



**The
First Fifty Years
1951 - 2001**

**CELEBRATION
OF
ST. MARK'S**

**The
Congregation**

**St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Chenango Bridge, New York**

The 1980s

Glory to you in the splendor of your temple.

Canticle 13

1980 - 1982 Father Speer's Last Years As Our Priest



Jean Speer, Father Speer and Bishop Ned Cole at Father Speer's 30th Anniversary Party

1980

St. Mark's Church decided to support Judy Kessler's decision to study for the priesthood under Canon 10. Canon 10 was a church law which provided an opportunity for a person to study for the priesthood who couldn't attend seminary because of other obligations. The members of the congregation formed a Canon 10 Committee. Initially they were Gloria Chantland, Barbara Davis, Linda Perrin, Ruth Pierce and Leiper Reed. Later Bob Thompson was also included.

(Judy Kessler)

In 1976 the Episcopal Church allowed women to become ordained priests. I had never given this any thought at all. My background was as a wife and mother who had done volunteer work with the Methodist Nursery School and the Boy's Club. Out of curiosity, Nancy Bolender and I attended the ordination of the Rev. Janet Watrous, who was the first women to be ordained

1980 Continued

in our area. During the service I knew that this was my calling and what I needed to do. I discussed it immediately with the Bishop at the coffee hour that followed the service.

My husband, Brian, could not have been more supportive from the get go. My call was the beginning of a long and sometimes difficult process. When I wanted to give up or came close to doing so, God and Brian told me I couldn't.

Myra English led Project Bread, a fund raising project used to replenish emergency food cupboards. Homemade bread was baked by women of the congregation and was sold at the Giant Supermarkets.

In 1980 and for the next few years, the church faced financial problems and was unable to pay its bills from the proceeds of the collection. An appeal was made in August for emergency donations.

(Ruth Pierce)

The church had come to depend too heavily on a fund set up from the inheritance of Mrs. Windus. We were using the fund for everyday common expenses and knew that this couldn't go on. We needed the congregation to be aware of the shortfall and of their obligation to fund our daily budgeted expenses from our contributions and not the fund.

1981

St. Mark's made its first food donations to the CHOW program sponsored by the Broome County Council of Churches.

Marion Shoop starts a Caring and Sharing group aimed at keeping St. Mark's alive and active in doing God's work in the church and the community. The group supported St. Mark's work at the Chenango Bridge Nursing Home, involvement with our own Sunday school program and maintenance of church property.

Coffee hour was rescheduled for once a month.

1982

The Women's Sewing Group made 10 hospital gowns.

1982 Continued

Father Speer initiated an adult class after the 10 o'clock service for reading, study and discussion. The first book to be considered was Mutual Ministry by James Fenhagen

This year's budget deficit was \$2,000.

Father Speer celebrated his 30th Anniversary as a priest and his 25th anniversary as rector of St. Mark's on June 2, 1982. A celebration of the Eucharist was held at 7:30 pm and was attended by Bishop Ned Cole. This was followed by a reception in the undercroft.

Memories of Father Speer

(Nancy Bolender)

This story wasn't about the church. Pete and Jean Speer were playing cards at my house. I had a new little cat, which loved shoelaces. When we were done and Pete got up to leave, he stepped out of his shoes. My cat had quietly eaten his shoe laces!

(Evelyn Smith)

Father Speer made our participation during the service very clear.

You sit to listen

You kneel to pray.

You stand to sing.

He was an all right guy, always fair and very down to earth. My brother, Les Wilmarth and I asked him to do the funeral service for our Mother, Theo Wilmarth. It was the last funeral service he did at St. Mark's.

(Ruth Pierce)

Father Speer was a very private person, but a good man. After Bill died, he'd stop over about once a week to visit. We didn't talk about Bill, but he just wanted to see if I was all right. I knew his heart was in the right place.

1983 Year of Transition



Rev. Jeffrey Meadowcroft, Judith Kessler, Rev. Charles Speer, Rev. Ralph Johnson, Rev. George Entwistle

After 25 years of service at St. Mark's, Father Pete Speer retired on January 28, 1983.

The women of the Methodist Church catered a dinner in his honor. He was given a picture of the church painted by Dorothy Bensley and a collected purse. He and his wife Jean retired to Greene, New York.

After the Speers had left, the rectory was rented out for six months.

The Rev. George Entwistle, formerly the Rector of St. Paul's in Endicott, New York came out of retirement to serve as supply Priest after Father Speer's departure.

A search committee headed by Fred Doolittle was formed and made arrangements for visitation and interviews of prospective candidates.

