

St. Mark's Episcopal Church



*116 South Street
Foxboro, MA 02035
www.stmarksfx.org*

About Us

St Mark's Mission and Vision Statement

- **Mission Statement:** St. Mark's Episcopal Church is called to do God's work through its people, financial resources, building and land to
- **Core Values:**
 - warmly welcome and truly include all
 - spiritually nurture, nourish and support ourselves and others
 - actively and visibly engage with our broader community to serve and advocate for all in need
 - support and connect those in our community and the world beyond
- **Vision Statement:** Growing in God's time, we seek to achieve a caring community in which all realize God's love, mercy, and compassion--creating wholeness and connection for everyone in the here and now

The people of St. Mark's are the heart of the church's mission. We are committed to spreading the message of God's love, peace, and justice to the wider community. The church offers many opportunities for worship, education, fellowship, and outreach to enable us to grow spiritually and serve others. Parishioners are encouraged to use our unique talents, skills, and passions to serve God and make a positive impact in the world.

To warmly welcome and truly include all, we recognize and celebrate diversity in all its forms. We strive to be open-minded and accepting of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and identities and create a safe and inclusive space for everyone, where they feel valued and respected.

Overall, creating a supportive and nurturing community requires intention, effort, and a commitment to ongoing growth and learning. By prioritizing inclusivity, spiritual nourishment, community engagement, and support for others, we can create a more connected, compassionate, and meaningful world for ourselves and those around us.

We recognize the importance of building a community based on love, empathy, and kindness. The phrase "growing in God's time" acknowledges that we need to be patient and trust in a higher power to guide us on our path towards creating a better community. We strive to create a caring environment where everyone feels valued, supported, and connected. Continuing this journey, we can build stronger, more resilient relationships that can weather the challenges of life and provide support for everyone who needs it.

Our History

St. Mark's Episcopal Church was founded in 1890 in Foxboro, MA. Our first home was in a modest and tasteful fieldstone church near the Common. As the population of Foxboro increased, a new church was erected at 116 South Street and dedicated on May 16, 1962. In 2007, St. Mark's undertook a major transformation of the building with a redesign of the sanctuary, entrance way, undercroft, and kitchen, making it a very welcoming and useful space for the parish and for the local community groups.

St. Mark's has a long history of responding to the needs of the community and world. In 1965, the church responded to the civil rights movement, sending our rector Reverend Frank Johnston and four members to march in Selma, Alabama. The parish also started the Foxboro Food Pantry within the church. In 1946, the church organized The New Trading post, a consignment shop near the Town Common. Each year we host the gathering and distribution of holiday baskets. In 1971, St. Mark's was also one of the driving forces behind bringing the METCO, Inc (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc.) program to Foxboro. Founded in 1966, METCO gives Boston students the opportunity to attend schools in towns outside of the city. The first Foxboro METCO director, Bernice Contee, was a member of St. Marks.

St Marks also serves members of the communities surrounding Foxboro such as Mansfield, Attleboro, Walpole, Wrentham.

Our Community

The Town of Foxboro is known by its residents as "the Gem of Norfolk County". It is located at the intersections of Interstates 95 and 495, providing easy access to major highways. Foxboro hosts a number of diverse culinary and entertainment venues, hotels/motels, Gillette Stadium (the home of the New England Patriots and New England Revolution) and people of faith representing nearly every denomination.

Building and Grounds

Our church sanctuary has a capacity of 270 people. We have a spacious undercroft with a full kitchen that can accommodate more than 125 people as well as a smaller meeting room with a kitchenette that accommodates 36 people. Additional spaces include meeting rooms, clergy and admin offices, the choir room, Sunday School classrooms, and the sacristy. We have recently renovated several additional offices and spaces to be able to increase our rental opportunities to community groups, individual social workers, tutors and others whose work aligns with our mission.

The church is situated on five acres of land, and the vestry is currently exploring how we can utilize this land to ensure long-term significant financial support for the parish. This work is in the beginning stages with diocesan consultants and the Property Development Committee.

