

THE MESSENGER

from St. Mark's

June/July 2020

Graduating Seniors

COVID-19 Reflections

St. Mark's Face to Face





“For God shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”
 -- Psalm 91:11

Usually we enter this long summer liturgical season of ordinary time with reduced schedules. Our rhythms expand into longer days of playtime, vacation, and fewer obligations. At the church we usually have fewer bible studies, fewer services, greater time for planning for the coming year, and a time to reflect on what the past year has been for us as a community.

I usually love ordinary time. It comes from the root word that asks for order and structure. It’s usually a chance to step away from our big festal celebrations of Christmas and Easter to look at what it means to be simple people of faith. But as we approach the summer months this year, I realize I don’t even know what ordinary will look like for us. Will the virus abate enough that we will be able to have some very modified form of in-person worship? How on earth do we think about planning for the coming program year with so much unknown? Are there still simple ordinary ways we can “order” our days?

I was visiting with a parishioner a while back and she was telling me about a book that suggests you always start the day by making your bed. You then have started with a positive act that gives you a sense of order and accomplishment. With huge apologies to my Bohemian mother who always makes her bed, I

haven’t always had that as a reliable part of my daily routine. But lately I have started doing it. And it does help. I also try to put on whatever constitutes work clothes these days and a little make up before I hop on my first Zoom meeting of the day. At the end of the day I look for rituals to signal a shift into an evening routine.

While much of our common life has shifted, we have made some important moves towards making life ordered and giving structure to what is ordinary. The daily offices of Morning Prayer and Compline have offered our community a way to pray these days with one another. When we participate online on Sundays and still have the ability to be moved by beautiful music and worship, we remain grounded in our central acts of faith. While our bible studies have a few more technological challenges than when we gathered in a circle, they still have been lifelines of continuity, study, and Christian love.

I hear from many of you that you are outside more, cooking and baking more, and even playing board games to get a break from your screens. It is in these simple pleasures that we are reminded of the goodness of God. We are called back to the promises of creation which show bursts of new life when we slow enough to hear the call of the birds anew.

This issue of The Messenger has a different look. It gives you a window into the extraordinary ways we are remaining ordinary with one another. The people of our community are still worshiping, serving, and loving God and neighbor. The means by which we are doing this has changed radically. But the ordering of our lives is still available. Thank you for your persistence and resilience in these times. Thank you for the fearless ways you are still enacting your faith and looking for the living God. The Holy Spirit is with us and will continue to guide our common life. I’m grateful for each one of you!

Peace,

Beth +

The Messenger, USPS 514-020
 Vol 20, Issue 3, Published bi-monthly

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Article Deadline: 3rd Monday of month
 preceding bi-monthly issue

Postage paid in San Antonio, TX
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
 St. Mark’s Episcopal Church
 Rector: The Rev. Beth Knowlton

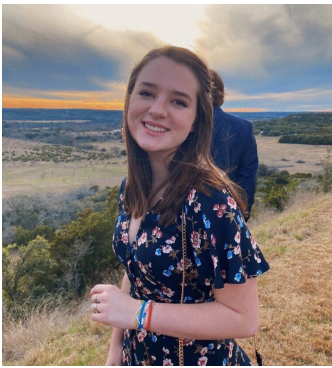
CLAUDIA ADAMS



I joined the St. Mark's community during my freshman year of high school and was confirmed last spring. I am graduating from the International School of the Americas (ISA) and will be

continuing my education at the University of North Texas in the fall. During my time at ISA, I was a part of the National Honor Society, graduated with Summa Cum Laude, and studied abroad for a month in Barcelona, Spain. I have loved being a part of the St. Mark's community and am so grateful for all the memories I've made here.

MOLLIE BLAKE



I am graduating from Alamo Heights High School. I've decided to get my undergrad in Communications at Texas A&M Corpus Christi. Although I haven't been a member of St. Mark's for long, I feel like it's always been

my home. I can still remember my first lock in at St. Mark's. It took a lot of convincing from my dear friend, Josie Breazeale, because I was nervous that my newness would stick out like a sore thumb. The moment I stepped into the Parish House, I was met with love and the overwhelming sense of belonging. That weekend of fun games, good food, and service changed me forever and I'll always be eternally grateful to be a part of such an amazing St. Mark's family. It's so sad to leave soon but I can't wait to come back and visit every chance I get.