1983 Continued

The Vestry decided that Eucharist would be celebrated at every service.

On December 24, 1983, the Rev. Jeffrey Meadowcroft accepted the call as Rector of St. Mark's. His first service was on Christmas Eve at the 11:00 pm service which was a celebration of the Eucharist with Lessons and Carols.

(Barbara Davis)

When I first met Father Jeff in the foyer, I pretended to be looking outside. He asked, "What are you looking for?"

I replied, "Your steed, you are our knight in shining armor aren't you?"

I felt that a knight in armor was about what we needed at this point.

1984 and 1985 Years of Innovation



Joel Taylor lights candle for children's service with help of his grandmother, Dot Johnson.

Father Jeff Meadowcroft soon requested some changes. He removed the "Thou Shall Not Park" sign from the Rector's reserved spot and requested that it be reserved for handicapped parking instead. He wished to have the reserved sacrament kept for continual use and to have a candle burning in the sanctuary to indicate the presence of the sacrament.

Ruth Pierce gave a sanctuary lamp in memory of her husband William Pierce. And Jenny Cooper designed an aumbry box, which holds the sacrament.

Dot Johnson was appointed Sunday School Superintendent following Marion Shoop and was voted a salary of \$125.00 a month. When asked what she did with this vast amount, Dot said, "Almost all of it was spent on supplies for the Sunday school."

1984 Continued

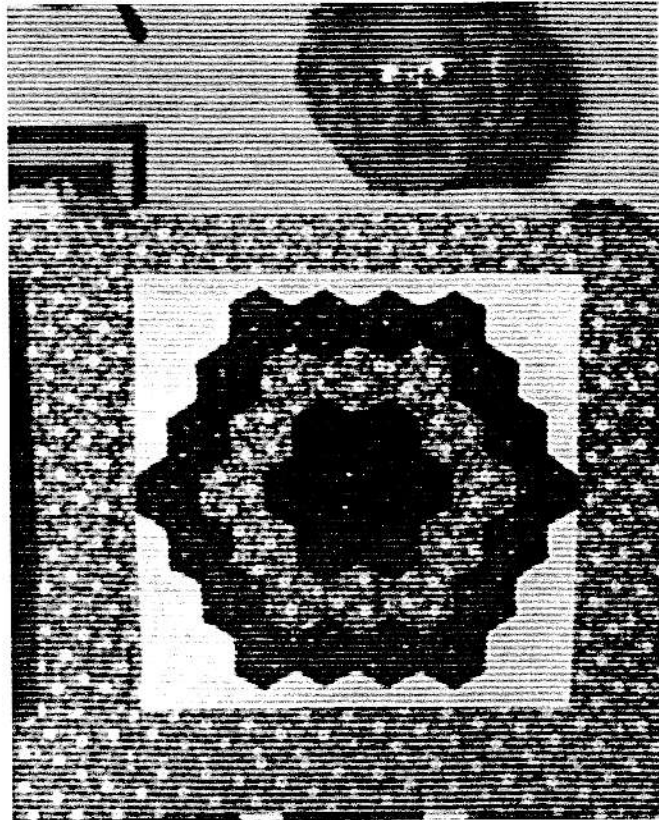
(Dot Johnson)

A children's sermon was not given. The children and the teachers spent the entire service in the undercroft. The children participated in a very short service designed especially for them. After this they went to their Sunday school classes.

Foyers groups were started for congregational fellowship. Names were drawn to form groups of 8 people. They met once a month in one another's homes for an informal meal and a social evening. After four months, names were drawn again and new groups were formed.

This year there was a budget deficit of \$7,000.

1985



Elsie Ingraham displays quilt made by the Guild.

1985 Continued

Judy Kessler was ordained as Deacon at St. Paul's Cathedral in Syracuse, New York by Bishop O'Kelley Whitaker on June 8, 1985.

(Judy Kessler)

I was ordained on a Saturday. That Sunday, the ladies of the Guild gave me a quilt they had made and the congregation gave me the Interpreter's Bible, a multi volume set. They presented these gifts in a wheel barrow which was rolled down the aisle. I had long coveted that quilt. Brian and I redecorated the bedroom to go with its blue, rust and cream color scheme.

In 1985, St. Mark's was alive with new ideas for worship.

