

*(This letter was shared at the Annual Meeting of St Mark's Episcopal Church
by their new rector, The Rev. Jack Myers, on Sunday January 20, 2019)*

Dear Saint Marks People (past, present and future)!

Hello and greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus the great "Giver of Second Chances"! I bring this idea of second chances up because I have been learning the last few days about some of the history of Saint Marks and the challenges and set backs you all have weathered. I appreciate the difficulties that you have gone through and I hope that my time here will bring a renewal and revival of better days!

Before we talk about how we can get "Saint Marks on the Move" let me introduce myself and tell you a bit of my history and what motivates me. My wife Joan and I have been married for 29 years. We have two sons, Matthew and Ben, who are ages 27 and 25 and who live in Incline Village (Lake Tahoe) and Baton Rouge. Joan and I were on and off High school sweethearts so we've known each other for another 17 years on top of our 29 years of marriage. Joan has recently lost her mother, Ruth, and her father, Bob Kickel, will be spending a lot of time with us escaping the snow and cold of northern Michigan. We have an Airedale Terrier named Barry (or Bear) who we constantly walk and we consider ourselves semi-athletic.

I grew up in the Episcopal Church and owe a lot of my call to ministry and training to my mother who had me in church from the beginning – I've been an altar boy since I was 6 years old. During his college years my brother went to Japan and got very involved with Zen Buddhism. This freaked my mom out a bit so I started to read about Buddhism and compare it to Christianity. I mention this because it was the start of my coming to Christ in earnest as a young adult. After college I fell into a Christian group called The Way and discovered with them my passion for God's Word and my desire to share the gospel with others. I also discovered that this group had some problems with their theology, so after separating from them I reconnected with the Episcopal Church of my youth. I read the Book of Common Prayer cover to cover and thought it was great. Since I was excited about the faith of Christ crucified, risen and coming again; I thought that the Episcopal Church could use my help (they seemed a little dull and board). I went off to seminary, got ordained and have been trying to excite and inspire people to personal faith and a believing, action-filled life ever since. Obviously, I have left out a lot of detail but in a nutshell, this is me.

As I mentioned my first passion is to help people put their faith into action. I love to see people come alive with a vibrant faith that trusts God in the midst of difficulty and which grows with confidence in the Lord's presence as they allow him to guide their steps. I also simply enjoy people and love to be with them in all the events of life. I consider it a privilege and honor to help people with baptisms, weddings, and even funerals. As a priest, the most wonderful thing to experience is a real faith community- a group of people who love, support, encourage and lean on each other. That is what church is to me and from what I gather, it is *what Saint*

Marks is now and once was even more so in years past. I came here because the people who interviewed me really hunger to see Saint Marks thrive! You simply can beat a group of passionate people.

So, how are we going to help make this happen? I say help because it is my belief that *the Father wants his church to grow and thrive and he will bring the increase.* All we have to do is commit ourselves to the task. Church is many things but among them it should be a sanctuary, it should be deeply spiritual, and it should exude joy! To get that ball rolling I would like to have a KIDS LEAD WORSHIP service one Sunday a month where the kids and young adults do everything – usher and greet, acolyte, lector, lead the prayers, assist at the eucharist, and lead in song. During this Kids Liturgy the sermon will either be the Godly Play lead by Brenda Harris (which has been a blessing this past year) or a simple reflection by me for the kids. What we will learn is that the kids have got this – they already have a developing faith. We'll also help them in their spiritual growth, and we'll have some fun!

In case you don't see it, these Sundays are a "tool" for you to use when talking to friends and lapsed members - offering you an excuse to invite them to worship and enjoy the kids. This brings me to the opportunity we all currently have – I'm new, and hopefully people are curious so we can ask them to come and check us out!

There is one thing I want to mention gently. I don't think you can be involved with a congregation of any depth without getting bruised from time to time. Its sad when it's the leadership who cause the pain, but that doesn't mean that God is out of business. Our God is the Lion of Judah, and he never quits. He is waiting for his Church to get up and get back on the saddle and try again. It can be a new day IF hear God's renewed call – *Saint Marks is on the move!*

And now. "Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen."