

Gifts and Ministry of the Congregation

There is a small and dedicated group of parishioners who make the wheels turn and ministry happen at Saint Mark's. They are the LEMs, the members of the Altar Guild, the Choir, the Acolytes, the Ushers, the Vestry, the *Love in a Dish* volunteers, the Community Gardeners, the Coffee Hour volunteers, the Sunday School and Youth Group leaders (when possible), etc. Volunteering in these groups provides fellowship and forms good friendships. Rectors change but parishioners are the constant - they form a community whose members help each other and also look for opportunities to reach outside the membership to help the broader community.

Going forward, where do we need to grow? St. Mark's has a fully equipped Sunday School wing and young families ready to work with a new Rector in reaching out to millennials. There are many searching and unchurched families in the Westhampton Beach area. Discussion groups see a possible part-time staff member and/or sharing the effort with other local churches in the community and are open to hiring the people necessary to foster this work. We have the seeds and support for a new Family Ministry that is ready to grow.

Engaging millennials requires **social media** skills - we have parishioners with these skills and are ready to partner with the new rector to help develop an online strategy in which our social media can flourish and be life-giving. At Saint Mark's we hope that the new rector will be comfortable using social media and can work with parishioners to help our communications become more timely and relevant and broaden our reach into the community.

Saint Mark's now draws parishioners from many different communities and over the years the demographics have changed. With this broader geographical reach, **outreach** opportunities have been identified throughout the East End of Long Island, including The Retreat, a domestic violence shelter in East Hampton and Communio Franciscano, a Hispanic Episcopal community in Riverhead, and parishioners are supporting them. By building relationships with other churches and community groups in the immediate community, we will work with the new rector to explore ways to grow our church so that it can expand beyond "Sunday in the pews".

Fellowship opportunities ebb and flow at Saint Mark's, partly driven by the church calendar but also eclipsed by competition for free time from sports, school work, careers and family events. Many activities that have been traditions for years (chili cook-offs, summer fairs, holiday lunches) have been on hiatus but we would like to continue and expand those. Alternatively, members have expressed interest in more Bible study, events around social justice and other forms of spiritual growth. We are ready to work with our new Rector to create new fellowship opportunities at St. Mark's.

Loyal members of Saint Mark's have consistently supported the church with their treasure as well as their time and talent. Long-time standing committees of the church, such as the Altar Guild and Building and Grounds, will partner with the new rector to support our worship and the physical plant. Newer committees are expanding their mandates: the Outreach Committee is adding new opportunities to its fold including pastoral visiting and the Communications committee is updating the website, planning a newsletter and looking for new ways to become more visible in the community. The Vestry, each of whom makes their stewardship pledge prior to the official opening of the campaign, manages the church's assets diligently, cutting expenses wherever possible and looking for revenue opportunities, but the outflow continues to outpace the inflow. This is a challenge for every church and we look forward to working with the new rector in all forms of **stewardship** as we figure out how to harness our gifts and talents as well as our financial resources.