

LETTER FROM YOUR RECTOR

Fr. Phil Mason

Dear Friends,

A friend of mine likes to quip, "Never waste a good train wreck." Certainly a train wreck is not a "good" thing, but his aphorism is about the idea that out of tragedy some good can come. At the end of the day when the dust has settled, consider this possibility.

There are many ways that this concept can be expressed to wit: "Every cloud has a silver lining," or as Monty Python put it, "Always look on the bright side of life." Forgive me if I overuse humor in the midst of this awful and scary crisis, but a smile helps dab the tears.

Right now the train wreck is fully underway. For our church family and our community, we are being called to make some significant sacrifices for our own protection but, more importantly, the sacrifices each of us make is for the protection of everyone. One of the most difficult for you and me is the loss of our ability to gather together in person for worship and fellowship. We are asked, for the time being, to give up Sunday in-person worship together and quite possibly future near-date church and school picnics, mission trips, April soup supper, prayer meetings, and many, many other activities that bring us so closely together. I sometimes feel like a beautiful and sacred band of lovers in Christ is being torn apart right before my very eyes by that metaphorical train wreck.

"Okay, Father Phil, where is the silver lining?" you are surely asking.

I am sure that most of us remember the great Blanco River flood of 2015. What a train wreck that was *and* what a silver lining came forward from that train wreck! Wimberley came together in the most incredible ways. Many of our parishioners were directly affected and some lost everything. Looking back, many of us have been able to see that silver lining. Our church family and the community were bonded together in love, care, and compassion for one another, and that bond remains today.

The crisis we face together today is really quite different, but I can already feel that same bond tightening again. The challenge is to keep the bond strong as we are physically separated by the presence of that tiny little microbe.

Our staff, leadership, and I are working hard to keep St. Stephen's worship intact using new technology, and so many have come forward asking, "How can I help?". Other groups that have been so vital to our life and our spirit are quickly forming ways to keep their bonds intact. We have technology experts available to help us, and if any group needs help with virtual meeting setup, please do contact the church office, 512-847-9956.

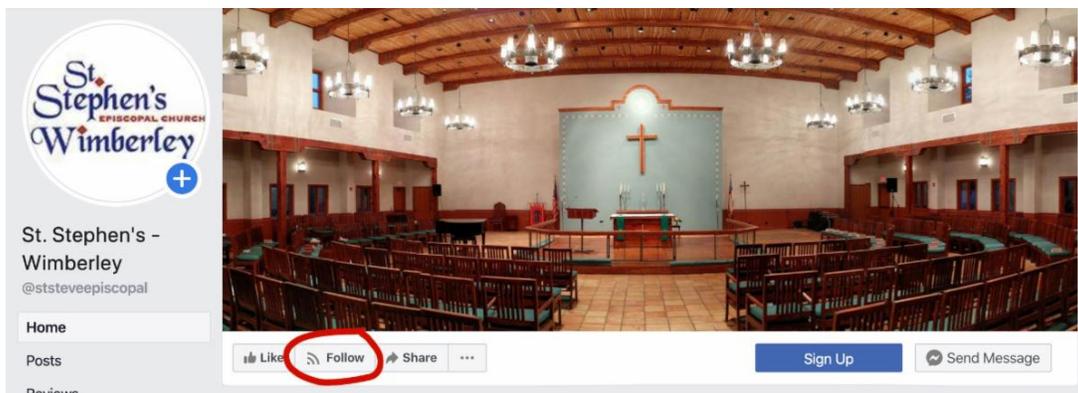
What I am most excited about is our ability to begin live streaming the Sunday worship

service with Facebook Live and offering our remaining Lenten programs through Youtube. In fact, Darelle Jordan has already provided her Godly Play Lenten Program. [Check it out.](#)

On Sunday, March 22, Anne Jones, Allen Hennig, and I will be live streaming the morning prayer service at 10:30 a.m. CDT, and I hope you all will join us online. If you are already following St. Stephen's Facebook, you will receive an alert from Facebook letting you know when the live streaming begins. If you are not following St. Stephen's Facebook, there is still time to join. *See separate article for how to do this.* If you do not wish to join Facebook, yet would like to see the live streaming, be on the lookout for a separate e-blast with the link on Sunday morning shortly before the service begins.

*Peace and love to all,
Phil+*

*"All shall be well, and all shall be well,
and all manner of thing shall be well."
- Lady Julian of Norwich*



HOW TO JOIN ST. STEPHEN'S FACEBOOK

We will be live streaming the Sunday, March 22 service through Facebook Live. Once you join St. Stephen's Facebook, you will receive an alert when there is a live streaming or new posts of reminders and news to the St. Stephen's Facebook.

