



ST. MARK'S IN-THE **VALLEY**
EPISCOPAL CHURCH & PRESCHOOL
2901 NOJOQUI AVENUE • POST OFFICE BOX 39
LOS OLIVOS, CALIFORNIA 93441

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN.
randall@smitv.org or text/call 805-245-4921

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Dear St. Marker,*

"We are clearly navigating off the map" is how one church leader recently spoke about the days we are living through as a church.

The statement made me think of a hymn we sing pretty often. The first verse is:
From shallow waters, call us Lord, from safety near the shore, and bid us launch upon the depths where faith is tested more. Let not past failures hope destroy, nor caution paralyze, but help us follow where you lead and wait for Love's surprise.

Truth be told, we have been navigating further and further off the map for some years, following where our Savior is leading and **encountering Love's surprise** all along the way. The pandemic and massive social change have dramatically accelerated our progress in ways both alarming and exciting.

This reality is national and global for churches of all sorts as well as for businesses, schools, medical care, non-profit organizations, local and community groups. In all of these settings many voices are offering, often stridently, quick fixes to profound and deep challenges.

I know that neither simple technical solutions nor reacting in fear will help.

I'm confident that connection, community, love, and generosity of all sorts will help, as will openness, welcome, curiosity, commitment, courage and good humor.

And yes, we continue to be **highly adaptive** – as we have been for years and throughout the pandemic, adding programs and services, remaining committed in **self-giving service to the world around us**, and seeking to change and grow more and more in the spiritual reality that formed us, sustains us, and is our destiny – **Infinite Love.**

I invite your commitment, re-commitment, new commitment and ask that you also, please, consider a significant special gift (however you define that in your life) to St. Mark's. **This year, 2022, is one of the most challenging years financially in St. Mark's history** – in addition to all of the programmatic challenges already in process.

There has never been a more important time to respond soon, both to assure St. Mark's continues to do its important work and also continues to be an important inclusive, active, embracing presence in our SYV region. All week, every week hundreds in our region look to us.

Over, please...

**St. Marker: member or friend of St. Mark's-in-the-Valley.
A term borrowed from my previous parish.*

Our small but important Endowment is stressed by downturns in the market and having to borrow from it during the pandemic. Our summer event met its conservative budget numbers to support our community service work, but it felt the pressure of the start of the economic uncertainty we are in now, so there's no "cushion" there this year. Some members have moved away, some have adopted new patterns and commitments, others have been away travelling extensively. And, there are no government funds this year.

As always, **the regular and special giving of the members of the parish is the largest source of funds for St. Mark's** to remain strong and to serve our neighbors.

As in all sorts of work nationally, the church is feeling the effects of "the Great Resignation," with clergy leaving their posts in large numbers in response to the grief and stress particular to the ongoing life of the church in these times. In our diocese alone, of 150 parishes, more than 50 do not have clergy leadership and there are few clergy available to fill those positions, especially when multiplied across the more than 90 domestic dioceses of the church. As I have said on other occasions, my intention is to remain in place serving St. Mark's, God willing, through my mandatory retirement age in 2027, so no disruption soon. **Together we can launch further into the depths of these very interesting days** we are experiencing. **Every day I wake up excited about our possibilities at St. Mark's and ready to engage them with you.**

I hope you will help strengthen St. Mark's in this time of unprecedented stress, change, and challenge. I'm excited about discovering our future together.

I hope you will return your Commitment 2022-23 form (either the "standard" form or the super-short "EZ" version) to add, change or remove your commitment (hard copies of each included here). **I will also send the link to fillable online forms**, which you can also find by clicking a **button on our homepage** at **smitv.org**.

Blessings on this time of discovery we are navigating together,



To give a special gift or regularly, Checks can be sent to St. Mark's, P.O. Box 39, Los Olivos, CA 93441. You can donate online using the button on our homepage at **smitv.org** and you can Text to donate by sending **SMITV to 44321**.

We can also receive donations from an IRA, tax-free, gifts of stock, gifts by wire transfer, in-kind gifts, through options for planned giving that offer the donor financial benefits, and through donors' estate planning. Contact our Business Manager, **Leslie Zuller at leslie@smitv.org for more information** and about these additional ways to give.

St. Mark's is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax id #31-1629166.

At St. Mark's, **you define your commitment in ways that make sense to you** and you can be sure that **all expressions of commitment count**.

WWW.SMITV.ORG