

DECK THE HALL PARTY Sunday, December 9th beginning at 11:30 AM

Deck the halls with boughs of holly...falalala...la...la...la. Join us for an afternoon of fun and festivities as we turn the Great Hall into a winter wonderland, make ornaments, decorate cookies, sing carols and enjoy good company. There is something for every age and a pizza lunch will be offered. Hope you will come and help us make our hall bright as we prepare for the birth of the "light of the world".



PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD: ADVENT BEGINS DECEMBER 2

The season of Advent arrives on December 2nd marking the beginning of a new church year and calling us all to stop and **BE STILL**. Advent is when we wait in silence and hope for the arrival of Jesus...as an infant in a manger, and as the Lord of all.



And that still expectancy can be hard because on the one hand, the world around us is in the midst of Christmas celebrations, decorations, carols, shopping, and Christmas parties. It's almost as if December 25th has already come and gone! And yet the Church invites us, urges us to be still, to breathe, to look with longing eyes to something that has not yet appeared; not to jump straight into Christmas but rather savor the expectation of the coming of the Christ-child.

Slow down...even for a moment and **WATCH**.

As we watch, the Church invites us to wait expectantly for Jesus in two different ways.

- Turn our eyes to the future...to the return of Christ. We can do this by reading scripture and offering prayers that turn our thoughts to a new reality which has yet to dawn in human history. A reality in which the nightmare of the world will be made right, when Christ shall remake reality into a place of peace, love, and harmony. Here are some helpful resources for Scripture reading:

Revelation 21:1-6

Romans 8:18-23

For a prayer resource try praying one of these two prayers:

From the Book of Common Prayer (BCP 832) "O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Or

The prayer of Julian of Norwich who wrote this prayer in the midst of turmoil and distress. I suggest you consider praying this a number of times, almost like a mantra, as you take deep breaths and focus on the trust and hope that dwells in these simple and yet powerful words.

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

- Look back into history...wait with Mary, Joseph, and countless others who anticipated the birth of the Christ-child. We can enter *into* history by rereading the nativity story in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-56, 2:1-20 and imagine what it would have been like to experience the wonder and joy of the long-awaited Savior coming into the world. We are invited to do this so that we may see Christmas morning with new, fresh, and amazed eyes.

Cont'd on pg 2

MISSION STATEMENT:

St. Mark's is called to serve all people in greater Springfield, MA. as a guiding light and a spiritual home where Jesus' spirit is known through inclusive, joyful worship, spirited formation, thriving ministries of service, and powerful outreach. Christ welcomed all, we welcome you.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

One Porter Road
East Longmeadow, MA 01028
413.525.6341
Email: office@stmarksma.org
Web: www.stmarksma.org
Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-3pm

**Sunday Worship: 8am & 10am,
6:30pm**

**Wednesday Worship:
12:00pm Eucharist**

Rector- Rev. Peter Swarr
Sr. Warden - Sue Schneider
Jr. Warden - Peter Fairman
Director of Music - Susan Matsui
Parish Administrator - Diane Chandler
Good News Editor - Diane Chandler
I.T./Webmaster - Lester Sill, Ryan Schneider

The *Good News* is published monthly by St. Mark's Church. The deadline is usually the **3rd Tuesday of every month** unless otherwise noted.

**Next deadline is
Tuesday, Dec. 11th**



Submit articles to:
Diane Chandler, Good News Editor
office@stmarksma.org

ADVENT *Continued*

MAKE READY YOUR HEART for the coming of the Light of the World

Before your evening meal, sit down and light a candle (or if you have one, an Advent wreath) and join me and my family in saying this prayer

Let us make our hearts ready to be the dwelling place of the most high. Come into our hearts Lord Jesus.

And then simply sit for 15 seconds or so, breathe and wait in peace, before you take your first bite. Maybe the practice of waiting, watching and being still before your meal might help increase your gratitude and joy, at the food you are about to receive and at the coming of Christ which we celebrate at Christmas.

I hope and pray that your Advent is filled with stillness, with hope-filled waiting...and with deep peace,

Father Peter

CHRISTMAS AT ST. MARK'S

St. Mark's will celebrate the birth of Christ at two special Christmas Eve services this year.



At 4:00pm St. Mark's will hold its Christmas Eve service with Drop-in Christmas Pageant. This family friendly service will welcome all children to come and help tell the story of Jesus' birth. ANY and ALL children who would like to participate are welcome!

