



Saint Mark's Ministry Report 2025-2026

Our 8th Rector, Kirsten Snow Spalding



Alive in the Spirit is how I am describing St. Mark's today. As the staff sat down to capture the ministry work of this congregation, we found ourselves with too much to say, too many different committees, events, worship moments, and joyous transitions. We settled on capturing our year in photos, recognizing that the pictures can't provide enough theological reflection about how God is working or how we are being called to follow Jesus here. But maybe the photos capture the feeling of being here over the past year, a mosaic of glimpses of the Spirit working in our midst.

I see in the pictures the fruits of all the work of "transition" as the search committee, Vestry, and transition committee with Interim Rector Nick Roosevelt prepared the parish for my call and arrival last October. The parish and its leaders were in vibrant ministry together when I arrived, and ready to start new things and continue our beloved traditions.

Our joyous worship, fellowship, and consistent care for members and our community continued throughout the transition. We launched new groups—a parent group, a youth group, a young adult group, a hiking group, and an inreach ministry. We did more interfaith work, celebrating Ramadan with our Muslim neighbors, praying for peace, holding a vigil in support of our trans and non-binary youth. We continued our wonderful jail ministry, our food ministries, and our commitment to serving people who live outside in our neighborhood. Our collaborations with other Episcopal parishes and the Diocese express our sense of ourselves as God's people, sharing in beloved community, building church to worship and serve. In our forums and public programs, we asked the hard questions about how our faith matters.

Our young people continued to grow in faith, participating fully in parish life, in worship, cooking beautiful meals for us and our neighbors, studying Scripture in thoughtful conversations with Lily, our Children, Youth and Families minister. Our elders continue to inspire us as we celebrated Martha's 110th birthday and the Senior Youth Group gathered us in fellowship.

This Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, Mary, and other followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. We mark the birth of the Christian Church and the beginning of its mission, to spread the gospel. I am celebrating that this was not an event long ago, but an ongoing event for us at St. Mark's. We are Spirit-filled as we go out today to live the Gospel here.

Blessings to all,

The Rev. Kirsten Snow Spalding

Installation & Celebration of New Ministry

Letter of Institution of a Minister

The Rev. Kirsten Snow Spalding, Presbyter of the Church of God, you have been called to work together with your Bishop and fellow-Presbyters as a pastor, priest, and teacher, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

Now, in accordance with the Canons, you have been selected to serve God at St. Mark's, Palo Alto.

This letter is a sign that you are fully empowered and authorized to exercise this ministry, accepting its privileges and responsibilities as a priest of this Diocese, in communion with your Bishop.

Having committed yourself to this work, do not forget the trust of those who have chosen you. Care alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. By your words, and in your life, proclaim the Gospel. Love and serve Christ's people. Nourish them, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

May the Lord, who has given you the will to do these things, give you the grace and power to perform them.

Given under my hand and seal, in the city of Palo Alto, on the 9th day of May, 2026, and in the third year of my consecration.



+ Austin J. Rios

The Rt. Rev. Austin Keith Rios
Bishop of California



Our Deacon, Debie Thomas



It has been my joy to serve as a Deacon at St. Mark's since my ordination in December. In our Episcopal tradition, a Deacon embodies a ministry of service by bringing the concerns of the world into the church and sending the church out into the world to care for those in need. I have loved doing this in our Sunday liturgies, by proclaiming the Gospel; writing and bidding our weekly prayers of intercession for those in need of God's love, justice, and healing; setting the Table for Holy Communion so that we can feast and be nourished; and sending parishioners out into the broader community to love and serve others in Christ's name.

I have also had the privilege of highlighting local and global ministries that care for God's children beyond our doors, and inviting St. Markers to participate in these ministries by giving, praying, and/or volunteering. Over the past three months, we have collected "ingathering" offerings for Stanford Canterbury, the Day Worker's Center in Mountain View, and the Anglican Communion Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Within our St. Mark's community, I have enjoyed curating opportunities like a spiritual writing retreat, a four-week series on discernment, and a monthly gathering for parents, so that together, we can deepen our lives of faith, and support each other in our life journeys.



