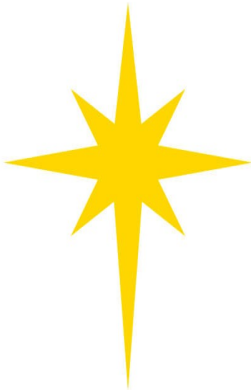




# the Lion's Roar

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Basking Ridge, New Jersey

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20-21



**Dear Friends,**

*Scene: a bustling cafe somewhere in the Somerset Hills.*

Rick - Oh, that's really interesting. I love it!

Hey, that reminds me - have you eaten at that new tavern that just opened? I was there for lunch last week, and I had the best burger I think I've ever had. You should totally check it out!

Friend #1 - Oh... yeah, ok.

*Friend thinks to herself:*

Seriously? Again with the restaurant suggestion? Why is Rick so pushy? Can't he just leave where I eat alone?

*The next day, at the same cafe.*

Rick - Hey, have you seen the new Frozen movie? The music was SO good! You should take your kids. The music has been running through my head all week.

Friend #2 - mmmmmhhhhmmmm.

*Friend thinks to himself:*

I mean how weird. Movie choices are so personal. Who does he think he is telling me which movies I should take my kids to?

*Yet another day, in the same exact cafe.*

Rick - Have you signed your kids up for soccer yet? I got my kids on the team with Coach Tom - he's amazing! He really pushes the kids, but they all end up having such a great time with him.

Friend #3 - Uh, yeah. Maybe. I'll check out his website.

**A CALL TO ACTION:**

Alpha begins again at St Mark's on Tuesday night, January 7th. Come with a friend to the first night.

**- Come. Grow. Here. -**

St. Mark's is a place to grow. It's a place to grow closer in our connection to God. It's a place to grow closer to the needs of the world, which God places on our hearts. It's a place to grow among and with other people, from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

**(Dear Friends Continued)**

*Friend thinks to herself:*

He's so judgmental with this whole "Coach Tom" thing. I wish he'd just stop with it. My kids don't even like soccer, and they aren't getting on the team with that weirdo.

*Next day. Yep, same cafe. (Rick really likes coffee.)*

Rick - Have you heard of the Met Gala? All those celebrities - Beyoncé, Lady Gaga - they all show up with these incredible gowns and costumes. And it's for charity! Somehow I got a few tickets. You want to go with us?

Friend #4 - Oh, yeah. Maybe. I think I'm busy though.

*Friend thinks to herself:*

How lame. Boor - ing. I wouldn't be caught dead at that dump.

*Today, Rick is at a cafe with YOU.*

Rick - Hey, Alpha is this gathering where you can talk about the big questions of life. The first night has a dinner-party-like atmosphere, and after seeing what it's all about you can decide if you want to come back. I've gotten a lot out of it. You want to come? It starts January 7th.

Let me know what Friend #5 says!

**Sunday School Happenings**

We welcome all children to participate in the annual creche service on December 15th. We will be practicing "Go Tell it on the Mountain" and preparing for the creche service! The Sunday school is decorated with paper chains and Christmas angels to get ready for Jesus' birthday. Lots to do so we are looking forward to seeing everyone!



During November, the children packed shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. Lots of fun was had helping children around the world. Thank you to all who donated and the children for making Christmas special for those in need.



**UPCOMING SUNDAYS**

December 1 - The First Sunday of Advent. In the "Little Apocalypse of Matthew," Jesus talks about the "coming of the Son of Man," which will occur on a day or hour that "no one knows."

December 8 - The Second Sunday of Advent. Once again, we meet John the Baptist who is preparing the way of the Lord, and calling for the paths to be made straight.

December 15 - The Crèche Service! The Open House at the Rectory! The Walk to Bethlehem!

December 22 - The Fourth Sunday of Advent. We'll hear the announcement of the angel to Joseph that Mary is about to give birth to a child.

December 29 - The First Sunday in Christmas. Every year on this Sunday we hear the grand opening of John's Gospel, with "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

## FELLOWSHIP

### Creche Gifts for Food Bank, December 15

There has been a request from the Food Bank regarding the gifts we donate through our Creche service. Each year, they sort through the items so families can be sure that the clothing items and toys are a good match for their children.

Therefore, please simply place your gift in a gift bag so it can be easily viewed and is accessible to the volunteers and families. It would still be helpful to mark boy/girl and the size on the bag.

This will make the volunteers' jobs much easier and the families are assured the items will work under their Christmas tree.