Simply arrive at 3:30 pm to get a costume and learn the basic stage directions for your role (shepherd, sheep, angels, and other barnyard animals).

The 4:00 pm service is a wonderful, friendly, joyful celebration with music which all are welcome to!



At 10:00pm St. Mark's will hold its festive candlelight Christmas Eve service. The choir will be singing, the handbell choir will play, and the music will be beautiful. A full sermon will be given and we will welcome with joy the newborn king. This service (which is our early version of a midnight mass) is full of beauty, peace, and joy. Come and welcome the newborn Christ.

FIRST NIGHT EAST LONGMEADOW

On New Year's Eve St. Mark's will again host First Night East Longmeadow. This fun and free event begins at 7:00pm and lasting until 11:00pm. First night will run at three distinct venues here in town for different groups of people.



- At St. Mark's there will be live music, dancing, and food for adults.
- At East Longmeadow United Methodist Church there will be a family friendly, alcohol-free event with food and entertainment.
- At St. Paul Lutheran Church there will be an event for children and families with special needs.

Space is limited so register soon.

Contact: stpaul@stpauelong.org

For more information contact Anne Strickert at 860-478-5756 or Kelly at 413-262-1709

OUTREACH NEWS



The Outreach Ministry Team became aware of many opportunities for giving this Advent season and created a trifold and a display board in the Great Hall outlining some of these worthy causes. If you picked up a tag off the display board, we thank you and ask you to bring in your items and place them in the boxes in the Great Hall **by December 16** so that we can distribute them to families and organizations who need them in time for Christmas.

Our Advent Warming Tree will up in the sanctuary **until December 23**. The hats, gloves, warm socks, new or gently used blankets, sleeping bags and coats we will bring directly to the homeless in downtown Springfield. We go out on the Big Blue ministry every Tuesday night during the winter months to assist those who will be battling the cold temperatures. Let's fill that tree to the top!

Also **Saturday, December 8 is our Loaves and Fishes day** when we will be preparing and serving a hot meal at South Congregational Church on Maple street in Springfield from 4 to 6 p.m.

If anyone would like to carpool from St. Mark's to Springfield, contact Claire at 413-967-9088 or ckerr1@aol.com. No experience is necessary and all are welcome!

THANKSGIVING

Recently we observed Thanksgiving Day, a secular holiday in our calendar. I love Thanksgiving Day because it is, at the heart of it, all we do as Christians. But offering God thanksgiving is something we do more than just once each year. Let us remember that all of life is a gift from God. It is about worshipping our gracious and Holy God, the God who broke all the limits of generosity by giving us the gift of His Son Jesus, whose birth we will celebrate on the 25th of this month. Thanks be to God for this most wonderful gift!

Bruce Rockwell

On behalf of the Stewardship Ministry Team



PETER COURTNEY CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS AS A PRIEST: DECEMBER 30, 2018

On Sunday, December 30, Peter Courtney, the interim priest who served St. Mark's before Fr. Peter became rector, and who has been worshipping with, and supplying for, us for the past few years will be celebrating 50 years as a priest.

This is a major milestone.

Peter was ordained in Rochester, NY on the 28th of December, 1968. Since then he has served God as a priest in a variety of settings ranging from upstate New York, to Honolulu, to East Longmeadow.

On the 30th we will welcome some of Peter Courtney's family and friends who will be joining us for the celebration. He will both preach and preside at the Eucharist while Peter Swarr assists in the celebration.

One fun fact...Peter Courtney has had a long love of Winnie the Pooh. In his words, "Father Courtney got a lot of mileage out of his journey with AA Milne's characters from the Pooh books and poetry volumes.

A wonderful parishioner at Emmanuel Church, Athens, Georgia made a gift to him of a chasuble featuring a disneyfied version of Pooh. When he actually wore it on a Sunday she said: "I didn't think you would ever wear it!" As some of you know he made a habit of surprising people along the way."



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Have you ever noticed how we take special offerings for flowers throughout the Church year? Right now we are getting ready for Christmas flower offerings...a way of giving thanks to God for the gifts of life and remembering and celebrating loved ones. Flowers as an offering to God are an ancient way that Christians have shown their thanksgiving and love. This prayer, written by Ishpriya R.S.C.J. and found in *Earth Prayers* helps express why flowers are such a fitting offering to God.

"O Holy One, I ran through the fields and gathered flowers of a thousand colors---

And now I pour them out at Your feet.

Their beauty and their brightness shout for joy in Your Presence.

You created the flowers of the fields and made each one far more lovely than all the skill of man could design.

