

Discerning Ministry – Kris Green and Ross McKay

We have so many gifted leaders at St. Mary's who care for our faith community and those in the wider world. We have business people, social workers, house cleaners, delivery drivers, physicians, parents, engineers, and so many more. For those who wish to participate, we even have a formal process we call the "discernment process" to help and support those who believe they may be called to any ministry, lay or ordained. Sometimes those who enter the discernment process end up clarifying a call to serve the wider church through the specialized ordained ministry of priest or deacon.

Two of our fellow St. Mary's members, Ross McKay and Kris Green, have been prayerfully working through the discernment process for some time now, and have identified a call to ordained ministry which has been confirmed by their discernment support committees.

I've asked them to write a few words to share with us about themselves and their journey so far.

- **Rev. Michael, Rector / Sr. Pastor**



Ross McKay

I don't know about anyone else, but it's a hard thing to say, "God is calling me to become a priest." There is an implied gravitas and authority to the priesthood that can leave one hesitant to make such a bold declaration.

Fortunately, in our tradition, if one is so bold as to answer this call to ordained ministry, they are given a lot of help along the way. The process of discerning a calling is done in community, with fellow members of the congregation, and is not something to be rushed. I personally was blessed to have a diverse and supportive team who challenged me to truly consider my calling, and why this call to ministry was leading me to ordination. Over the year that we met they gave me the confidence to say I truly do feel the call to ordained ministry.

Saint Mary's, as represented by the Vestry, took into consideration the report from my discernment committee, and after prayer and meditation, they saw fit to nominate me, as a postulant to the priesthood, in the Diocese of Alaska; but their support has not ended there. They have continued to make the commitment to support my formation to ministry, and the formation of other postulants that have been raised up from among us.

Now all this is a real blessing, but I want to add one special note to all of us; one does not need to be called to ordination to seek discernment of ministry. We are all ministers to God's church and should all be spending time to discern how God is calling us to better serve. In this season of Lent I encourage you to spend time in prayer, and in intentional conversation with others, purposefully discerning where God is calling you to put your efforts in the coming year.

Thank you all for the encouragement you have given me, both as a community of faith, and as a congregation supporting me in my call to ministry.

Ross.

Postulant for Holy Orders

Kris Green



**Dear children, let us not love with words or speech
but with actions and in truth.**

1 John 3:18

To the St. Mary's Community—

At the request of Rev Burke, I want to share a bit of my story as I humbly stand before you as an active Candidate for Holy Orders. I ask for guidance and most importantly your prayers.

When I first encountered St. Mary's in 2010, my nightmares were growing worse; they had threatened my ability to function on the job and to single-parent my four teenage sons. Knowing of the burdens of the night, a friend and member of St. Mary's suggested that I join a newly forming Dreamers Group. This started a new path of health and wholeness, of membership at St. Mary's, and comfort within a congregation of caring and loving peoples, committed to praising God and to be, on this earth, the heart, the eyes, and hands of a message of love and hope through their actions. Landing at St. Mary's was a homecoming of sorts, after a long and winding path to ministry that had long been inside me.

I grew up Catholic in a small farm town. At a young age, I felt called to ministry, but had few options as a woman, and none that seemed to fit with a broader life goal of having a family. I found myself post-college, in Alaska, a mother, and happily living a busy life. In my mid-40's, now a member of ELCA Lutheran church, I revisited that lifelong dream and considered seminary. However, a tragic accident that resulted in the death of my husband changed my life-course. I was plunged into despair and deep grief.

All personal plans halted, and I became a widow raising four teenage sons who struggled. When people told me "God only gives as much as one can handle," I became angry at the world and God. I did not understand that kind of God, found no solace in that kind of message; nor did I want that kind of God in my life. I wandered in despair in a long and lonely valley.

As part of the dream group, I began to understand the nightmares, were moving me from darkness to light. It was God calling me back to health and wholeness. I realized that when I was most alone in the valley of darkness, it was then that God (who had never left me) in fact, carried me. As a beloved child of God, I was restored to my true self and knew the time was to act, wait no longer, and be led by the Holy Spirit. By the loving actions of this community, God sought me out and saved me, quite frankly from

myself. I could finally hear the message - for everything there is a reason, and a time for every purpose under heaven - *Ecclesiastes 3:1* I grew, once again, to understand and to love God with my whole heart; to love myself; and to love my life.

After surviving a great grief, finding love again (and remarrying), successfully raising children to adulthood, and nearing retirement, I wrestled with this question: what is God calling me to do now? In a conversation with St. Mary's clergy in my office in late 2018, I discovered God had rekindled that long ago dream of serving others through ministry. What gripped me at 13, resurfaced at 45, and called yet again nearing retirement is to minister to others – to love not in words, rather in action and in truth - *1 John 3:18*. Thus began the journey of my path to priesthood in the Episcopal Church.

With the help and direction of a devout discernment committee (Rashmika, Judy Veerman, Victoria Ault, Greg Wilkinson, Jim Henkelman, and Rev. Nathan Rogers), I discerned my lifelong call to ministry. With approval of our Rector Michael Burke and the Vestry, Bishop Mark Lattime accepted me as a Postulant in late 2019. The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska's Standing Committee and the Bishop in late 2020 recommended me as a Candidate for Holy Orders. Despite slow-downs a worldwide pandemic, the Commission on Ministry continues to oversee my formal education, experientials, and the 28 steps to ordination.

I ask for your prayers as I continue to grow in my faith and learn scripture, traditions, and rituals on the path toward ordination.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share my story and for your on-going prayers and support.

Most Sincerely,

Kris

Candidate for Holy Orders