

THE

LION'S MARK

NEWSLETTER FOR SAINT MARK'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

A COMMUNITY THAT GATHERS IN FAITH, SERVES IN LOVE, AND PROCLAIMS HOPE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

RECONSTRUCTION

FATHER SEAN MULLEN

Some years ago, I attended a seminar on historic preservation of buildings at which an architect was describing important preservation techniques and approaches to masonry buildings. She'd spoken specifically about churches built of brick, and churches built of limestone. I piped up with a question *"What about buildings built of brownstone—what can you tell us about them?"* *"Well,"* came the response, **"I can tell you there's a reason they stopped using brownstone as a construction material."**



Brownstone is a kind of sandstone. It's sedimentary rock formed in layers, relatively soft, and prone to deteriorate in a number of ways as a result of its exposure to the elements over time.

Mindful of the assessment provided at that seminar for a long while, I felt a bit resentful about the choice of brownstone by those who built our church. Saint Mark's is a beautiful, elegant building, but it is made of this stone that is prone to deterioration, and therefore requires ongoing preservation. The work that is required on our bell tower—which we expect to cost at least \$2 million—is an example of the sort of thing that shaped my feelings on this matter.

But lately I have modified my attitude toward the brownstone, as I have come to appreciate its age. The fact of the matter is that any building, no matter what is made of, would require ongoing care and preservation around its 175th birthday. As one of our engineers put it to me:

“If someone was offering to sell you a building today that would still be standing 175 years later, wouldn't you buy it?” Yes, I would. I highly doubt that many such buildings are being built today.

As I think about the work of masonry preservation, I find myself wanting to classify that work as reconstruction. And I want to do this in part because of a process that is happening throughout North American and European society—the deconstruction of faith. Evangelicals speak of deconstruction in terms of people losing their faith. Roman Catholics speak of it in terms of disaffiliation—that is, people abandoning the practice of faith and leaving the church.

What had looked to us like secularization now looks like something more fundamental, like a deterioration of people's connection to and confidence in their faith, their church, their God. Is it possible that just like brownstone, faith was susceptible to deterioration and it took us until now to realize it?

The deconstruction of faith is happening because people do, indeed, feel as though their faith has deteriorated. They feel as if their faith, their church, their God has failed them.

In the modern world, people cannot make room for faith when it is presented as the antithesis of reason, as has been the experience of so many. We allow our faith to be deconstructed—taken down stone by stone as it were—wondering if anything useful can be made of the old stones. We often do all the work of deconstruction ourselves.

Sometimes there are good reasons for the deconstruction that we see taking place. As the pastor and writer Brian Zahnd puts it, “The beautiful image of Christ has been obscured by the imposition of cultural assumptions, political agendas, distorted doctrines, and the corrupting influence of empire.” These and other forces all advance the cause of deconstruction. “Demolition is easy,” Zahnd writes. “But restoration requires wisdom, knowledge, respect, and patience.”

(Brian Zahnd, When Everything's On Fire, InterVarsity Press, 2021, p. 31)



RESTORATION.

PRESERVATION.

RECONSTRUCTION.

Many of those who have diagnosed deconstruction as an epidemic in western society are also pointing out that the most sensible response to deconstruction is reconstruction. I think this includes the categories of preservation and restoration.

It is not a novel insight to say that faith is prone to deterioration, but the wholesale deconstruction of faith that we are seeing around us ought to capture our attention at least as much as the need to do some work on our bell tower.

The necessity of tending to the deteriorated masonry of the bell tower is a kind of metaphor for the need to attend to the need for reconstruction of faith in the world around us. How will we do that? We might take a cue from those who invested so much in our beautiful brownstone building.

Brian Zahnd writes that “the perception of true beauty ... is as reliable a guide to profound truth as reason is. My experience is that beauty is a more reliable guide than reason.”