Accept my joy along with theirs, this field of blossoms at Your feet.

Holy One as the wind blows through these flowers till they dance in the ecstasy of creation, send Your Spirit to blow through my being till I too bloom and dance with the fulness of Your life."

May your offering be one of joy and beauty unto the soon to be born King.



Christmas Flower envelopes are due in the church office no later than Sunday, 12/16/18 in order to include the names in the Christmas bulletin.

Please print clearly!

WHAT IS A REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR...AND WHY SHOULD YOU MAKE ONE?

Have you heard of a reverse Advent calendar? Have you seen this idea floating around Facebook or Pinterest? In case you haven't, I'm going to share a bit about this wonderfully unique idea for celebrating the Christmas season with a reverse Advent calendar.

The idea behind a reverse Advent calendar is simple. **Pick out a sturdy basket, box or bag and fill it with food donations for your local food pantry – one item for every day in December.** Then, when your bags are filled, take them to the food pantry of your choice, or even better, bring them by church on Sunday mornings. Lori Decker will drop the collected food to The Open Pantry.



The beauty of this reverse Advent calendar is in the simplicity but also in how it can be customized. You can add one item a day or purchase several items every time you shop. You can collect 25 items from your whole family or 25 items from each member in your family. You can start collecting the items in the middle of November or wait until the beginning of December. You can focus on food items or practical donations or a combination of both. You can create the reverse Advent calendar however you and your family choose. **The reverse Advent calendar encourages us to think of others as we wait to celebrate Jesus' birthday.** What a great way to serve this Advent!

*Happy
Birthday*

DECEMBER

*Happy
Anniversary*

12/01 Mark Rodrigo
12/07 Kathleen Rice
Thomas Rice
12/10 Meg Galbreath
12/14 Dolly Nicoli
Peter Rosengarten
Angela Swarr
12/15 Grant LaBonte
12/16 Tracie Wood
12/19 Michael Derose

12/21 Chrisitne Whitehead
Julianna Berselli
12/23 Katherine Rosengarten
David Wicks
12/25 Jessica Lister
12/26 Carey Noonan
12/29 Dominik Rodrigo
Dick Volker
12/31 Michael Solitario

12/21 Peter & Mindy Rosengarten
12/28 Roy & Jackie Butler



2018 Advent and Christmas Happenings St. Mark's Church

Sunday, December 2

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath: The Advent season begins as we wait with joy and expectation for the coming of Christ.

Sunday, December 9th @ 11:30 am

Deck the Hall Party: Deck the halls with boughs of holly...falalala...la...la...la. Join us for an afternoon of fun and festivities as we turn the Great Hall into a winter wonderland, make ornaments, enjoy cookies, music and good company. Bring your favorite soup, appetizer or dessert to share. Activities for people of all ages. Following the event we will reshape our worship space, rearranging seating and the Altar.

Wednesday, December 19th at 12:45 pm

The Greening of the Church: Join us as we prepare and beautify our worship space with greens in anticipation of the coming of the Christ child.

Sunday, December 23rd @ 11:15 am

We make final preparation for the Pageant and Christmas Eve services by bringing up props from the lower level of the Great Hall. Any and all help in moving items is most welcome!

Monday, December 24th

Christmas Eve Services:

4:00 pm service will include our family focused service along with carols, the bell choir, and a family-friendly sermon. The Pageant will include an opportunity for any and all children and youth who are interested to participate.

10:00 pm service will offer a festive Eucharist with choir, bell choir, carols, and candle-light singing of Silent Night. This year, our Minister of Music is pleased to offer carol singing before the service as well. As we gather at the church beginning at 10:00 pm different Christmas carols will be sung. Then the service will officially begin at 10:15 pm. Come early and enjoy some extra Christmas Carols this year!

CHRIST WELCOMED ALL, WE WELCOME SALVATION CHURCH

In an effort to keep all St. Mark's members up to date with new developments at St. Mark's the Vestry wants to update you about the relationship between a new church and our congregation. Beginning on November 25 St. Mark's welcomed the Salvation Church to worship in our sanctuary on a weekly basis. Below are some

Q. I hear that the Vestry as decided to enter into an agreement allowing the Salvation Church (Nepalese/ Bhutanese) to use our sanctuary on Sundays to hold worship service. Why is St. Mark's doing this?

