

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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



The Day of Pentecost

Holy Eucharist with Baptism

*Welcoming Luciana Timpanaro-Throop
Into the Community of Saints*

May 19, 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

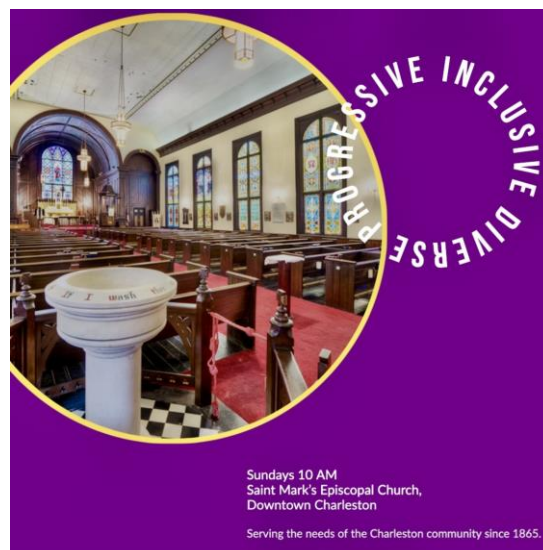
The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Shaffer, Interim Rector

Loretta Haskell, Organist & Choirmaster



The Day of Pentecost

Pentecost, the fiftieth and final day of the Easter season, celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day believed in the Gospel message. The day emphasizes that the Church is understood as the body of Christ, which is drawn together and given life by the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, a fitting day to welcome new Christians through baptism, and for us to renew our own baptismal vows.



We Are
**PENTECOST
PEOPLE**
TRANSFORMED BY THE
Holy Spirit

*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

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit

Spiritual

PROCESSIONAL

Hail thee, festival day!

HYMNAL 225

*Hail thee, festival day!
blest day that art hallowed for ever,
day when the Holy Ghost
shone in the world with God's grace.*

Lo, in the likeness of fire, on those who await his appearing,
he whom the Lord foretold suddenly, swiftly, descends:

Refrain

Forth from the Father he comes with sevenfold mystical offering,
pouring on all human so infinite riches of God:

Refrain

Hark! for in myriad tongues Christ's own, his chosen apostles,
preach to the ends of the earth Christ and his wonderful works:

Refrain

Praise to the Spirit of Life, all praise to the fount of our being,
light that dost lighten all, life that in all dost abide:

Refrain

A LITURGY OF THE WORD

All standing, the Priest says.

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

The Priest then continues.

Priest There is one Body and one Spirit;
People ***There is one hope in God's call to us;***
Priest One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
People ***One God and Father of all.***

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Priest The Lord be with you.
People ***And also with you.***
Priest Let us pray.

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE LESSONS

Please be seated.

FIRST READING: *Acts 2:1-21*

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' ”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 104:25-35, 37

25 O Lord, how manifold are your works! *
 in wisdom you have made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.

**26 *Yonder is the great and wide sea
 with its living things too many to number, *
 creatures both small and great.***

27 There move the ships,
 and there is that Leviathan, *
 which you have made for the sport of it.

**28 *All of them look to you *
 to give them their food in due season.***

29 You give it to them; they gather it; *
 you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

**30 *You hide your face, and they are terrified; *
 you take away their breath,
 and they die and return to their dust.***

31 You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; *
 and so you renew the face of the earth.

**32 *May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; *
 may the Lord rejoice in all his works.***

33 He looks at the earth and it trembles; *
 he touches the mountains and they smoke.

**34 *I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; *
 I will praise my God while I have my being.***

35 May these words of mine please him; *
 I will rejoice in the Lord.

**37 *Bless the Lord, O my soul. *
 Hallelujah!***

SECOND READING: *Romans 8:22-27*

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Please stand.

SEQUENCE HYMN

Praise the Spirit in creation

Hymnal 506

1 Praise the Spirit in creation,
breath of God, life's origin:
Spirit, moving on the waters,
quickenings worlds to life within,
source of breath to all things breathing,
life in whom all lives begin.

2 Praise the Spirit, close companion
of our inmost thoughts and ways;
who, in showing us God's wonders,
is himself the power to gaze;
and God's will, to those who listen
by a still small voice conveys.

5 Pray we then, O Lord the Spirit,
on our lives descend in might;
let your flame break out within us,
fire our hearts and clear our sight,
till, white-hot in your possession,
we, too, set the world alight.

