

Episcopal Identity

THE REV. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



Rev. Kristin Sullivan,
School Chaplain

**He has told you,
O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord
require of you but
to do justice and
to love kindness and
to walk humbly
with your God?**

– Micah 6:8

One morning this past spring, I sat down with our 2nd grade students to hear what they had learned about food insecurity and hunger in preparation for a service project they would be doing with their 6th grade buddies. The deep thought and empathy students showed blew me away. They didn't just tell me facts; they connected emotionally with the issue of hunger and the children who struggled with something they took for granted.

At St. Mark's, education is a constellation of many things. We want students to be academically well-versed, emotionally strong, and spiritually attuned. We strive to create a school community that will teach them the skills and attitudes that will allow them to become self-aware, empathetic people prepared to make a difference in the world. We are guided in this by the principles and ideals of Episcopal Identity, expressed through:

- **School Worship** that is creative, inclusive, draws fully upon the liturgical resources of The Episcopal Church, and is a regular part of school life for all faculty and students.
- **Community Life** in which reflection, prayer, and matters of the spirit are honored and cultivated and the physical, mental, and emotional health of all are supported and nurtured.
- **Religious Formation and Study** that is meaningful, academically substantive, and age-appropriate, and, in teaching the Christian tradition, fosters dialogue with other faith traditions.
- **Social Justice**, which is the integration of the ideals and concepts of equity, justice, and a just society throughout the life of the school; the embracing and honoring of diversity; and the inclusion of community service and service-learning as an integral part of the life of the school.¹

The last ideal, Social Justice, drives our dedication to service learning. We aim for every student to have a hands-on, age-appropriate service experience each year. As students grow through their time at St. Mark's, the type of service they engage in changes and grows along with them. Primary and Lower School projects have included collecting books for Books Between Kids, creating Birthday Bundles for children in need, and making cards for nursing home patients during the holiday season. In Middle School, each grade is partnered with a local service agency that they visit in person during the school year. These partnerships include The Houston Food Bank, Care Partners Dementia Day Center, and The Beacon Homeless Day Center. During their once-a-week service learning class, students learn about their partner organization and the issue they are working to address.

Through large and small projects, St. Mark's students learn to look beyond themselves as they serve the larger community. We are building lifelong habits of service that will impact our students and the communities they live in for years to come.

¹ "Episcopal Schools," National Association of Episcopal Schools, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.episcopalschools.org/about-episcopal-schools/>

Top: Riya Singh, '32, and Max Solomon, '32, in Lower School Chapel
Bottom Left: Chapel Chums, Bottom Right: Rev. Kristin Sullivan, School Chaplain