



OUR PARISH PROFILE

A Journey of Faith, Hope and Love



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Austin, TX

You Are Here.



Welcome to St. Mark's Episcopal Church!

St. Mark's exists to carry out the mission of the body of Christ on earth. Our purpose is to be agents of reconciliation who work together to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Jesus Christ. We exist to be a community of formation that seeks in all things to deepen and broaden our relationship with God and each other.

The vision of St. Mark's is to be a warm and welcoming community, inclusive of all God's children, wherever they are on their spiritual journey; to teach, preach, and live out the gospel daily in our life and work; to pray and work for justice for all God's children; and for the Kingdom of God to be fully realized in our world.

Our parishioners have many reasons for belonging to St. Mark's: participating in worship; sustaining personal spiritual growth; receiving Holy Communion; fostering the spiritual growth of their family; participating in the traditions of the Episcopal Church; being uplifted through participation in a positive, friendly community; and feeling a sense of belonging. Join us and see what our spiritual life can do for yours!

Where Are We As a Parish?



In Principle:

St. Mark's cherishes the organizing principles below as guideposts of our common life.

Worship: We believe that everything begins with our worship life. We gather to pray and sing God's praises, to read and hear God's word, and to be nourished and nurtured by the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Then we are sent out into the world to do the work and ministry to which we have been called as God's people here.

Education: In our education programs we try to respond to the questions that are raised in our worship. Who is this God we speak of and pray to? Who is Jesus? How did all this come to be? Why are we here? What is God calling us to do? In our programs for children, youth, and adults we attempt to address these questions. Our focus is on Holy Scripture, the teaching of the church, contemporary issues of life in our broken world, and skills in dealing with the issues and relationships of our lives.

Outreach: In our worship and the study of Holy Scripture we quickly learn that if we are to be about the work of reconciliation of all people to God and each other, then we need to be involved in the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves. Our programs reach out both locally and globally, and include opportunities for members to be personally involved in the mission work of the church.

Discipleship: We believe that our worship, education, and outreach lead us into discipleship. Discipleship for us is defined as how we organize, order, and structure our daily lives in order to live out what we proclaim in worship, study in our education programs, and discern in our prayer life. It includes our stewardship of our God-given gifts, talents, and treasures. It includes our concern for the environment and being stewards of creation. It means that we are intentional in taking care of our body, soul, and spirit as we attempt to grow more fully into our relationship with God and each other in Jesus Christ.

In Practice:

It's one thing, of course, to develop and aspire to the values above. The more telling question is how well we actually live those values, and, according to the parish survey conducted to help to develop this profile, we must be doing something right. An overwhelming majority of parishioners — 89% — believe St. Mark's is "Almost always" or "Usually" on the right track. **Comments about what St. Mark's does best focused on five strengths: the sense of welcoming and community; worship; outreach; education; and music.** Parishioners praised the openness and caring in the parish, the quality of preaching and spiritual nourishment, the way the congregation responds to pleas for help and charity, the growth in children's programs and the content of Christian formation for kids and adults, and the quality and value of the music at St. Mark's. These things are, however, just part of the total picture that is St. Mark's. A fuller view encompasses many areas, including the following.

Ministries: Members of St. Mark's are actively involved; serving as acolytes, lay readers, lay Eucharistic ministers or ushers; serving on various committees; teaching Sunday school or leading children's chapel; and singing in the choir. From committees to one-time events to ongoing groups, St. Mark's offers its members many ways to serve each other and the community. Fortunately, four-fifths of the parishioners surveyed say they would be willing to volunteer for St. Mark's ministries.

Beliefs & Practices: At St. Mark's, our surveyed membership is:

- ☛ **Faithful:** 40% say they've had faith as long as they can remember; while 29% say they have experienced "specific moments of faith commitment or recommitment over the years"; and 21% say they came to faith through a gradual process.
- ☛ **Prayerful:** Two-thirds pray several times a week, and most of that group prays daily or most days.
- ☛ **Thoughtful:** 75% agreed with one of two statements about the Bible: "The Bible is the 'Word of God,' to be interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context"; and "the Bible is the 'Word of God,' to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church's teachings".
- ☛ **Satisfied:** 81% agreed that their spiritual needs are being met as a member at St. Mark's.