6 Praise, O praise the Holy Spirit,
praise the Father, praise the Word,
Source, and Truth, and Inspiration,
Trinity in deep accord:
through your voice which speaks within us
we, your creatures, call you Lord.

The Priest asks Luciana.

Do you desire to be baptized?

Luciana replies. I do.

The Priest then asks Luciana.

Priest Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces
of wickedness that rebel against God?

Answer I renounce them.

Priest Do you renounce the evil powers of this world
which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Priest Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you
from the love of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Priest Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your
Savior?

Answer I do.

Priest Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Answer I do.

Priest Do you promise to follow and obey him as your
Lord?

Answer I do.

After Luciana has been presented, the Priest addresses the congregation saying:

*Priest Will you who witness these vows do all in your
power to support Luciana in her life in Christ?*

People We will.

The Priest then says these words:

Let us join with Luciana who is committing herself to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Entire Congregation answers questions

Priest Do you believe in God the Father?
People ***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.***

Priest Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
People ***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

Priest Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
People ***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.***

Priest Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
People ***I will, with God's help.***

Priest Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People ***I will, with God's help.***

Priest Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
People ***I will, with God's help.***

Priest Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
People ***I will, with God's help.***

Priest Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?
People ***I will, with God's help.***

PRAYERS FOR THE CANDIDATE

The Priest then says to the people:

Let us now pray for Luciana who is to receive the Sacrament of new birth.

Priest Deliver her, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Open her heart to your grace and truth.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Fill her with your holy and life-giving Spirit.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Keep her in the faith and communion of your holy
Church.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Teach her to love others in the power of the Spirit.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Send her into the world in witness to your love.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

Priest Bring her to the fullness of your peace and glory.
People ***Lord, hear our prayer.***

The Priest says:

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and for ever. **Amen.**

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

The Priest then says:

Priest The Lord be with you.

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

Priest Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

The Priest says:

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise.

In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

At the following words, the Priest touches the water:

Now sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.

To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

BAPTISM

Luciana, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Luciana, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. **Amen.**

Priest : Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon Luciana the forgiveness of sin, and have raised her to the new life of grace. Sustain her, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give her an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. **Amen.**

All stand

The Priest then says:

Let us welcome the newly baptized Luciana.

Priest and People together

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.

THE PEACE

Priest The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord saying, "Peace be with you."

SONG

Surely the Presence of the Lord is In This Place

Sung by all.

*Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
I can feel God's mighty power and God's grace.
I can hear the brush of angel's wings,
I see glory on each face.
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE OFFERTORY

The Priest offers an Offertory Sentence.

OFFERTORY

Pentecost

Mark Schweizer

HYMN AT THE PRESENTATION


Sung to the tune of Hymnal #400

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (*Eucharistic Prayer D*)

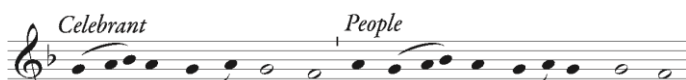
The people remain standing. The Celebrant says:

Celebrant *People*



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Celebrant *People*




Lift up your hearts. 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...

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds.

It is truly right to glorify you, Father, and to give you thanks; for you alone are God, living and true, dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and for ever.

Fountain of life and source of all goodness, you made all things and fill them with your blessing; you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.

Countless throngs of angels stand before you to serve you night and day; and, beholding the glory of your presence, they offer you unceasing praise. Joining with them, and giving voice to every creature under heaven, we acclaim you, and glorify your Name, as we sing,

All



Ho - ly, ho - ly,
ho - ly Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho-san-na in the
high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high-est.

The people stand or kneel.

Then the Celebrant continues

We acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power. Your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love. You formed us in your own image, giving the whole world into our care, so that, in obedience to you, our Creator, we might rule and serve all your creatures. When our disobedience took us far from you, you did not abandon us to the power of death. In your mercy you came to our help, so that in seeking you we might find you. Again and again you called us into covenant with you, and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.

Father, you loved the world so much that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior. Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, he lived as one of us, yet without sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation; to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy. To fulfill your purpose, he gave himself up to death; and, rising from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new.

And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it, and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

When the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end; at supper with them he 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."

Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption. Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead, proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand, awaiting his coming in glory; and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us, this bread and this cup, we praise you.

Celebrant and People

*We praise you, we bless you,
we give thanks to you,
and we pray to you, Lord our God.*

The Celebrant continues.