- We decided to include the announcement of individual birthdays and anniversaries.
- The service sometimes included contemporary guitar music and liturgical dancing.
- Father Meadowcroft began home blessings. Chuck Miller made the crosses, which were replicas of our sanctuary cross, to be used for the blessing. The cross was left with the home.
- For the first time, the services of Compline and Evening Prayer were used.
- More informal services were conducted in the lounge.
- A program was given twice a year to help children to understand Holy Communion and First Communion was given.
- Some members of St. Mark's attended a Cursillo weekend. These weekends were part of an international movement designed to increase spiritual awareness and active participation in the work of the church.
- All confirmands were to take on projects in the church or community. They were also asked to join a Commission.
- Brunches for newcomers were given at local restaurants.

In 1985, The Diocesan Venture in Mission was completed after 3 years with a total contribution from St. Mark's of \$24,000. Marion Shoop was the Chairperson.

Sunday school attendance was up by 25%.

Father Jeff sent a letter to those long absent from services; this resulted in an increase in attendance.

1985 Continued

Father Jeff also began the Lay Ministry Commission with church members Ted Bryant, Brian Kessler, Eric Lane, Ann Range, Faith Gaynor and Olive Weatherby, for the purpose of visiting shut ins and taping services. Lay Readers, Bob Davis and Les Crichton conducted services at nursing homes. The Lay Ministry Commission also sponsored a Gifts Discernment workshop for the congregation.

(Ann Range)

Part of Father Jeff's ministry was to get us to care about each other. Before he came, we pretty much came to services and then went home.

A "Kirkin O' the Tartan" celebration was held on St. Andrew's Day with Scottish dancing and bagpipe music.

(Jeanne Eichelberger)

I joined St. Mark's in 1985. I was looking for a church that left its door open, as St. Mark's does. After I had tried the door and entered the church, I went up the stairs to the choir loft and leafed through the music left on the organ to see what this church was singing and playing.

(Judi Laine)

We always came to early service. When our son Eric came, we missed church because we were at the hospital. Faith Gaynor (White) immediately called the hospital to see if we were there. She must have said she was Doctor Gaynor, because they put her right through to the labor room. By the 10 o'clock service everyone knew Eric was on his way. It's this atmosphere of caring that has kept us at St. Mark's. We never thought of leaving, even though there have been several priests and supply priests.

1986 One of St. Mark's Own is Ordained a Priest



Members of the Choir: Les Crichton, Ralph Moore, Peg Prentice, Armand Harding, Pam Thorson , Marion Shoop, The Rev. Judith Kessler, Lee Harding, Jeanne Eichelberger, Dorothy Pierce, Joan Moore (Barbara Witko was in the choir but is not in this picture.)

On May 10, 1986, Judy Kessler was ordained Priest by Bishop O'Kelley Whittaker at St. Mark's Church. She was the first member of the congregation to be ordained as a Priest and the second woman ordained in the church from the Binghamton area.

(Judy Kessler)

My Canon 10 Committee was very supportive, especially Bob Thompson. In truth, St. Mark's gave me a hugely strong foundation for what I ended up doing. St. Mark's was my example of a community of faith with its ups and downs, and has been a real safety net for me too.

(Margot Kessler, quoted from the Binghamton Press)

The biggest dilemma is the question of names. "What do we call her, 'Father Mother'?" she asked.

(Jim Cady, quoted from the Binghamton Press)

There's only one boss upstairs and I don't care who preaches about him.

Innovations in the ministry of the members of St. Mark's to one another continued through the 1980's. The Lay Ministry initiated the Helping Hands Committee, which was formed to make emergency meals, to give emergency care to relieve primary caregivers, and to run errands for shut-ins.

1986 Continued



Gerry and Trina Cooney; Father Meadowcroft holds Patrick Cooney

(Trina Cooney)

Father Jeff Meadowcroft baptized Patrick on August 3, 1986.

Evangelism Committee made newcomers packets and under the leadership of Bob Thompson initiated a Shepherd's program for newcomers. The Shepherds sat with the newcomers during service, escorted them to the coffee hour and made introductions and familiarized them with the organizations and activities of the church.

Father Jeff made every effort to include the homebound in the life of the church. He gave them ministries that could be performed at home for the congregation, which included sorting records, making items for the church bazaar, making phone calls to coordinate events, being on the prayer chain, and coordinating the prayer chain.

1986 Continued

A Landscape Committee of Helen Crichton, Judy Kessler and Marion Shoop took charge of planting annuals and perennials.

The baptismal font was donated in the memory of Mark Prentice by Peg Prentice and Faith Gaynor White.

(Faith Gaynor White)

The font was designed especially for St. Mark's after Father Jeff sent a picture of the sanctuary to the company in Boston. Father Jeff, Ruth Pierce and I drove to Boston to pick it up when it was completed.