Worship

We celebrate the Holy Eucharist with Rite II from the Book of Common Prayer. Each Sunday Service is recorded on Facebook. Our services include lay participation with music, a choir, and occasionally musical bells. Pastoral Care provides communion for members not able to attend. Sunday School offers religious education for our younger members. There is also a confirmation group preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Active lay participation also includes Bible Studies, Altar Guild, Lay Readers, Ushers, Facebook streaming and YouTube recordings.

St Mark's Ministries

Pastoral care

One of our parishioners has been the head of this ministry for years. We have a calling tree and groups of people that she can call upon for various needs such as providing meals, rides to the doctor and similar. She works directly with the priest to address the needs of not only the parishioners but the community as well. For example, several meals were recently provided to a family with the father in the hospital due to Covid and unable to work for a month.

Lay Leadership

The Church year begins again in the Fall with a robust Welcome Back Picnic. Open to all of the Foxboro community, St. Mark's members and friends share food, music and fellowship. Each ministry and group hosts a table to share information, sign up new participants, and excite the community with the mission of their ministry. New participants and veterans in the groups bring in rich ideas and energy. Our welcoming community supports the long-established ministries that have become traditions and new ministries in response to the community's needs and interests.

The Long-standing Groups:

Lady's Group- A social network of friendship and new opportunities and activities

Men's Breakfast- A social opportunity for men of faith to gather.

Book Club- Keeping current on relevant topics of mutually interesting new literature is important to our community. This group creates intentional conversations monthly on chosen books over a meal.

Prayer Shawl- Either alone or in the companionship of others fiber work brings joy to the person creating and to the person receiving. This ministry ensures that our newly baptized, our students off to college, and our parishioners who need comfort, find a gift created in yarn and in prayer.

Altar Guild- Like elves in the night, this group makes sure all of the sacramental and necessary items are in place and cared for at each liturgy.

The Newer Groups:

Sacred Ground- A Facilitator led group focusing on the curriculum from the Episcopal Church to explore Race and Faith.

Technology Group- A highly important group during COVID, the church continues to develop the application of technology in our outreach and engagement.

Buildings and Grounds- Discerning the best use of our land and resources is crucial to our economical well-being. This group collaborates to move forward in the process.

Bible Study- Led by lay facilitators, this is a focused by flexible learning opportunity, that centers around understanding the Bible and understanding the application of the Bible in our lives.

Christian Education

St. Mark's youth educators teach 4 age groups:

Ages 3-7 - Catechesis of the Good Shepherd - meets each Sunday after church. The focus of this program is to expose children to various Infancy Narratives, Parables, Articles of the Service and the Geography of Israel through hands-on experiences with hand crafted materials. Six and seven year students are invited to participate in a 5 week program including a one day retreat involving the minister preparing them for a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist during a parish service.

Ages 8-10 - Children's Ministry 2023 program

Ages 11-13 - Children's Ministry Teen program

Both of these programs meet weekly after church. We have used this curriculum since 2019 with success. Each lesson guides children in an age-appropriate manner to compare/contrast real life experiences with Bible Scripture. Games and activities hold the youths' attention with its interactive curriculum.

Children enjoy our annual Easter Egg Hunt after the Easter Service and Sundaes Sunday in June, the last day of our time together until our parish picnic in late August.

During the Lenten and Advent seasons, we hold intergenerational activities that have proven to make an impactful impression on our St. Mark's community for all ages that participate.

Outreach- How we serve the community.

For 77 years, St. Mark's has run the New Trading Post, an all-volunteer consignment shop. Fifty percent of all profits are donated directly to St. Mark's Life Building Fund which provides assistance to those in need. The remainder is used to help local organizations and others in our surrounding communities. The children in the parish fill the Mini Food Pantry Drop Box in front of our church each Sunday with donations from church members and the remainder is delivered to the town food pantry. We are involved with One Family, a deanery project hosted by All Saints Church in Attleboro. Pre-COVID, we hosted a breakfast once a month at All Saints for families in need while providing much needed care packages with food and household necessities. St. Mark's continues to collect and donate laundry soap