Lord, we pray that in your goodness and mercy your Holy Spirit may descend upon us, and upon these gifts, sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

Grant that all who share this bread and cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ, to the praise of your Name.

Remember, Lord, your one holy catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of your Christ. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace.

Remember all who minister in your Church. Remember all your people, and those who seek your truth, especially Luciana, whom today has been reborn in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever.

And grant that we may find our inheritance with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with Saint Mark and all the saints who have found favor with you in ages past. We praise you in union with them and give you glory through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, all honor and glory are yours, Almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and 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

WLAP # 764

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The musical score is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are: "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." The score ends with a double bar line and the word "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, allowing the Eucharistic Minister to dip your wafer in the wine, or dipping your wafer in the intinction chalice. If you do not wish to receive the wine, please indicate that by crossing your arms over your chest when the chalice reaches you. 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

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart
There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit

LEVAS 119
LEVAS 120

After Communion, the Celebrant says:

Let us pray.

Celebrant and People

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

Come down, O Love divine

HYMNAL 516

1 Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

3 And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till Love create a place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

DISMISSAL

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

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

CLOSING HYMN

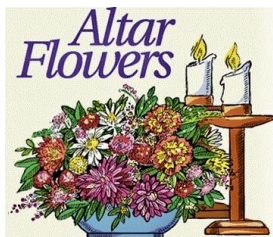
Thank You, Lord

Sung by all.

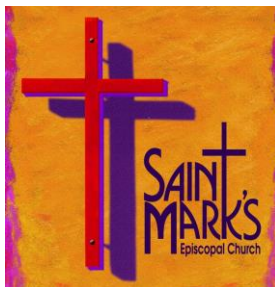
*Thank You, Lord (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.
You've Been So Good (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.
You've Been My Friend (x's 3) I just want to thank you Lord.*

POSTLUDE

The worship is over. Now the service begins.



*The Flowers are given by the O'Neill Family
In memory of Lawrence J. O'Neill,
And St. Mark's Episcopal Church
In honor of Luciana Timpanaro-Throop*



SERVICE PARTICIPANTS:

The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Shaffer, *Celebrant*
B. Shawan Gillians, *Eucharistic Minister*
Taylor Chase & Sarah Grayson *Acolytes*
Lerone Johnson, *Thurifer*
Marj Kenney Williams, *Lector*
Loretta Haskell, *Organist & Choirmaster*
Ruth Breland, Susanne Hieserman & Alphonso Grayson *Altar Guild*
Ginny Grayson & Vicki Williams, *Ushers*

Announcements

PENTECOST SUNDAY



Pentecost Picnic today following our worship service worship!

**Social
Media
Boost**

Make a Special Offering of Financial Support this month!

Earlier this year the Vestry authorized spending an additional \$200 a month, for five months, to “boost” our outreach and St. Mark’s exposure on Social Media Platforms, which has evidenced amazing results. *Please help us* by making a special financial offering to help us raise \$1000 to pay for these efforts by placing a check into the offering plate, writing “media boost” on the memo line, or let Fr. Michael know if you would like to contribute to this effort electronically.



March in the Pride Parade with St. Mark’s – *Love is the Way!*

St. Mark’s will participate in the annual Charleston Pride Parade on Saturday, June 1, 2024. We will gather Saturday morning June 1 at 8:15 AM Wragg Mall Park downtown to take our place in the parade line-up. It is not a long route, easily walked, on King Street starting on Ann Street and finishing at the intersection of King and Market.

If you plan to participate please email Fr. Michael no later than Friday, May 24, 2024, so we might register St. Mark’s participation with the Pride Parade organizers timely. Email frmichael@saintmarkschurch.com.



CAJM Celebration 2024



Minerva King - Honoree

The 2024 CAJM Celebration will be held at Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, 7396 Rivers Ave, North Charleston, SC 29406, on Monday, May 20, 2024, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Our own Minerva King will be recognized as one of the CAJM Team Leaders with the highest turn out to this year's Nehemiah Action. Congratulations Minerva and St. Mark's! At the celebration prizes will be awarded to the networks with the highest number of attendance or the highest number of financial commitments, so please make an effort to show up to share in this ministry and honor Minerva.



The Panorama Newspaper which is published in Columbia but covers news throughout South Carolina is available every week in the narthex. Please remember to pick up your copy either on your way in or out of the church.

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



We're 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 +
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