUPKI HARVEST** Take Out Dinner 11:00 am to 1:00 pm
22 Holy Eucharist II 10:00 am Also on Zoom	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**  	**27**  	**28**
29 Morning Prayer 10:00 am Also on Zoom Advent 1	**30**			11-29 First Sunday in Advent		