

The Messenger

LENT AND EASTER 2025



ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Lent and Easter

At St. Mark's Episcopal Church

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, March 5

Services at 7 a.m., noon, and 7 p.m.

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday Services, April 13

7:45, 9, 10:30 a.m., and 5 p.m.

Monday, April 14

Holy Eucharist Rite II at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, April 15

Holy Eucharist Rite II at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16

Holy Eucharist Rite II at 7 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, April 17

Holy Eucharist Rite II at 7 p.m.

Stripping of the Altar

Good Friday, April 18

Liturgy for Good Friday with communion at noon

Women at the Tomb at 7 p.m.

Holy Saturday, April 19

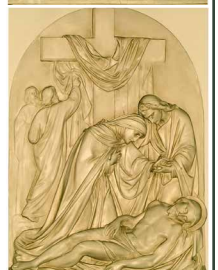
Holy Saturday Liturgy at 10 a.m.

Easter Vigil Service at 7 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 20

Easter Services at 7:45, 9, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.



ASH WEDNESDAY AND EVENING PRAYER SERVICES

Join St. Mark's as we begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 5, with services at 7 a.m., noon, and 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Ash Wednesday is the first of the 40 days of Lent, named for the custom of placing blessed ashes on the foreheads of worshipers at Ash Wednesday services. The ashes are a sign of penitence and a reminder of mortality, and may be imposed with the sign of the cross. Ash Wednesday is observed as a fast in the church year of the Episcopal Church.

Continue to join us through the season of Lent on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in Enderle Chapel for our Evening Prayer services led by the St. Mark's clergy.



PALM SUNDAY AND HOLY WEEK

From early times Christians have observed the week before Easter as a time of special devotion. As the pilgrim Egeria recorded in the late fourth century, Jerusalem contained many sacred places that were sites for devotion and liturgy. Numerous pilgrims to the holy city followed the path of Jesus in his last days. They formed processions, worshipped where Christ suffered and died, and venerated relics. From this beginning evolved the rites we observe today on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Each day of Holy Week, St. Mark's will offer services as we prepare our hearts for the risen Christ on Easter.

WOMEN AT THE TOMB

We invite you to join us on Good Friday, April 18 at 7 p.m., as women of St. Mark's lead us through the stations of the cross with musical reflection. This Lent, we return to this beautifully impactful tradition that has been a part of St. Mark's Holy Week since 2009. Music will be performed by our Music Director, Renee Rybolt, and the St. Mark's choir, with special guest musicians Ellen Story, Alaina Diehl, and more. The stations of the cross are a devotion to the Passion of Christ which recalls a series of events at the end of Jesus' life from his condemnation to his burial. The stations imitate the practice of visiting the places of Jesus' Passion in the Holy Land by early Christian pilgrims.



A Word From The Rector

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus faces distinct temptations by the devil: to break his fast, to serve Jesus' own interests instead of God's, and to put God to the test (Luke 4:3-12). The temptations we read of are common to each of us. We worry that we will not have enough 'bread', which is, interestingly enough, the modern-day slang for money. We are in conflict about who we will serve with our lives. Will we answer the call from our baptisms, or the pull of our individual careers? And will we test God's legitimacy, from an unwelcome medical diagnosis to an unsatisfactory parking spot, or the unexpected rain on our wedding day. The tension of human being 'being' is difficult, and we are made aware that Jesus struggled with these and more in his interaction in the wilderness with the devil.

Our lives are full of calumnious pressure. This pressure is averse to our common life as Christians. Its roots are deep within us and cause us to be soulfully rigid and promotes hostility between each other and with ourselves. We denigrate each other and ourselves. And this part of human being 'being' is an existence that is not sustainable. It destroys us, our families, and our communities. It is no wonder this is the tool of the devil.

However, like Jesus' ability to withstand this pressure, we too have the power to push back against this negative aspect of our humanity. We do not live for bread alone, we do not simply serve our human self, and we do not seek to test God. Instead, we take a conscious journey through a season of Lent. We look at the calumnious pressures we face, and we renew our lives with repentance and fasting. We accept our fragile place in the creation, even though we are apex creatures. We admit our powerlessness even with all our accumulated power. We realize our mortality, and instead of



hiding behind a hedge of negative despair, worried and alone, we walk in a different direction. We walk right to the cross that will hold our death, and we admit the truth of being human. We accept Good Friday because we know Easter Sunday.

