St. Mark’s Church, Bridgewater

Pursuant to Resolution #2 – Common Mission Support - passed in the 2014 Convention, St. Mark’s, Bridgewater has by the grace of God been able in recent years to honor the full 12.5% amount traditionally recommended for a diocesan assessment. Accordingly, we found ourselves challenged by the resolution to redirect 2.5% of our annual revenues of our annual budget into fresh mission initiatives during 2015. Furthermore, we note that the resolution invites us to share our story as to how we have redeployed these resources which formerly went toward the support of diocesan mission. What follows is a brief summary of that redeployment.

In March of 2015 the St. Mark’s resolved to focus our redeployment of the 2.5% to mission efforts within the town of Bridgewater, the site of our worship space and parish hall. Our first task seemed to us to obtain a firm handle of the nature of mission. In the past, we have most likely seen it to consist in gifts and grants to worthy organizations both within and outside the church who are seen to be furthering worthy servant causes.

Our Episcopal leadership has become a strong voice for the church’s mission replicating God’s mission of which the church aspires to be a part and support. The Book of Common Prayer maintains that the “mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” To provide further clarity, our bishops have crafted some “Baptismal Marks of Mission” which were shared with us at the 2012 Convention. They are as follows:

**Worship & Prayer**

- Teaching, baptizing and nurturing new believers

**Repentance & Forgiveness**

- Resisting evil and safeguarding the integrity of creation

**Evangelism**

- Proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ
Service

• Responding to human need by loving service

Justice & Peace

• Seeking to transform unjust structures of society and challenging violence

These five “marks” have tested our collective imagination. Initially, having the opportunity to redirect the 2.5% felt not unlike the experience of a youngster being presented with a sizable sum of money and invited to make something of it. Our annual budget being a bit under $100,000/year, the amount in question came to $2,400. We were simultaneously eager and cautious lest we either miss a good opportunity or spend foolishly. The baptismal marks discourage thinking of mission as simple “outreach.” Rooted in our baptisms, they take in the whole scope of a Christian’s vocation within the world. Hopefully, our experience will lead to further expressions of mission which combine a certain venturesomeness with prudence and faithfulness to the gospel.

Specifically, our expenditures were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of Fun for Children</td>
<td>$70.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organist for Saturday evening services</td>
<td>$525.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Dinner</td>
<td>$213.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenant to Care gift certificates</td>
<td>$375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to ACE</td>
<td>$1,216.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,400.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Spirit of Fun** was an effort envisioned and organized by a parishioner and vestry member – Nancy Sutherland. Nancy, who oversees Sutherland Academics in Danbury set up our parish hall and front lawn with attractive games and crafts on tables, and invited neighborhood children to enjoy a church experience of invention, creativity and fun. This was offered in tandem with several other activities: free summer, sidewalk hotdogs and Saturday evening worship out of a Wee Worship Book.
Organist for Saturday evening services – as mentioned above, we experimented offering some non-Eucharistic worship once a month, August through October, following some of the Wee Worship Book evening offices supplemented with hymn singing, sung responses to the prayers, and a homily each time.

Community Dinner – On several occasions, we offered free prepared food to the community. One such occasion was the summer hotdog event on a Saturday afternoon. Another included free passes for certain Bridgewater residents identified by the town social worker as experiencing current economic hardships who were privately mailed passes for our annual Victorian Christmas Dinner.

Covenant to Care Gift Certificates – For many years, St. Mark’s has been a participant in Covenant to Care four times a year (Easter, Mothers’ Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas) with baskets of goods for those identified among the needy in the New Milford – Danbury region and including Bridgewater. Our support this past year included gift certificates at Thanksgiving and Christmas that went to specifically to Bridgewater residents.

ACE – The AfterCare Enrichment Program (at Burnham School in Bridgewater) is a recently established after school offering to Bridgewater children. One of our own vestry members, Lanie Flanagan, has been instrumental in its start-up. (Bridgewater elementary education has struggled with low enrollment given the generally high cost of Bridgewater housing and real estate in an ageing and shrinking town.) The ACE budget for the 2015-2016 School year totals $18,460.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Rev. Robert W. Woodrooife
Missional Priest
St. Mark’s Church, Bridgewater