



Office for  
Transition  
Ministry

# Ministry Portfolio

*Full Portfolio (last updated Mar 28, 2024)*

## St. Mark's, Grand Rapids, Western Michigan

134 Division Avenue North, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | Receiving Names until 05/30/24.

[tlittle@edwm.org](mailto:tlittle@edwm.org)

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) <b>150</b>	Number of Weekend Worship Services <b>2</b>	Number of Weekday Worship Services <b>3</b>	Number of Other per Month Worship Services
Current Annual Compensation <b>\$76000</b>	Cash Stipend <b>\$24000</b>	Housing / Rectory Detail	Utilities
SECA reimbursement <b>\$7650</b>	Compensation Available for New Position	Housing Available for	Pension Plan <b>We're in compliance with CPF requirements.</b>
Healthcare Options <b>Full family</b>	Dental <b>Yes</b>	Housing Equity Allowance in budget	Annual Equity Amount
Vacation Weeks <b>4</b>	Vacation Weeks Details	Continuing Education Weeks <b>2 (standard)</b>	Continuing Education Weeks Details
Continuing Education Funding in budget <b>\$1001-\$2000/year</b>	Sabbatical Provision <b>Yes</b>	Travel/Auto Account <b>No</b>	Other Professional Account

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Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

Contrary to a broad trend toward shrinking congregations in mainline denominations and the Episcopal Church itself, St. Mark's has grown in the last decade and generally held steady during the recent months of an interim rector. This is clear in the following ways:  New visitors on Sundays and continued participation in weekday events  Relatively healthy finances and a realistic 2024 budget  Continuing confirmations and re-affirmations of Episcopalian faith  Parishioners' outreach to the community and its social service organizations including work with City commissioners on issues of housing and childcare through Together West Michigan (see answer to Question 8)  A significant number of parishioners are pulling together to help the parish through the search and transition process, leading to continued parishioner growth and involvement once a rector is called.

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How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

Being the oldest house of worship in Grand Rapids and having successfully adapted many times since 1836, St. Mark's understands the challenges today's churches face. Some of the steps recently taken to address them include:  Reviewing and updating St. Mark's Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan with supporting measurable goals  Providing updated programming for families and children  Striving to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all parishioners and visitors  Launching a capital campaign for physical renovations to make our building more accessible and open  Maintaining steady and sound financial oversight and planning  Conducting the recent parish survey and listening sessions (with robust participation)  Increasing regular and ongoing communications with parishioners via email, website, announcements during church services  Increasing opportunities for participation in learning sessions on specific topics and special meetings

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Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

inclusivity, empathy, liturgist, energy

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

We maintain a traditional liturgical style grounded in the Book of Common Prayer. Eucharist is celebrated with an open Table for all. There are three services every week, two on Sunday then noon Eucharist on Wednesday. The 8:00 am service on Sunday is a spoken service; the 10:30 am service is conducted with a full choir. Music is a rich and prominent feature of the later Sunday service as at all special services. There is a formal processional to start and end the service and for the Gospel reading. During high holidays, a thurifer adds incense to the procession. We include children in services as acolytes and crucifers, and we provide a children's quiet/play area so they can be near parents in the Sanctuary during service. Children also do readings during regularly scheduled, children-led services. We participate in interfaith services over Thanksgiving and collaborate with local churches to create and distribute meditational booklets during special seasons and to mark other major events. Guest preachers and lay persons periodically present the Homily.

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How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

St. Mark's offers over 30 ministries, both outreach and for the church community itself. Parishioners often lead these ministries providing necessary support and expertise for the church and its work in the community. The Newcomer's ministry connects with new members to gather contact information and provide information. There is a weekly newsletter and Facebook page with updates and details of opportunities. The full-time Administrative Assistant, Kate Assarian, is also an excellent resource for those looking to get involved. Within the church, there are opportunities to help with service as part of lay ministry, verger, readers, and ushers. There are regular training sessions for these positions yearly. Others that require no special training, such as Parish Life Ministry, will invite volunteers throughout the year. Updates for the outreach ministries, including Breakfast Cafe, Together West Michigan and East Leonard Elementary School Support are given in the newsletter and during announcements with appropriate contact information provided. For some of these, the goal is to get not only our congregation but the community at large involved in advocacy and outreach.

