



Meet Fr. Michael: A Lifetime of Leadership and Commitment

The Very Rev. Dr. Michael Shaffer became the twenty-third rector of St. Mark's with over 25 years of ordained clergy experience. He has served as the Dean of the Charleston Peninsula Deanery in our diocese since 2022 and in 2025 served as President of the Standing Committee in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina.

Michael received his bachelor's degree in political science from Southern Methodist University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Following graduation from law school, Michael served as an assistant prosecuting attorney in Jackson County, Missouri, for five years before entering private practice and starting his own law firm, where he focused on representing healthcare professionals in medical negligence cases for almost 30 years. Michael participated in over 200 trials to a jury verdict conclusion as a trial attorney.

While a practicing attorney, Michael was ordained as a vocational deacon in 2000, serving in the Diocese of West Missouri. Sensing what he refers to as a call to "a more sacramental ministry," Michael left the practice of law and attended the Bishop Kemper School of Ministry, a school sponsored by the Episcopal Dioceses of Kansas, Nebraska, West Missouri, and Western Kansas, pursuing priestly ordination.

Following his ordination as a priest, Michael served in the Diocese of Olympia before accepting the call to become priest-in-charge of St. Francis Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina, in 2018. Since arriving to the Diocese of South Carolina, Michael has served as priest in charge at St. Francis Episcopal Church, as Interim Rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, and as Interim Associate Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, before serving St. Mark's, first as Interim Rector in 2023, becoming rector in 2025.

Since the day of his priestly ordination, Michael has been guided by comments made by two previous Archbishops of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey and Rowan Williams. Michael Ramsey, the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, once told a group of priests, "*May it one day be said of you, not necessarily that you talked about God cleverly, but that you made God real to people*". And Rowan Williams, the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, later said, "*The priest has to be free to be a lookout, an interpreter, and what I can best call a weaver.*"

Michael has said that he feels blessed to serve the community of St. Mark's, as he and his wife Erin have always been committed to social equity, equality, and justice issues and the support of organizations and events that promote equal opportunities for all persons, regardless of race, creed, color, ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference, or orientation. He is most proud of the work being undertaken collaboratively with two other historic African American congregations on the Charleston Peninsula, St. Stephen's and Calvary Episcopal Churches, known collectively as "Three Churches United". He often reminds us of James Baldwin's famous quote, "*Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced,*"

Michael and his wife Erin live in downtown Charleston.