Zahnd is no anti-intellectual. He is deeply interested and engaged in theological and philosophical traditions, but he thinks that we cannot come to a faith robust enough to be reconstructed if that faith resides “all alone inside our head” (p. 110).

So let me repackage his thinking just a bit: **true beauty is a reliable guide to profound truth.** This is not a categorically definitive statement, but a useful guide.

It’s my prayer that every Mass that’s said or sung at Saint Mark’s is a small thing of beauty, just as it’s my prayer that every meal that’s served from our hands to a hungry person is a small thing of beauty. And it’s my prayer that these daily acts of beauty, performed in and out of a place of great beauty, will serve as reliable guides to the profound truth that God’s love is made known to us perfectly in the person of his Son Jesus.

Here on Locust Street, we do not just have a series of programs to be housed in whatever space serves the function most efficiently. Rather, we are trying to enact, day by day, a series of acts of beauty that reflect something of the nature of God’s love, and that express the truth of that love incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ.

Preservation of our buildings is not simply a matter of practicality, it’s an articulation of faith. If our buildings need periodic reconstruction, we should not be surprised that our faith might be in need of reconstruction from time to time as well.

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Here at Saint Mark’s, we aspire to be a place where faith that has faltered can be reconstructed. We know that all of us have experienced faltering faith at some time or another, sometimes rather frequently. “How beautiful are the feet of [those] who bring good tidings.” The prophet identifies beauty as a property of evangelism, and we should take this attitude seriously,

along with the call to carry the good news with us wherever we go. Leading with beauty does not discount the important work of the mind in loving God, nor the need to put our hands and our backs to work for our faith. The prayer book teaches us that “things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new.” These words are more than a nice turn of phrase, they are an expression of resurrection hope, and an articulation of the expectation of transformation through reconstruction.

May God give us the wisdom, knowledge, respect, and patience to help us to take these words to heart, and to be a force for the reconstruction of faith in an age of unbelief.

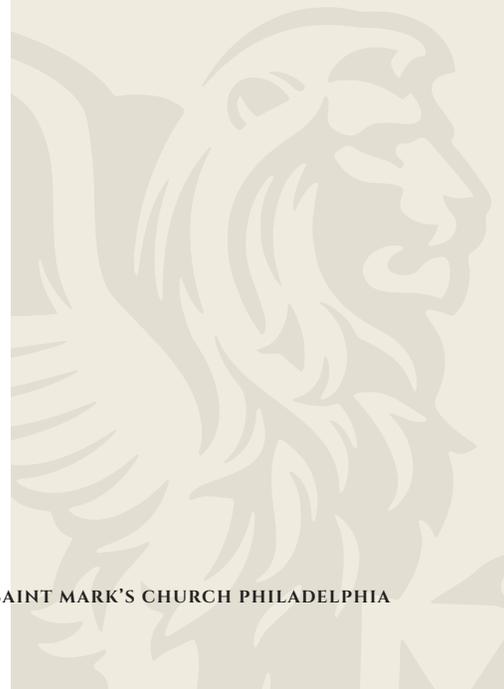
UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 5 **Parish Office Closed**
Low Mass at 10 a.m.
- 11 **Homecoming Sunday**
Low Mass at 8 a.m.
Family Mass with Boy & Girl Choristers at 9 a.m.
Formation, Adult Forum, and Children’s Formation Social in the Garden at 10 a.m.
Choral High Mass with the Parish Choir at 11 a.m.
- 17 **Parish Picnic at Grumblethorpe**
(9/24 rain date)

OCTOBER

- 2 **Blessing of the Animals at 3:30 p.m.**
Choral Evensong at 4 p.m.





MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

ROBERT MCCORMICK

I was reflecting recently on one difference (of many) between American and British church choral programs, that of vacation (“holiday”, of course, across the pond) for the choirs. Most American choirs, at least in Episcopal churches and especially in places like Saint Mark’s, tend to go, go, go from just after Labor Day to sometime in early summer (for our adults, Corpus Christi, whenever that should fall), with few breaks or weeks off even after Christmas or Easter.

