



ST. MARK'S IN-THE **VALLEY**
EPISCOPAL CHURCH & PRESCHOOL
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At Christmas, 2020

Dear Friend in Christ,

We wanted to make it through 2020. (Like everyone else.)

And we almost have.

And now comes 2021.

In recent years, St. Mark's has been a remarkably strong faith community in service to the world around us. In the face of a general decline of churches everywhere, **we have built strong relationships in the wider world that God so loves**, focused our work on what people in the community around us really need.

And these community relationships have helped us thrive. And have helped us move through this **year of unexpected challenge**.

We aimed to get through 2020 offering what we could to our worshipping community, to our Santa Ynez Valley region, to continue our commitments to our outstanding (*nearly all part-time*) staff, and to be ready for whatever comes after the pandemic.

Many critical questions have arisen through this year that will shape our future as a church and our work in the broader community. **Our "future worth having" will be different** from what we said goodbye to early in Lent (mid-March) of 2020.

So there's **some significant work to do now** in shaping how we will live as a faith community and how we will serve in the days ahead.

To make it through 2020 financially, **we have worked hard to use every opportunity available to St. Mark's** (*please review the list of atypical income enclosed*). We have received government funding, a public/private grant for the Preschool, other grants and gifts for our community service, primarily for the Community Kitchen, a loan from St. Mark's Endowment, and, finally, many members of the parish have continued to make regular donations.

But 2021 holds very few of the funding opportunities we had in 2020.

While we have indications of strong ongoing support of our community programs, **to continue church programs will require dramatic year-end giving and significantly increased 2021 financial commitments** from members of our worshipping community.

While I continue to be confident that **God has placed significant resources in the hands of the members of the parish** (*more* than what is needed to sustain and grow St. Mark's), **giving to St. Mark's at the end of 2020 and throughout 2021 will need to change notably.**

It is unclear when we will be able to have regular in-person services and resume other programs we have enjoyed in the past. Varied predictions suggest as early as mid-year or fall of 2021.

Income from building use and serving the community is very high. We are using the annual distribution from the Endowment and have taken a prudent loan from the Endowment. The summer event, when we are able to have it again, supports community service, not church programming. A mailing this year to community members who support our community service took the place of the summer event.

There is **no scenario in which other people or other uses of the campus will fund church programs** (programs like Sunday liturgy, music, Christian formation, pastoral care, guild and group activities).

We are extremely fortunate to have a highly-talented and committed group of part-time staff members who lead a number of our church activities. **Continuing to support them in their positions will allow us to smoothly transition from our current online and at-home formats to in-person worship and programs** (while continuing online programming). Otherwise, we will have to start from scratch raising funds and hiring new staff when we are able to return to in-person services and programs – a slower way to begin again.

Clearly, the future is uncertain. It will unfold in both familiar and new ways.

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.

Please return your Commitment 2021 form to add, change or remove your commitment. (This form is both printed and online at smitv.org)

Also, **your Christmas/Year-End Gift is critically important this year.** Year-end giving is always important – but this is **a year like no other** for St. Mark's. **Together, we can make it to a future worth having** for ourselves, for our community, and for future generations. (Donations can be made online or by text in addition to postal mail.)

Blessings in this Christmas season and for the New Year,



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**. You can even choose from two enclosed forms: standard or a **super short Commitment EZ** (blue printing). You can also fill out either form **online** at **smitv.org**.

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