JOSIE BREAZEALE



I have been a lifelong member of St. Mark's. The St. Mark's community has been instrumental in my growth not only spiritually, but as a person. The

Youth Group created a core group of friends and mentors that were always there for me. Likewise, the choir became a second family, starting with Cherub Choir, Boy and Girl Choir, Treble Choir, and finally graduating to Adult Choir. I have been honored to have been a Choral Scholar for the past 4 years. Because of all of this, I am proud to say that I will be attending the Sarofim School of Music at Southwestern University in the fall.

LILLY CHIPMAN



I'm graduating from Alamo Heights High School and will be attending the University of Houston this fall. Although I'm excited to start college, I'll miss being a regular at St. Mark's! It's the place where I was

baptized, and the place I found my way back to in middle school when I joined the choir and Youth Group. Since then, I've made so many amazing memories doing service projects, playing games on youth retreats, going on choir trips, and being an acolyte with the other youth. I'm so grateful for all of the opportunities I've had to grow in my faith and as a person because of this church, and of course for the amazing friends I've made along the way. I'm also especially grateful to Meredith Rogers for being the most dedicated and welcoming youth minister, as well as one of my biggest role models. I know I'll be coming back for services soon enough!

JENNY CLEMENTS



I'm graduating from Alamo Heights High School and will be playing soccer at Oglethorpe University. Growing up in St. Mark's has been a very important and impactful

experience for me. The community is my family and I will never forget volunteering at Christmas to the Street every year. I loved being able to acolyte on Sundays and will miss everyone in San Antonio.

ALI FOWLER



I've been a member at St. Mark's my entire life. I was baptized by The Rev. Mike Chalk at a Mother's Day service as an infant and with the church, hit many more milestones throughout the years. I remember going through the different levels of Sunday School until I was finally old enough to join Youth Group. I remember "graduating" from Cherub Choir into Boy and Girl Choir, and then eventually Youth Choir. I remember going through confirmation classes and getting to affirm my faith. Throughout it all, the community of St. Mark's was always there for me, supporting me through every step. I'm nervous to leave this community as I go off to college, especially when it's been my source of comfort for so long, but I know the community will still be in reach. I'll be spending my next four years at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania with a major in English. I'm already looking forward to Christmas and summer vacation when I can come home to the St. Mark's community.

CARMEN GRIMES



I am the last of my sisters to finish high school and have many memories from the Cherub Choir to the Youth Group at St. Mark's. I was not able to stay in the Youth Choir throughout high school with my hectic schedule, but I am thankful for the knowledge and opportunities I was able to experience. I loved the youth trips taken to T Bar M and volunteering during Christmas to the Street. Both events allowed for meeting new people and allowed me to reconnect with my second family. I have seen youth ministers, reverends, and choir directors come and go, and I hold a special place in my heart for those I got to know. After graduating from John Jay Science and Engineering Academy, I will be attending St. Mary's University to pursue a career in Clinical Psychology. While COVID - 19 resulted in a change of plans

for my future, I am glad to know I will still have a support system in the church and my family while attending college. Special thanks to the other graduates, Meredith Rogers, Kay Mijangos, Joe Causby, and The Rev. Matt Wise, for their spiritual advice, kind hearts, and caring personalities.

CURTIS GUNN



I am graduating from Alamo Heights High School, and I will be attending Austin Community College this fall. After the fall semester, I hope to transfer to the University of Texas where I will finish out my college career. One of my favorite memories of St. Mark's is attending the afternoon Christmas Eve service every year with my family. Also, I had a great time throughout confirmation classes.

ALLY LOZANO



I am graduating from Samuel Clemens High School in Schertz and will be attending the University of Texas at Austin in the fall. I have not yet decided on a major, but I am interested in Political Science, Journalism, and Nutrition Science. When I leave for college, I will miss St. Mark's incredibly. The polished pews, ill-fitting acolyte robes, Sardines games at youth retreats, beach s'mores, Christmas to the Street, and Youth Group. These memories will stay with me long after I leave my church home. I give thanks for the community of parishioners and friends who have seen me grow throughout the years. St. Mark's will always be with me as I step into the future! Hook 'em!

