

# St. Mark's Episcopal Church

*All are welcome. All are embraced. All are loved.*



April 28, 2024  
10:00 a.m.

*Welcome to St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
A house of prayer for all people in the historic Radcliffeborough  
neighborhood of Charleston, South Carolina*

The Rt. Rev. Ruth Woodliff-Stanley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina  
The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Shaffer, Interim Rector  
Loretta Haskell, Organist & Choirmaster  
Alphonso Grayson, Senior Warden – Bob Waters, Junior Warden



Celebrate  
**50 Days**  
of Easter

*Hallelujah!*



*Welcome to Eastertide*  
*Easter Sunday is only a beginning!*

The Great Fifty Days of Easter, also referred to as the season of Eastertide, is a time when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and all that means for us, leading to the launching of the Christian Church and its mission on Pentecost.

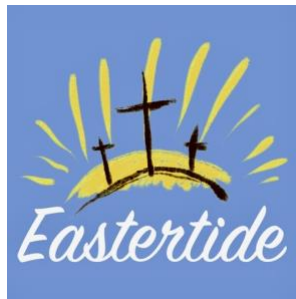
Although many people are familiar with Easter Day when the Church celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, you may not know that it always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after March 21. This was determined in 325CE at the Council of Nicaea in attempt to have all Christians celebrate on the same day with limited success, since Orthodox Christians use a different calendar. Eastertide is a season that actually lasts 50 days.

Why 50 days? It's actually quite simple. After the resurrection, Jesus spent forty days on earth before he ascended, which is commemorated on Ascension Day, May 9 this year. Then there were ten more days after that before the Day of Pentecost, or *Whitsunday*, which is celebrated on May 19 this year.

Luke writes in the first chapter of the Book of Acts that Jesus "presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God." In chapter two, we hear the followers of Jesus gathered for the Day of Pentecost, which actually means "fifty." It happened during the Hebrew feast of *Shavuot*, which is why the followers of Jesus were gathering. The Hebrew festival was originally a harvest first fruits celebration and later it evolved into a commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

These Great Fifty Days are a celebration of the Resurrection of Christ and all that means for us, leading to the launching of the Christian Church and its mission on Pentecost. During this time, Episcopalians once again use the word *alleluia*, which they refrain from using during the penitential season of Lent and the confession is omitted from the liturgy. So, for the next few weeks, the priest will still exclaim "*Alleluia. Christ is Risen*" on Sunday mornings, to which the people will reply, "*The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.*" The Paschal Candle is lit on Easter and on Sundays during Eastertide which symbolizes the risen Christ. Paschal means "related to Easter or Passover," which is why Eastertide is sometimes called Paschaltide and Jesus is sometimes called the "Paschal Lamb." The church also uses white (and sometimes gold) vestments, which is the color designated for feasts and festivals. Eastertide ends on the Day of Pentecost, which commemorates the Holy Spirit descending on the disciples in the form of tongues of fire. Interestingly, word Pentecost means "fiftieth day" in Greek.

Easter and Eastertide are the high point of our Church year, so it makes sense we should celebrate for a prolonged period of time. After all, the main point of the whole gospel is to prepare us for an eternal feast!



*The 1982 Hymnal, referred to as **Hymnal** and *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, referred to as **LEVAS** are found in your pew. **WLP** designates the music comes from the publication *Wonder, Love and Praise*. If **BCP** appears, that is a reference to the red Book of Common Prayer, also found in your pew.*

## Opening Proclamation

*Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

**INTROIT**

Bless Us, O God

Richard Shepherd

**OPENING HYMN**

God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him

**Hymnal 379**

## A LITURGY OF THE WORD

*The Celebrant says.*

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*People*      **The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

*The Celebrant says.*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The following is sung, all standing.*

1. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and  
peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly  
King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we  
give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus  
Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you  
take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy  
on us; 5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -  
ceive our prayer. 6. For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One,  
you a - lone are the Lord, 7. you a - lone are the Most  
High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the  
glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

## THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Celebrant        The Lord be with you.

*People*         *And also with you.*

Celebrant        Let us pray.

