

# Adult Formation Fall 2025

Sundays 9:30 – 10:20 a.m.

Library and Zoom ID#483-170-780



Fellowship and lifelong learning are the hallmarks of Adult Formation at St. Mark's. Connect with your friends and make new friends, as we explore a variety of topics relating to the St. Mark's Vision—*Rooted in Baptism, Growing in Faith, Reaching Out into the World.*

No commitment or rsvp is required. Come when you are able or interested in the topic. Join in the community learning and sharing at Adult Formation!

## Fall 2025 Schedule

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|--------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| September 7  | <b><i>Rectors' Forum</i></b>  | Father George Smith                 |
|              | All questions and observations are welcome as Father George talks about the life of St. Mark's and a vision for our future. You won't want to miss it!  |                                     |
| September 14 | <b><i>Refugee Resettlement Update</i></b>   | Jody May                            |
|              | The landscape of refugee resettlement is rapidly changing. Jody May, Director of Education for Exodus World Services, will clarify what has changed, explain how Exodus is responding, and offer opportunities to meet urgent needs and walk beside recently resettled refugee families and individuals in Chicagoland. |                                     |
| September 21 | <b><i>Who is My Neighbor?</i></b>   | Jane Stoller-Schoff and John Schoff |
|              | Refugees, immigrants, green card holders, asylum seekers, illegals/   |                                     |

undocumented—who are all these groups of people and how do they get here? How does our faith inform our response to the needs of these groups of people? Join Jane Stoller-Schoff and John Schoff as they share their experiences hosting newcomers to our country and encourage us to think about these questions. We will discuss the definition/distinctives of each group as well as a broad overview of current immigration statistics, as well as the rich opportunities for service available.

September 28

***Landscapes and Musings: An Exhibition***

Dan Loblaco

St. Mark's Parishioner and current featured St. Mark's artist Dan Loblaco presents watercolor work from both his travels and invented landscapes. Loblaco's travel watercolors are primarily created *en plein air*, a practice he finds deeply fulfilling. According to the artist, "I find it to be so important when traveling to take the time to sit sometimes for a few hours and paint a place that I am visiting. I feel that this process is spiritual and allows me to truly connect with a location by observing the intricate details necessary for these paintings. This deliberate slowdown offers an almost cathartic contrast to the usual fast pace of life, allowing me to appreciate the surrounding world."

October 6

***St. Francis—A Hazardous Saint***

Joyce Fletcher

When most of us think of St. Francis, we imagine a quiet person communing with nature and blessing the animals. However, Francis led a wild life prior to turning his life over to God. Learn more about this fascinating saint on St. Francis Sunday

October 13

***Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity***

Miguel Briones

Celebrated as the Day of Cultural Diversity in Argentina, many think of October 12 as Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples Day. What does Respect for Cultural Diversity really mean? What steps can we take to understand and respect other cultures?

October 19

***Following the Prince of Peace in a World of War***

Lindsey Paris-Lopez

What is the Christian responsibility for peacemaking in a war-torn world? During the first week of this 2-week series, Lindsey Paris-Lopez will discuss how violent interpretations of scripture have weaponized Christianity in the past and present, as well as how inclusive, merciful interpretations of those same scriptures have nurtured faith-based movements for peace and justice.

- October 26      ***Following the Prince of Peace in a World of War***      Lindsey Paris-Lopez
- In the second week of our series, Lindsey Paris-Lopez will focus on the current crises, particularly in the Middle East. We will speak to how militant interpretations of Christianity have contributed to the devastation of the region. And we will creatively contemplate how to follow Jesus' call to love neighbor and enemy alike as we pray and work for peace together.
- November 2      ***Orthodox Icons: Windows to Heaven***      Aphrodite Peponis
- Discover how the artistic attributes and symbolism of Icons have enabled spiritual enrichment and enhanced meaningful prayer life for centuries. Join Aphrodite Peponis, a respected lecturer and presenter of icons and iconography, as she enthusiastically and knowledgeably shares her love for the theology and symbolism of the icon, enhanced by her travels to churches of Greece, the Holy Land, Mt. Sinai, Istanbul, Cappadocia, Italy, Sicily, Romania and Russia.
- November 9      ***Beyond St. Mark's, Part I: The Episcopal Church - Divinity in the Details***      Father George Smith
- St. Mark's is part of The Episcopal Church, which is one of 44 national and regional churches that make up the worldwide Anglican Communion. In this session, we will explore how The Episcopal Church is structured and operates as a family of over 6,500 congregations. It is not by accident that the governance of The Episcopal Church resembles that of the United States, with two houses of representatives and procedures of governance. Beyond our stately appearance, The Episcopal Church is a dynamic, messy, transparent and human organization.
- November 16      ***Beyond St. Mark's, Part II: The Diocese of Chicago - Our Strategic Plan in Process***      Father George Smith
- St. Mark's is part of The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago whose geography stretches from Peoria to Galena and includes 114 congregations and ministries. Under the leadership of our Bishop, Paula Clark, our Diocese is in the midst of formulating a strategic plan. In this session, we will discuss the results of a recent survey and next steps in this important work to strengthen our Episcopal witness in Northern Illinois.
- November 23      ***A Christian's Journey Through Hinduism***      Bob Lundin

Learn how one St. Mark's parishioner found that his exploration of Hinduism enriched his Christian faith. Bob Lundin will share his experiences at two Chicago-area Hindu temples: the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Bartlett and Chicago Kali Bari in Glen Ellyn. While maintaining his Christian identity and having no intention to convert, Lundin found these interfaith experiences spiritually enriching, deepening his understanding of God-centeredness and divine surrender within his own Christian faith.

November 30

**The Ghost in the Machine – Artificial Intelligence?** Jamie Hommowun  
It is a defining feature of the decade that “AI” is becoming a central feature of many aspects of work, play and creative endeavor. While most designers maintain we have not achieved a “true” artificial intelligence, it seems like every week there is a headline about a contrite AI destroying months of data or an off-the-rails model gleefully spreading misinformation to see the results. The AIs describe themselves as “panicking” or “apologetic.” What does the training and uses of AI say about the human trainers, as well as the AI themselves? Are we ready for a “true” artificial intelligence? Join Dr. Jamie Hommowun, PsyD, as we consider these questions and more in the “Advent of AI.”

December 7

**Paging Dr. Sbaitso: AI as Counselors?** Jamie Hommowun  
Folks of a certain age may recall the party gimmick fad in the PC gaming world in the early 90s – Dr. Sbaitso, by Creative Labs, the “Sound Blaster Acting Intelligent Text-to-Speech Operator,” an interactive “therapist” that would read your queries and respond in its signature robotic voice with Freudian tropes. At the time, it was a laugh, but it accurately predicted the current generation of LLM “counselors” people – especially youth – are turning to online to address relationship, emotional and even spiritual concerns. Join Dr. Jamie Hommowun, PsyD, as we explore how these tools are shaping people, and how we should respond in love?

December 14

**Written on Our Hearts** Vicki Fink  
At this time of year, we delight in the gospel image of a baby in the manger, the star, shepherds, and angels. What other gospel images do we carry with us? Using a collection of graphics, Rev. Vicki Fink will facilitate a conversation focused on sorting out which parts of the gospel affirm us, which challenge us, and which would be helpful to carry with us – to learn by heart.

December 21  
Hommowun

***Spiritually Directed***

Tammy Minuti, Vicky Fink, & Jamie

Learn more about Spiritual Direction from Tammy Minuti, Spiritual Director at St. Mark's, and from two parishioners who have experienced Spiritual Direction. They will share their experiences with Spiritual Direction and answer your questions about the practice.