



St. Stephen's E-NEWS

...Where God is seen, love is felt and lives are changed!

September 11, 2020

Sunday Readings:

Psalm 114

Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12

Matthew 18:21-35

MORNING PRAYER

This Sunday is the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, and we will begin having two services of **Morning Prayer** this Sunday morning.

At 9 a.m., we will have in-person worship **outside** in our Grove. This is a spoken service, with no music. **Please wear a mask and bring your own lawn chair.**

Our livestream will be at a **new time: 10:30 a.m.** on our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/ststephensor>

VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR

[Zoom Coffee Hour](#) will meet at **11:30 a.m.**, after our livestream worship.

Meeting ID: 827 0156 0814

Password: 018306

INSPIRATION

"We are called to be people of hope, whose trust in God gives them the resilience to pick themselves up when they've fallen or been pushed down, and to continue to answer the call. We must be like sturdy trees, able to stand their ground in the face of violent winds because their roots reach deep into the soil from which comes their food and their strength."



~ Br David Vryhof,

Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Photo by Jeremy Bishop on Unsplash

PASTORAL CARE

JOIN US AS WE PRAY THIS WEEK FOR:

Chip & Amy Pennoyer, Louis, Jack
Bill & Mary Petersen, Britton
Phyllis Petersen
Carla & Hella Peterson

Please include these people in your prayers.

SERMON SUMMARY: LET'S TALK ABOUT POLITICS...

As I write this, we gather together as Americans to remember the tragic day of 9/11/01. Even nearly 20 years later, it still seems like an awfully ambitious and difficult event around which to speak about forgiveness, which is what our gospel for this Sunday chastises its main character for failing to offer. Forgiveness and mercy are at the heart of the Christian life, but sometimes we forget the basis for those virtues. God forgives us and shows mercy to us in spite of the fact that human beings (including us as individuals) are capable of such horrendous and inhumane acts that any reasonable standard of justice would easily deny this very mercy to us all. We are given life by God, a debt we can never repay, and we find numerous ways to waste it or use it for purposes that benefit ourselves and hurt others. With this national day of mourning as a backdrop, I hope you will hear the story of Jesus' parable of the forgiving servant as an invitation not to simply whitewash the horrors of human behavior but rather to see how far God has come to free us from our self-imposed burden of trying to make things right. It is only in living into the forgiveness of our great debt to God and one another that we can truly work to make things right - with God's immense help. ~ Fr. Bailey

SUNDAY CHEAT SHEET

I'm excited about the chance to see some of you (finally!) this upcoming Sunday for in-person worship. Please refer to the [September Evangel](#) for the full guidelines and overview of what you can expect, but here's a quick cheat sheet and reminder:

- In-person worship begins at 9 a.m. Our virtual service will start at 10:30 a.m. on YouTube.
- Masks and social distancing are required.
- Please bring your own lawn chairs if at all possible.
- **DO NOT COME IF YOU HAVE HAD A FEVER AND/OR ANY SYMPTOMS THAT FIT THE CDC'S CHECKLIST FOR COVID WITHIN THE PAST SEVEN DAYS**
- This week's service is Morning Prayer. The following two Sundays will be communion (more details will be shared about that next week).
- There is a chance of rain on Sunday morning, so please monitor parish communications. We will cancel if the forecast shows a 60% or greater chance of rain during our hour of worship. **If the service is cancelled, we will notify the parish by 3 p.m. Saturday** via e-mail, social media, and a message on our phone system. You may tune in to the livestream at 10:30 in lieu of the in-person service. No notification will be sent if the service is on as planned.

Look forward to being with you Sunday, whether in person or virtually!

~ Bailey

EYF

Sunday School and EYF start back up this Sunday! Each week we meet from 12:00pm-2:00pm. We will eat lunch and have Sunday School, and then move onto EYF!

This week, we will start our "What Does it Mean to be Episcopalian?" lesson and have a Wacky Woad Wace afterwards! The Wacky Woad Wace is a relay race full of fun, wacky, and a few messy games. Kiddos should come with a mask, water bottle, and wearing clothes they don't mind getting dirty.

PLEASE RSVP and let me know if your kiddo has any dietary needs! Craig and I will be grilling out for lunch. See you Sunday!

Caroline Wood, Youth Minister youthminister@ststephensor.org



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ANNUAL REPORTS

The deadline for committee reports is in ONE WEEK! Please submit your reports no later than **Friday, September 18, 2020**. If you head a committee or ministry, please submit your report as soon as possible, so the Annual Report can be created, edited and published in a timely manner. Please send your reports to secretary@ststephensor.org. Thank you!

A WALK THROUGH ACTS

Fr. Bailey guides us as we walk through the Book of Acts in a [YouTube Bible study](#).



Fr. Bailey offers a short reflection on the selected passage for that particular day, providing history, context, and maps that pertain to the the passages. Fascinating and nourishing food for thought!

Videos are posted daily on YouTube.