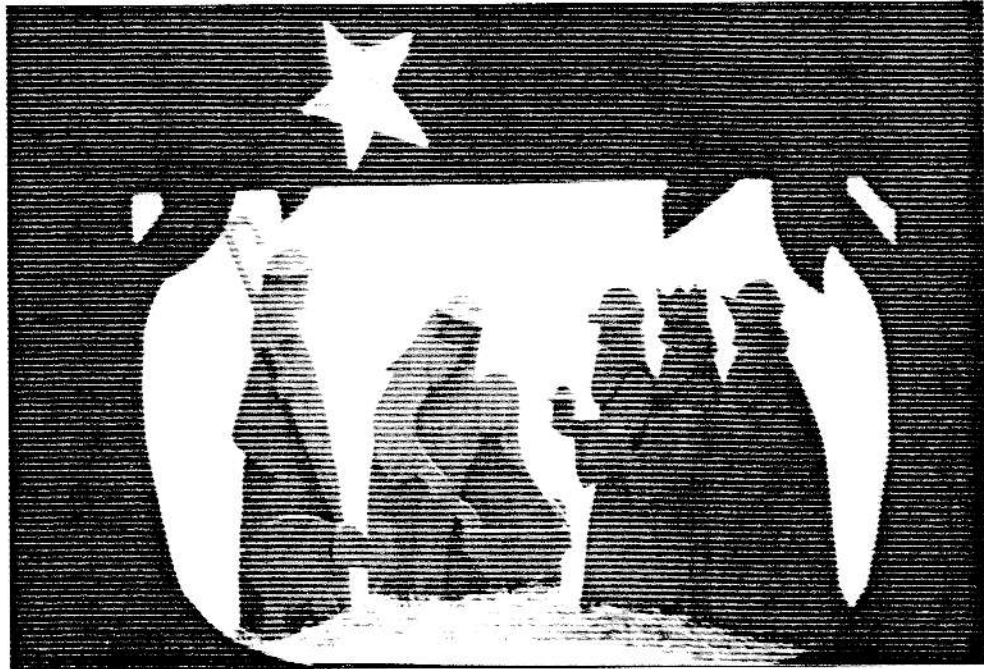
A wooden sign in front of the church was given by the Crichtons in memory of Les's mother, Ruth Crichton.

Les and Ruth Wilmarth donated the Advent Wreath in memory of Les's Father, Warner Wilmarth.

Dennis Burke made both the picture boards for the lounge and the nametag racks in the hall.

Ethel Lynady retired as Church Secretary and Mary Taylor filled the position.

1987 The Commissions Are Established



Wooden Crèche Scene

Money to buy materials for a large wooden crèche scene was raised at a church bazaar. Nancy Cady provided the plans. Mary Taylor and Don Johnson did the carpentry. This scene was displayed outside during the Christmas season.

1987 was the beginning of the Rector's discretionary fund.

Father Jeff Meadowcroft started the commission and leadership groups. The first commission leaders were:

- Education - Dorothy Lane
- Evangelism - Conrad Range
- Lay Ministry - Faith Gaynor
- Property - Alan Blythe
- Worship - the Rector
- Fellowship - Nancy Bolender
- Budget - Eric Laine
- Altar Guild - Marion Shoop
- Church School - Dot Johnson
- Prayer Chain - Racma Wilson
- St. Mark's Guild - Myra English
- Acolytes - Neal Lane

1987 Continued

The Choir received new red robes, which were dedicated on April 1, 1987. The robes were a memorial gift given in memory of Audrey Nelson

Father Jeff conducted an Inquirer's Class during Lent for newcomers and for those who wished a refresher course in the Christian faith within the Episcopal Church.

The parking lot was repaved again.

Evelyn Berg donated the oriental rug which is used in the lounge and Madeline Taylor donated the large table which is also in the lounge.

Bob Thompson continued his annual Mother's Day Brunches which he called "Green Eggs and Ham".

Marion Shoop, as President of the Diocese ECW, went to the National Church Conference.

Father Jeff went on a pilgrimage to Egypt and to Israel. And this begins the story of Father Jeff's communion wine.

(Ann Range)

Father Jeff wanted to bring us something from the Holy Land for all of us to share, so he brought back some wine to be used during communion.

(Esther Finn)

A bottle of Father Jeff's wine from the Holy Land was left open in the sacristy. I was on the Altar Guild and was preparing the elements for the communion service. So, I used the wine from the bottle that was open. During the service, Father Jeff blessed the wine, took a drink of it and hurried from altar and out the door. The wine in the open bottle had gone sour. He got some new wine, repeated the consecration and the service went on. I was told later that I should have tasted the wine before I used it. I didn't know that. I didn't stay on the Altar Guild much longer; I was always getting in trouble.

