



HEARTS OF PALM CENTER

A Capital Campaign
of St. Mark's Episcopal Church

HOPC News & Notes, September 1, 2024

Donor Spotlight

The gratitude and joy they've witnessed in the St. Mark's community have inspired Sara and Gary Hamer to call the church home. They have faith that the Hearts of Palm Center will create a vibrant and loving environment benefitting those who give and those who receive. They took some time to share more about their love of St. Mark's and how the congregation has moved them to make a personal gift to the Hearts of Palm Center campaign "So Others May Live."

Can you share a bit about your journey before moving to Florida and how you came to St. Mark's?

Gary: We lived in Maryland since 1970. We were both federal employees. Sarah worked with Social Security, while I had roles with HUD, the Office of Special Counsel, and George Washington University. Our move to Florida in 2019, even after years as part-time residents, was a big change for us, so we knew that the church would play a crucial role in making us feel at home.



Sara: I was raised a Southern Baptist in South Carolina but started attending the Catholic student mass in Wisconsin. Gary was raised a Methodist in Ohio. Later as a couple, we chose the Episcopal Church. It was our common ground. When we moved here permanently we wanted to remain within the Episcopal community. Our previous church, St. John's in Ellicott City, MD, was like family, so there was a lot for St. Mark's to live up to.

"...the Episcopal Church's values of inclusivity and community have always resonated with us deeply."

Gary Hamer

Is there a particular moment you knew St. Mark's was a great fit?

Sara: Yes. At one of our first services. The congregation recognized an anniversary for Jim with a special gift. You could just tell how touched he was. Everyone's smiles just lit up the room and you could absolutely feel the shared love and appreciation. That was an inspiration.

Gary: Probably my most memorable experience was when Sanford, a former Assistant Rector, married at the church. That was a true celebration. The congregation's involvement—with the bishop officiating and a lively reception—really captured the spirit we were looking for. It felt like a big, joyous gathering. In fact, the Episcopal Church's values of inclusivity and community have always resonated with us deeply.

Continued.

See the HOPC
video online



Interview Cont'd

Can you share what you love most about the Hearts of Palm mission?

Sara: When we first heard about Hearts of Palm mission at a church service, I felt Karen's passion and belief that this was something that worked. It felt immediate and personal and that resonated with us. I love the holistic approach the new Center will take, especially with initiatives like the hydroponic garden.

Gary: This work is a two way street between the church and the community around the Center. It makes real engagement possible. We have witnessed the most heartfelt gratitude from those whose lives have been uplifted by the mission work. I know that strengthens our church family.

Sara: You know, I keep coming back to one thought "These are our neighbors, and you help your neighbors."

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Sara Hamer

Let's join together as a beacon of faith,
hope and light within Riviera Beach.

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today?

Please contact Charlotte Pelton,
charlotte@charlottepelton.com,
561-329-3686

church.stmarkspb.org/hearts-of-palm-
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