Outreach: The community of St. Mark's has always responded generously to those in need. Ongoing outreach projects include El Buen Samaritano (which provides aid to working poor Spanish-speaking families), SafePlace (a shelter for abused women and children), and the Storybook Project (a ministry which connects incarcerated mothers to their children through books), as well as seasonal projects like Heifer International (an aid organization fighting hunger and poverty) and Angel Tree (a Christmas gift ministry for the poor). Effort is needed to bring the giving of time into balance with the giving of goods and financial support, however.

Christian Formation: St. Mark's offers Christian education for both children and adults, as well as a youth program for grades 6-12. Both of these programs received "B's" on the latest parish report card, reflecting happiness with the quality and dedication of the staff, but also the strain of coping with and properly accommodating an exploding youth population.

Parish Events: If a parish that eats together stays together, then the members of St. Mark's must truly be tight. Our most popular community events — those attended by more than half of our parishioners — are the Mission and Ministry Dinners for Stewardship, the January Annual Meeting, Rally Day, and the Church Barbecue. Other popular events that bring our community together are Lenten Services and Suppers, the Fall Festival, the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and the monthly Men's Group dinners.

Administration: General administration, communication with members, lay leadership, financial stewardship, and use of buildings and property were all areas that received "A's", reflecting the hard work and talents of our staff. Administrative challenges include strengthening and leveraging the parish's relationship with our Day School, as well as managing the myriad details that come with a large, active congregation.

Finance: For the past 10 years, St. Mark's has operated a balanced budget. Stewardship is strengthening; 2008 pledges came in at record numbers, both in terms of the amount pledged and the number of pledging units, a trend which bodes very well for our future financial strength.

How Did We Get Here?



- ☞ St. Mark's Church was organized as a mission on December 7, 1958. 15-20 people gathered for services in a small room adjacent to a taxidermist's shop.
- ☞ On December 20, 1959, Bishop Percy Goddard knocked with his pastoral staff to open the doors of the new all-purpose building, and the first St. Mark's confirmation class was presented to him.
- ☞ On December 23, 1962, Bishop Goddard dedicated a new addition constructed solely by the church men. On November 21, 1963, Bishop John E. Hines dedicated a new wing which included a sacristy, the vicar's office, and two classrooms. A parish family's gift of a bell tower was erected, and the bell upon it, donated by another parish family, now hangs in the present steeple.
- ☞ St. Mark's Episcopal Day School opened in September, 1963, offering both kindergarten and pre-K classes.
- ☞ Palm Sunday, 1973, saw the arrival of a Baldwin organ, purchased through fund raising. This organ brought forth music until replaced with a new instrument in 1985, a gift from the estate of parishioner Martin Heinemier.
- ☞ After 17 years as a mission, the congregation voted on November 23, 1975, to petition the Diocesan Council for acceptance as a parish, which was accepted on February 6, 1976.
- ☞ In November, 1978, ground was broken for the present church structure. Bishop Milton Richardson dedicated the new church on October 17, 1979, and St. Mark's began worshipping where it does now.
- ☞ Shortly after Easter 1998, through the generosity of church members, the sanctuary was completely refurbished. In 1998 St. Mark's also sold the rectory, a gift of Martin F. Heinemier, and paid off a long-standing loan.
- ☞ Increased Sunday attendance and crowding at the two Sunday services in 2000 led to the institution of three services—7:30, 9:00, and 11:00—with Christian formation at 10:00.
- ☞ In 2001, a capital campaign was conducted, raising a significant amount of money needed for expansion. In April 2003 construction began, and on December 17, 2003, the Bennett Wing was dedicated.
- ☞ Additional improvements to the sanctuary in 2002 were skylights, new doors, a new exterior, and removal of the covering over the front walkway into the church, plus a new altar cross.
- ☞ A short capital campaign took place in late 2003 to purchase a new organ, which was dedicated in December 2003.
- ☞ According to the Congregational Life survey in 2006, the tiny group of charter members of St Mark's had grown to a parish of approximately 450 active members.