EMMA MATTHEWS



My favorite memory of St. Mark's is definitely being in the Christmas Eve pageant just a few years too long because I wanted to do it with both siblings along with our family friends. I loved the idea of being the oldest in our little constructed family unit

and so my determination to do something altogether exceeded the slight embarrassment of being a lot older than the other kids. St. Mark's has meant so much to me these past 15 years. Every year I look forward to the Christmas Eve service, because it creates such a special sense of unity that is not continually present throughout the year. Worshiping and praying means different things to so many people, but for me, the act of doing those things inside the walls of St. Mark's makes all the difference. The congregation has watched me grow all my life and has made me feel supported and truly loved. Next year, I will be attending Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. I plan on majoring in Cognitive Sciences. I am very excited for my new adventure and always know that I have St. Mark's to come back to.

SOFIA MCKENDRICK



My friend Josie has been going to St. Mark's her whole life. I was always invited to join Youth Group, and I was apprehensive at first, as I didn't really know anyone there. But, after my first time going to Youth Group, I felt as though I was

already well acquainted with everyone there. Meredith was and still continues to be the most loving, welcoming, and caring person I have ever met. She makes you feel at home even if it's your first time meeting her. She welcomed me into Youth Group with open arms and for that I will be forever grateful. I will be attending Texas Tech University and plan to major in Social Work. Being a part of the St. Mark's Youth Group has filled me much more than anything else I've been a part of. I love this church and the people who are a part of it!

JULIETTE MCNEEL



I am graduating from Alamo Heights High school and will be attending SMU in the fall. I am studying Fashion Media and Business! St. Mark's has been a big part of my life since I was young. I have so many memories of Sunday school,

choir practice, being an acolyte, and singing silent night during the Christmas Eve Service. All of these memories hold such a special place in my heart. It has helped shape me into the person I am today and has been a prominent part of my life for so long. I am forever thankful for the community it has provided and the people it has brought into my life. I am so excited for my next chapter in the fall and can't wait to see what the future holds!

PARKER WORLEY

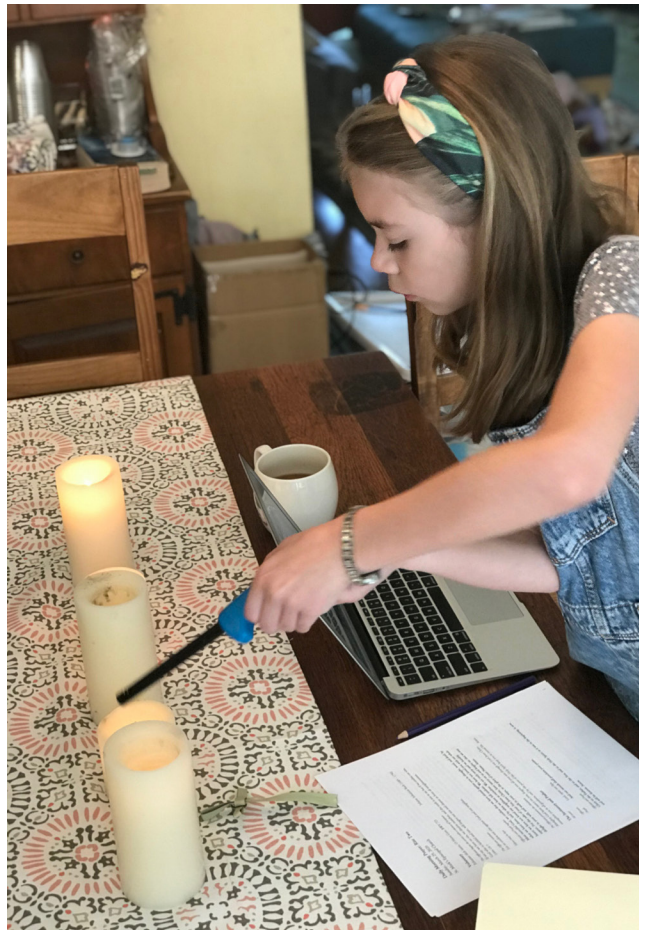


My favorite memories at St. Mark's would definitely have to be Christmas to the Street and 30 Hour Famine. I also really loved playing games in the church during Christmas to the Street with everyone. St. Mark's has always been a community of support

and love for me throughout the years and although I'm going to miss St. Mark's next year, I know they'll always be here for me when I come back. I am graduating from the International School of the Americas (ISA) and will be attending the University of Kansas in the fall where I plan to major in Environmental Science and minor in Photography.