We accept the truth we have inherited, that there is an Easter dawn. We know there is a tomb, but we know the stone will be rolled away. We know there is a linen wrapping for our bodies, but we also know there is a linen wrap, a tomb, a death for our human sins. There is more happening in the walk from Lent to Easter than we realize. The old you is dying. The new you is appearing. The holy you is revealed. You no longer need bread, you no longer walk apart from God, you no longer test God. The pressure you now feel is the uplift of the Holy Spirit, the air of the divine. The love of a God who provides, is always near, and never needs to be tested.

As you make your Lenten journey and live in the temptations of your own life, remember the goodness of God that has brought you to now, and the gifts you still have yet to give in the Easter life that never left you and always inspires you.



The Rev. Patrick J. Miller
Rector

Prison Ministry at Jester 111

“The world breaks everyone; afterward, some are strong in the broken places.”

-Ernest Hemingway

As part of my ministry here at St. Mark's, I regularly volunteer and minister to the inmates at Jester 111, Richmond. By providing support, guidance, and rehabilitation opportunities with volunteers from other church affiliates, we help inmates gain fresh perspectives and reduce the likelihood of reoffending after release. While I believe I, along with the other volunteers, have had a positive effect in these efforts, they too have impacted my own life and given me deeper understanding of the goodness of God.

Listening to inmates tell their stories about where they were born and lived, their parents and siblings, events in their life, why things happened as they did, how they have been hurt, and how they have hurt others, their beliefs and feelings, vulnerabilities, loneliness, and isolation, all help reveal who they are and how they have come to this place. Though I wish I could share more here, concerns about their privacy and confidentiality exist, as some inmates may not want their personal information or experiences shared publicly. Volunteers must ensure ethical and responsible storytelling, protecting the well-being and rights of the individuals involved. However, I can share my own story and how being a volunteer has changed me.

Volunteers at Jester 111 strive to restore broken relationships. Reconciliation and restoration are not easy, but they are possible, and help offenders and victims follow the path laid out in Kirk Blackard's book *Restoring Peace*. As volunteers, one goal is to promote a sense of community. In my time volunteering,

I have learned to break down my own stereotypes and stigmas associated with incarceration. Visiting the inmates has brought a sense of self-discipline, humility, and a recommitment to living out the Christian values of compassion, forgiveness, and love of self and others. One offender commented, “I understand that everyone has trouble and deals with the same temptations as I do. I also recognize that I put my victim through so much that I don't want another person to go through that.” A victim



also commented, “Allowing us to tell our story allows us to verbalize for others and ourselves the pain we have endured, which is important in the long journey of healing and wholeness in life.” These conversations have a profound effect on myself and others who witness the healing power of God and the transformation of hearts that may have at one time seemed unreachable. Witnessing the journey of another on the path of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing causes us to look in the mirror and ask ourselves where we have fallen short and need forgiveness, where we should look for reconciliation, and the parts of our lives that need healing. Simply put, one cannot visit the inmates without looking deeper into one's own life.

The season of Lent is a time to reflect on Jesus's path to the cross, a path of pain and suffering. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed. The Daughters of the King of St. Mark's will make this journey with our Lord on March 8, providing a message of hope, redemption, and renewal, a journey leading up to Jesus' crucifixion that resonates with the struggle and suffering that we all face - his betrayal, condemnation, and crucifixion. The stations of the cross symbolize our hardships and challenges, but it also reminds us that there is always hope for redemption and transformation. The season of Lent is a time for Christians to seek personal growth and transformation leading up to the Easter celebration, which marks Jesus Christ's resurrection.

At Jester 111, offenders and victims share their stories through prayers, conversations, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Victims learn to forgive their offenders, for true freedom is available through forgiveness. As Kirk Blackard writes, forgiveness is the experience of peacefulness in the present moment. It allows you to overcome intense reactions such as resentment, anger, hatred, and desire for revenge, which are caused when another has wronged you. This Lent, may we all take time to find forgiveness for our wrongs, healing for our wounds, and experience the peace that passes all understanding in Christ our Savior.

The Rev. Johannes George
Associate Priest

Why Do We: FAST?

Lent is one of the oldest Christian traditions, potentially pre-dating the Nicene Council and Creed of 325. The forty days before Easter mirror the fast of Jesus, the Noahic flood, and several other Biblical stories. In those olden days, when Baptisms were done only on Easter, the forty days of Lent were a period of preparation for the candidates and a reminder to those already baptized of their covenant with God.