To join, simply visit the [St. Stephen's Church Facebook](#). Click "Follow" and you will be all set.

SENIOR WARDEN NEWS

Nancy Cooke-Jenkins



Well, times, they are a'changing! We are in new territory that we have never experienced before. We will get through to the other side as a united front, though. We may not be in each other's physical presence, however, we are a loving community, committed to one another and to our faith.

Your Community of Hope (COH) coordinators want you to know that we are standing by, hoping you will choose to contact us and share your thoughts, concerns, doubts, fears, or just commiseration concerning the Corona-crisis. The COH will be reaching out to each of you in the next few weeks, just to say, "Hello," let you know you are not alone, and to ask if you have any questions that they may answer. The COH is here to serve you and each of you are their greatest concern. Remember, you don't have to be ill for the COH to help you out. You may just need to talk, share perspectives, pray, or hear a caring voice. The Coordinators are:

Sharon East	sharoneast@verizon.net
Becky Denton	dentonrebecca1@gmail.com
Dot Green	dotgreen@anvilcom.com
Nancy Jenkins	nmjenkins@austin.rr.com
Connie Maverick	joemaverick@verizon.net
Kristin Schmidt	tkschmidt@anvilcom.com

Give us a try!

We had back-to-back funerals this past weekend. A huge thank you to all the participants: Altar Guild, Ushers, Lectors, LEMS, and Acolytes. The services you render go far in making a family feel comfort.

Fr. Phil has shared with us in his "Letter from the Rector" above about the new ways that we will be worshipping and communicating with each other and the continued bonding that can and will occur even during this unprecedented time with COVID-19. I would like to say that his sentiments are shared by those of the St. Stephen's leadership and staff as well.

Our very own Story Lady, Darelle Jordan, St. Stephen's longtime Godly Play teacher, is now a celebrity! Did you see her online Lenten Program yet? If not, I encourage you give yourself 12 minutes of mesmerizing comfort [by watching her program](#). We are so blessed to have this talented member of our church family faithfully leading our Godly Play children over these many years.

While we are on the subject of talent, be sure to watch Carla Daws' online Lenten "Amoeba" program on Wednesday, March 25. We will send you an e-blast next week with instructions.

*Here's to All of Us Staying WELL,
Nancy*

*"I'll get by with a little help from my friends."
- John Lennon and Paul McCartney*

FROM YOUR TREASURER

Roy Buckley



Today we find ourselves in circumstances so unique, be it at home, at work, or at church, we could not have possibly prepared for it. The viral pandemic, COVID-19, has swept the globe and arrived at our doorsteps. It has placed nearly everyone in a position of helplessness, but not hopelessness. Our local, state, and national leaders and advisors are setting standards and making strong recommendations under which we now find ourselves isolated and apart from each other. This we have accepted as the most effective means to prevent an unstoppable spread of the disease and to stem the catastrophic consequences which could result in ways permanent and disastrous. Yet, we are not without hope. The spiritual community of St. Stephen's Episcopal remains strong and resolute.

Having collected the financials for the 2nd month of the year, we find ourselves at the end of February with a surplus of \$30,948 over budget. The month of February did, however, see a precipitous drop in February Pledge revenues (\$22,259) in comparison to Pledge revenues posted in the January (\$84,463). This is due in large part to the large share of Pre-Paid Pledges made in late 2019, but carried forward to January

2020. In fact, it is not unusual to see very strong January Pledge receipts (including Pre-Paid/Carried Forward receipts) followed by significant drop-offs in February's numbers. The below 5-year comparison is instructive.

	January % of Pledge	February % of Pledge
FINANCIAL YEAR	<u>Actual to Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual to Budgeted</u>
2020	225%	59%
2019	147%	102%
2018	147%	94%
2017	194%	77%
2016	170%	75%

As can be seen, January's Pledge receipts when compared to the budgeted expectations reflect a dramatic surge of Pledge revenues, whereas the February numbers tend to fall off in comparison. The February 2020 Pledge receipts fell even more dramatically than in prior years, however, and this could be explained through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the deep fall in the financial markets.

Yet, I maintain we are not without hope. The members of the St. Stephen's congregation remain steadfast in support of the church's finances at a time when we find our need to physically commune with each other unwise and with considerable risk to our health. Thankfully, today's technology permits us to commune virtually, if not physically, through online options and a live-stream service where we can receive God's word and His undying love. Communion, of course, will not be possible, however, for the time being, I think we are all grateful for the chance to commune at any level. Technology has also made it possible to meet our pledge obligations through the St. Stephen's website online giving platform, <https://www.ststeve.org/online-giving>.