Congratulations also to Chris Huseman who is not pictured here.

THE ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19





Behind the scenes - Morning Prayer - March 22, 2020



The doorbell rings. I slowly creep out of my room. My mom behind me, I open the door to balloons and wide smiles. It's the Hansens. We keep an intentional distance as they hand me a basket of wonderful surprises

- a university t-shirt, a picture frame, and trail mix (my favorite!). We chat, take a group picture, and say our good-byes.

The mother and son duo adopted me as part of a community graduation program. While they were at my doorstep we talked about school. The son was also a senior at Clemens High School in Schertz. He and I had never met, though we shared much in common. We would not have the chance to dance at prom, visit our elementary school for the Elephant Walk, announce our future plans on Decision Day, plan elaborate senior pranks, count down the minutes until the last bell, or walk the stage at graduation. He and I, along with millions of high school seniors across the nation, would not live those long-awaited events.

COVID-19 did not ruin our senior year, it only made it different. We would miss opportunities, but we would also forge new ones. For me, I adapted to working from home. As a math tutor, my work now involves engaging with students online. When I am not tutoring, I am in the kitchen, learning to cook, trying recipes. I resolved to wake up earlier, too. Most days, I am out of bed before 7.00am. (A feat I never thought I could accomplish considering I used to sleep until 8.15am for an 8.40am class!). Finally, I have had more time to speak to God. Days of school, work, studying, and extracurriculars left little time for quiet. Now, in the calm of early morning, I remember to give thanks for people like the Hansens and places like St. Mark's.

I look forward to seeing my church family again. To sit in the chilly pews. To listen to organ sounds and old hymns. I will cherish these aspects of church life when I leave for college this fall.

-- Submitted by Ally Lozano

For my family, staying at home has meant many complicated things. Principally, it's been a heart-wrenching moment to witness trauma unfold for thousands of people across our city, state, and country. It's also



been a dramatic transition for my brood, since I have morphed overnight into principal, teacher, recess monitor, and A/V tech support for my fourth and first graders. These are roles that have been delicately balanced with my professional work and toddler/golden doodle/laundry/meal wrangling. Painfully, quarantine has meant that food staples, personal care items – along with patience and quiet time – have been in short supply. These are complicated realities, indeed, exacerbated by murky timelines, and I have faced them, hand-in virtual-hand with my St. Mark's community. (Assuredly, FaceTime and a lively group text have revealed slices of the Kingdom in the hours I've needed them the most.)

But, in reflecting on our time at home, I am forced to push beyond the nuanced surface, and into something that's deeper, simpler, and fairly ironic. Specifically, during the period I've been temporarily removed from worldly time and the outside world, I've had more hours than ever to put myself into the hands of the Holy Spirit - and felt compelled to participate in the wondrous world surrounding us outside! My backyard has been humming with new life this spring, reminding me at every turn that I was created to love this place unconditionally, protect it judiciously, and marvel at it unceasingly. However, busy as I was, pre-quarantine, with piano lessons, article revisions, and traffic, I hadn't tuned in consistently. I hadn't known that the discovery of a tightly knotted nest could be, in fact, something to keep me from unraveling. But now, nature's nearly all I witness when I open the back door, or crack open a window. And the Holy Spirit continues to call to me in meaningful ways – through parishioners reading biblical passages from their own backyards, as well as from the magnificent chorus of songbirds accompanying Beth's sermon on Easter Sunday.

Continued on the next page.

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“Some keep the Sabbath going to church, I keep it staying at home, with a bobolink for a chorister, and an orchard for a dome.” Emily Dickinson has masterfully summed up many dimensions of my life, but it’s possible she never pierced my soul more than with these words. Swap out bobolinks for mourning doves; replace the orchard with a dense canopy of live oaks; the backyard is, indeed, where I will keep my Sabbath until we come together again.