### Advent Brunch, 12/8 - Save the Date

It's that time of the year again!

Please plan to attend our annual Advent Brunch to be held after the 10am service on December 8th in the parish hall. Please bring a dish to share to go alongside the omelettes and ham that our St. Mark's chefs will be dishing out.

### Women of St. Mark's - Dec 11, 6:30pm

Traditional annual Christmas Gathering of the Women of St. Mark's. After a one-year hiatus, we will be gathering at the *Christmas Museum* home of Sharon & Tom DeFeo, Church St., Liberty Corner. Excite your Christmas spirit with the display of a 10' decorated tree, decorated wreaths and 100+ Santas and snowmen, candles, roaring fireplace, good food, wine & fellowship!

Hope to see all the ladies of the church, particularly those who haven't joined before. Sign up sheet in link and fellowship hall. Any questions, call Carol DeCoste, 908-766-0408 or cell, 918-436-8470. Merry Christmas!!

### A Request from the Flower Guild

The holidays are fast approaching, and the Flower Guild is busy making plans for greening our church and filling the altar with beautiful poinsettias. We would greatly appreciate donations towards this effort. Please forward the names of your loved ones you would like remembered in our Christmas bulletins.

## Youth Group Happenings

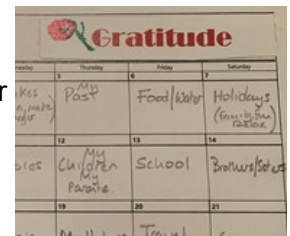
For the month of December, the youth groups will be meeting on December 1st and 8th. Then on December 15th the youth groups will be assisting with the creche service.

We're always in need of bagel donors for the youth program. For bagel sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0848aaad29a1fe3-bagels>

## STEWARDSHIP

I hope you were able to take some time to pause for a minute and experience Gratitude in your life during our recent stewardship season. An interesting idea shared at a recent Sunday Forum session by one of our parishioners, Susan Smith, was to consider having a calendar for one month and every day to consider briefly something that you are grateful for. Our family decided to do this for December this year and agreed on our list together. It was a simple way of reminding ourselves how much we have to be thankful for during this season, together.



We have just concluded our stewardship season and have received many pledge cards for 2020. Thank you for your generous pledge to St. Mark's. If you have not had a chance to pledge, the easiest way is to visit our website at [stmarksbr.org/pledge](http://stmarksbr.org/pledge), or you can pick up a pledge form in the link or in the church office. I am also available by phone or email and can follow up directly with you over the next few weeks.

All the best for the season,  
Gerald McDonnell, Stewardship  
gerry\_lesley@hotmail.com

## Birthdays

Dec 1 Emiliana Omick  
 Dec 3 Kathy Seabrook  
 Brian Rolli  
 Dec 5 Julia West  
 Dec 6 Jacob Giordano  
 Nicholas Giordano  
 Noyoze Eweka  
 Dec 12 Jim Barna  
 Wilson Kocek  
 Joanne Woolford  
 Dec 13 Benjamin Seitz  
 Rich Thoma  
 Dec 14 Caroline Coffin  
 Christy Denechaud  
 John Mooney  
 Ariana Omick  
 Elsa Van Loo  
 Dec 19 Sean Gogerty  
 Susan Sinofsky  
 Dec 20 Jennie McKoane  
 Dec 26 Tim Marston  
 Dec 27 Christine Trucco

