

The Voice of St. Stephen

Volume 14 Issue 4

April 2020

GOD'S PEOPLE IN EXILE WHEN WE CANNOT WORSHIP TOGETHER

The number of people in our country infected with COVID-19 continues to rise. The United States has become the third worst hit nation by the pandemic. Our isolation grows. Residents of many states are living under shelter in place orders. In these times, we normally flock to our places of worship, seeking comfort. But those places are shuttered.

We are doing all we can to provide worship and prayer resources for our Saint Stephen family. For the first time ever, we celebrated Holy Eucharist by livestream. We will continue to provide that resource as we strive to find ways to improve it and to find other resources. God is telling us in this time of great anxiety that he has not abandoned us.

We are all human and struggle to adjust and to cope in unusual times. We all suffer the same vulnerability and mortality. This truth is very apparent to us as we realize that no one is exempt from this virus. We are a people often become divided by ideologies. We easily lose sight of our common humanity. So the healing that the Lord wants to bring to us must begin with that act of faith that the Lord is close to us.

It's also important for us to look forward to that healing that will follow this time of difficulty. That kind of healing that will draw us together. It's easy to allow fear and uncertainty to amplify our feelings of aloneness, as we all hunker down. But the Spirit tells us we are not alone.

If we seek them, there are signs of hope to be found. We see the numbers of new cases beginning to decline in some of the areas that were first impacted. We see individuals and community groups that have stepped up to help vulnerable neighbors combat the isolation we're all weathering together. We see many across our nation giving of themselves when and where possible. We see real love being demonstrated.

So let's hold on. We may be physically cut off from our church, but the Spirit still moves among us. We may be isolated in our homes, but we are not alone. God will never leave us. God will not forsake us. We will be Christ for one another, and together we will overcome this crisis.

St Stephen Anglican Church
Anglican Church in North America

PASTOR'S CORNER

A FEW WORDS FROM FATHER JIM

COVID-19 is a virus that is particularly dangerous for many in our beloved Saint Stephen community. So, what is our response as Christians to the reality of this deadly disease? When we gathered for the Ash Wednesday service, we remembered that we are not immortal, and that we will have to give an account of our words and actions. In light of this, we as Christians must cling fervently to faith, hope, and love.

Above all we must have faith in God's mercy and his love for us. We are anchored in hope. Because of our faith and hope, we can respond to everything with love. To be Christian is to live one's life with love. We know that it is better to die while being loving than it is to live in fear.

Saint Cyprian wrote beautifully on what a pandemic means for us as Christians, "Horrible and deadly plagues reveal the truth of each person. They examine the lives of each person, to see whether the healthy will tend the sick; whether families will love their kindred; whether bosses will pity their suffering workers; whether doctors will not forsake their needy patients; whether the strong will suppress their violence; whether the greedy will allow the fear of death to quench their desires; whether the arrogant will bend their necks in humility; whether the certain will soften their boldness; whether the rich will finally share what they have. All this benefits Christians so we may begin to joyfully desire martyrdom and learn not to fear death. These plagues are trainings for us, not something to fear. They teach our minds to patiently endure in faith. They teach us to prepare for death so we may receive the crown of life."

So, in light of our faith, hope, and love, how will we respond to this crisis as a church? We will continue to be his faithful people while not being reckless or doing dangerous things. We will take care of our bodies for they are God's temple. This is our act of love for the life God has given us. We will take care of each other. If someone in our church gets sick or cannot be out, we will make sure they have everything they need. We will pray for them while supporting them in body and soul.

Finally, we will be open to loving any of our neighbors who are in need. It is these kinds of actions that express our faith in God, that show our hope in the resurrection, and our love for all of God's creatures. Please reach out to me if you have any concerns or if you need anything at all.



COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COMMUNITY INTEREST

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

COPING IN TIMES OF ISOLATION

Social distancing and self-quarantine have become the new normal amid coronavirus. As people lose face-to-face contact with co-workers, friends, and family, they may begin to feel lonely, depressed, and anxious. There are ways to cope. First, stay connected. You can use web conferencing options so you can connect face-to-face with others. If you are at home with children, take it as an opportunity to connect with them. Play games, read books, or watch movies together. Call your friends and neighbors, especially if you know one who lives alone. It helps to commiserate with others and gives us a sense of community. Keep doing activities that make you feel good. That helps to maintain a positive mental state. Keep some kind of routine. Routine is good for the mood, and helps us to feel less aimless with a disruption in routine.

