

The Messenger

2013, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2013

Annual Meeting Set for February 10th

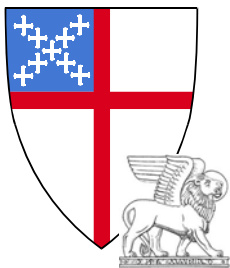
At the regularly scheduled November meeting of St. Mark's Vestry, the date and time for the parish's Annual Meeting was set. It was officially announced shortly afterward by Father Zwifka at announcement time in the liturgy and in the Sunday bulletin.

This issue of *The Messenger* is a special one dedicated almost entirely to the business of the Annual Meeting.

A parish's Annual Meeting is one of the most important events to occur in the life of a parish. It represents practical concerns of being a parish in the Episcopal Church today as it considered the election of parish leadership, discussion of the budget and the general "state of the parish." However, it also represent an important and unmistakable aspect of what it means to be Episcopalian within the broader sweep of all Christian Churches.

Early in our history, the importance of lay leadership blended with the tradition of leadership by bishops and the "lower clergy." The great influence of a new governmental system, *democracy*, in the first days of our nation, eventually placed the Annual Meeting at the very center of parish life. The same could be said for the annual Diocesan Convention (at the diocesan level) and for the triennial General Convention at the very highest level of our church. It goes without saying then, that Annual Meeting is not only an opportunity for us to gather as a parish family but also a moment when we are most completely the Episcopal Church in our community.

This year, St. Mark's will move beyond simply "doing business" at its Annual Meeting into a new understanding of the role of our gathering. Along with the necessary business that must be accomplished (outlined elsewhere in this newsletter), we that gather will have important discussions concerning our identity and our future. Toward this end, Father Zwifka has asked The Rev'd Canon Robyn Szoke-Coolidge, Canon for Children & Youth Ministry & Development, to facilitate parts of the meeting using a very helpful process called "Appreciative Inquiry." Canon Szoke-Coolidge has met twice with the vestry to introduce this process with happy and positive results. We hope that your participation in this process will deepen our self-understanding as a parish community and assist us in finding our way forward in our ever changing circumstances.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Annual Meeting

Sunday, February 10, 2013

10:30 AM

St. Mark's Parish Hall

Light Brunch Fare

and refreshments will be served

NEW WORSHIP TIME

SUNDAY

9:30 AM

Begins February 17th

*See inside for more
information*

COMING EVENTS

Exercise Program
Continues
Tuesdays at 3 PM

ECW Chicken Corn Soup
Sale

Friday, Feb 1st

Shawn Gisewhite & Rachel Bargo Wedding
*Saturday, Feb 9th
2:00 PM
Church*

Parish Annual Meeting
*Sunday Feb 10th
10:30 AM
Parish Hall*

Shrove Tuesday
Chicken & Waffles Dinner
*Tuesday Feb 12th
5:30 PM
Parish Hall*

Ash Wednesday Services
*Feb 13, 12 Noon & 7PM
Church*

Noon Time Prayers
*Daily beginning Feb 14
Church—Choir section*

WORSHIP
NEW TIME!

*Begins Sunday Feb 17
9:30 AM*

*Christian Formation
8:45 AM*

Vestry Meeting
*Feb 19, 5:30
Library*

An Open Letter from the Rector

To My Beloved Parish Family in Christ,

Having recently celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany, it seems appropriate to recall a story many of us read while in high school – O. Henry’s “The Gift of the Magi.” The story’s two main characters are a husband and wife who give up their most precious possessions to be able to afford gifts for each other on Christmas Eve. We watch Della go through the process of deciding to cut her long luxurious hair, her most prized possession, to purchase a precious watch-fob for her husband, Jim. Jim, on the other hand, sells his most prized possession, his heirloom watch, to purchase a beautiful comb for Della’s hair. Each makes a great sacrifice only to discover that the other has done the same. The story assures



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us that in their willingness to give up all they have, they have proven themselves the wisest of all gift-givers.