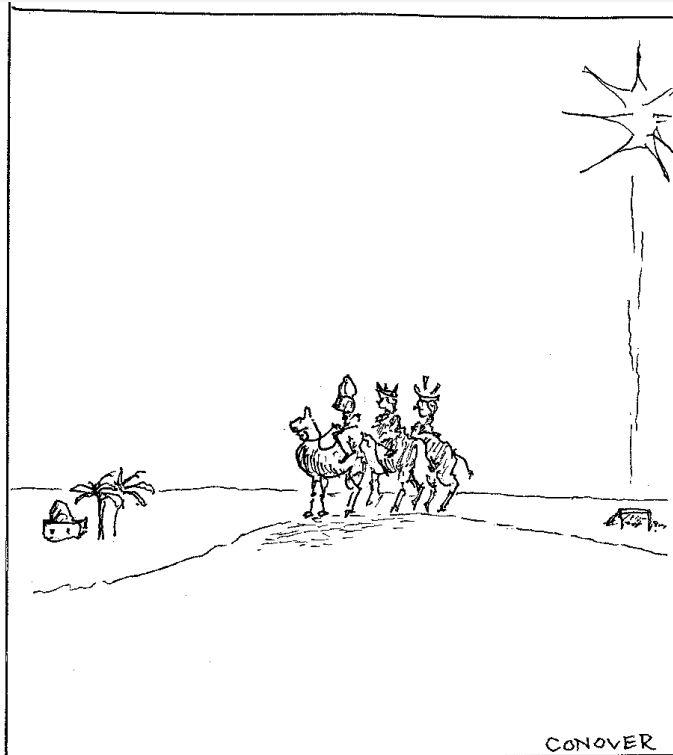


Dec 29 Mattie Morley  
 Bryan Knill  
 Theresa Nishimura  
 Carter Rolli  
 Dec 31 Rob Brangaccio  
 Meg Jewson

## Anniversaries:

12-7 Tim & Nancy Opremcak  
 12-28 Bill & Lauran Corson  
 12-31 Steven & Susan Sinofsky

## LAUGHTER IN THE PEWS



“Hey, Caspar, could you check your GPS once more?”

## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### Worship:

8am Holy Eucharist, Rite I  
 10am Holy Eucharist, Rite II & Sunday School  
 9am Wednesday in Post Chapel  
 5pm Saturday in the Post Chapel

### Alpha Program: Ridge Oak, Thursdays at 1PM

Dec 3  
 Holly Manor, 10am  
 Dec 5  
 Ridge Oak, 10am  
 Fellowship Village, 11am  
 Dec 16  
 Holly Manor, Bible Study, 10am  
 Dec 15  
 Creche Service, 10am

### Christmas Services:

Dec 24  
 1pm Harry Dunham Park  
 5pm & 11pm

### Meetings:

Dec 9  
 Wardens Meeting @ 6pm  
 Finance Meeting @ 7pm

Dec 16 Vestry Meeting, 7pm



## Your Pledge is Important

Dear friends,

It has been communicated during this Stewardship season that the leadership of St. Mark's relies on the results of the Stewardship campaign to guide its budgeting decisions. As we move into December and the windup of our Stewardship campaign, let me be a bit more direct.

One of the principal jobs of the vestry is to manage the financial resources of St. Mark's to support its mission and the work of our Rector. To accomplish this, we formulate a budget for each year and manage expenditures so as not to exceed our income. We have already started the 2020 budgeting process. At the December meeting, we will take the total of what has been pledged by you for 2020, make estimates of what we might expect in additional income, and construct a balanced budget.

Pledge income represents about 75% of our total income, so the figure we have to work with at the December meeting is crucial to determining how much we will be able to spend next year. And the amount of money we will be able to spend will in turn determine what we are able to accomplish. How we will be able to fund our outreach efforts to the broader community. How we will be able to support our worship and music programs. How we will be able to support our youth programs and how we will be able to stay connected with our homebound parishioners. Even how we will be able to maintain our facilities.

We have many wonderful things we would like to do. But to put a budget and plans together with any confidence, we need to know how much money we have to work with. So I ask that if you have not yet responded with your pledge for next year, please do so as soon as you can. And if you have supported St. Mark's by making donations but have not pledged, please consider making a pledge for 2020.

As we prepare our budget and plans for 2020, please join us so we are not limited by insufficient income but instead have more than adequate resources to fulfill our vision. And thank you for supporting St. Mark's.

In peace, Jim Lunny

### WARDEN'S CORNER:

December contains two of my favorite St. Mark's traditions, the Advent Brunch and the Creche service. As we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus the Advent Brunch opens the season and for me the Creche Service celebrates the story of the birth and increases our excitement for the true celebration on December 25<sup>th</sup>. If you haven't attended either event, come along, you will enjoy! The Advent Brunch is December 8<sup>th</sup> and the Creche Service is December 15<sup>th</sup>.

Our Project Insight meetings have concluded and we are compiling the comments to present the results at the annual meeting on January 19th. At the Vestry retreat we will examine the comments and work at developing a plan going forward. We heard a lot of good things about St. Mark's and there were also some very good suggestions for areas where we can change or improve. Comments spanned from ideas for the worship service to social activities and increasing membership. There are ideas we can implement at the Vestry Commission level, the easy suggestions are the social and membership suggestions. As far as membership we can all participate in welcoming new members and ensuring that Coffee Hour is the time that we all look around to

see if someone new is with us to make visitors feel welcome, find out their interests, invite and bring them to an activity. The most difficult question is still how do we get young people into Church.? The dream for St. Mark's is to have a generational mix, to see that we are ministering to the next generation. That will be our biggest challenge. If you did not attend a Project Insight meeting call or email the office for the link to Father Rick's video. Any additional comments are always welcome.