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As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

Our spiritual well-being is nurtured by worship, adult formation classes, and children and youth formation programs. We have a long-standing Education For Ministry (EFM) group and have supported a number of parishioners as they have discerned and pursued a call to ministry. Our prayer ministry sends cards to those for whom we pray and serve as prayer ministers at our Sunday services. Lay Eucharistic ministers bring Eucharist to those who cannot attend church, and volunteers drive those on Sunday mornings who are unable to drive themselves. We care for each other physically in many ways, including flu shot drives, Basic Life Support classes, and by joining citywide river cleanup efforts and the annual Walk for Good Food. Much of our emotional care for each other happens informally among members of our church family. Formal care ministries include: the Newcomers Ministry; the Parish Life ministry; and the joint youth group with St Andrew's Church, Grand Rapids Episcopal Youth (G.R.E.Y.), which provides community for our young people.

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How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

St. Mark's involvement in our city is best exemplified by our Saturday morning Breakfast Cafe. Our Cafe guests, many of whom are unhoused or live in local shelters, enjoy a hot meal, free clothing, and live music. Our Cafe also hosts a free medical clinic by the MSU School of Medicine once a month. We also support many of these unhoused neighbors with other events, such as Spa Days for women, Man Cave Days for men, and collections to help meet basic needs. We participate in an annual citywide diaper drive and collect food monthly for another church's food bank. Through a designated endowment, the Outreach Ministry makes grants to twelve area agencies that provide services for persons who are unhoused, victims of abuse, and dealing with mental health issues. St. Mark's has a history of offering worship services to address significant events in our community. A recent example was the prayer service that we offered at the start of the war in Ukraine. We are involved in ecumenical conversations, events and worship services through the association of downtown churches and the Kaufman Interfaith Institute.

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Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

Our church is both a place of worship and a community that engages in various social issues. Diversity is one of our cornerstones. We celebrate and embrace people from all walks of life, and we promote inclusivity through multicultural events, interfaith dialogues, and supporting diversity-driven organizations. By fostering an environment that values diversity, we aim to create a welcoming space where everyone feels accepted, loved, and respected. Our church prioritizes environmental stewardship. We have implemented energy efficient lighting, recycling programs, and water conservation measures. We offer workshops and guest speakers on sustainability, and we work to inspire others to become more conscious stewards of the environment. Our strong connections with the diocese allow us to extend our impact beyond our immediate community. We participate in diocese-led initiatives that address poverty, education, and health care. We have a member on the Diocesan Finance Committee and four members on the Bishop Whittemore Foundation. We expect this leadership role to continue when the Dioceses of West and East Michigan merge to create a single diocese.

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Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

In 2021, St. Mark's helped found Together West Michigan, a non-partisan coalition that focuses on issues of poverty, affordable housing, education, and healthcare access in our community. Through their programs and initiatives, TWM aims to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all residents. TWM also collaborates with other organizations to advocate for systemic change and build a stronger, more compassionate society. Contact: Deacon Jan Gockerman. Another new initiative is Free Lunch Wednesday for College Students. The high cost of living can make it difficult for students to afford necessities like food. By offering a free meal one day a week, St. Mark's eases some of that financial stress and allows students to allocate their resources towards other essential needs. The program also encourages social interaction and networking among college students. By creating a supportive space and addressing food insecurity, St. Mark's contributes to the overall well-being and success of college students. Contact: Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg, UCCF

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What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

The Vestry and Stewardship Ministry lead an annual stewardship program in the fall that seeks to communicate to the congregation the importance of giving our time, talents, and money. The program includes Witness Talks during Sunday services, short vignettes shared by laity about their understanding of what it means to give to God and how our giving affects St. Mark's and the wider community. The fall program concludes with a pledge drive for the upcoming year, which enables responsible budgeting by introducing predictability with respect to our revenues. Additional revenue comes via endowment interest. The clergy address stewardship throughout the year in sermons and classes, and it is our goal as a congregation to practice year-round stewardship. When we openly and consistently talk about stewardship as not just a campaign for funding the next year's budget but as practices that encompass ALL that we do (including outreach, education, liturgy, pastoral care, and partnering with other organizations), we act in the fuller meaning of stewardship - that is, who we are to be as Christians.