THIS MONTH IN CHURCH HISTORY

When Saint Anselm of Canterbury died on April 21, 1109, the church was poorer by a great mind and England by a zealous reformer. Anselm won a name for reform because he attempted to end abuses such as the slave trade and urged the holding of regular synods. Because of his powerful intellect, some scholars consider him one of the creators of scholasticism. But his most notable gift to history was what has become known as the Ontological Proof for the existence of God. Can the existence of God be proven? Anselm thought so. Modern philosophers and theologians disagree, but it is Anselm's Ontological Proof which is the most troublesome for them to disprove.



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saint James wrote, "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." In addition to the healing grace that flows from God, spiritual and psychological healing comes from openly revealing our sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available at the church from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Saturday, April 11, and by appointment any time as needed.



SUNDAY READER / ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

04/05/20 Palm/Passion Sunday

First Reading Isaiah 45:21-25 Psalm 22
Second Reading Philippians 2:5-11
Gospel Reading Matthew 27:1-52

Reader: Brian Shoemaker **Acolyte:** John Lyons

04/12/20 Easter (Resurrection) Sunday

First Reading Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118
Second Reading Colossians 3:1-4
Gospel Reading John 20:1-18

Reader: Jessica Cook **Acolyte:** Mark Styles*

04/19/20 Divine Mercy Sunday

First Reading Acts 2:14,22-32 Psalm 118
Second Reading 1 Peter 1:3-9
Gospel Reading John 20:19-31

Reader: Mark Styles **Acolyte:** Kathy Caccamo*

04/26/20 Third Sunday in Easter

First Reading Acts 2:14,36-47 Psalm 116
Second Reading 1 Peter 1:17-23
Gospel Reading Luke 24:13-35

Reader: Kathy Caccamo **Acolyte:** Rhonda Shoemaker

05/03/20 Fourth Sunday in Easter

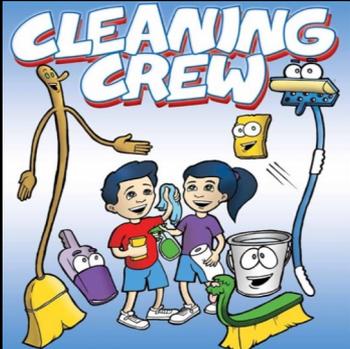
First Reading Acts 6:1-9,7:2,51-60 Psalm 23
Second Reading 1 Peter 2:19-25
Gospel Reading John 10:1-10

Reader: Rhonda Shoemaker **Acolyte:** David Ayres

If you will be absent on a day when you are scheduled to read or serve, please arrange for someone to read or serve for you.

Church Cleaning Schedule

03/30 - 04/04 V O'Banion / B Brown
04/06 - 04/11 J Curry / J Cook
04/13 - 04/18 Rachelle Lo / Family
04/20 - 04/25 D Renfrow / D Flatico
04/27 - 05/02 V O'Banion / B Brown



St Stephen Anglican Church

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Pastoral Associate: Deacon Clay Cook
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E-Mail: clay.cook125@gmail.com

Office Manager: Vicki Lockett
Altar Guild Ministry: Brenda Brown
Outreach Ministry: Joyce Curry
Fellowship Ministry: Jessica Cook
Facilities Manager: John Lyons

Wednesday Study Series 6:30 PM
Worship & Holy Eucharist 10:30 AM

Our hope is that Saint Stephen Anglican Church is not just a place that you attend once a week, but a place where you can connect with people and be involved in life changing ministry. Faith should touch and inform every part of our lives. Come on in. We've been expecting you.

A graphic for Resurrection Sunday. The word "Resurrection" is written in a large, white, cursive font. Below it, the word "SUNDAY" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. A white cross is positioned behind the text. The background is a vibrant, glowing orb with a color gradient from purple on the left to yellow on the right, with a bright white light source in the center.