-- Submitted by Dell Villa



Returning to school after Spring Break is a struggle of focus for students and teachers, so I was elated to hear that my Spring Break was extended a week. It was easy to continue planning my days in free-form, vacation style. And with that, I had plenty of time

to hear various leaders talk about what steps would be necessary to subdue a deadly disease. My mood and my conversations started to change at a rapid pace with no time to process what was happening. Chats with friends became more about cancelling plans than making them. Phone calls with my parents and in-laws living in senior residence buildings included talking about restrictive measures put in place that meant a lock-down policy with no visitors. FaceTime calls from our son were more frequent and filled with conversation about the challenge of staying home with two young children while two adults juggled work schedules. Our house became a beehive of activity as we prepared and then welcomed home our other adult son following the government suspension of all Peace Corps assignments. Home office arrangements were made as my husband closed the physical office of his psychology practice and set up tele-health video calls here at the house. I tapped many of my online curriculum resources and put together a distance learning plan for my students. Spending a Sunday afternoon thinking about teaching was a nice distraction, but the reality of it all snuck up on me and I was overcome with emotion. It was time to slow down, process, and seek renewal. And yet, my primary source of renewal, in-person services at St. Mark’s Church, had ceased. Events postponed, lights turned off, doors closed.

My time of darkness did not last long because emails arrived announcing online church services. The narrative of fear and uncertainty going through my head was replaced with that of our liturgies. Hymns, prayers, lessons, and a sermon brought back the feelings of Palm Sundays past. I found renewal through a computer monitor, sitting with my family, and holding a leaf from a back-yard plant. Holy Week continued to play out in sharp focus as I had close-up views of Beth and Matt stripping the altar during our Maundy Thursday service, one I have watched again as the messages are still relevant. We made our own fire here early Easter morning and I felt connected to others as the light of Christ was shared and His resurrection celebrated. I felt God’s presence in the familiar elements of each Holy Week service, and I felt God’s presence as I experienced a new way to worship.

As time passes, I am aware of more distractions here at the house. Home church is becoming too casual and is sometimes interrupted. I have found it helpful to re-read the prayers said in a Sunday service and refer to the bulletin for specifics. I often do this after attending services at St. Mark’s, but now it is a regular part of my routine. I have started using the Book of Common Prayer to look up service liturgies. Doing this has allowed me to see these words of Jesus in print as part of the Maundy Thursday service, “Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.” I give thanks for these words and for their presence in our Book of Common Prayer.

When I allow myself to think about returning to the building of St. Mark’s for church services, I wonder which part will be the most special. What have I missed the most or what will have the greatest emotional impact? At this point, I am thinking it will be the sound of the bell we ring to signal worship is starting. It will be a sound heard by many as an announcement that the doors are open, lights are on and we are once again gathered inside our building. I pray for patience.

-Submitted by Susan Thompson

COVID-19 Reflections are continued on the next page.



When Stay Home, Work Safe began, I thought since I live alone with my two devoted dogs that it would be an easy transition, then reality set in. For several years, I have

been volunteering at CAM (Christian Assistance Ministry) as a way to give back to a society that has blessed me and to bear witness of God’s love for all his creation. The Stay Home order prompted CAM and other organizations to cease using volunteers, and it was then that I realized that I received much more through CAM than I gave. The relationship with other volunteers and the interaction and insight into the lives of our most vulnerable citizens energized me. As I’ve mourned this loss in my own life, I’ve felt some sense of guilt when I acknowledge all those who have been put at great risk in our society. Their basic needs such as food and shelter are in jeopardy.

Another difficulty I’m experiencing is accepting being in a “protected” age category. How do I move forward in life continuing to be actively engaged, while honoring the sacrifice and precaution others are taking to keep me safe? So I’ve been spending some of this time contemplating how my life may unfold in the near and even more distant future.