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*Please be seated.*

## THE LESSONS

### FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

    "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
    and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
    so he does not open his mouth.  
In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
    Who can describe his generation?  
    For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Reader         The Word of the Lord.

*People*         *Thanks be to God.*

**Psalm 22:24-30**

24 My praise is of him in the great assembly; \*  
I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.

**25 *The poor shall eat and be satisfied,  
and those who seek the Lord shall praise him: \*  
"May your heart live for ever!"***

26 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, \*  
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.

**27 *For kingship belongs to the Lord; \*  
he rules over the nations.***

28 To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; \*  
all who go down to the dust fall before him.

**29 *My soul shall live for him;  
my descendants shall serve him; \*  
they shall be known as the Lord's for ever.***

30 They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn \*  
the saving deeds that he has done.

**SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Reader            The Word of the Lord.  
**People            *Thanks be to God.***



*Please stand.*

**SEQUENCE HYMN**

Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life

**Hymnal 487**

**GOSPEL: John 15:1-8**

Priest            The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

*People*            *Glory to you, Lord Christ.*

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Priest            The Gospel of the Lord.

*People*            *Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

**TRANSITION SONG**

**In the Lord I'll be ever thankful**

**Song by Taizé**

*In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,  
In the Lord I'll rejoice.  
Look to God, do not be afraid,  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near;  
Lift up your voices the Lord is near.*

**THE SERMON**

**The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Shaffer**

**THE NICENE CREED**

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: *Form IV*

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
***Hear our prayer.***

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
***Hear our prayer.***

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
***Hear our prayer.***

Almighty God, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve, bless all who following in his steps live a life of service to others. Those who dedicate themselves in every season of life, in youth and advancing age, to service of nation and every human being, striving for justice, peace and equality for all people in their daily lives. By the power of your Holy Spirit, grant all who serve, wisdom, patience and courage, that they may minister in the name of Christ to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
***Hear our prayer.***

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us. We invite your personal intercessions at this time, either aloud or in your heart. (Pause, followed by Intercessor Prayers)

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
***Hear our prayer.***





## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING: Eucharistic Prayer A

*The People remain standing.*

*Celebrant*        The Lord be with you.

*People*            ***And also with you.***

*Celebrant*        Lift up your hearts.

*People*            ***We lift them to the Lord.***

*Celebrant*        Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*People*            ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

*Facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

But chiefly are we bound to praise you for the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has won for us everlasting life.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus S 128

Schubert

*Celebrant and People*

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

*Celebrant*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Celebrant and People*

***Christ has died.***

***Christ is risen.***

***Christ will come again.***

*The Celebrant continues.*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*People and Celebrant sing*

***Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debt, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.***

## **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

***People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.***

**Fraction Anthem: Taste and see**  
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WLAP # 764

Taste and see. Taste and see the good - ness  
of the Lord. O taste and see. Taste and  
see the good - ness of the Lord. of the Lord. **Fine**

**INVITATION**

*Celebrant* The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

*At St. Mark's Episcopal Church, all desiring a deepening and reaffirming relationship with Christ are invited to come forward for Holy Communion or for a blessing. This is the table not of the Church, but of Jesus Christ. It is made ready for those who love God. Come, not because the Church invites you; it is Christ who invites you to be fed and blessed here. For He knows you by name and calls you by name.*

*Communion will be offered in two kinds. The wine may be received by either sipping the chalice or allowing the Eucharistic Minister to dip your wafer in the wine, so that you may receive by intinction. If you do not wish to receive the wine, please indicate that by crossing your arms over your chest when the chalice reaches you at the altar rail. Communion in one kind (in bread only) is a perfectly valid way to receive the sacrament. Gluten free hosts are available upon request. For a blessing, cross your hands over your chest. If you would like to have communion brought to your seat, please let an usher know.*

**MUSIC AT COMMUNION**

Lord I Want to Be a Christian  
I Love to Tell the Story

**LEVAS 138**  
**LEVAS 64**

*After Communion, the Celebrant says.*

Let us pray. *(All pray)*

*Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**THE BLESSING**

**PROCESSIONAL**

Lord Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing

**Hymnal 344**

**DISMISSAL**

Celebrant Alleluia, alleluia. Let us go forth in the name of the Christ.

