



St. Stephen's E-NEWS

WHERE GOD IS SEEN, LOVE IS FELT, LIVES ARE CHANGED.

December 31, 2021

SUNDAY WORSHIP

This is the Second Sunday after Christmas (the 8th day of Christmas), and our readings will be:

- Jeremiah 31:7-14
- Psalm 84
- Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a
- Luke 2:41-52

NOTE: There is no Children's Chapel or Nursery this week due to a combination of Christmas holiday, Covid precautions, and lack of staffing/volunteers for the Nursery. EYF is still taking a holiday break, and will resume meeting on January 9, 2022.

SUNDAY BIBLE CLASS

This Sunday at 9 am in the Library, the Adult Bible class will look at what Luke means when he describes what the coming of Jesus will mean to the world. Come join us. You can view a [brief video of the material](#) at home before coming to class.

~Jack Campbell

OFFICE CLOSURES

The Parish Office will be closed on the following dates for a New Year holiday:

- Friday, December 31, 2021
- Monday, January 3, 2022

WEEKLY PRAYERS

WE PRAY FOR PARISH MEMBERS

Doug and Elissa Aaron,
Alexis, Brennick
Scott and Ann Aaron
Carole Akers

Please include these people in your prayers.

A MESSAGE FROM FR. BAILEY

Happy Christmas to you all! This holiday season was, once again, a very interesting time of year. With COVID making a comeback in the midst of reestablishing celebration rituals which had laid dormant the previous year, it made for an equally exciting and stressful time, perhaps more so than usual. Your parish staff and lay leadership who planned our plethora of moving Christmas services also had to remember how we did things in person! Although a good number of our people are still hesitant to attend in-person services, it was a fulfilling and enriching season to bring the familiarity of Advent and Christmas back just a bit. And we are immensely thankful that we are able to continue many of our liturgies on a virtual platform.



As we wish to rid ourselves of the craziness of this 2021 year, a new word has popped up into our vocabulary – OMICRON. Yep, the gift that keeps on giving. This new strain of COVID, as far as we know, seems very mild. **But it is highly contagious, and it is in our area.**

What does this mean for us? First, we will remain masked in services for the foreseeable future. I reiterate that I am among the first in line of those ready to ditch the mask. But even with a substantial portion of our population vaccinated, we still have a significant number of people at St. Stephen's who are vulnerable. Some are still not quite ready to come even with masks, but others are coming right now because of them.

Second, be prepared for a sudden and temporary drawback into totally virtual worship. With this strain, it is not a question of IF but WHEN it will affect our people. Your staff and leadership have, with a few exceptions, managed to stay free of COVID (though picking up the usual bugs that go around this time of year!). I suspect Omicron will affect us more significantly. Specifically, if Fr. Ashton, Simon, or I contract Omicron, we would likely have to call off in-person services for 1 or possibly 2 Sundays depending on the severity.

To be clear, this is not living in fear of the virus. It is taking precautions like we would for a massive outbreak of flu or some other highly contagious disease. It is also caring for each other and doing our best to not make others sick. We have a lot of good things happening at St. Stephen's, and I don't want that momentum to stall. Playing it safe when necessary in the short term will keep us healthy and strong to pursue our goals for the future.

For the first time since I arrived, your Vestry and I are planning a retreat in January which gives us a time to build community among our leadership, and also to set some goals for the upcoming year. If COVID affects us, we will do it virtually instead of in-person. Either way, we will be praying for and articulating a specific course for our parish now and in the future. Please pray for your Vestry. Offer your input to your clergy or Vestry representatives as to what you would like happen at St. Stephen's.

Omicron may cause us to take a timeout, but it will not deter us. The Spirit is alive and well at St. Stephen's. May 2022 bring us the power of Christ's joy and hope and a deeper sense of the presence of God leading us into new horizons.

Bailey