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What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

Our recent altar relocation project provides a good example. Our rector brought to the vestry, then the congregation, a proposal to move the altar from the back of the chancel, which was reached by climbing several stone steps, to the front of the chancel on the same level as the pews. The rector outlined theological, safety, and accessibility reasons for this change. With the support of the vestry, it was taken to the congregation in multiple ways, including via homilies, mailings, electronic communications, and listening sessions in person and via Zoom. Much of the parish expressed support for the change, but others were opposed. There was an effort to make those who disagreed feel heard, in spite of their position not holding sway. In the end, there were those that still felt that the move was executed abruptly, but also those who felt that the point was belabored and that too much time and energy was put into communicating the change. In the end, the relocation of the altar was accomplished and now feels a natural part of our sanctuary.

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What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

The altar relocation led our lay leadership to recommit itself to clear, frequent communication using multiple modalities and to listening to the opinions and concerns of the congregation when leading change. The vestry is emphasizing these strategies as we begin a capital campaign for facility updates. There are ongoing updates in multiple formats, listening sessions on the project, and reminders that any concerns or questions can be brought to any vestry member. We are also aware that change is particularly difficult for people now, given uncertainty in other areas of life. Even beneficial change may be unwelcome, and the best leaders can do is to help people feel heard and accepted despite differences in opinion. At the beginning of their term, vestry members sign an agreement to use a documented process to handle conflicts that arise, starting with direct communication between the parties. There is also acknowledgement that everyone is not "on the same page" at all times, but one of the wonderful things about the Episcopal Church is that we don't have to be.

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### Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
<b>Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato</b>	<b>Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge</b>	<b>2017-01</b>	<b>2023-01</b>

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
<b>Rev. Dr. Robert Schiesler</b>	<b>Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge</b>	<b>2007-01</b>	<b>2015-01</b>

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
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Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School
	<b>23</b>	<b>70</b>

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School
<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School
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# Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio  
(last updated Mar 28, 2024)

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Contact:  
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Worshipping Community Web site: [www.stmarksgr.org](http://www.stmarksgr.org)

Media Links:

> <https://www.youtube.com/@StMarksGR>

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/stmarksgr>

> <https://www.instagram.com/stmarksgrandrapids/>

Languages Significantly Represented:

English

Provide Worship or Classes in:

English

### References

Bishop:

The Rt. Rev. Gladstone  
"Skip" Adams, Assisting  
Bishop

sadams@edwm.org 616-319-2006

Diocesan Transition Minister

The Rev. Canon Tracie  
Little

tlittle@edwm.org 810-300-9177

Current Warden/Board Chair

Dawn Butler

(864) 915-2101 buller.dawn.n@gmail.com

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Nancy Dodge

(616) 245-7492 dodgemimi2@gmail.com

Search Chair

Shawn Miller and Darren  
Walhof

Shawn Miller, (616) 340-3550 smmiller00@outlook.com Darren  
Walhof, (616) 401-6026 walhofd@gvsu.edu

Parish/Institution

The Rev. David Blank

616-456-1684 officeadmin@stmarksgr.org

Local Community Leader

Thelma Ensink and Rev.  
Lynette Sparks

Thelma Ensink, Executive Director, DeGage Ministries (Community  
Partner), (616) 454-1661 Rev. Lynette Sparks, Westminster  
Presbyterian Church (Ecumenical Partner), (616) 480-0055,  
lynettes@wpcgr.org