I recall this story as I write to you about a most important matter in the life of our parish family. Over the last two years, through cutting operating costs and increasing the level of individual giving on the part of many, we have been able to stabilize the financial position of our parish. Shortly before I became involved in the leadership of the parish, many told me that the parish was on a course that neither met the needs of its people nor invested for its future. In short, it was a rather bleak picture.

I am delighted to say that many in our parish family have risen to the occasion and provided as much from their means as possible to meet the costs involved in the operation of the parish. Many have sacrificed. The community took the hard decision to accept only half-time presence on the part of its priest. People have volunteered countless hours and provided many in-kind donations (work and treasure) to make things happen in nearly every area of parish life. However, the reality of our circumstance has not allowed us to conquer all the obstacles to fiscal health in the way we would like.

It is a fact of life that many among us who give substantially from their means either can no longer do so, have needed to leave the area, or, have been called home to God. This fact alone has betrayed the fact that more parishioners are individually contributing more money than they have in the past. In spite of that wonderfully good news, our actual revenue from pledge and plate offerings has declined substantially. Two extremely successful fundraisers raised a great deal of good will, brought people together in a most important way and produced much needed resources. Yet, even these merely made a “dent” in the shortfall.

The Finance Committee of the Vestry (Jeff Wilson, Elta Lauver, Blair Hannon, and I) met recently and examined our schedule of revenues and expenses for the coming year. All options were on the table, including a cutback in personnel costs (the largest share of the budget). It was agreed at that meeting, and later at the January Vestry meeting, that few if any further cuts could be responsibly made without dramatically affecting the mission and ministry of St. Mark’s Church.

Just to be clear – most of our outreach ministries (Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard, Parishioners’ Outreach, Breaking Bread Together, Environmental Stewardship, and Folks of A Seasoned Age) are all fairly self-funding and are on solid financial footing. We are talking about the operational costs of the parish itself (personnel, buildings, ministry programs) without which these important faith-based community services could not occur. At the same meetings, we noted how we have steadily increased our efficiencies in providing a warm and welcoming environment for all but still need to invest more in our development as individuals and as a faith community. Even so, all were at a loss as how to raise the increased revenue that will keep us a strong and vibrant community.

For the near term, it was agreed that, because St. Mark’s has benefited so richly from the generosity of past generations, we would look to them again for help in meeting our present need and planning for the future. As a result, Vestry will be considering a very carefully measured “draw down” of funds currently invested in the Diocesan Investment Fund and in the investment funds held at local institutions to help us meet the shortfall over the next five years. There is no intent simply to raid our treasury but to use wisely the carefully stewarded resources of the past to assure our future. At the same time, we will continue to explore ways to raise our regular revenues, take advantage of grant programs for special projects, and generally fit ourselves for another century of ministry. Rest assured, this is not the first such circumstance in the life of our 190 year old parish – and it won’t be the last. We must recognize, however, that it is *our* circumstance and that *we* must meet its challenges like so many before did in their own time.

For this and for other reasons, it is most important that you attend and participate in the discussion of our upcoming Annual Meeting. Asking for God’s grace and wisdom for the days, weeks, months and years ahead, I remain

In the heart and mind of Christ,

David+

The Rev’d Canon David A. Zwifka, JCD

“There is no intent simply to raid our treasury but to use wisely the carefully stewarded resources of the past to assure our future.”



Bishop Baxter sends Greetings!

Bishop Baxter sends greetings following his recent visit to St. Mark's.

"Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I and Mary Ellen are most grateful for the

hospitality shown to us at our recent visitation to St. Mark's Church in Lewis-

town. I always look forward to my visits there because of the warm and generous spirit that pervades the parish community. I am particularly delighted to hear of the wonderful things that are happening in the parish community, especially as you prepare for the 30th Anniversary of the Jubilee Ministry Center and the start of your preparations for a third century of ministry. Baptizing Kimisha and Stephen and welcoming Logan, Mark, Alexis, and Colby to the Lord's table

were highlights of the day for me.

Thanks to all who prepared and executed the worship service as well as those who provided a fine repast following the service. You will remain in my thoughts and prayers as I embark on my sabbatical in a few weeks. God bless you all in the days to come.