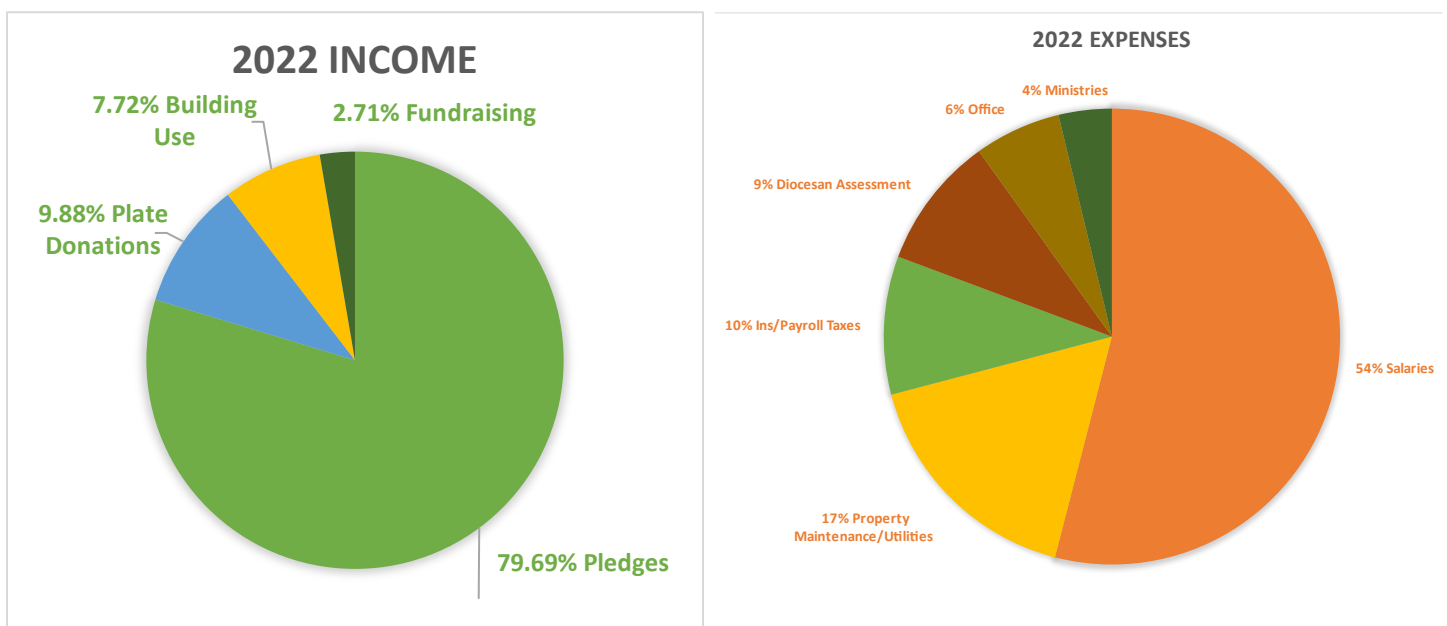
for this program, helping support over 100 families. We are also involved with collecting socks, gently used shoes, hats, and gloves for MANNA (Many Angels Needed Now and Always) in Boston, an organization that supports the homeless.

The Priest's Discretionary and Life Building funds give the priest an avenue to discreetly provide financial support to those in need.

Finances

The majority of St. Mark's income comes from pledged donations, with plate donations, building use and adding to this amount. Building use and fundraising are potential areas of increased income and efforts are ongoing to build these income sectors.

Salaries make up the largest portion of expenses. Property maintenance and utilities expenses reflect the importance of maintaining the physical infrastructure of the organization. Overall, St. Mark's places a strong emphasis on staffing and maintaining its physical infrastructure, while also contributing to the larger governing body and supporting various ministries.



Challenges

Prior to the pandemic, the church participated in an extensive visioning process and created a new mission and vision statement. As a result of this process, the vestry identified 4 areas of focus. Committees, were formed, led by vestry members working with additional parishioners, to address each of these areas:

- Community Engagement
- Technology
- Property Development and Fundraising
- Spiritual Education

During the pandemic shutdown, significant progress was made in the area of Community Engagement. Compassion Circles were created, connecting lay leaders with every parishioner on a regular basis. The

committee gathered information on community resources to address current and anticipated needs of our parishioners. This group coordinated communications and also planned online gatherings, drive-by celebrations, and other activities to bring our community together during the shutdown.

