

RECTOR REPORT



As I sit to write this annual rector's report, I'm reminded that this is the fourth one that I've written since moving here four years ago. In the four years that I've served as rector of St. Mark's, I have watched as my children have grown. I have done weddings, baptisms, and funerals. I have celebrated countless Eucharistic services. I have visited every hospital in the area visiting with sick parishioners. I have joined the community in ways that I never expected and I have made friends that I hope will be a part of my life forever. As ever, it is a privilege to serve as your priest.

One of the most important things that has happened in the course of the last year is the hiring of our new Minister of Music, Kurt Daisley. Last September we said goodbye to Andrew McKeon who moved onto a fulltime position at St. John's in Center Moriches. We were fortunate to have Jim Brophy serve on an interim basis with his customary humor and good grace. And with the help of Carol Fitton, Carol Johns, and Ina Ferrara, we conducted a search for our new Minister of Music. And what we quickly found was there are not an abundance of organists in Suffolk County. We advertised with the American Guild of Organists and we were fortunate enough to find Kurt. After speaking with him for a couple of times, we quickly arranged for an interview and we found him to be both talented and personable. He joined us in January and has brought a new spirit to our music program. If you have been in church at all this year, I'm sure you have noticed that the choir has grown and is singing beautifully. In addition, St. Mark's is also singing the Psalm antiphonally. Kurt has been a wonderful addition to our St. Mark's family and is serving with his customary grace and humor.

And after serving as Christian Education Director for two years, Stephanie Zayicek stepped down. Aimee Ralph was kind enough to volunteer her services to the children of St. Mark's. Aimee quickly developed a modified version of the Godly Play program that focuses on story and play with the children. One of the difficulties with our Sunday School is not knowing how many children will show up on any given Sunday. In this day and age sports, dance, and other activities offer a great deal of competition to church and parents are being stretched thin trying to get their children to all of the various events. But Aimee has done a wonderful job in working with whomever is present on any given Sunday.

After serving St. Mark's as parish treasurer for the last thirteen years, Nancy Connett is taking a well-deserved retirement. Thirteen years ago, Nancy stepped into the treasurer's office

are Ray Downing passed away. In that time, she has been an incredibly faithful steward of our parish finances. She has also been a huge asset to St. Mark's Bright Beginnings. For me, Nancy has been a wonderful source of counsel and a repository of St. Mark's institutional memory. Fortunately, Tom Simson has been kind enough to step into the office of treasurer and we welcome his gifts and abilities. While Nancy will be missed, we are currently making the transition and we thank her for all of her years of service. As ever, I am extremely grateful for the work of the entire staff here at St. Mark's. Kurt, Kate, Chris, Aimee, Sara, Nancy, Dawn, and all of the Bright Beginnings staff work harder than you'll ever know to make this church a vibrant place of ministry in Westhampton Beach. In addition, I'm very grateful to the work our vestry and our wardens. Sandy Wyman and Carol Fitten have given me a great deal of support as wardens as well as wonderful counsel.

It is a strange and wonderful thing to be the rector of a church. Parish life is full of quiet victories and disappointments. These are strange times for the church as more and more Americans opt to not be a part of any church. There seems to be a sense of unrest amongst so many people these days. And to say that St. Mark's has risen above the turmoil of our greater culture would be an untruth. The fact is that we have noticed a dip in our average Sunday attendance this year. It's clear that what has worked well in the past does not always work in the present. We do need to do some thinking and praying about what St. Mark's might look like in the future. The days of expecting crowds to flock to church en masse are long gone. While this seems like a huge problem for the church, it is also a wonderful opportunity. People are hungry for God and for goodness. They might not be able to fully articulate that hunger, but I'm convinced that the church offers something that people need desperately. I promise that I will dedicate myself to being the kind of priest you can be proud of and a faithful minister of word and sacrament. Moreover, I will always ask you to be a part of the ministry along with me.

Blessings,

Fr. Michael+