Yours in Christ,

Nathan Baxter +

Annual Meeting to Elect Vestry Members

The Vestry of St. Mark's Episcopal Church is composed of nine (9) members each of whom serves a three-year term. A member may be re-elected for a second consecutive terms for a total of six (6) years but then must retire from service for at least one year before being considered again.

Three members will be elected to serve this year. The slate of nominees will be available before the annual meeting to assist participants in discerning the wisest choice for the term of service.

If you or someone you know would be a good candidate for vestry service, please contact Blair Hannon (Senior Warden) or Joyce Hart (Clerk of Vestry) as soon as possible.

Annual Meeting to Chose Delegates to Diocesan Convention

Each parish of the diocese must select at least one (1) layperson as a delegate to the annual Diocesan Convention. The Diocesan Convention is the "annual meeting" of the diocese and provides direction for the future of the diocese. It elects diocesan officers, considers resolutions for policies, canons (laws) and constitutional changes for the diocese.

St. Mark's is allowed two (2) delegates and any number of alternate delegates.

A delegate must be willing to attend the Diocesan Convention, to be held Saturday, June 8 (with preliminary meetings on the evening of June 7) at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center, State College, PA. Delegates must also attend

general meetings of the Altoona Convocation, the regional community of Episcopal parishes that meets at least twice a year: once to prepare for Convention and at least once in the Fall to consider matters of importance for the diocese and the convocation itself. It is an exciting time for the diocese as it seeks to refine its identity and its mission and ministry within the 25 counties it serves.

Service as a delegate can be rich and rewarding through interaction with other clergy and lay members of the church both locally and diocese-wide.

If you would like to be considered as a candidate for parish delegate and/or alternate, please contact Blair Hannon (Senior Warden) or Joyce Hart (Clerk of Vestry) or see Father Zwifka for more information.

Canon Robyn Szoke-Coolidge to Facilitate St. Mark's Annual Meeting

The Rev's Canon Robyn Szoke-Coolidge, currently a member of the diocesan staff charged with helping parishes discover and move toward their true mission, will be with us during our Annual Meeting to facilitate a process called "Appreciative Inquiry." AI, as it is known, seeks to focus on increasing what an organization does well rather than on eliminating what it does poorly. Through an *inquiry* which *appreciates* the positive and engages all levels of an organization it seeks to renew, develop and build on its strengths and opportunities.

Canon Robyn is a nationally known resource for Christian formation at all levels of development from children and youth to adults and folks "of a seasoned age!" Her work in parish discernment and development has helped many parishes discover that the path to health and growth cannot be found in external resources but is discovered "from within" — both for individuals and for congregations.

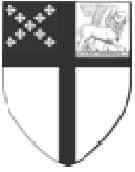
Canon Robyn has already worked with our Vestry to introduce the method and to explore the members' own hopes and dreams

for St. Mark's. All who participated in those exercises left with a feeling of hope and a renewed sense of commitment to the work of the parish. It is hoped that the same will happen for any who participate in this year's Annual Meeting.

"Youth are not the future of the Church," Canon Robyn maintains, "they are as much the Church of 'now' as you or I. So, it is important that they are part of any process that envisions where the Church will go and how it proposes to get there." With that in mind, it is also hoped that our young people will participate in the process that is planned for Sunday, February 10th.

CORRECTION

In a previous edition of *The Mediator* the dates for the visit of the Presiding Bishop were in error. Presiding Bishop Jefferts-Shori will be visiting St. Mark's and the diocese on September 7th and 8th NOT October 7 & 8th as previously published. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.



**St. Mark's Episcopal
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*The voice of the Gospel
in the
Episcopal tradition
for the Juniata Valley
since 1823.*

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**ECW Chicken Corn Soup
Sale — February 1st**

Just in time for cold winter days, the ECW will sponsor its Chicken Corn Soup Sale at St. Mark's on FRI-DAY, February



1st. Be sure to place your orders in plenty of time to help the ECW volunteers organize.