People *Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.*

**CLOSING HYMN**

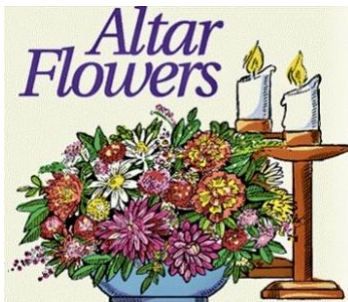
Thank You, Lord

*Sung by all*

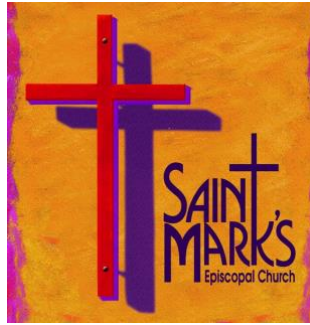
*Thank You, Lord (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.  
You've Been So Good (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.  
You've Been My Friend (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.*

**POSTLUDE**

*The worship is over. Now the service begins.*



*The Flowers are given by Sharon and Gary Crossley  
In Thanksgiving of Sharon's birthday.*



**SERVICE PARTICIPANTS:**

The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Shaffer, *Celebrant & Preacher*  
 Lerone Johnson, Sr, *Eucharistic Minister*  
 Shawan Gillians, *Lector*  
 Loretta Haskell, *Organist & Choirmaster*  
 Jean Turner, Angela Hare, Kristin Wallace & Jacqueline Storts, *Altar Guild*  
 Ellen Hardin & Vicki Davis Williams, *Ushers*

**Announcements**

***Spirited Brunch Today! – 12:30 to 3:30 PM***

















Now in its sixth year, the Spirited Brunch is an entirely free event, including snacks and sanctuary tours. You can visit as many or as few venues as you choose, in whatever order you like.

Everyone is welcome, and no RSVP or tickets are required. If you have questions or comments, please email [askin@thefoodsection.com](mailto:askin@thefoodsection.com)

FIND DETAILED INFORMATION ON EACH HOUSE OF WORSHIP AND ITS HISTORY AT [THEFOODSECTION.COM](http://THEFOODSECTION.COM)

*All participating congregations that don't have downtown locations will share their foods and stories at Spirited Brunch headquarters, 86 Wentworth St.*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 28**  
**12:30-3:30 P.M.**

 <b>CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST</b> 120 BROAD ST. <i>Sweet potato biscuits with ham</i>	 <b>GRACE CHURCH CATHEDRAL</b> 98 WENTWORTH ST. <i>Pimento cheese sandwiches</i>	 <b>ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> 405 KING ST. <i>German pastries and punch</i>
 <b>CHARLESTON BAHAI' COMMUNITY</b> 2 DESPORTES CT. <i>Fresh fruit and cold water</i>	 <b>KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM</b> 90 HASELL ST. <i>Mattzah toffee and macaroons</i>	 <b>ST. PAUL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH</b> 624 RUTLEDGE AVE. <i>She-crab soup</i>
 <b>CIRCULAR CONGREGATIONAL</b> 150 MEETING ST. <i>Homemade bread, cookies, and seasonal vegetables</i>	 <b>MOTHER EMANUEL A.M.E. CHURCH</b> 110 CALHOUN ST. <i>Rice and okra</i>	 <b>UNITARIAN CHURCH IN CHARLESTON</b> 4 ARCHDALE ST. <i>Deviled eggs, apple pan dowdy and other rolls</i>
 <b>FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST</b> 137 MOULTRIE ST. <i>Ice cream sundae bar</i>	 <b>ST. JOHANNES LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> 48 HASELL ST. <i>German apple cake</i>	 <b>THE CHURCH OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS</b> <i>Johanny cakes</i>
 <b>THE FRENCH HUGUENOT CHURCH</b> 44 QUEEN ST. <i>Huguenot torte and macaroons</i>	 <b>ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH</b> 16 THOMAS ST. <i>Collard greens and pilau</i>	 <b>HINDU TEMPLE OF SOUTH CAROLINA</b> <i>Biryani</i>
		 <b>SIKH GURDWARA NANAK DABAR</b> <i>Pulao and potato cullies</i>
		 <b>VICTORY FAMILY SUMMERVILLE</b> <i>Jollof rice</i>

*Each congregation selected a snack that reflects its local history or faith tradition.*





**Mark your calendars now. Show up and *Witness!***

We recognize seven principal feasts in the Episcopal Church each year, and our next is the Feast of Pentecost, which will be celebrated Sunday, May 19, 2024. We will celebrate by again welcoming into our beloved community yet another child of God by baptism during our 10 AM worship service.

