



AUGUST
2020

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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The Evangel

SMALL SUCCESSES BUILD LARGE HOPES

Small successes build large hopes. This was a mantra I heard proclaimed many years ago by a musician named Mo Leverett, a man who can claim a pretty real experience of finding hope in desperate places. I met him for the first time in 1998 when I took a mission trip during my freshman year at Sewanee to New Orleans to work with varying inner-city ministries. One of the most moving ministries I've ever witnessed was the one begun by Mo, who with his family had moved into the Desire Projects, which at the time was the largest public housing development in the U.S. with over 12,000 residents. If you happen to Google Mo ([check out his story](#)), you'll recognize very quickly that he is a white dude, making him and his family a distinct minority at Desire.

But he felt a call by God to build relationships and trust with the residents there, beginning with his work coaching at a local high school. After much skepticism initially, many of the young people at Desire ultimately not only warmed up to him but looked up to him as a father figure that they were sorely lacking. Keep in mind that, at this particular housing development, drugs and gunfire were as common as grass and rain. In spite of these constant threats, Mo helped facilitate a community that encouraged these young people regularly to believe that every personal success they achieved

was a step away from the constant violence and, more importantly, was a new light filling their hearts. Even if a bullet were to take them tomorrow, the small successes had filled them with the knowledge that God created them, that God loved them, and that they did have a role to play in this world.

What does a man whose ministry in New Orleans ended 15 years ago have to do with us here at St. Stephen's? While thankfully bullets aren't whizzing by our houses on a regular basis, I can't help but notice that the tone of the current pandemic has become one mixed with fear about what might happen right around the corner. For very different reasons, we feel stuck, either in our homes for fear of getting out or within institutions or cultures that seem to blatantly dismiss the dangers of COVID.

**As devastating as the
storm has been, we
believe that God has a
redemptive purpose for
it. And we desire to be
with Him in that
purpose.**

Mo Leverett

As someone said to me the other day, “While we can do something, figuring out what’s the right thing to do as we continue in this pandemic is hard”. We want to see people but can’t to the scale we would like. We want to make a difference in our community, but it’s really hard to figure out what that might look like. I can’t help but remember words Mo gave to a gathering of young boys during one of our times working with him when he said, “It probably feels to you guys like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders, and especially when you are trying to do what is right. But when you try to do whatever act of kindness you can do for another, you’ve made hope visible. Whenever you choose something that is out of love and not fear, you’ve opened your heart and maybe someone else’s too. It doesn’t matter how big your kindness or your success is. Whatever it is that you can do, you’ve made God’s house a little bigger place for others to enter and find something good to cling to.”

How can we do that at St. Stephen’s?

START WITH WORSHIP

While I do not anticipate regular large-group gatherings anytime soon, I will be proposing a plan to the Vestry to begin limited in-person worship on Sundays and perhaps during the week to start sometime within the next few weeks. This is not to substitute for the streaming service, and this is also me saying that there are many of you who, for whatever reason, need to continue to stay at home and limit your outside contacts. But the process of SLOWLY returning to face-to-face worship is a way in which we may invest small actions and prayers into hope that helps us to see beyond the uncertainty and fear. More details will be coming soon.

KEEP CALLING PEOPLE

We have had a phone tree that has been good in keeping lots of our St. Stephen’s folks together in some sort of community during this time. We are looking to expand that, both for keeping track of folks during COVID but also as ways to make sure our bonds extend to multiple people at St. Stephen’s. I’ve heard more than several times how much phone calls from the Eucharistic Visitors and others have meant to them. A little contact really goes a long way.

JOIN IN CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND FELLOWSHIP VIRTUALLY

Unfortunately I know that this doesn’t apply to all of you, but for those of you who are able to access our YouTube channel, we have a wide offering of virtual classes. We are looking to use a combination of virtual and some (hopefully) small-group physical gatherings for our youth and children and their families. Now that we’ve started the pattern of Zoom coffee hour on Sundays, we’ll be looking to do “breakout rooms” (i.e., smaller subgroups that can be broken off from the main discussion to allow easier conversation). And we will be looking at increased ways to use our virtual platforms to maintain and even grow our fellowship.

Finally, as I shared the story about Mo and his courage in stepping into a world that was very different from his own, I ask you to think and pray about the next steps of our journey at St. Stephen’s and your own spiritual journey. What will our parish look like when we all can return? What will be the same? What will be different? For all of its tragedy and its impact upon all of us, the pandemic has helped us to learn and adapt in many different ways. Small risks have led to new ways of reaching people. George Floyd has compelled us to listen to our stories in different ways as (mostly) white people, and by learning about ourselves, it is opening us up to learning about others and how they may perceive the same world with very different eyes than our own.

I do think of the heroes who are putting themselves out there for others, either by choice or by necessity: medical professionals, first responders, food service employees, and now teachers, among many others. Few of us are called to uproot ourselves and do something completely foreign as Mo Leverett did. But the pandemic is an invitation for us to find new ways to be together, to give encouragement to each other, and to love one another. All of us have had to figure out ways to offer small acts of kindness. I hope that you will see how important your “small” work may be in making hope shine brightly in dark places. And I hope you see how much St. Stephen’s impacts the lives of so many others through the faithful acts of so many. Cast your eyes forward on this vision as you work on shedding the anxiety and fear of the present days. Whatever its specific form, God is calling St. Stephen’s to continue its work in very new and exciting contexts as we emerge from this. All I know is that, as we strive for the little victories in this pandemic, a greater hope is emerging that will shape another chapter of this wonderful parish. The doors of God’s house are indeed opening wider, as are the hearts of its people. Wherever we are, whatever we do, let us enter these temples of God’s presence with gladness so that we may be the people who can truly rejoice no matter the circumstances.

