Thanks be to God! That’s about all I can say as I think back over the month of April and how amazing it has been. We began this month with the Holy Triduum and what had to be one of the best Holy Week celebrations I have experienced. As a priest, it is an honor to lead a parish through this holy narrative, remembering the hope that triumphs over death and makes up the core of our faith. A week like this does not happen without many people helping out in many different roles, and I want to especially thank our verger guild, our choir, EMs and acolytes for serving so faithfully during this week. A special thanks goes to Rhinda Kesselring who organized our Easter Vigil reception this year as well.

I am writing this article a few days before Bishop Benfield will visit, and I look back on the year since his last visit and I marvel at what you all are doing. St. Mark’s is alive and well and there are days I have to run just to keep up with you! (that’s a good thing) I ask your continued prayers for me and this parish, that God will continue to pour the Spirit into this place and use us for the Kingdom. There is still so much to do.

Coming up in May, I encourage you to participate in a new tradition this year at St. Mark’s by purchasing a rose for $1 in honor or memory of the mothers in your life. On Mother’s Day, the altar and church will be decorated with white and red roses, and after the service, you may take the rose and give it to the mothers in our lives who mean so much to us. Also, Pentecost Sunday is in May and we will be releasing thousands of lady bugs into our gardens (lady bugs are very beneficial unlike red balloons). I hope you can be present as we continue our celebrations this year.

God bless,
Jesse+
On Sunday right after the sermon, The Right Reverend Larry Benfield dedicated a new icon and prayer station in the transept of St. Mark’s. This was generously given to the Honor and Glory of God, and in memory of Glenda Stayton. Feel free to kneel and say a prayer.

The Curate’s Corner...

The necessity of doing good has seemed particularly urgent the past few weeks. Thousands dead, injured, shelter-less in Nepal, destruction that I cannot fathom and that no picture can capture. Baltimore alight with struggle -- I listened to a program explaining the decades of discriminatory policy-making behind the current climate and it seems as though our prejudices grow ever more subtle and slippery. A court will decide on the validity and availability of love expressed in marriage, and I could write books on everything wrong with that statement.

What's a Christian to do?

If you're like me, sometimes it feels like the answer is "everything." We are the light of the world, and the world so obviously and desperately needs this Good News of the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

Then I remember, rather sheepishly, that the one most in need of this good news is me.

Thomas Merton was a monk who died many years ago, but he has been a spiritual mentor of mine for years through his writing. I came across this from his journal the other day: "It is most important not to undertake any special project of self-transformation or some attempt to 'work on myself', but rather just go for walks, live in peace, let change come quietly and invisibly on the inside."

Thomas Merton quiets my soul when it is given to striving. How much does the sum total of peace in the world increase when a few people learn to let go of the reaction of anger and defensiveness? Letting change come quietly is a worthy experiment. It could it be as contagious as a riot, as powerful in healing as an earthquake in destruction, more enduring and persistent than our legislated tolerance.

May you daily walk in the peace of our Lord.
Confirmation 2015
We have many, many more pictures from our confirmation and baptism on April 26. You can see all of these if you click on this link:

St. Mark’s New Confirmands, April 26, 2015

Berry, Kelley Mitchell
Gore, Sarah B.
Haynes, Brandon Shane
Hendrix-Brown, Remington Hunter
Hendrix-Brown, Tommy David
Jones, James Russell
Jones, Reilee
Marks, Janet Dian
May, Matthew
McBride, Jordan Lee
Newman, Carolyn Beth
Nipper, Sallie Yvonne
Penley, Leah Kirsten
Pucik, Jonathan
Russell, Danny Aaron
Shields, Mindy
Sirota, Krystal Michelle
Skinner, Jessica Elise
Smith, Ryan
Wheeler, Amanda

Davis, Kathryn
Gillis, Abigail
Heim, Noe
Hudson, Daisy
Hudson, Nathaniel Runsburgh
Hurst, Madelyn Gail
Johnson, Breanna
Neves, Colby
Poston, Cameron
Thompson, Drake
Welch, Holden Everitt
Welch, Isabel
Our Munchers (small dinner) groups were a big success last year and it's time to create new groups. The groups last year enjoyed getting to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships in an informal setting, but it's time to mix the groups up and allow for others to participate. Groups can choose to do potluck style, have a rotating host/hostess each month, go to a restaurant--have Subway sandwiches and Ben & Jerry's if that's your preference. There are no "rules"; just have fun and do whatever works for your particular group! Last year we had a family group; if there is interest, we will have a family group again. If you are interested in joining a Munchers group, email Katy Perkins (katy.perkins@gmail.com) by Sunday, May 17th. Please provide your name, address, phone number, and email address. Also, if you would be interested in being a convener of a group, let Katy know that as well. Conveners start the communication with the group to get the first dinner organized (you don't necessarily have to host it) and let the group take it from there.

