

Listening Process
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral

“Listen and attend with the ear of your heart.”

- *Benedict of Nursia*

Both justice and inclusiveness are core values of the Saint Mark's Cathedral Community. As Christians and members of the Episcopal Church, we attempt to, “Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves,” and to “Strive for justice and peace among all persons, and respect the dignity of every human being.” Respectfully engaging in discourse about civic issues is central to our identity.

In creating this Listening Process, the Vestry hopes to provide a safe place for the congregation to discuss, debate, and deliberate civic issues. Our goal is to provide a sacred, safe space where we may listen to those with whom we may not be in agreement, while recognizing we are all one in the Body of Christ. Our prayer is that this leads to a stronger congregation, in which differences are addressed and honored. In conducting these Listening Processes, the Vestry seeks to hear the voices of the Saint Mark's Cathedral community, inform themselves about issues, and come to a decision. Note that this process is designed in response to requests for endorsements. The Saint Mark's Vestry may choose to initiate additional listening processes as desired or needed.

Engaging in the Listening Process

1. The Dean and Wardens receive a request for endorsement:
 - a. Criteria for entering Listening process:
 - i. The request is from a Saint Mark's Ministry.
 - ii. The request is from the broader community but a Saint Mark's ministry is willing to sponsor it.
 - iii. This request fits the Saint Mark's mission and ministry.
 - iv. The Bishop, the Diocese or the Episcopal Church has/has not made a decision on this issue.
 - v. This request will not violate current laws for 501(c)3 organizations.
 - vi. This request serves the common good.
 - b. The requester completes an application that includes
 - i. A summary of the issue
 - ii. How it relates to the Baptismal Covenant
 - iii. How it relates to the our core values, as expressed in the Saint Mark's Strategic Plan, specifically within the Vision, Mission, and Values
 - iv. Where to find additional resources
2. The Executive Committee (the Dean and Wardens) reviews the application and makes one of the following decisions:
 - a. To pass it on to the Vestry

- b. To return it to the applicants for clarification and/or editing
 - c. To decline the application.
- 3. The Vestry votes on whether to consider the issue for endorsement
 - a. If the answer is yes, a forum is scheduled at the first convenient opportunity. Note that, due to scheduling constraints, it is advisable for the applicants to submit their application as far in advance of any legislative, voting, or other deadlines as possible.
 - b. If clarification is requested, the application is returned to the applicants for additional content and/or editing
 - c. If the answer is no, the process will be halted.
- 4. One of the wardens schedules the forum, recruits Vestry members to serve as scribes and readers, and obtains statements both for and against the issue.
- 5. The Vestry conducts Listening Forum to gather input from the congregation
 - a. One of the wardens introduces the forum, offering a brief reflection on its purpose, which is for members of the parish to listen to one another respectfully. Vestry members attend and participate, with a special focus on listening to the voice of the community.
 - b. Two Vestry members read statements for and against the issue.
 - c. Table groups discuss the issue, in light of the baptismal covenant and relationship to Saint Mark's, as well as broader implications.
 - d. Prayer and scripture, silence and contemplation are important elements.
 - e. Input from the table groups is shared with the larger audience. Vestry members act as scribes. Attendees are welcome to share their comments as to their feelings on the issue at hand.
 - f. Attendees may also share comments with comment cards
 - g. An email alias is made available to those who wish to comment and weren't able to attend the forum.
- 6. All data is compiled and shared with the Vestry members.
- 7. The Vestry enters a period of discernment, based on what they have heard, and feedback they continue to receive. Generally, the period of discernment will end at the next scheduled Vestry meeting.
- 8. The Vestry discusses issue at next Vestry meeting, reviews the issue, and determines whether or not to endorse. The final decision is made by the Vestry.

Engaging in Supplemental Process

- 1. A group or Saint Mark's member identifies an issue for which they are seeking Saint Mark's endorsement.
- 2. They formally applies to Saint Mark's Executive Committee for endorsement
 - a. Criteria for entering Supplemental process:
 - i. The request is from a Saint Mark's Ministry.
 - ii. The request is from the broader community but a Saint Mark's ministry is willing to sponsor it.
 - iii. This request fits the Saint Mark's mission and ministry.
 - iv. The Bishop, the Diocese or the Episcopal Church supports this issue

- v. This request will not violate current laws for 501(c)3 organizations.
 - vi. This issue has no stated opposition
 - vii. The request serves the common good
- b. The requesters complete an application that includes:
- i. A summary of the issue
 - ii. How it relates to the Baptismal Covenant
 - iii. How it relates to our core values, as expressed in the Saint Mark's Strategic Plan, specifically within the Vision, Mission, and Values
 - iv. Where to find additional information
3. The Executive Committee reviews the application and makes one of the following decisions:
- a. To pass it on to the Vestry with a recommendation for endorsement.*
 - b. To return it to the applicants for clarification and/or editing
 - c. To decline the application.
4. The Vestry votes on the recommendation from the Executive Committee. Their responses may include the following:*
- a. The issue will be endorsed
 - b. The issue will be returned to the applicants for clarification and/or editing
 - c. The issue will not be endorsed.

*Note: If the issue is controversial or the Executive Committee and/or Vestry feels that the community would benefit from conducting a Listening Process, they may elect to either recommend one (the Executive Committee) or request one (the Vestry). If so, this issue would go through the Listening Process as described above).

Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you.

- Henri Nouwen

Listening Process Application
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral



Directions: If you would like to have an issue considered for endorsement by St. Mark's Cathedral, please read and familiarize yourself with the Listening Process guidelines. Once you have done so, please complete this form, using additional sheets as necessary, and return to either the Dean or the Senior Warden. Contact the Senior Warden with any questions or concerns.

Issue Name:

Contact Person (please include phone number and email address):

Sponsoring Saint Mark's Ministry:

Relevant Dates (i.e. election deadlines, filing deadlines, etc.):

Resources:

Please include website and other resource information for organizations that both support and are against this issue

Issue Summary:

(Please provide a detailed description of this issue, using additional sheets as necessary)

How does this issue relate to our Baptismal Covenant?

How does this issue relate to our core values as expressed in Saint Mark's Strategic Plan, specifically within the Vision, Mission, and Values?

Additional Information for Consideration

Thank you!