



# St. Paul's Church

422 Market St.  
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## Return and Hope

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.*

*Isaiah 58:12*

In the several weeks since we have resumed our food ministries inside, it has been at once the same and quite different. The prior system in the mornings, where our guests would line up to be seated at long tables has been replaced by a system where food preparation is separate from assembly of plates, which are, in turn, taken by "runners" to our guests, seated at widely spaced intervals. It is as safe as the practice at any restaurant and the initial impression is that our guests understand and (by-and-large) appreciate the ministry of hospitality that is built into these new procedures.

There is, of course, the recognition by both our guests and volunteers that things are not the same. Before the pandemic, there was an informality that made it easier to have casual conversations, to find out how things were going on the street, to have an atmosphere in which we could cultivate relationships. Paradoxically, the current situation is an

improvement in many ways.. The servers place the food in front of our guests and clean their place after they are done, which models the kind of servant ministry we would want to nurture. There is also the presence of the nursing students, to whom we can refer our guests who look as though they could use some medical attention. As we determine how to take health concerns seriously, however, there is a degree of formality that is foreign to me as I had experienced these programs prior to the pandemic. We all had determined that it would take some time before we discovered a rhythm for this part of our collective life; for now, I am simply glad that we are able to make them run, with the help of our volunteers and some extremely faithful people from St. Paul's.

The prophet Isaiah speaks to the people of Israel after their return to lands that had been desolate since their captivity in Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem were a ruin, the Temple desecrated. If you are like me, it does not feel far from what we have experienced through this last year-and-a-half, as though something unclean had laid waste to our lives together and all we could do, for an interminable time, was wait things out. The pandemic has caused tremendous dislocation for many people and has proven itself to be a

fighter. And yet we are called to rebuild, to be "the restorers of streets to live in."

Paradoxically, we will do so with more resources than when we entered this dark time. The nursing program will be operating on Fridays, as well as Sundays. We are working on a relationship with the School of Social Work at Rutgers, which will help our guests sort through numerous thorny situations that have arisen over the last two years, among them the end to the eviction moratorium. We will also be doing things with the help of students from the university, who will be helping us in many ways and, hopefully, learn what it is to be a repairer of the breach in especially riven times.

I have admired the toughness of many of our guests, finding a way forward in times that would challenge the most resourceful of us. I believe we have to be just as intrepid and courageous in finding our way as we help them in their own journeys. I believe it is work for which we are well-suited. Having found our way through our share of challenges, we will meet this one with the same combination of grit and hospitality for which we are known.

Fr. Mark

## Confirmations and Recognitions

*During the Episcopal visitation of Bishop Stokes on October 17, three of our young people will receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Arianah Eustace, Justus Morgan and Nikole Morgan will all be confirmed as members of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; we should be deeply proud of these young people who, as the bishop will say, will be sent forth "in the power of the spirit to perform the service God has set before them."*

*That day, we are also honoring those who have given themselves conspicuously and tirelessly throughout the pandemic, who have held the ministries and the worship of St. Paul's together under deeply challenging circumstances. We owe them a great debt, and part of that day will be given to honoring their service among us. Part of their invitation is printed below:*

As a people centered in word and sacrament, we all know the world can be a deeply unsure place, the only real certainty being the love of God in what we go through and the abiding presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. But in March 2020, most of us encountered something that we had never experienced, something that indeed is with us still. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered everyone's lives and we are still finding ways to cope with its effects, especially as people of faith. We have had to change our worship schedules, make hard decisions about whether it is "safe" to come and generally have tried to cope with the effects of the virus on a daily basis.

The effect of the virus has been hardest, of course, on our homeless guests, many of whom have had no safety net and for whom food insecurity has been an ongoing issue, one that we were allowed to continue to address through a radically changed food program at St. Paul's. Throughout what seemed like chaos this past eighteen months has been the presence of a core group of volunteers who have allowed our food ministries continue, even when we could not have in-person worship. These people cooked food for our breakfasts on Sundays, prepared food for our suppers and have been unusually

faithful to the injunction in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel, that, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." It was their recognition that we are a family, founded in mutual interdependence, that made our food programs possible.