BOOK STUDY: JUST MERCY

Our book study, *Just Mercy* will continue for two more Wednesdays: September 15 & 23, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.



[Zoom Meeting ID: 873 1086 7826](#)
Password: 369255

Videos will be available on our [YouTube channel](#) on the following day.



KEEP CALM AND REMAIN FAITHFUL

ANNUAL MEETING & VESTRY ELECTIONS

Nominations for Vestry are kindly requested no later than **Monday, September 14, 2020**. If you are nominating yourself or someone else (with their permission), please submit candidates' names via email to [Brent Sigmon](#) or call him at 865-607-7015.

Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held **Sunday, October 4, 2020**. We are still figuring out how we will hold this meeting virtually. Additionally, we are working with the Diocese on establishing canonical procedures that will allow us to conduct voting for Vestry and for any other matters by absentee and/or virtual balloting since the meeting will almost certainly be live streamed on YouTube.



In the meantime, Vestry elections will take place as usual. We are looking for candidates who are eager to build upon our progress in helping to raise up all members of our congregation for ministry, for growing in our presence in the wider community, and for looking at how our rich and varied expressions of faith and worship can carry us forward into the post-COVID world. Candidates must be confirmed communicants who contribute financially to the life of the parish.

MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

The initial Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) between St. Stephen's Vestry and Father Bailey Norman, St. Stephen's Priest-in-Charge (PIC) was facilitated by the Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee (DioET,) in an on-line virtual forum the evening of September 2, 2020. All twelve Parish elected Vestry members participated in this MMR, with the Vestry Secretary in attendance to take notes. Designed to enrich spiritual life and growth, MMR is a process that enables clergy and lay leadership the opportunity to periodically examine the wellness of a parish and its ministry. In the DioET, MMR is an established tool for parishes with a PIC. The Priest-in-Charge tenure is a two year provisional term wherein the clergy member functions as full rector in all respects except tenure. Mutual Ministry Reviews are conducted semi-annually during this provisional period, to assess how things are going and to gauge status against an established development/support plan. At the end of the two year term, the Vestry votes on whether or not to call the PIC as permanent rector.

During this MMR, clergy and Vestry:

- identified significant changes that occurred in the past six months,
- discussed what was learned within that same time frame;
- revisited parish developmental goals established at the beginning of the calendar year;
- examined our response to the above; and
- discussed areas of focus for St. Stephen's as it moves into the future.

With regard to recent significant changes, the inception of Fr. Norman's tenure as Priest-In-Charge engendered hope, positivity, and excitement within the parish. His arrival concluded a prolonged (3 year) period of absence of a full-time rector. Fr. Norman's leadership enabled St. Stephen's to successfully embrace other unanticipated and substantial changes, specifically arrival of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to "move beyond survival". Parish leadership learned St. Stephen's is fortunate, resilient, committed, engaged and can adapt well in the face of immense unforeseen changes. Developmental goals were reviewed and opportunities to refine them were discussed.

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MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

2020 DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR ST. STEPHEN'S

- Celebrate what is going well
- Give clear reliable feedback
- Identify needs in leadership development
- Minimize unrealistic expectations
- Renew goals for next period
- Deepen clergy/vestry relationship and enhance trust

OPPORTUNITIES TO REFINE DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS

- Examine recent shifts in the parish's circumstances
- Articulate the congregation's particular identity
- Identify shifts in ministry priorities
- Identify shifts in leadership roles
- Seek to strengthen relationships

St. Stephen's Response to Change

- Strong technical skills, worship and stay connected
- Learning taking forward, experiment
- Congregation adapted to worship regardless of format
- Keeping least connected in connection, calling shut-ins, visiting when can
- Individual initiative
- Regular worship, people sharing incredible skills
- Commitment, determination, faithfulness and LOVE to keep people united and involved

- Adaptability to continue groups, committees
- Meaningful worship as a unit
- Adapted to care for folks' needs
- Moving beyond survival
- Adapt to changes
- Outside community connection
- Parish phone tree to check in
- Sharing Faith dinners, trying to tell stories - intentional listening, in and out
- Individual personal contacts
- Remarkable how we kept connected despite in-person being difficult/not possible

St. Stephen's has been able to successfully meet technical challenges, adapt worship, and fully serve each other and the community despite the pandemic. These accomplishments were made by capable, invested people possessing commitment, determination, faithfulness, the capacity to learn, and acting in love. Leadership will thank those who have contributed to outstanding ministry.

Potential focus areas for Winter 2020/2021 include:

- better articulating our identity and dreams and aligning resources to match priorities
- maintaining balance between keeping the doors open/ keeping church going (i.e., "focus on the main thing") versus defining the future vision and working toward it (i.e., "don't lose progress");
- sharing our faith stories about why our faith matters, expanding diversity of parish and evangelism;
- continued communication improvements
- address generational gap
- media experimentation
- build tech savvy
- post sermons

The MMR closed knowing that St. Stephen's is moving forward and God is very present as we do so.