Music at Saint Mark's



Last year, St. Mark's was blessed by the donation of a beautiful two manual harpsichord, built in 1979 in the style of an eighteenth century German instrument. St. Mark's Choir has grown to 25 members, and together with our neighboring parishes sang four evensongs; members also sang Christmas carols at the Elmwood Women's Correctional Facility. Visiting youth musicians at St. Mark's this year have included Ragazzi Boys Chorus and Harmony Ensemble.



Icons in Transformation

In the spring of 2026, in collaboration with All Saints Palo Alto, we hosted an art installation by Swedish and Ukrainian artist Ludmila Pawlowska titled Icons in Transformation.



As part of the work of our Arts & Acquisitions Committee, we purchased **Door to Paradise** for permanent display in our buildings. Proceeds from the purchase went to support refugee families from Ukraine.



Over 50 works were exhibited in our Sanctuary and Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene. Gallery hours were open to the public.

Community Connections

At St. Mark's, we build connection through parish gatherings, Inreach ministry, and participation in interfaith and other community events.



St. Mark's contributed food and presence to Sacred Lives: An Interfaith Community Vigil of Solidarity for Palo Alto's Beloved Trans Youth.



St. Mark's co-hosted the American Muslim Voice Foundation's Annual Interfaith Iftar Dinner, sharing prayer, peace, and gourmet Pakistani food.



In February of 2026, we celebrated the 110th birthday of longtime parishioner Martha Bachmann.



Parishioners of all ages and abilities gather for hikes on trails around the Bay Area.



Our Youth Group program meets weekly with teens from St. Mark's and Trinity.



Each Sunday, we share an Agape meal after church hosted by different parishioners and groups.

A Community in Christ

Seasonal services range from quiet contemplation to celebrations that ring with Alleluias.



Clockwise from top: Easter Morning Sunrise Vigil, St. Francis & St. Clare Blessing of the Animals, Advent Eve Service, Festive Easter Eucharist.

Celebrating Together

Festive gatherings are highlights of the program year, bringing us together with food, fellowship, and fun.



Clockwise from top: Ice Skating at Winter Lodge, Advent Festival and Wreath Making, Greening of the Church, Parish Picnic 2025.

Worship & Wonder

Our Sunday morning liturgical services combine music, prayer, preaching, and the Eucharist as we gather in the name of Jesus Christ to worship. Our engaged and welcoming congregation, grand choir, dedicated team of lay ministers, and varied preaching voices are the heart of St. Mark's.



Guest preachers during the 2025-2026 Program Year included Dr. Travis Stevens, Chaplain of the Stanford Canterbury Foundation; The Very Rev. Eric Metoyer, Canon for Racial, Social, and Environmental Justice; and The Rev. J. Sierra Reyes, Canon to the Ordinary.



Thought & Theology

At St. Mark's, we seek God's wisdom, truth, and loving presence through worship and study.



During our Sunday forum hours this year, we gathered for conversation, reflection, and study around a rich diversity of topics including justice issues, liturgical seasons, and discernment. We also gather throughout the week for book groups and Bible studies.



Our Becoming Beloved Community Task Force hosts speakers and other programs focused on social, racial, and environmental justice. BBC speakers this year included Ret. Judge LaDoris Cordell speaking on activism and democracy.