In the United Kingdom, the summer break is considerably shorter, but there are far more weeks off built in over the course of the year. (One advantage they do have is that all schools seem to follow

a common schedule, whereas our boys and girls go to schools with, for instance, spring break spread over any number of three or four weeks: a real challenge for planning!)

Those details aren’t important, or perhaps even terribly interesting, but I have again been thinking of, whenever it occurs, how everyone needs time off for rest and (literal) re-creation. While in most ways, I’d love to have choral music all summer long, our hardworking singers have earned some time away.

I am so grateful to our adults, children, choir parents, and our newest choir members, the Saint Mark’s Singers, for all their hard work over the past season, most especially with the changes and chances of the pandemic.

I, like my colleagues on staff, am in planning mode. I've just completed drafts of schedules for the Parish Choir and our Boys' and Girls' Choir. Our incoming Assistant Organist & Choirmaster, Thomas Gaynor, has been hard at work on a calendar for the Saint Mark's Singers. I write just a few days before leaving on my own vacation, and when I return, just after the Annual Choir Camp at the end of July, I'll begin planning choral repertoire for the season.

All our choirs will resume just after Labor Day. Especially for those who may be new to the parish, a brief description of each choir might be helpful:

The Parish Choir (which sings for the 11 a.m. High Mass most Sundays, Evensong & Benediction, liturgies for major holy days, and other special services) is, at present, about 1/2 professional and 1/2 volunteer. All members are auditioned and a very high musical skill level is required, including strong sight-reading.

The Saint Mark's Singers, by their spring concert last May, already sound like they've been singing together for years. This choir is larger than the Parish Choir, and is all volunteer. Members bring a huge diversity of experience: some have been singing in choirs for years (and some have worked as professional

musicians), and some are quite new to singing. They explore repertoire that often is beyond what can be realistically sung in a Sunday or feast liturgy, giving them a distinctive focus. One important facet of their schedule is a relatively limited time commitment—generally not more than an hour per week, which is much less than our other choirs. And they love to socialize after rehearsals!

Our Boy & Girl Choristers for children, offers in-depth musical training for children ages 7 and above. New choristers may attend only once weekly, but each child gradually increases in commitment and skill, learning to sing great sacred masterworks at the highest possible level. There are four rehearsals each week, and all but the newest members attend at least two rehearsals, in addition to singing most Sundays, either at the 9 a.m. Family Mass or another special service. We are most certainly recruiting new members!

If you are interested in any of these choirs, please be in touch with me regarding the Parish Choir and Boys & Girls, and reach out to Thomas Gaynor about the Saint Mark's Singers.

By the time you read this, we will have given our formal, final farewell to Bryan Dunnewald, of whom I am extremely proud, and to whom I am hugely grateful. Bryan has made enormous contributions to the parish over the past seven years. As I've said elsewhere and often, I and we will miss him more than can be said.

Yet, I am tremendously excited to welcome Thomas this August. He will continue building on Bryan's great work in every way, and I know you will enjoy getting to know him (and hearing him). Additionally, we expect to welcome a new Organ Scholar, Isabella (Isza) Wu, who is beginning graduate studies in organ at the Curtis Institute. Isza just graduated from Northwestern University. She, too, will be a superb addition to our parish.

I hope everyone will have some rest this summer, and will be ready to ramp back up in the fall.

May I quote Fr. Mullen? "We miss you when you're not here." I look forward to seeing you in church, soon and often.





CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

MOTHER BRIT FRAZIER

As the years pass, it becomes clearer and clearer to me that holy scripture is not merely something to be read, heard, or even to be proclaimed, but also to be treasured. Like the proverbs that claim that one can never step into the same river twice, it is the truth that we never encounter verses and stories from the Bible in precisely the same way. There is always more that the text has to reveal to us, always more to discover and love. God is always up to something fresh within our hearts as we let ourselves fall more in love with his Word, and while the truths in the Bible endure always, we see them in new light as we learn and grow.