CLERGY WHO HAVE SERVED ST. MARK'S

The Rev. Malcolm P. Riker, First Vicar	1959-1961
The Rev. Kenneth R. Clark, Second Vicar	1961-1964
The Rev. Carl S. Shannon, Jr., Third Vicar	1965-1966
The Rev. Frank Henriques, Priest-in-Charge	1966-1967
The Rev. Robert A. Jackson, Fourth Vicar	1967-1968
The Rev. Thomas H. White, Fifth Vicar	1968-1971
The Rev. Donald Blavier, Jr., Priest-in-Charge	1971-1972
The Rev. Donald R. Raish, Sixth Vicar/First Rector	1972-1976/1976-1984
The Rev. Allan Green, Assistant	1982
The Rev. Arthur J. Bevins, Assistant	1983
The Rev. Neil F. (Scotty) Innes, Second Rector	1984-1990
The Rev. Thomas W. Gray, Third Rector	1990-1996
The Rev. William M. Bennett, Fourth Rector	1996-2007
The Rev. Elizabeth Zarelli Turner, Assistant & Associate	1998-2004, 2005-2007
The Rev. Elizabeth Zarelli Turner, Interim/Acting Rector	2007-

Where Do We Want to Go?



Even in a congregation where the vast majority of members are confident in the church's direction and actions, the journey must continue and our parish must evolve. Complacency and self-satisfaction have been the undoing of many a great organization, but fortunately, the parishioners of St. Mark's are willing to turn a critical eye to the present and a clear eye to the future in order to learn, grow and thrive as a family in Christ.

Just what do we believe will help our parish's growth and success? According to those surveyed, these five actions have been deemed most important to St. Mark's future:

- Offering a variety of types and styles of worship services
- Increasing parish diversity
- Assuring that our church family works together more effectively through goal setting, communication, and training
- Increasing participation by parishioners of all ages in the planning and in the execution of worship services
- Making committed stewardship the norm and striving to increase the amount of active pledging in order to attain our goals and have the future we all desire.

In addition to the five critical items above, three themes for improvement emerged in the course of our recent survey:

More involvement in church activities: This could take a variety of forms, from new activities, especially on days other than Sunday, to simply encouraging more meaningful committee participation within the church. Involving the church's neighborhood in more activities, or involving St. Mark's with other churches in Austin are also potential pathways to more participation. Parishioners would also like to explore more community building activities, both in small groups and as a full congregation.

Programs for youth and young families: Expanding the youth programs to meet the needs of a fast-growing part of the congregation — kids and teens — is critical to St. Mark's future. Although we have an active Young Families group, as well as a Youth Group and Sunday School, we need to think about providing more activities and guidance for young families. Additional youth programs, parenting classes, consideration for special-needs kids and their parents, and a dedicated space for older kids have all been put forth as ideas.

Christian education: Parishioners have many ideas for shaping the future of Bible study and adult education. Possibilities include focusing more on Bible study in Adult Ed or bringing in more outside teachers, adding a library, or tapping into the Internet for "virtual Adult Ed", and offering Adult Education at a greater variety of times.

Beyond these areas, there are as many goals for the community of St. Mark's as there are members. Surveyed parishioners dream of increasing diversity at St. Mark's, getting the church "actively involved in changing the world", and, to improve and expand our space, starting a building fund. They also suggested more or different activities, such as more congregational potlucks, picnics and other get-togethers, as well as more outreach programs, and projects to connect "all types of parishioners". A desire also exists for programs that bring together faith with world and community issues.