~ Fr. Bailey

ECUMENICAL STOREHOUSE

We did not have the usual bantering with and walking around with clients as they chose household goods from the inventory at the Ecumenical Storehouse. St Stephen's was combined with First Christian Church to supervise the new routine and hours. However, due to the ongoing social distancing, our aging volunteers, stay at home and be safe needs, we only saw a few, hardy volunteers during July. Jim Kring, Joshua Anderson, James Anderson and myself are counted among our own as volunteers. I know I have missed someone. The heat also has just been way too much to expect much in the way of pick ups.

Clients were asked to call ahead of time to make an appointment for pick up of their requests which were picked out by volunteers and staged at the bay doors. Debbie Jordan, the ES president, coordinated most of this. I remember a client calling in for a few items. He really did not know what he needed. He did know that he had a very small living area and needed only the basics. The very small eating table and twin bed we had for him along with suggested items like a toaster, flatware, small cooking pans and linens we normally take for granted.

Fr. Bailey will take a tour soon, as he has found a little time after all that has happened over the past five months since Ash Wednesday. With unemployment benefits changing, more unemployed than available jobs, potential evictions and churning of families and their households keep the ES in mind and refer anyone you may know in acute need due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

~ Roger Johnson and Jim Kring

OUTREACH THANKS

A note of thanks to Girl Scout Troop 21139, led by Karen Vacaliuc for helping with our summer outreach to the Clearfork community. Rising high school seniors Jocelyn, Jackie, Marian, and Siena created individual craft packets for many girls and boys receiving the third set of materials to work on at home in lieu of day camp.

~ Gay Marie Logsdon

BAPTISM JOY



A few photos celebrating the baptism of Arlo Guthrie Reddish, son of Amanda and Matthew Reddish, grandson of Susan & Cyril Meredith.

A NOTE OF THANKS

Dear St. Stephen's family,

The Manrod and Pennoyer family is profoundly grateful for your uplifting love and support provided in response to Mike's passing. Your prayers, condolences, and kindnesses delivered great comfort during a time of deep pain and loss. Thank you.

Most sincerely,

Courtney

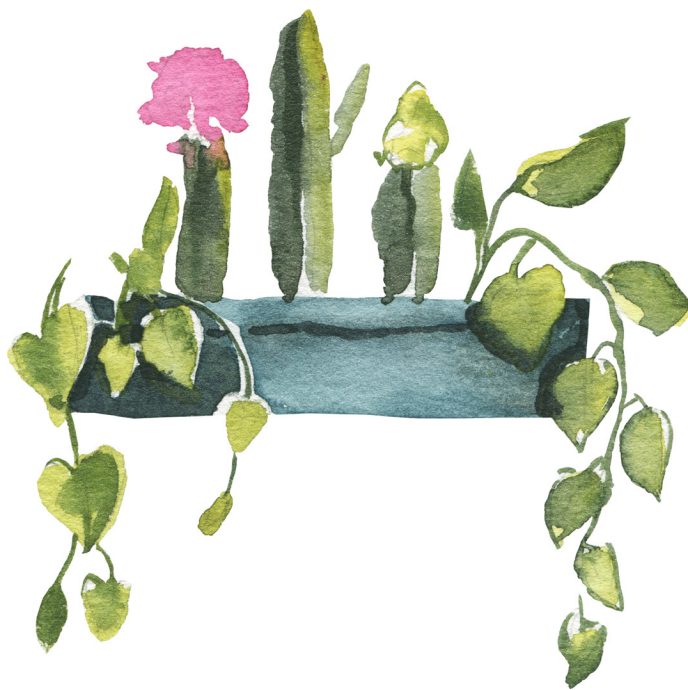
August Celebrations

BIRTHDAYS

8/2	Arthur Frost	8/19	Joe Lisenbee
8/3	Julie Weatherford	8/20	Chuck Estes
8/5	Matthew Cox		Mary Lou Murphy
	Brenda Irwin		Barbara Neill
	Philip Pack		Chuck Kirk
8/6	Glenna Derby	8/21	Blynn Prince
	Camille Mauk-Olson	8/22	Barbara Bovee
	Jacob LaRose	8/25	Steve Herbes
8/7	Hella Peterson	8/26	Tatum Cavender
8/9	Pat Wykoff		Ellis Cavender
8/11	Diane Sams	8/29	Olivia Cox
	Anna Berven	8/29	Brennick Aaron
8/12	Catherine Graves	8/30	Britton Petersen
8/13	Alan Liby		

ANNIVERSARIES

8/2	Cindy & Kevin Jones
8/11	Marilyn & Bob Davis
8/19	Penny & Jim Neal
8/20	Carolyn & Wes Singer
8/23	Miranda & Eric Miller
8/27	Mary Lou & John Murphy
8/29	Roslyn & Elwood Gift
8/31	Rebecca & Adam Cavender
	Barbara & Richard Neill



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

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