A. Week in and week out we say that Christ welcomed all and we welcome you. It seems that welcoming a congregation of Christians into our facility to worship Jesus and grow in faith fits this mission. Added to that, this church has worshipped with us at the annual multi-church worship service we held and they already been taking part in our Rainbow Community Garden so we have an existing relationship with them via worship and this ministry. St. Mark's also strives to be wise and good stewards of the resources God has given us. Our worship space is a wonderful resources...and yet we only use it for a small portion of each Sunday. Letting it be used by others when it would otherwise be empty seems like a faithful and wise way for us to good stewards of this space.

Q. What are the details of this new agreement?

A. The Salvation Church will begin setting up on Sunday a little after 11:30am, worship from 12:00 until 2:00 pm. Once a month they will hold a meal in our great hall following their worship service. They will be done in the great hall by 4:30pm (before our youth proگرامing begins). In exchange for this use of our space, they will pay St. Mark's 50 dollars per week to offset expenses.

Q. What more can you tell me about this church?

A. They are a Pentecostal church made up of Bhutanese refugees who have been resettled by the US Government in the Springfield area. Their pastor's name is Pastor Enoch and Fr. Peter has worked with him for the past year. They are Christians who believe in the Bible and who worship in a contemporary style. They hold their services in the Nepalese language. While some of them speak fluent English, others speak far less. There are about 50 members who attend service. They have a number of children and younger members who were born here in the US while the older members were resettled as refugees. They have about 15 cars that they use to carpool to church. For the past year they have been worshipping at St. Paul Lutheran Church, but the Lutheran Church needs to change their worship time. Many of the Nepalese cannot change their work schedule, hence their search for a new place to worship.

Q. Will we be able to interact with them and get to know them? Will we do anything together or is this just a rent situation?

A. Salvation Church sees us as their brothers and sisters in Christ and they want to invite us to their common meals. They want to take part in joint services when it makes sense, and they would like to hold joint children programs (such as VBS or our Summer Garden program). This is not just a rental situation, it is an opportunity to grow in relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to welcome them more fully into our community, and to learn and grow from them.

Q. How has Vestry thought this through? What sort of things have they considered in making this decision?

A. Vestry has considered parking capacity, special Sunday events (like Deck the Hall and the Annual Meeting), storage of supplies, cleaning, impact on youth proگرامing and other ministry teams. We have considered the added utility costs of additional use. Every time a new question or concern has arisen, we have discussed the issue with Pastor Enoch and found them flexible and responsive to our needs.

Salvation Church (Cont'd)

Q. So how do we handle places where there is an impact on St. Mark's? You mentioned Deck the Halls and the Annual Meeting, how do we deal with things like that?

A. Pastor Enoch has told us that on days like the annual meeting when we need the sanctuary, they will start worshipping once we are done (even if that means waiting until 1:30pm). On days we have events in the Great Hall we will use the Hall and they will worship in the Church. We will strive to use different entrances to help reduce congestion and confusion for those events.

If you have other questions please speak to a member of Vestry.