Project Insight discussions expressed an overwhelming gratitude for St. Mark's. We all seem to consider St. Mark's a warm, welcoming community and a source of spiritual cultivation. My family considers St. Mark's part of our home. Our children have grown up at the Church and it is still their spiritual home, they know they will be warmly welcomed when they return for a visit. Our best friends are at St. Mark's and we enjoy not only the spiritual life of the church but the support, outreach and fellowship opportunities. As our Stewardship season closes I encourage all to join in expressing gratitude for what we receive from St. Mark's so we can continue to support our facilities and programs. Please consider a financial pledge for 2020 if you have not done so already.

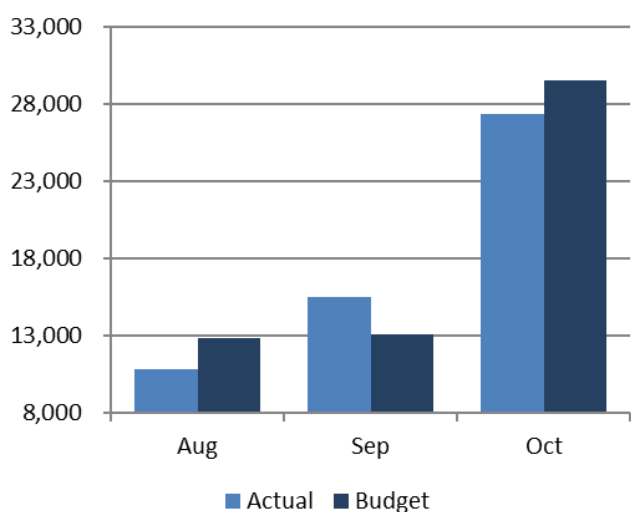
# FINANCE REPORT— October YTD Results

YTD Operating Net Income is \$334K. We continue to track too slightly above full year budget operating revenue \$378K. Our operating revenue is driven by higher donations and fundraising partially offset by lower building use and pledged income.

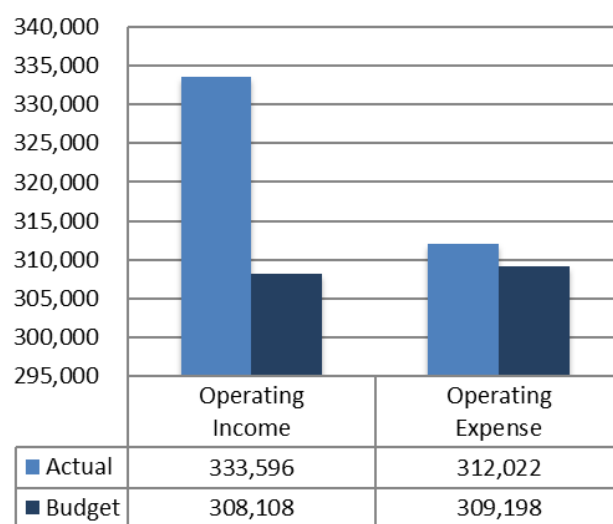
Operating expense of \$312K is \$3K above YTD budget. Projected full year costs are higher than the budget of \$378K resulting from unexpected maintenance expenses. The anticipated Operating Revenue should just cover the projected 2019 expenses.

The finance committee and vestry have reviewed the initial 2020 budget. Due to primarily increases in personnel and healthcare, the preliminary budget is \$10K higher than the 2019 budget. This assumes most other line items remain flat year over year. Once we have final operating income projections we will identify actions to ensure a balanced budget.

**Current 3 Month Pledge Income**



**YTD Operating Inc & Expenses**



## 2019 VESTRY

Rector: The Rev. Richard M.C. Morley  
 Senior Warden: Jim Lunny  
 Junior Warden: Joan Graff  
 Grounds: Pete Kocek  
 Buildings: Jeff Hooper  
 Outreach: Lea O'Shea  
 Finance: David Taylor  
 Stewardship: Gerald McDonnell  
 Christian Educ/Youth Ministry: Laura Mooney

Comm. / Evangelism: Eileen Barna  
 Membership: Marcie Hanhart  
 Fellowship: Betsy Coffin

Non-Vestry Positions:  
 Warden Emeritus: Jim Nishimura

Recording Treasurer: Doug Post  
 Sunday School Director: John Lyga  
 J2A Activities Coordinator: Tammy Young