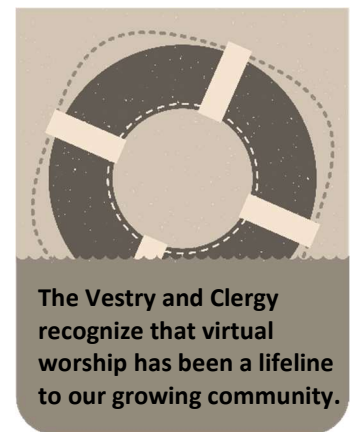


August 1, 2021

Beloved of God, Community of St. Mark's:

During the time of Covid, St. Mark's did an amazing job of offering Hybrid Worship using equipment we had (laptops and an iPhone) to cobble together a basic streaming system that somehow worked despite obvious challenges. People near and far have expressed their gratitude and amazement with the richness and creativity shown through St. Mark's hybrid worship these many months.

At their June meeting, the Vestry of St. Mark's made the important decision to allocate up to \$50,000 from capital funds toward the St. Mark's Hybrid Worship Project. From the practical standpoint, St. Mark's badly needed a sound upgrade as our PA system was failing. From the perspective of our mission, we want to strengthen St. Mark's capacity to reach beyond the walls of our church with the message of God's transforming love and forgiveness. This project brings upgrades to both our Sound System and our Video Streaming capacities. The Vestry and Clergy recognize that virtual worship has been a lifeline to our growing community—both those who live in other places and the more "local" members who are shut-in, ill or unable to attend in-person for any reason. Over the last months, hybrid worship has helped bereaved family members and friends across the country when St. Mark's hosted funeral services for their loved ones. The Hybrid Worship Project will support continued involvement from those online serving as readers, offering prayers, delivering eulogies, providing video testimonies and more.



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Upcoming changes to our technology and our worship space will offer a more elegant and higher quality experience of worship. We will install not only new speakers and microphones but also a new sound board and mixer, PTZ cameras and a large monitor in place of our former projector. The new system should present considerably fewer distractions to the in-person congregation.

We know that having more technology present and visible in our worship space will be a difficult change for many of us, and we are mindful about this reality. However, we are also aware that Hybrid Worship is here to stay. The system will also enhance the worship experience for our existing, on-line community; so that we may help these members grow and flourish in their faith right alongside the in-person members. Hybrid Worship allows us to recommit to our mission to share the love of God in Christ with those outside our in-person community. We also believe that as new generations enter our doors, we need to be able to communicate with them in ways that they understand intuitively. The many months of the pandemic have forced us to change and grow in many ways, and I am grateful that St. Mark's continues to be a vital and creative parish that is willing to change and grow while maintaining a sense of beauty and depth of worship that nurtures so many.

Covid brought many changes to everyday life, and the use of technology has been a part of that. Please be assured that we intend a thoughtful use of technology that will complement our traditional St. Mark's culture and style, not replace it! We will maintain the Rite II Book of Common Prayer approach that serves/touches/ministers to our members lovingly each week. Technology can never substitute for a powerful, in-person worship experience in the midst of the community.

The Vestry has approved up to \$50,000 from Capital Project Funds for this effort because they see it as essential to our ongoing life and ministry as a congregation. The Vestry was careful to undertake the project knowing we have the funds needed to carry it out. We would at this time welcome a special gift from any who wish to go beyond their regular pledge to support this project. Such a special gift would defray these costs and replenish our Capital Project funds, so we can be prepared for whatever may come our way next. Checks or gifts can be made out to Hybrid Worship Project or given online through PayPal and selecting the Technology/Hybrid Worship category for the gift.

In the coming weeks, the Clergy and Tech Team volunteers will be learning to use the equipment. We ask your continued patience as we navigate technology that is new to all of us.

In the Generous Love of God,



Fr. Christopher+
Rector, St. Mark's