Anyone who has read the Bible with children is likely familiar with this experience of fresh encounter in a particularly special way. Kids have a way of seeing things that can be surprising, challenging, imaginative, and sometimes even transformational.

I will never forget the young boy of three who heard the story of Jesus' feeding of 5000 people on the hillside one year at camp.

At lunch, he wrapped up his hotdog in a napkin, and when a helper asked why he had done this, he said, "it's for Jesus. He gave away all the bread. He needs a lunch." Of course, we might assume that Jesus partook of the fruits of his own miracle, but this tender idea of saving something for Jesus—of caring for the one who cares so perfectly for us—is ripe with theological profundity. By caring for Jesus, this little boy had much in common with Mary, and surely with God the Father. I will never think about that story the same way again.

Meeting scripture and coming to know the Bible with greater tenderness and curiosity is always a part of the formation curriculum for all ages at Saint Mark's. Each curriculum and all of our adult leaders and teachers share a rootedness in the Gospel that continues to inspire our children and youth from year to year, but in this program year of 2022 into 2023, we will be placing particular emphasis on practical encounters with the Bible. We will explore how we hear and read the Bible in the Mass at Saint Mark's, to be sure, and we will also bring the texts into our homes and hearts together to meet the Word of God anew.

Quick Q&A

WITH THOMAS GAYNOR

Tell us about your background. Where are you from? What are some highlights on your path to Saint Mark's?

I grew up in Wellington, New Zealand with a family of music makers. My mother sings in choirs and my father plays guitar in a band. As a child I was always encouraged, but never pushed, to make music.

Looking back, I don't think there is a year that I wasn't in some sort of school or church choir. It was at my sister's school concerts in Wellington Town Hall that I first noticed the pipe organ.

There is a beautifully restored 1906 Norman and Beard organ there; this is an instrument that remains one of my very favorites to this day. My parents found a teacher who happened to be the cathedral organist, so from day one I was surrounded by the daily cycle of the prayer book. I continued to be involved there as organ scholar through my undergraduate studies in organ at the New Zealand School of Music under Douglas Mews.

After graduating, I moved to the USA to continue my studies with David Higgs at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. Cue culture and climate shock! I continue to be grateful for the encouragement offered by the faculty to go to competitions and travel to play recitals. Highlights include first prizes at the St. Albans International Competition (UK) in 2017 and the Bach-Liszt Internationaler Orgelwettbewerb in Erfurt/Weimar Germany in 2016. These led to invitations at a number of amazing venues across the world, including Notre Dame de Paris just a few months before the great fire.

While at Eastman I served as Associate Director of Music at Christ Church, Pittsford. This was a great position that really introduced me to some of the ins and outs of music making in a program-sized American Episcopal parish.



They all became family and I still keep in touch. More recently I was a Music Associate at St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Houston, a large suburban parish with over 15,000 members. I am grateful for the opportunities to lead a number of choirs there at their 11 weekend liturgies, including the

45-voice children's choir.

What was one of your most formative musical experiences?

Without a doubt, my most formative musical experience was being Richard Prothero Organ Scholar at Wellington Cathedral of St. Paul. My mentor there Michael Fulcher gave me a wonderful introduction to all aspects of working in a busy music department.

Unlike many programs, I wasn't thrown in the deep end with responsibility; for the first six months I turned pages and sang in the choir, then as I got to know the style and customs, I was slowly introduced to service playing. Eventually I would play entire services, but the most important thing for me was just being able to soak in the wonderful aspects of Cathedral music.

We sang weekday Evensong and the full slate of weekend services, so there was a lot of music to take in. I credit my musical fluency to this wonderful period of musical formation.