We are now faced with the challenge of re-engaging our community with in-person activities. Lay leadership has been strong in the past, but as with many organizations, most of the current load is carried by a minority of active and committed parishioners. During the past year, many of the ministries have returned to in person meetings and activities and are actively recruiting additional members to help with efforts and activities.

The Technology group has worked hard to upgrade the wifi throughout the church to support the live streaming of services as well as ensure connectivity throughout the church to serve our renters and community groups who utilize our space. The St. Mark's website is a vital tool in presenting St. Mark's to our community. A full review and update has been done in the last six months and the website is regularly updated to promote St. Mark's events and activities. We recognize our social media presence could be improved to enhance St. Mark's visibility in the community as well as bring in new people to our congregation.

Our advancements during the shutdown also included installing new HVAC systems in some of the offices and meeting rooms, but a major upgrade effort remains for the aging boiler system. A significant portion of the cost of these upgrades has current funding, but leadership for this project is still needed.

Our congregation is aging. Many of our parishioners are in their retirement years and our efforts to welcome younger families and couples continues to be a major focus. Prior to the pandemic, our Saturday evening service was developing a following as well as our early Sunday service. During the pandemic we grew a sizable following with our online services. Since reopening, we have not been able to offer the Saturday Service and the early Sunday Service has been discontinued due to priest availability. Our challenge is to engage both populations and offer opportunities to past participants and newcomers to become an active member of our faith community.

Financially, we need to continue to develop and implement strategies to create new income streams and enhance current streams to help support the annual budget while building our pledge base. Long-term office rentals are beginning to fill this gap and pursuing strategies to use our land will be key to secure our long-term financial stability. The Property Development Team is currently working diligently to explore innovative options that would contribute significant financial support which would ensure the long-term viability and growth of our congregation.

We have several very strong and active ministry areas.

Our Outreach Committee continues to be active with the Deanery One Family program and collecting food for our 24/7 Little Pantry and local food pantries. The New Trading Post Consignment Shop has continued to be our most visible community ministry, with profits on their way to returning to pre-pandemic levels. These funds help support the Life Building Fund, Outreach Fund as well as Community Organizations and members in need.

Our Fellowship activities are continuing to gain momentum following the shutdown. Men's Breakfast and the Ladies' Group have returned to regular meetings and the Book Club and Prayer Shawl Ministry have utilized both in person and zoom meetings to maintain their activities.

Our Youth Education Ministry has struggled to find an audience. Leadership and the programs we offer are strong. We have yet to find the right formula to sync with the many priorities of kids and families today. These leaders continue to cultivate newcomers and encourage grandparents to participate and have also created special programming during holidays and multi-generational activities.

Our biggest challenge will be navigating the collaboration with Trinity Wrentham. Our leaders have made inroads in this area, with wardens and vestries coming together as well as including both parishes in Fellowship and Fundraising events. Trinity recently hosted a game night and St. Mark's hosted a St. Patrick's Day Family Dinner. We look forward to joining together in fellowship even more as we find our way through this new partnership. Our new priest, along with the wardens and vestry will play a vital role in continuing to discover how best to combine resources and manage the needs of two parishes.

Hopes and Dreams

St. Mark's prides itself on being an active, welcoming faith community. It is the strength of our caring, compassionate community that has sustained us throughout the years.

We are seeking a priest who:

- can connect scripture with our current lives and build spiritual connections with our congregation.
- can adapt to the needs of a multi-generational community as well as guide us on how we as lay leaders and participants can best move forward to further live into our mission.
- will take a significant role, along with lay leadership, to be available to those in need.
- can be a presence in our community, representing St. Mark's with community leaders and organizations in our area.

It is our hope that with a strong faith leader, St. Mark's can grow as a congregation and build sustainable financial resources to call a full-time priest. Our Youth Education Ministry has struggled to find an audience. Leadership and the programs we offer are strong. We have yet to find the right formula to sync with the many priorities of kids and families today.