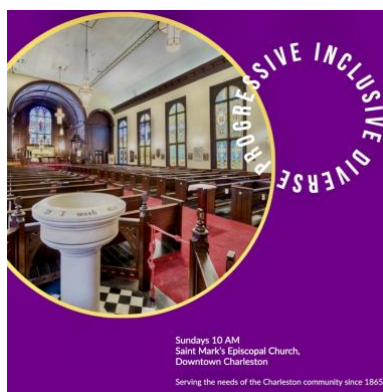
Pentecost is sometimes referred to as the “birthday of the church”, as it is often understood that Jesus “completed” his work with his disciples by sending the Holy Spirit, and now it was their job to continue that work, empowered by the Spirit. In any case, it truly is a day to see that God had empowered the disciples – just as God continues to empower us today – to carry forward the message of God’s redeeming love to a world so desperately in need of receiving those healing words.

Following our worship service on Pentecost Sunday, we’ll be hosting an old fashion picnic on our front porch and lawn, sharing hot dogs, chips and the like, in fellowship with each other. And, we’re going to invite our neighbors in the Radcliffeborough neighborhood to join us, just like we did to our February Oyster Roast. So please plan now to show up and witness not only during our worship service on May 19, but plan to stay for the party afterwards. Invite a friend. *We’re having a party!*

**Altar Flower Donations** – Altar Flowers may be donated by signing up for any given Sunday in the Altar Flower Notebook in the church Narthex. Suggested donation is a minimum of \$40.00.

**Free parking** is available during Sunday Worship Services at Ashley Hall School parking lot, located at the corner of Warren and Smith Streets, only one block from St. Mark’s Church.

**Parish Office Hours** are every Friday, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Other times, contact Fr. Michael at 843-830-1220.



## *Welcome to St. Mark's*



*I'm so glad you are here.*

Whether you are visiting Charleston for the first time, have recently moved here, have visited our church before or are doing so for the first time, we hope you will consider making St. Mark's Episcopal Church your spiritual home. Whoever you are and wherever you are in your life journey, we invite you to join our community effort in making the world a better place to live. There are no litmus tests. We don't want to change you. We want to support you as you grow into the person you were born to be.

In the Episcopal Church, we dream and work to foster God's vision of *Beloved Community* where all people may experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God. *Beloved Community* stands on the foundation of recognizing that any person's fundamental identity is God's beloved child. Such innate belovedness compels us to treat every single person on this planet with respect and dignity and to work for justice and peace and end our participation, knowingly or unknowingly, in assumptions or systems which trample on the beloved identity of our neighbors.

We humans cannot exist in isolation. We depend on connection, community, and caring. Simply put, we cannot be without each other. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained, "*My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.*" Tutu understood that the potential of human beings working collectively to achieve goals is infinitely greater than the potential of any individual.

We are a community of believers who come to worship, to pray, to love and to be loved, as we work to ease the burdens we share, living in the twenty-first century. We not only welcome but *embrace* a diverse community of people with different ethnic, racial, sexual orientation and social backgrounds, who may have different ways of being their authentic selves in the world. Our focus is to live into right relationship with each other and all creation as followers of Jesus. We are strengthened by our diversity, as we strive for unity, not uniformity.

So, I invite you to join us. Bring your gifts and passions, along with your doubts and your curiosity, but most of all, your hearts and minds. There is a place for everyone in God's church, and we may be the place where you can flourish, just as you are, *God's beloved child*.

Gratefully,  
Michael Shaffer +  
Interim Rector – St. Mark's Episcopal  
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