What most excites you about coming to Saint Mark's?

I am so excited to be a part of a community that places a high emphasis on all the liturgical arts. For me it is wonderful to be working and worshipping in a place where holiness can be sought and found in all five senses. Then, as a musician, it is simply a thrill (and an honor) to work with Robert McCormick and be involved in one of the world's finest church music programs. During the interview process, one of the things that kept on coming up was the great emphasis the parish places on formation.

If there is one thing in particular that I am excited about, it is being part of the full formation of a

chorister from their starting offering of simple enthusiasm to being able to sightread any piece put in front of them, sing with understanding, and lead others in their own music-making.

Can you share some of your hopes for the Saint Mark's Singers?

It was a delight to meet the singers at the end of July, and have the ceremonial "passing of the bota" with Bryan Dunnewald.



BRYAN DUNNEWALD "PASSING THE BOTA" AND ENTRUSTING THE SAINT MARK'S SINGERS TO THOMAS GAYNOR.

Bryan has cultivated a wonderful culture within the group. As a base line, I hope to continue in their pursuit of excellence, with lots of fellowship and fun on the way. Then, looking forward, I hope to keep up the momentum of growth.

From what I've observed, Saint Mark's Singers is a wonderful outreach opportunity to people who may not normally come to Saint Mark's, or even be involved with religion at all. It is my sincere hope that I can make the group a place of Christian welcome.

BONUS QUESTION: Who is your favorite composer and why?

For me, my favorite composer really depends on the day! Sometimes I'm in a Bach mood, sometimes Elgar. More often than not, though, Strauss and Wagner will fit the bill quite well. If you hear Brünnhilde hojotoho-ing down Broad Street, fear not; it will likely just be coming from the stereo system in my car.

ADULT FORUM

Welcome back! On Sunday, September 11, we will celebrate Homecoming by resuming the Adult Forum in the parish hall at 10 a.m. You are warmly welcome to join any and every Sunday, for a lively set of conversations that explore our shared faith with joy, understanding, and gratitude. You can grab a cup of coffee, pull up a chair, listen in or speak up, learn new things, and meet new friends. This September we will be talking about the role of formation in Christian life, and about how we learn to live a Christ-shaped life.

FORMATION, SCRIPTURE, SACRAMENT

SEPTEMBER 11: HOMECOMING SUNDAY

We will discuss what adult formation is and why we value it. Come talk about how formation for adults works at Saint Mark's. Why and how does a parish need to think together about God? How can we think together in our parish as an act of love for God and for all of creation? How is formation different than "school?"

SEPTEMBER 18: HOW DOES THE BIBLE GUIDE US IN FORMATION?

We often speak of ourselves as a "sacramental" parish, but we are also a profoundly biblical parish. This conversation will explore some of what makes our reading of scripture different than other kinds of reading we may do. Scripture forms us as followers of Jesus.

SEPTEMBER 25: FORMATION AND THE MASS

Every Sunday, even every day at Saint Mark's, we engage in certain prayers that shape us as Christians. We also engage in the daily Mass, in bodily practices—kneeling, bowing, holding our hands out to receive communion—that shape our devotion. Come have a conversation about how corporate worship is a powerful source for Christian formation.

and you shall be like a watered garden...

**ADDIE PEYRONNIN, CHAIR OF
THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

Spend a mere ten minutes working in the garden at Saint Mark's, and you will be flagged down by multiple passersby who want to tell you how much they enjoy walking past this space every day on their way to work, or reminisce about the garden they used to keep when they lived in the suburbs, or ask more in-depth questions about Saint Mark's, what we believe and who we are. And it's certainly not unusual to see people lingering outside the Fiske doors, taking photos or selfies, or sitting quietly on the bench next to the West doors. Not every parish has such opportunities to invite its neighbors in to share its treasured space. This is a gift for which we are truly grateful.