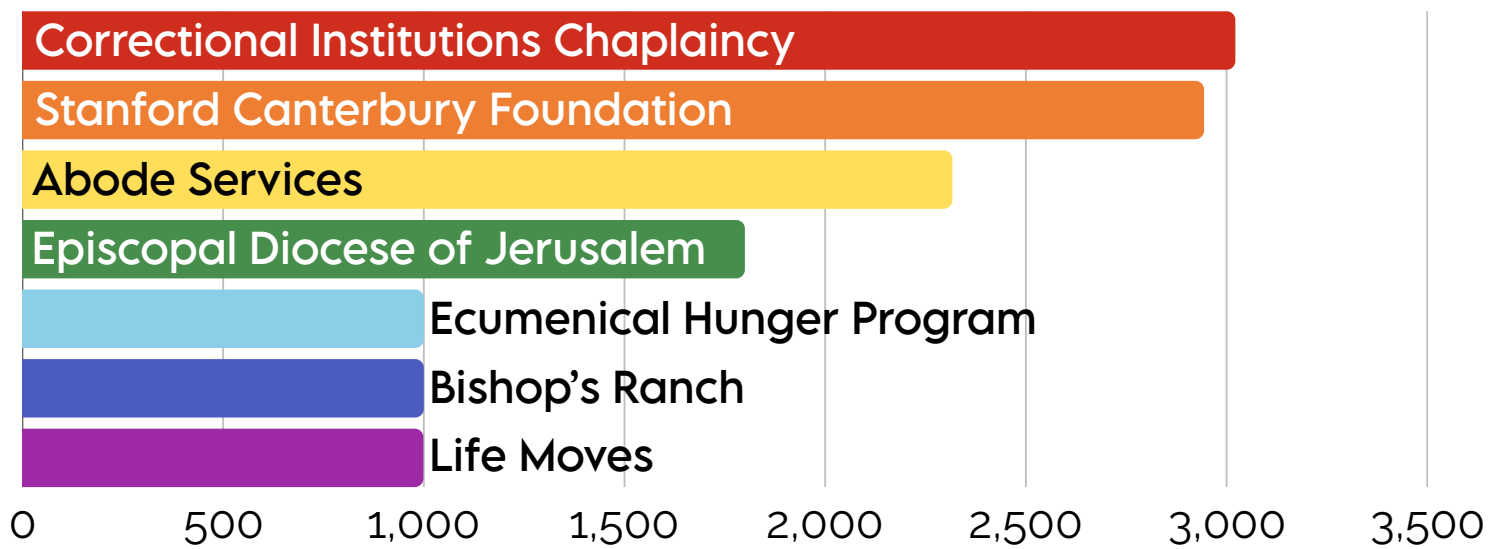


Seeking and Serving Christ in All Persons

As part of our baptismal vows, we promise to “seek and serve Christ in all people.” Through our Outreach programs, we raise funds and provide financial support to organizations that serve those in need.

Total Raised: \$19,962.35

Our special collections during the 2025-2026 program year included:



Safeway Cards

St. Mark's provides Safeway cards to those in need of financial help. During the 2025-2026 Program Year, we gave 315 cards for a total of \$7,875. People visit from as far away as Gilroy, often via public transportation, to receive from this ministry.



A Living Faith, Lived Out

We show up in person to provide hands-on service and work in solidarity alongside others in our community.



In the summer of 2025, St. Mark's stepped up to host Hotel de Zink, a local homeless shelter, for two months. In coordination with the BBC Task Force, we printed signs for marches and rallies that allow us to demonstrate the Episcopal church's commitment to justice and love. During June 2025, we participated in Grace Cathedral's Pride Mass.



Parishioners volunteer at the Day Workers Center of Mountain View, serving as a "faithful presence" to protect our immigrant neighbors and participating in succulent planting and walking at the CROP Walk to end hunger.

A Living Faith, Lived Out

Service work coordinated by BBC, Outreach, and other parishioners this year included cooking and serving a full Thanksgiving meal for 51 unsheltered people at the Opportunity Center, volunteering with LifeMoves, an MLK Day of Service, and leading art, writing, and counseling programs at local jails.



Children & Families

Children and families are fully included in our worship and parish life, participating in service, events and programming for kids and parents.





ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH
PALO ALTO

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