Appendix A: About Austin*

*Thanks to the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce for this information.



Austin serves as the seat of state government, and is an educational mecca with several area universities. Its renowned entertainment scene includes the best of live music and the arts, plus all the fun of the great outdoors that comes with being located amidst the rolling hills and lakes of Central Texas.

Arts and Entertainment

Austin is nationally known as "The Live Music Capital of the World", offering music fans access to hundreds of noteworthy performances and several high-profile festivals. Artists, writers and filmmakers thrive in this creative haven, filling the city's many museums, bookstores, festivals and parks with their works. A professional symphony, ballet and opera companies, dozens of theaters, dance companies, vocal ensembles, and orchestras also produce events year-round.

Climate

Austin's climate is classified as "humid subtropical" with hot summers and mild winters. Freezing temperatures occur only about 25 days per year. Cold spells are short, seldom lasting more than two days. While summer days are hot, summer nights are usually pleasant. Precipitation is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year.

Cost of Living

Texas features no personal or corporate income tax, and overall the state has one of the lowest state and local tax burdens in the nation, ranking 45th among the 50 states in taxes paid per \$1000 of personal income. Compared to other major business centers, Austin is well known for offering affordable living. The National Association of Realtors reports that the median home price in Austin was \$173,700 in 2006; the national median was \$221,900.

Education

Highly rated schools contribute to quality of life. Austin-area households enjoy diverse options in education, including strong public school districts, a variety of charter schools and many private schools. In addition, The University of Texas and seven other public and private universities and colleges feature a combined enrollment of over 118,000.

Healthcare

Austin's health care system rivals that of any major metropolitan area. Eleven major hospitals, including the new Dell Children's Medical Center, boast more than 2,500 hospital beds, and the region offers the most recent technology available, including specialties in neonatal care, organ transplants, oncology and in-vitro fertilization.

Outdoors

There's no excuse for sitting home bored in Austin. From cool, spring-fed swimming holes to Ben Crenshaw-designed golf courses, from area team sports to a walk in the beauty of Austin's natural settings — there is something to get you on your feet. The home of seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong is a great cycling town and a great running town. The Capital 10,000 and the Motorola Marathon attract thousands of runners each year.

Appendix B: St. Mark's Statistics



PARISH DEMOGRAPHICS:

Number of Members: 450 active members

Breakout by Gender: 48% male and 52% female

Breakout by Age: Roughly 50% of the congregation is between age 25 and 65, with:

- 4% between 15 and 24
- 28% between 25 and 44
- 23% between 45 and 64
- 23% over 65
- approximately 62 youth in 6th - 12th grade
- approximately 60-70 children in the range of birth to 5th grade

Education: 86% have college or graduate degrees.

Income: By household,

- 14% earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000
- 21% earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000
- 17% earn between \$75,000 and \$100,000
- 40% earn \$100,000 or more

PARISH BUILDINGS:

- The sanctuary seats approximately 200; Grace Chapel seats about 70.
- The administration building houses offices for the Rector, Director of Religious Education and the Parish Administrator, the approximately 2100 s.f. Parish Hall, a general purpose Common Room, a commercial kitchen, and 3 classrooms for shared use by the Day School and the church nursery/Sunday School.
- In addition to Grace Chapel, the Bennett Wing of the administration building includes the Associate Rector's office, one small conference room (6-7 person capacity), and one larger conference room seating 15-18.
- The separate Day School Building has 6 classrooms and office space.
- Two portable buildings onsite provide storage space as well as a meeting place for the Boy Scouts.

PARISH GROUPS/STANDING COMMITTEES:

Acolytes, Altar Guild, Christian Formation, Adult and Youth Choirs, Communications, Contemplative Prayer, Daughters of the King, Women of St. Mark's, Facilities, Finance, Long-Range Planning, Men's Group, Outreach, Parish Life, Pastoral Care, Stewardship, Ushers, Young Families, Youth Group, and Youth Lectors.