Glad Tidings



A Holiday Handbell Concert Presented by



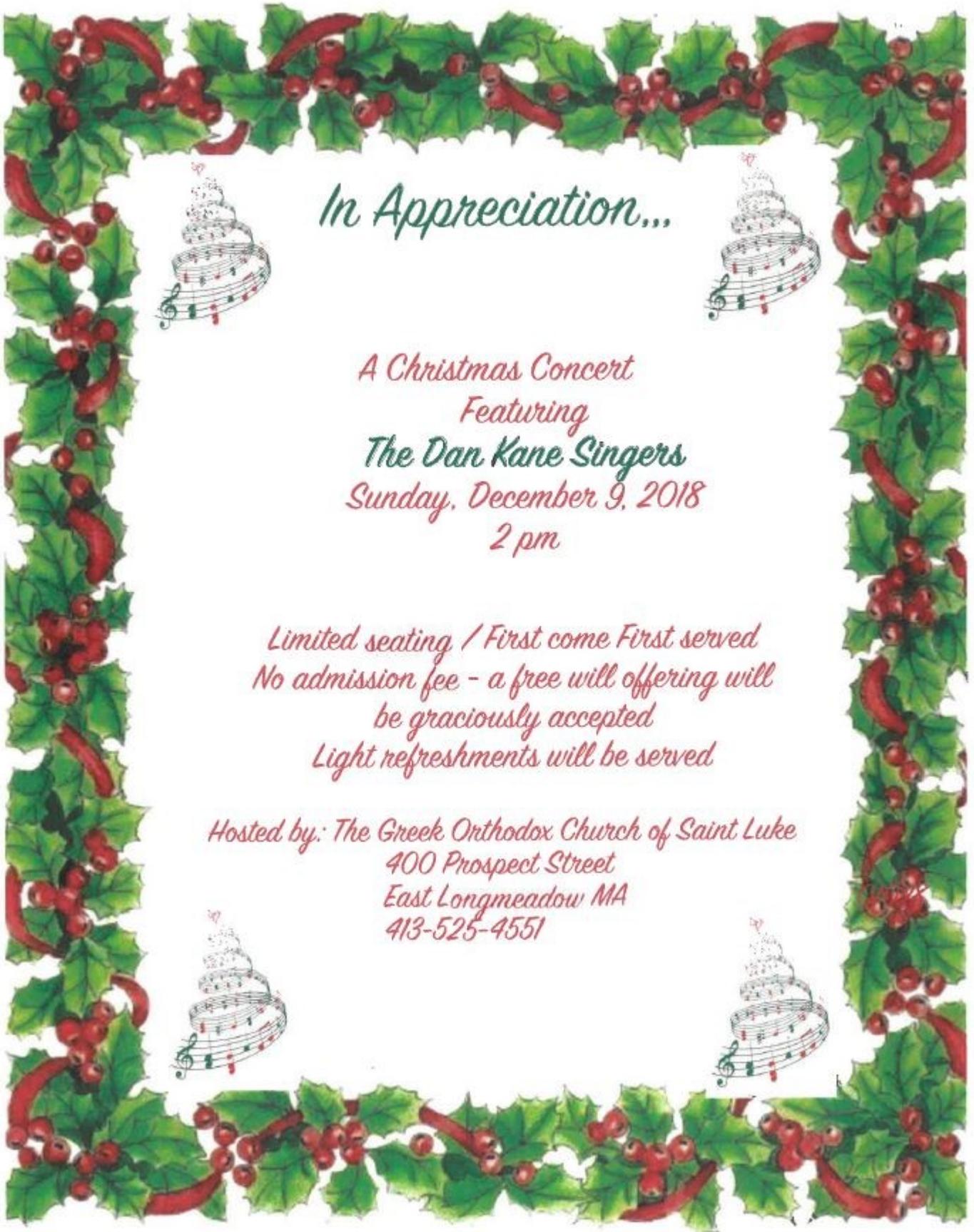
Shoreline Ringers, a community handbell choir based in Southeastern Connecticut, awes and inspires audiences with their ringing. Under the direction of Jane Nolan, this dynamic group is dedicated to musical excellence and handbell education through exciting and uplifting performances of secular and popular music, which includes a variety of techniques and rhythms that promise fun for all.

Saturday, December 8 – 7:00

Somers Congregational Church

599 Main Street, Somers, CT

www.shorelineringers.org



In Appreciation...

*A Christmas Concert
Featuring
The Dan Kane Singers
Sunday, December 9, 2018
2 pm*

*Limited seating / First come First served
No admission fee - a free will offering will
be graciously accepted
Light refreshments will be served*

*Hosted by: The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Luke
400 Prospect Street
East Longmeadow MA
413-525-4551*

Aging Gently-Aging with Dignity

We are a group of gently aging people who meet once a month to engage in conversation, prayer, and moral support with other gently aging people who are trying to age with dignity.



November Meeting Notes

We had several new ideas presented at our November meeting. Aging Gently is beginning two new projects at our meetings.

Make sleeping mats for homeless folks from recycled plastic grocery bags. These mats are light weight, waterproof, and help keep plastic bags out of oceans and landfills. There are multiple ways to help: be a collector, be a folder, be a cutter, be a "plam" maker, a crocheter or knitter

Rick Stevens is delving into the St. Mark's archives to put them into a usable order and could use some help with sorting, labeling & filing items

There is interest in the Gentle Movement-Art of Tai Chi. Betty Rennell & Ginny Sill are both familiar with the different forms of Tai Chi. We are working to develop an ongoing Tai Chi segment for our Aging Gently meetings.

Warm Blessings to all as we prepare to celebrate the season of Christmas

Upcoming

Next Meeting Date

Weds, Dec. 19, 2018

Monthly Prayer Intention

For strength & guidance in moving into the future.

Golden Years, Golden Words

LOOK IT UP!

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Note! We meet on the third Weds. each month at 1:00 in the Williams Media Room at St. Mark's Church.

Lunch is provided or bring your own.

All are very welcome!



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
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East Longmeadow, MA 01028-1348

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