I’ve found great comfort in St. Mark’s online services and especially love participating daily in Compline with Matt, Beth, occasionally Meredith, and now Ann. Even my dogs have accepted that I will often be singing along part of the time. While the St. Mark’s family can’t be together in the same physical space, I find it reassuring to see familiar names and faces, recognition that we are still sharing worship together. Experiencing worship in more informal settings, alone at home, I hear more clearly and contemplatively. For the first time ever, I attended each service in Holy Week. On Maundy Thursday watching Beth and Matt strip the altar and darken the space was extremely moving. Reading scripture and the Book of Common Prayer has given me a greater awareness of the power of our faith. Words from the collects in Compline “...we who are

wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness” and “...grant that we may never forget that our common life depends on each other’s toil” speak as directly to this time as to times past. I’ve also felt the freedom to spend some time following new sources. A friend referred me to the Good Friday service at the Washington Cathedral, where a vocalist performed some beautiful spirituals. I became curious about who she might be and discovered what I consider her powerful statement for our time. “If we, the people, could recognize ourselves in each other it would without a doubt be through the lens of love.”—Imani-Grace Cooper. I pray such love will find us during this time and beyond. While I am looking forward to a day when we see each others smiling faces and celebrate the glorious strains of the organ as the choir and clergy process to the altar and partake of the bread and wine, I will also miss some of the intimate inspirational moments of our online services.

--Submitted by Lucy Wilson

Thank you to each of these parishioners for contributing to this issue of The Messenger.

THE PEOPLE OF ST. MARK'S

Under San Antonio's Stay Home, Work Safe orders, many of us have been unable to continue our volunteer work at St. Mark's or other organizations in the community. However, over the past few months, the people of St. Mark's have stepped up to take care of each other, as well as those in need in our community.

When in-person gatherings were suspended in March, Call Ministry volunteers began calling all St. Mark's members to check in on each other. We also received the quarterly shipment of Forward Day by Day devotionals at the church. Several volunteers made deliveries around the city to make sure that all those who requested these booklets received them. In April, another group of volunteers wrote messages on Easter cards, addressed, and mailed them to all St. Mark's members.

When requests came from the city to help our neighbors in need, the people of St. Mark's answered the call. The SA Food Bank Good Friday Food Drive raised over \$6,500 to help feed those struggling during the COVID-19 crisis. In May, the city asked the faith community to provide 3,000 face masks

FINANCIALS

Thank you to the many who have accelerated their pledge giving! With your generosity, we can confidently support our outreach partners in need.

2020 FINANCIAL REPORT as of 4/30/20

33.33% of annual budget	Actual (YTD)	Budgeted (YTD)
Pledge Revenue	\$735,974	\$713,994
Non-Pledge & Open Plate Giving	\$54,351	\$84,000
Seasonal Giving	\$10,450	\$10,000
Other Rev (parking lot, fees, carryover)	\$161,204	\$165,734
Endowment/Fund Revenue	\$48,743	\$53,423
Total Revenue	\$1,010,721	\$1,027,151
Total Expenses	\$792,410	\$929,170
Over/(Under)	\$218,311	\$97,980

\$1,624,113 in 2020 Pledges • 286 Pledges • Average Pledge is \$5,679 • Median Pledge is \$3,000

CLERGY AT ST. MARK'S

Parish Clergy: The Rev. Elizabeth Knowlton, Rector; The Rev. Ann Benton Fraser, Associate Rector for Outreach, Pastoral Care, and Parish Life; The Rev. Matthew Wise, Associate Rector for Liturgy, Adult Formation, and Family Ministry

Making a Gift of Their Service: The Rev. Michael Chalk, Rector Emeritus; The Rev. C. Douglas Earle, Assisting Priest; The Rev. Mary Earle, Assisting Priest; The Rev. Dr. John Lewis, Co-director, St. Benedict's Work+Shop; The Rev. Mary Margaret Mueller, Assisting Priest; The Rev. Dr. Jane Patterson, Co-director, St. Benedict's Work+Shop

to protect those most vulnerable. A group of St. Mark's volunteers gave their time and talent to sew almost 700 face masks. We also raised \$1,140, which purchased 300 more masks to be donated to organizations including SA Senior Centers and Homeless Care Hub.



As we discern what the next few months will look like for our church and community, we will continue to look for ways to stay connected and be of service to those in need.



ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
San Antonio

PERIODICAL

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover photo: Rachel Dugger

Photos in this issue provided by: Dina Aboul Saad, Rachel Doyle, Ana Hernandez, Elizabeth Herrera, Ally Lozano, Jackie Matava, Natalie Matthews, Meredith Rogers, Susan Thompson, Dell Villa, Ralph Voight, Lucy Wilson, St. Mark's Youth