Sometime in the mid 1980's, the tradition of blessing animals was begun at St. Mark's. The historian was offered all these versions of one story on this theme.

- Father Jeff blessed Peg Prentice's dog and it died.
- Judy Kessler blessed Faith Prentice's cat and it died.
- Judy Kessler blessed Faith Prentice's horse and it died.

1987 Continued

According to Faith Prentice (Dr. Faith White), it's the second story that's true. The deceased cat was a 6 year old Himalayan named Bangora and it didn't die immediately upon being blessed, but two or three days later. According to Judy Kessler, Faith Prentice said, "Thank God you didn't bless my horse."

(Faith Gaynor White)

There were many discussions about covering the cinderblock walls of the sanctuary. Several of the original members thought this would obscure the fact that this church was built by them. In an effort not to divide the church, Father Jeff and the Vestry decided to put a gold threaded wall paper on the front walls of the church and to leave the side cinder blocks as they were. The project was finally finished in December, 1988.

1988 - 1989 Father Meadowcroft's Last Years



Warren, Sandy and Don MacDuffee in the Phyllis June MacDuffee Garden

A landscaped garden area, located between River Road and the parking lot in the memory of Warren's wife and Don's mother, Phyllis June MacDuffee. The garden was paid for by donations given to the Memorial Fund in memory of June. She had long been a devoted member of the parish and an active gardener.

A Lenten study was conducted on the relationship between faith and our health. Healing service was added to the evening midweek service and elicited a very enthusiastic response.

St. Mark's published a list of Vestry qualifications and responsibilities.

Dick Halstrom made a new large CHOW collection box. Some people said, "Gosh it's great, but it's so big. It was nice to fill the old one." But soon the new box was filled to overflowing.

1988 Continued



Arna O'Neill, Mary Taylor, Tina Whetsell, Kim Whetsell in Scenes from the Passion

The Sunday school presented a play entitled "Scenes from the Passion" on the Evening of Good Friday.

A Long Range Planning Committee on congregational needs was formed. The Vestry signed a statement that they were either tithing or working towards tithing.

Several Cub Scouts, under the direction of Father Jeff and Priscilla Kellogg, worked for and completed the God and Country Award. Patrick Gaynor and Ben Kellogg were two of these Scouts.

A joint Thanksgiving service was held with the Nimmonsburg Methodist Church, St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church and the Chenango Bridge Methodist Church.

News from DownUnder was a column added to the Lion's Roar by the Sunday school classes.

1988 Continued

A St. Mark's love story:

(Libby Gruver Ingraham)

Brenton and I met at St. Mark's, when we were kids, back in the 1950's. Our parents, Jessie and Clyde Gruver and Elsie and Orrin Ingraham helped to found St. Mark's. Brenton and I went together all through high school. But after high school, we went our separate ways. We met again at my Mom and Dad's 50th anniversary party. We were married at St. Mark's on July 8, 1988.

1989



Some of the Early Members of St. Marks: John and Della Pepernik, Ken and Olive Weatherby, Les and Ruth Wilmarth, Fred and Peg Sisson, Henry and Myra English, Peg Prentice, Nancy Bolender, Mary Taylor, Ethel Lynady, Ralph and Joan Moore, Elsie Ingraham, Clyde Gruver. In Front, Ruth Pierce, Ruth Zanker, Jessie Gruver

A history project was started and was called "This Is Your Life, St. Mark's". To commemorate the contribution of all the original members, Ruth Pierce, made a

1989 Continued

banner, which displayed sheep, one for each of the members who were present at the time of Rev. George Detor. Trina Cooney cross-stitched little sheep for each of the original members.

St. Mark's congregation was using nametags, so we could get to know each other better. Father Jeff had always encouraged the members to greet new people. The parishioners would also call on newcomers for a friendly visit at home.

Rides to church were offered to those who needed them.

Father Jeff Meadowcroft answered a call from Christ Church in Pittsford, New York. He wanted to go to a larger city where his wife could be an assistant in an urban ministry.

A grateful memory:

(Judi and Eric Laine)

The person we want to tell about was Ruth Pierce. We always used to sit in the back, because we had 3 kids and might have to slip out with them. Ruth would sometimes take them out for us to count cars outside or tell stories to them or whatever. It gave us a little space to worship together and it meant so much to us.