



### **Tolerance**

St. Mark's has long cooperated with those with other beliefs. Church facilities were shared on occasion with Temple Beth-El when it was nearby, with Travis Park Methodist Church for three years after a fire and, in the 1920s, with the Greek Orthodox congregation of St. Sophia, prior to completion of its new church.

In the 19th century, St. Mark's rector Walter W. Richardson added members of German and Syrian background and officiated at funerals of some who did not appear to be Christian. One occasion gained him local media renown.

San Antonio, like many western cities at the time, had a notorious red-light district. In the summer of 1896, a young lady named Nellie Clemente, driven by poverty into prostitution, had "a fit of jealousy," took a dangerous drug and died. Her friends contributed enough for a decent burial, but had trouble finding a clergyman who would preside at a funeral. Eventually St. Mark's was contacted. Richardson agreed.

"She was a prisoner and a slave, not shut in with bolts and bars but bound by the chains of sin," Richardson told those at the gravesite. "She took the only key that seemed to her at hand and unlocked with it the gate of death, and her body is at rest."

Then Richardson asked, “If I do not denounce her, if I have come here to help you, her companions and friends—her only friends—to do the last act of charity for her and put her decently away, is it that you may have license to go on still with your sin?” Instead, he urged them to choose alternatives offered by “the hand of Christian people.” As the coffin was lowered into the grave, Richardson—in “a strong and ringing voice”—added, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”