But what does fasting actually do? There is a modern conception of fasting as part of a regimen of self-control. In this understanding, temptations beset the individual who must, through the power of Christ and their own willpower, resist these temptations. Relatedly, some view fasting as a sort of self-imposed punishment, a way of apologizing to God for our sins. While there may be some truth to that, I don't think it is the whole story.

One of the figures most associated with repentance, with apologizing to God, is John the Baptist. He lived a life of asceticism and fasting, wearing camel's hair clothing and eating locusts and honey.

Now, had John sinned greatly? While we can presume that he, like all of us, erred, Jesus said that "of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist." Was John particularly self-controlled? Perhaps, but he was provocative in his speech even unto death. I think John's



self-denying behavior and teaching point to a more nuanced understanding of fasting.

In all four gospels, John quotes the prophet Isaiah and tells those following him, "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways

made smooth." We often view spiritual practices like fasting and repentance in self-interested terms, in what they will accomplish in us. This is understandable, and not wrong. At the same time, they aren't solely for us, but also for God. By fasting, we are making his paths straight in us. It creates a space within us for God to move and act. Just as it is harder for a messy person to accomplish their goals, a spiritually messy person, the kind Dante might describe as being hurtled about by passions, can't witness the grace of God in their life.

Fasting during Lent doesn't make us better stoics, more able to withstand life's troubles. It also doesn't make us better people, more worthy of receiving God's love. It removes the scales from our eyelids that prevent us from seeing how God is already loving us. This Lent, let us pray to God for help in discerning what valleys in our lives need to be filled and what mountains need to be made low. And then, let us come together as a community, fasting from the things which distract, to live together as God's community.

Stephen Adkison, Youth Minister

St. Mark's Youth Group *Summer Mission Trip*

St. Mark's Youth Group is heading to New Orleans for a week of service and ministry. Join Youth Minister Stephen from June 21 to 28 for a week of fellowship, new experiences, and growing closer to God. A deposit of \$500 is needed by March 19 to reserve your spot, and the full cost of \$1,000 is due by April 15. We're limited to 12 spaces, so act fast! If you have any questions or would like to volunteer as a chaperone, please contact Stephen via email stephen.adkison@stmarks-houston.org.



Theology Corner

Pray the Psalms by The Rev. David M. Goldberg

Psalm 139 begins:

LORD, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.



This image is from a manuscript Psalter of King Henry VIII in the British Library. Pictured is King David, often identified as "the Psalmist," playing his harp. Interestingly, "David" bears a striking resemblance to Henry VIII himself.

At the center of Christian spirituality is the belief that God leaves no depth or part of human experience untouched by his Incarnation. In sorrow and joy, doubt and faith, anger and peace, we are met by God tangibly in the life of his Son, our Lord. Sometimes we mistake a life of faith for the absence of negative thoughts about God or about the frailty of our mortal condition, but the psalms remind us this is not so: there is room for a full range of feeling in our relationship with God.

For example, Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance. The Psalmist laments:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

And later:

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The Psalms can even be imprecatory. Psalm 139, cited above, goes on to cry out, "Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God!"

It is not that God wants us to be angry, but that when we are angry, God invites us to pray so he may lead us to "still waters" (Psalm 23:2). Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the Psalter "Christ's Prayer Book":

On this basis the great Psalms of trust develop. Trust in God without Christ is empty and without certainty; it is only another form of self-trust. But whoever knows that God has entered into our suffering in Jesus Christ himself may say with great confidence, "Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."
—Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible (1970), p. 59.

God's presence with us is deepened by joining with him in praying in every conceivable mood or condition.

Of course, the psalms are not only for the despondent; they are also for the joyful. The Psalmist exclaims, "Hallelujah" and "Sing to the LORD a new song" (Psalm 149:1). The joy we share as Christians is infused with God's love. Our thanksgiving receives God's gifts and renders due gratitude. Thus, Psalm 139 concludes:

I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

This Lent, I pray you rediscover the fullness of prayer in the psalms—repentance and praise, lament and thanksgiving—and so find yourself ever more deeply in the presence of the God who knows us altogether.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
3816 Bellaire Boulevard
Houston, TX 77025
church@stmarks-houston.org
www.stmarks-houston.org
713-664-3466

Easter Sunday

April 20

7:45 a.m.	Annual
9 a.m.	Egg Hunt
11 a.m.	at 10 a.m.
5 p.m.	in the
	courtyard



ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH