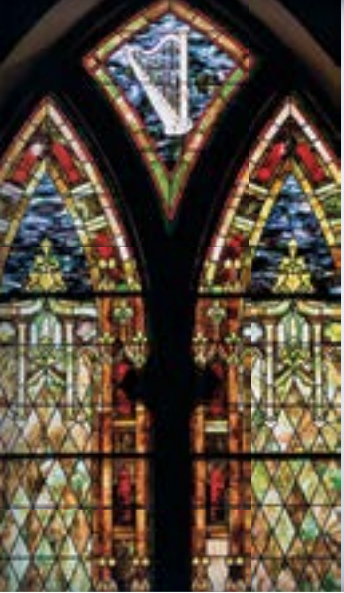




SAINT
MARK'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH



We are an inclusive community of faith, reflecting
Christ's love, ministering to all who hunger in
body, mind, and spirit.

PARISH
PROFILE
2024

CONTENTS

03

Our Church

Mission, Vision, and Values
People
Commitments
Worship and Music
Leadership
Ministries
Parish History

10

Our Future Rector

12

Our Stewardship and Finances

13

Our City





MISSION

We are an inclusive community of faith, reflecting Christ's love, ministering to all who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.

VISION

At St. Mark's we will create a vibrant spiritual community where worship, accessibility, belonging, formation, and a commitment to social justice enable us to love and serve all God's people.

VALUES

Liturgy
Radical Welcome
Affirmation of the LGBTQ+ Community
Gratitude & Generosity
Lifelong Spiritual Learning
History and Commitment to Grand Rapids

PEOPLE

St. Mark's Episcopal Church is a vibrant, welcoming, and affirming community of faith in the heart of the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. In our worship and our service, we proclaim that all people are worthy of God's love. We embrace people of all ages, all racial and ethnic backgrounds, all social, political, and educational backgrounds, all abilities, and all sexual orientations and gender identities.



Word cloud from survey question: What are the things that St. Mark's does best?

As part of our rector search, we surveyed the parish in Fall 2023. Members could respond electronically or on paper. There were 108 individual respondents, a robust return rate given average attendance on Sundays for both services is around 150. Survey results showed that St. Mark's is a downtown destination church, with most parishioners living in various parts of the city or in neighboring towns and townships. The survey also showed that we are a multigenerational, well-educated congregation, with almost a quarter of respondents coming from families with children and over 90% having obtained a bachelor's or a post-baccalaureate professional degree. Although an overwhelming majority of respondents identify as white or having European heritage, many parishioners display a keen interest in St. Mark's outreach and Christian justice work, including racial justice. More than one-third of survey respondents have attended St. Mark's for less than five years, and more than 40% have previous church involvement in non-Episcopal Christian traditions.

COMMITMENTS

In conjunction with our parish survey, we held small-group congregational listening sessions after two consecutive Sunday services involving 67 participants. In response to open-ended questions about what St. Mark's does best, many parishioners highlighted communal,











liturgical worship that is spiritually renewing and accompanied by meaningful music that “offers inspiration during the liturgy.” St. Mark’s open and affirming community was also frequently mentioned. Many appreciate the clergy and congregation’s commitment to “the values of being an inclusive community” by welcoming visitors, new members, and children’s participation in services.

An important embodiment of inclusion at St. Mark’s is an open Eucharist; everyone’s participation in this faith-affirming sacrament is widely viewed as an essential element of our Christian conviction. Community outreach also is highly valued among St. Mark’s parishioners who see faith-informed social justice and care for our neighbors as central to our parish life. Many emphasized their support for current ministries such as Breakfast Cafe, Together West Michigan, and the Dismantling Racism ministry.

Survey Question:

Which of the following eight ministry categories are most important to St. Mark’s Parish identity? (Select your top 3.)

	Worship, liturgy, and music	81%
	Outreach and Christian justice, including racial justice	60%
	Congregational fellowship within the Parish	40%
	Christian formation and spiritual development for all Parishioners	30%
	Pastoral care to all by clergy and members	23%
	Facilities and our physical building	18%
	Stewardship (giving of our time, talents, and providing financial support)	15%
	Parish administration and governance	2%

Percent (n=109)



WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Worship and music are at the center of our communal life. We have two Sunday services: an 8 a.m. spoken Holy Eucharist and a 10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with music, led by the Choir of St. Mark's and our Director of Music, Dr. Gregory Crowell. We use traditional liturgies in both services. Sunday attendance in Fall 2023 averaged approximately 150 across the two services, including roughly 30 children in church school and nursery care. We also stream our 10:30 service via Facebook and YouTube. Weekday services include in-person Eucharist at noon on Wednesdays and Compline on Mondays and Thursdays evenings via Facebook Live.

Every year, our Sacred Sounds series offers free public concerts of sacred music. The series features world-class guest musicians, such as the singing group Trio Mediaeval from Norway and soprano Hannah De Priest in 2022, and the all-male Cantus ensemble and the Sonoran Winds chamber ensemble in 2023. The series also features the Choir of St. Mark's in its annual Advent Lessons and Carols and spring Evensong concerts.

The 2023 parish survey and congregational listening sessions confirmed the high value our parishioners attach to our liturgical worship and music. Participants again and again mentioned worship and music as a reason they joined St. Mark's and why they stay. About 85% of survey respondents said they were very or extremely satisfied with the worship, liturgy, and music here.



LEADERSHIP

St. Mark's has faith-filled and committed lay and clergy leadership. Our interim Rector, The Reverend David Blank, is a graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary. In 2023 he celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination and was recently received into the Episcopal Church. Our Associate Rector for Pastoral Care, The Reverend Susan York, is a graduate of Seabury Western seminary and has been ordained for 25 years. She has a special gift for pastoral and spiritual care. Our deacon, The Reverend Jan Gockerman, is a longtime member of St. Mark's and was ordained to the Diaconate in 2018. Assisting in many areas of our common life, she has an abiding commitment to outreach and justice and has helped lead our congregation to deeper community involvement.

Our music ministry is central to our identity and a crucial component of both inreach and outreach. Our talented Director of Music, Dr. Gregory Crowell, oversees our adult choir, bell choir, concert series, and our liturgical music. Dr. Crowell is a graduate of the New England Conservatory and the University of Cincinnati and is a Senior Affiliate Professor of Music at Grand Valley State University.

Our staff leadership team also includes Jeff Brown, a graduate of Hope College with an MS from Ball State University, who has been our Director of Youth Ministries for 12 years, and has led the Grand Rapids Episcopal Youth for 20 years. The position of Children's Ministry Leader is open and currently filled by a volunteer. We have a dedicated and highly capable financial manager in Pam Stevenson, who has served that role since 2003.



St. Mark's has a legacy of strong lay leadership through both our vestry and ministry leaders. Our twelve-member vestry represents a broad cross-section of the parish, bringing a variety of skills and experiences. The heads of our many ministries, such as ushers and the Hospitality committee, are also key parts of our leadership. Despite having 30 different ministries, only two are in leadership transition at this time. The others are filled with people serving in their leadership position from one to 25-plus years.

MINISTRIES

Our church ministries are essential to our Christian community, serving as avenues to demonstrate God's love to others. These ministries serve physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and seek the flourishing of our city and region.

Education Ministries:

Creation Care Ministry, Education for Ministry (EfM), Adult Education Ministry, Children & Youth Ministries, Grand Rapids Climate Coalition

Social Justice and Advocacy:

Dismantling Racism Ministry, Breakfast Café Ministry, Together West Michigan Ministry, East Leonard Elementary School Support, and United Campus Christian Fellowship

Internal Ministries:

Card Ministry, Greeters Ministry, Hosting Coffee Hour Ministry, Newcomers' Ministry, Parish Life Ministry, Lunch Bunch Ministry, Prayer Ministry, Visiting Eucharistic Ministry, Communication Ministry, and Safety Ministry.

Administrative Ministries:

Finance Ministries, Stewardship Ministry, Grants Ministry, Human Resources Ministry, Property Ministry, Endowment, History & Archive Ministry

Additional Alliances:

[Degage Ministries](#)

[Dwelling Place](#)

[God's Kitchen](#)

[Access of West Michigan](#)

[Westminster Food Pantry](#)

[Mel Trotter Ministries](#)

[Arbor Circle](#)

[Kids Food Basket](#)

Find further information about St. Mark's ministries at stmarksgr.org.



PARISH HISTORY

St. Mark's has been part of Grand Rapids from its earliest days as a European settlement. In 1836, nine business and professional men from the then-village of Kent, soon to be reorganized as Grand Rapids, submitted a petition to the Bishop of Michigan to organize St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The Bishop denied their first attempt. They tried again and succeeded in 1838.



Francis H. Cumings
First official rector

St. Mark's first building was consecrated in 1841. In 1846, after the vestry decided the church needed a new location and a larger building, it purchased the current site and began construction. The cornerstone was placed on June 7, 1847, and the church was consecrated two years later. Many additions and renovations took place in 1852, the 1870s, and the 1890s, adding the transepts, chancel, towers and porch, and the chapel. In 1900, the new parish house brought us to our current configuration. The main building and transepts are constructed of wood framing with walls of limestone from the Grand River.

St. Mark's has long been a pillar in its service to the city. In 1850, it obtained a charter from the state legislature authorizing the establishment of an institution for academic, collegiate, and theological learning to be known as St. Mark's College. The endeavor lasted only thirteen months, but it set the foundation for Grand Rapids to become the educational center of western Michigan. In 1874, what is now the Butterworth campus of Corewell Health began when a couple from St. Mark's church donated a large three-story home to establish St. Mark's Home and Hospital.

Music has always been a vital part of worship at St. Mark's. The composer and organist Leo Sowerby, winner of a Prix de Rome and a Pulitzer prize for his compositions, was born in Grand Rapids in 1895 and had his early church home at St. Mark's. In 1939, another musician of note, Paul Calloway, left his position as Director of Music at St. Mark's to fill the same position at the National Cathedral. Our Walker organ, installed in 2004, serves as one expression of the congregation's continued commitment to musical excellence. At that time it was the largest Walker tracker organ in the United States.

St. Mark's has long been a leading parish in the Episcopal Diocese of West Michigan. In 2020, a Joint Standing Committee of the Dioceses of West and East Michigan appointed the Building Bridges Steering Committee and tasked it with leading a discernment process regarding a possible merger of the two dioceses. The recommendation to create a single diocese will be presented to a Joint Special Convention in March 2024.

OUR RECTOR

OUR FUTURE RECTOR

The following quote sums up much of the feedback received this past Fall: "St. Mark's is phenomenal in making new people feel appreciated and heard through their faith journeys. While we honor history, tradition, and liturgy, our modern activities, such as service, outreach, and emphasis on continuing education are where we thrive as a church."

Our survey responses, combined with input from listening sessions, leads the search committee to identify the following qualities as crucial in a new Parish rector:

WORSHIP

St. Mark's seeks a rector with passion for traditional Episcopalian worship, rooted in the rich stories, texts, symbols, and liturgies of the Anglican communion. This was the highest-ranked strength of St. Mark's in the survey results. The ability to incorporate current and relevant homilies that resonate is one of the strong desires of the parish, along with the ability to incorporate music that inspires and lifts the spirit.

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our parish value Radical Welcome includes this explanation: "We believe that love is an action demonstrated through the kindness, respect, help, and honor we give to each other." As one survey participant put it, one of the things St. Mark's does best is "active participation in community and social programs." Examples of this include the Dismantling Racism ministry, our Breakfast Café, membership in Together West Michigan, and many other activities and partnerships. We anticipate our new rector joining us in identifying how our parish can best demonstrate the work of Christ and follow God's call through service to our local community and the world.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION / SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

We strive to walk in the Way of Love. To help us to learn how, we need opportunities to learn about God, spirituality, and living Christian lives. St. Mark's new rector must be able to implement and support educational opportunities for parishioners of all ages.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

In addition to providing individual comfort and solace during times of need, overall congregational nurturing will be a critical skill for the new rector. St. Mark's is known to be a welcoming parish, blessed both with many long-time members and with new families and individuals. Our members come from a variety of beliefs, faiths, and backgrounds. As we foresee continuing flux in both the secular and non-secular environments around us, we look for a leader to help us maintain a loving community of openness, belonging, nurture, and peace.











ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Facilities, stewardship, and administration and governance topics in the survey were rated lower in comparison to other categories. However, administration is a major component of leading any organization, and it is important that the new rector has proven experience in this type of role. St. Mark's has a strong administrative team and vestry leaders that work with the rector; many have knowledge of St. Mark's that would be difficult to replicate.

St. Mark's plans to undertake building updates in the coming years and has begun a capital campaign to raise funds. The new rector will partner with the vestry and other leaders in the congregation in the process of finalizing construction details, securing funding, and working with a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure successful completion of this project.

Survey Question:

Which of the following eight ministry categories is most important when selecting the next rector? (Please select your top 3.)

	Worship, liturgy, and music	77%
	Outreach and Christian justice, including racial justice	44%
	Christian formation and spiritual development for all Parishioners	40%
	Pastoral care to all by clergy and members	39%
	Congregational fellowship within the Parish	34%
	Parish administration and governance	18%
	Stewardship (giving of our time, talents, and providing financial support)	10%
	Facilities and our physical building	7%

Percent (n=109)

OUR STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCES

The theme of the 2024 pledge campaign, Rooted in Abundance, captures our approach to stewardship and finances at St. Mark’s. We have been greatly blessed, and we seek to use those gifts to minister to our congregation and our broader community. For 2024, we have received 124 pledges totaling nearly \$500,000. We also steward approximately \$3 million in endowed funds that support specific programs and also supplement our operating expenses.

ST. MARK’S 2024 BUDGET

2024 INCOME

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>
Current Year Pledges	\$506,075
Offerings Not Pledged	\$65,000
Prior Year Pledges	\$6,500
Reserve for Pledge Loss	\$(11,000)
Parking Lot Rent	\$65,000
Christmas/Easter Offerings	\$9,000
Bequests	\$5,000
Wedding & Funeral Income	\$8,000
Memorial Income	\$2,500
Misc Income	\$15,300
Endowment Allocation for Operations	\$150,106
	\$821,481

2024 EXPENSES

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>
Pastoral	\$172,775
Facilities	\$162,450
Administration	\$260,250
Diocesan Contribution	\$83,786
Christian Formation	\$68,220
Music	\$65,750
Outreach	\$8,250
	\$821,481



OUR CITY

OUR CITY

St. Mark's is located in the heart of Grand Rapids, the second largest city in Michigan, with a metropolitan area of 1.3 million people. Located 25 miles east of Lake Michigan, Grand Rapids is the cultural and economic hub of West Michigan. Major industries include healthcare, furniture, aviation, automotive, information technology, and consumer goods. The city is home to many colleges and universities, including Grand Valley State University, Calvin University, Aquinas College, and Kendall College of Art and Design. The airport has more than 140 flights daily with non-stop service to 32 cities.

Grand Rapids ranks highly in quality of life indicators, including cost of living, safety, traffic, and access to artistic, cultural, and recreation opportunities. It frequently appears on national "best places to live" lists. At the same time, Grand Rapids struggles with a housing shortage, racial segregation, poverty, gentrification, distrust in police, homelessness, and other issues faced by many U.S. cities. One notable effort to address these structural problems is Together West Michigan, a broad-based organizing movement of churches and other organizations, of which St. Mark's is a founding member.



Grand Rapids offers a wide array of arts and entertainment. The Grand Rapids [Symphony](#) presents more than 400 performances a year. The city also has an opera company, [ballet](#) company, and hosts touring shows (including an annual Broadway series) at DeVos Performance Hall and Van Andel Arena. Artists come to Grand Rapids every fall for [Artprize](#), a two-week competition that draws entries from all over the world that are exhibited throughout the city. Art can be seen year-round at the Grand Rapids [Art Museum](#), [Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park](#), and smaller galleries. The city has a [zoo](#), [public museum](#), and [children's museum](#).

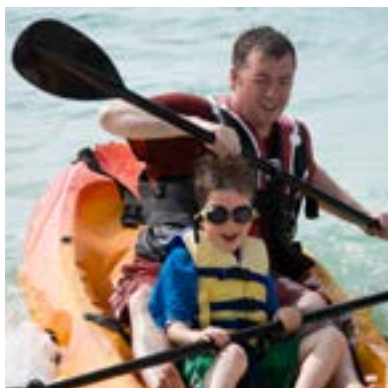
Grand Rapids is home to a lively and diverse restaurant scene, three minor league sports teams, and recreation leagues for young and old throughout the city for various sports. There are bike lanes throughout the city and numerous bike paths, including the 92-mile White Pine Trail connecting Grand Rapids to Cadillac. In the winter, there are cross-country ski trails and the Cannonsburg downhill ski area, plus seven large ski resorts within a three-hour drive.





West Michigan is well-known for its recreation, including salmon fishing, deer hunting, golf, and water sports. Indeed, the northern part of West Michigan was named one of CNN's best places to visit in 2024. The shore of Lake Michigan offers large expanses of powdery sandy beaches, where people enjoy kitesurfing, fishing, sailing, boating, swimming, and even scuba-diving. On the Grand River and smaller lakes, people enjoy kayaking, paddleboarding, and fishing.

The Grand Rapids region's large number of college and universities, strong school districts, vibrant immigrant and refugee communities, and strong population growth all contribute to a dynamic metropolitan culture. This is the context in which St. Mark's seeks to embody God's love through our worship, our service, and our neighborliness.





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