Katy

Helping Neighbors Food Pantry

Gosh! It doesn't seem possible that the school year is drawing to a close in the next two or three weeks. That's great news, isn't it? Of course, all of the children will be happy to sleep a little later and not have homework to do, but they also may have a problem having enough food to eat. During the school year the area schools feed breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack to many children from struggling families. Where are all of those children going to get the necessary food during the summer? A couple of churches feed lunch to children, but much of the rest of the time, children have to fend for themselves. Each summer we try to donate items which children can access by themselves. Boxes of juice, large cans of fruit, peanut butter and jelly, canned spaghetti, canned tuna or chicken (especially cans which have pop tops) – these are the needs for the month of May at Helping Neighbors Food Pantry. It takes so little money to buy one of those things when you stock your pantry each week, but it can mean so much to another person or family. We see so many people who come into the Pantry who have no smile, but when they receive their food – somewhere between 20-50 pounds, depending on the size of the family – they are so grateful and always express their appreciation. It brightens our day when we work there because we can give a tiny bit to those less fortunate. When you thank God for your blessings, pass those blessings forward.
At the end of this catechetical year we will have completed the three-year cycle of Weaving God’s Promises. Weaving God’s Promises is the curriculum we are using for Christian Education at St. Mark’s. Weaving God’s Promises is a comprehensive program designed to provide children with basic knowledge of Church teachings in Christian education, worship and service, the three elements essential to the practice the Episcopal faith. Like a three-legged stool, each is dependent on the other for the faith to stand firmly.

St. Mark’s Christian Education program does not meet during summer months because of family commitments and summer vacations. Our last day of class before summer activities begin is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20. Parents and students will meet in the hall at 6pm for a special end of year ice-cream social. Afterwards, children who have participated in our Christian Education program will be recognized and receive certificates of participation. We will also recognize kids who have perfect attendance. Please note: We will not serve our regular meal on the 20th and we will have an early dismissal.

Vacation Bible School

It will not be long before our local churches will soon be making plans for vacation bible school programs. St. Mark’s VBS program is scheduled for August 3 - August 6. I am excited to say that I have volunteered to organize our vacation bible school program again this year, but I cannot do it without your help.

In addition to your prayers, I will need help the week before our scheduled VBS program in order to create and paint murals and make props. I will also need your help as volunteers during the actual VBS week. I will need folks to help share our Bible stories, lead crafts, lead games, lead songs and serve refreshments. I ask that you now begin thinking about what role you can take to help make St. Mark’s VBS program a reality for our parish. For
May Birthdays
May 1  Patrick Land
May 1  Gary Latanich
May 2  Spencer Guinn
May 3  Marian Peeler
May 5  Bob Thompson
May 8  James Jones
May 11 Kayden Gillis
May 12 Kailey Ferguson
May 13 Joshua Hahn
May 14 Zachary Langford
May 16 Tony Fowler
May 18 Matt Elam
May 19 Debbie Gairhan
May 19 Tim Hudson
May 19 Hunter Smith
May 20 Chris Hollis
May 20 Tabitha Langford
May 21 Melissa Chance
May 22 Payton Land
May 23 Priya Gill
May 28 Thomas Hogue
May 29 Emil Heim
May 31 Randy Coleman

May Anniversaries
May 8 Dennis and Tracy Perkey
May 10 Blake and Maggie Coe
May 17 Mark and Julia Steward
May 19 Keith Pringle & Amy Pearce
May 21 Bob and Kitty Thompson
May 22 Steve and Laura Thompson
May 22 C.W. and Katie Toombs

May 8  Dennis and Tracy Perkey
May 10  Blake and Maggie Coe
May 17  Mark and Julia Steward
May 19  Keith Pringle & Amy Pearce
May 21  Bob and Kitty Thompson
May 22  Steve and Laura Thompson
May 22  C.W. and Katie Toombs

It is almost time to close the book on a very successful school year. The last day of our regular school year will be May 22nd. We have extended the year one week to make up for our many snow days! Plans are underway for the "end of the year" parties and the 4-year-old graduation. It will be bittersweet saying goodbye to our oldest. We wish them much success in the future. The summer and fall 2015 enrollment has been a huge success. We are truly blessed with wonderful parents, children and of course, the best teaching staff in town! Peggy
Financial Update

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April</th>
<th>Year to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pledges and Offerings Received</td>
<td>$25,123</td>
<td>$106,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed to meet budget</td>
<td>26,665</td>
<td>107,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Surplus (Shortfall)</td>
<td>$ (1,542)</td>
<td>1,154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Actual Expenses Paid    | $26,747 | $ 109,117    |
| Actual (Shortfall)      | $ (1,624) | $ (2,412)  |
| Loan Balance            | $171,966 |             |

Upcoming Events:

- **May 9**   ECW Meeting
- **May 10**  Mother's Day
  - Coffee with the Rector
- **May 14**  Ascension Day Eucharist
- **May 18**  Vestry Meeting
- **May 22**  Last Day of Semester for Day School
- **May 23**  Workday
- **May 24**  Pentecost, Lady Bugs, Lunch
- **May 25**  Memorial Day, office closed
- **May 31**  Fifth Sunday Breakfast

May Schedule
- May 2 - Team 4
- May 9 - Team 5
- May 16 - Team 6
- May 23 - Team 7
- May 30 - Team 8

Two Saints' Kitchen