The regular cycle of worship and work at Saint Mark's can often keep us so squarely in the present and looking ahead to the future that it can be a surprise to remember the breadth and magnitude of the legacy that has been left to us since our founding in 1848. And I'm not referring only to the buildings themselves, and the treasured items within it; there's also the intangible, yet palpable, legacy of prayer, intention, bodies and minds working for good, and outreach to the wider city.

The Stewardship Committee has been reflecting on these legacies, and most especially, on the outdoor space that has given us so much over the last few years. It's hosted us for outdoor Mass in the very worst pandemic times, served as playground for very competitive pancake races and gleeful Easter egg hunts, and sacrificed its grass to the increased traffic caused by weekly outdoor Coffee Hour and Saint Mark's Singers Bota con brio socials. It's welcomed us, our neighbors, and strangers for rest and reflection, and offered its scented roses to the noses and iPhone cameras of people walking by. It is a blessing.

As the Stewardship Committee meditated over this gift, and the gifts that Saint Mark's gives to its own community and neighborhood through outreach and ministry, a beautiful passage from Isaiah came to the

forefront of our conversations. It seems to encapsulate all that Saint Mark's has been, all that it is today, and all that we hope for its future.

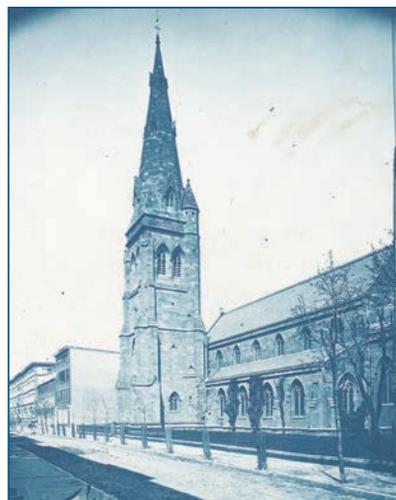
If you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,

*and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.*

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many
generations; you shall be called the repairer of the
breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

— ISAIAH 58:10-12



1869 View of Saint Mark's from Free Library of Philadelphia

We have some wonderful events planned to celebrate this season of Stewardship and our many gifts! More information will follow by mail, and we hope you'll gather with us in the garden.

NEIGHBOR *Care*

MARA BLAKE-WARD, MEMBER OF THE
SOUTH PHILADELPHIA CLUSTER

When Neighbor Care first started before COVID, I happily agreed to attend the first event in our cluster. The night of the event, I honestly didn't feel much like going. I was tired. I was busy and while I wanted to participate, I seriously thought about canceling. I managed to go, it was after all, just a block away from my house. I thought I would make a guest appearance and leave.

I am so glad that I went. Our cluster met at the home of John and Ted Schmeichen and as I mentioned, they live only one block away from my home. However, in all the years that we have lived in South Philadelphia and attended Saint Mark's, our paths had never crossed. One reason that we never met at Saint Mark's is that I attend the

8 a.m. service and they go to the high mass at 11 a.m.

Through Neighbor Care, we have become great friends. John and Ted were an enormous help when I caught COVID before the vaccine and was stuck alone by myself on Christmas.

Little did I know the adventure that was to begin when we became friends! Ted convinced me to run for committee person with him in the local division of our ward last spring. This May we were elected.

Getting to know John and Ted has been like meeting old friends. I feel so fortunate that we finally met through Neighbor Care.

If you have thought about attending a Neighbor Care event but then felt too tired or too busy or too shy to do so, I highly recommend that you get involved. You never know who you might get to know!

*There's not a word
yet for old friends
who've just met."*

— JIM HENSON



SAINT MARK'S CHURCH
PHILADELPHIA

1625 LOCUST STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103



HOME COMING SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 11

Join us for the start of a new program year!

8 A.M. LOW MASS

9 A.M. FAMILY MASS

10 A.M. FORMATION FOR ALL AGES

11 A.M. CHORAL HIGH MASS