It is in our acknowledgement that they are part of our family that we are celebrating their ongoing work among us. At the bishop's visit on October 17, we are celebrating their work in extremely challenging circumstances, offering themselves in the work of helping to feed our brothers and sisters. They have shown us that real faith consists not in huge offerings but in what we can offer day-by-day, week-by-week—"little-by-little," as Dorothy Day was fond of saying. We are grateful to everyone who said "yes" to this challenge and we hope, during and after the 11:00 mass on October 17, that you will allow us to honor you. You are priceless, and you have meant more to us than we can say.

Fr. Mark

## The Call of a New Bishop

As many of you know, Bishop Stokes has announced his plans to retire in June 2023: the text of his letter is printed below. The process of Episcopal transition is a long one and it begins at the parish level. On Saturday, September 25, we will gather via Zoom to elect six people from the parish to attend a convocation meeting in October. At that meeting, one clergy and one layperson will be elected to serve in the remainder of the process to help organize a smooth transition. The process begins, however with us. **Please plan to be available for a short meeting at 10am on September 25.** Many thanks in advance for your participation in a sacred (and exciting) process!

Fr. Mark

September 2, 2021

Dear People of the Diocese of New Jersey,

For everything there is a season ...Ecclesiastes 3:1

I am writing to let you know that, following prayer and consultation with family, trusted friends and trusted advisors, I have determined that the time has come for me to call for the election of the 13<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey and to notify you of my intention to resign and retire as the 12<sup>th</sup> Bishop in June 2023. At that time, God-willing, I will be 66 years old and will have served the diocese for almost ten years. My intention is not to call for a bishop co-adjutor, but to call for the election of the next diocesan bishop. Prayer, discernment and a recognition of the changing needs and demands of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Jersey all indicate it is time for me to "step aside" and allow a new generation to step forward.

I have notified The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, our Presiding Bishop, of my intentions and he wants me to assure you of his love and support of our diocese as we enter this time of transition. The Right Reverend Todd Ousley who serves the Presiding Bishop's office as Bishop for Pastoral Development will be working with the Diocese throughout the process that will lead to the election and consecration of the next bishop. I am grateful to Fr. Ed Zelle and the members of The Standing Committee for their support in this. Governed by the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Jersey, they will have general oversight responsibility for the election process and are already working on retaining a consultant to advise them and the wider diocesan community.

I am also deeply grateful to Ms. Valaida Guerrero, member of St. Andrew's Church in New Providence and a Trustee of the Diocese, who has agreed to serve as the Chair of the Episcopal Search and Nomination Committee for the election of the 13<sup>th</sup> bishop. I have appointed her to this role with the advice and consent of The Standing Committee in accordance with Diocesan Canon 9, Section 3(c). She is an exceptional person and faithful leader who I feel confident will guide this process prayerfully with tremendous skill and grace.

I cannot express the profound gratitude I feel for the sacred honor and privilege I have had in serving as your bishop. By God's grace, we still have nearly two years to walk together in this work. I look forward to journeying with you and trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead, sustain and guide us through it all.

May God bless you and those you love.

The Right Reverend William H. Stokes  
12<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey

## Stewardship!

All will have received their stewardship packets for 2022. Please pray about what you and your household can offer the church. As I have mentioned, stewardship is fundamentally a spiritual endeavor, an opportunity to offer back what we can from the lives we have been given. Please consider what that offering will be for the coming year.

## The Rev. Jeannie Marcucci!

On September 19, Jeannie began her service with us as our new deacon. Jeannie brings many gifts to St. Paul's, including an artistic temperament and a passion for the outdoors. I hope we can all be a part of her creative work with our gardens and other projects through the coming year. Welcome, Rev. Jeannie!