By using the church website, each Member will be capable of making the recurring pledge obligations and supporting particular programs and ministries such as Altar Flowers, First Fruits, Memorial donations, and Back to School Fiesta. The site is quite user-friendly and easy to navigate through. You will be prompted to login using your personal login codes, if you have previously set up an account. If you are new to the giving portion of the site, you can easily set up an account by providing basic information such as name, email address, credit/debit card information, and establishing your own personal login password and PIN (personal identification number). Once set up, you can easily maneuver through the online giving and make your donations to a particular program or pay your monthly or quarterly portion of your Pledge. Also available are ACH (Automated Clearing House) capabilities where, by providing your bank's routing numbers and account numbers, your obligations can be met by allowing the system to debit your account each month. These types of payment methods are at your disposal to use, yet, by no means, are you required to utilize the technology. The tried-and-true and familiar way of writing a check and sending your Pledge to St. Stephen's through the trusty U.S. mail are still available to all. Checks should be made out to: *St. Stephen's Episcopal Church* and mailed to:

**Attn: Parish Administrator
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
6000 FM 3237
Wimberley, TX 78676**

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to email me, roy.r.buckley@rice.edu. I look forward to soon seeing the day we are all once again positioned in the pew we have grown accustomed, and where we can once again offer to each other greetings and the sign of peace in God's house and under God's blessings.

*Until that day, be safe and stay healthy,
Roy*

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Co-Chairs: Sharon East & Darelle Jordan

Up until 5:00 p.m. CDT Wednesday, March 18, the Search Committee continued to "hum along" with its search committee tasks of interviews and visits. However, at that time, we did receive official word from the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, DWTX, to cease all activities, until COVID-19 guidelines can be lifted.

"I think that all our parishioners will understand what has happened," Senior Warden Nancy Cooke-Jenkins assures, "We certainly don't want a Rector that would leave his/her parish in a time such as this. We shall continue to be positive. We are in this together, and we will see it through together!"

"As always, we appreciate the support and prayers of our church family," reiterates co-chair Sharon East.



DWTX IMPORTANT UPDATES

TWO-WEEK SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC GATHERINGS

Effective Wednesday, March 18th, the Rt. Rev. David Reed calls on all clergy and congregations of West Texas to cease gathering in person for worship and meetings until April 1st. In this way, we will join our communities' and our nation's efforts to slow community spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Click here](#) to read more.

IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES AT BISHOP JONES CENTER SUSPENDED UNTIL APRIL 1

In-person meetings, outside group gatherings and the weekly Chapel Service at the Bishop Jones Center have been suspended through Wednesday, April 1, 2020. The diocesan office will remain operational, with adjusted hours on Fridays, but will not have in-person meetings. Staff will work remotely, when possible.

Individuals or group leaders with calendar reservations at the Bishop Jones Center may contact: Melissa Soderberg: melissa.soderberg@dwtx.org for help.

FRIDAY COFFEE & TEA FRIENDS CANCELED

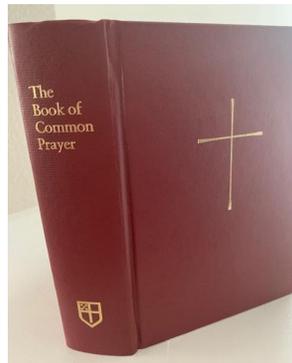


Until Further Notice

SATURDAY'S ROADSIDE CLEANUP CANCELED



Watch your e-mail's inbox for new date.



**BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE**
[**CLICK HERE**](#)



YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

INSTEAD OF YOUTH MEETINGS/PACKET COMING

All JH/HS aged students on our rosters will soon be receiving by U.S. postal mail a packet containing the weekly lesson and activities. If your physical mailing address has changed since December, please email Elisa your preferred address. ***We will not be meeting in March on Sundays.***

FUNDRAISERS

We will **NOT** be holding our March breakfast taco fundraiser. In the meantime, let's get our creative caps on with fundraising ideas that can be done virtually and on-line.

For more information, contact: Elisa Webster, elisawebster9@gmail.com.



FAMILY MINISTRY NEWS

SSEC Family Events

If you are not currently on our rosters and are interested in receiving a weekly lesson with activities for your family's children and/or teens, e-mail, Youth & Family Minister, Elisa Webster, elisawebster9@gmail.com.

Although you see scheduled events below, please be aware that we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and make adjustments as necessary.

Saturday, April 4	8:00 a.m.	campus-wide	SSEC Work Day with lunch provided
Monday, April 6	9:30 a.m.	courtyard	Pet Blessing
Sunday, April 12	10:30 a.m.	Church	Easter Service & Egg Hunt
Friday, May 8	6:00 p.m.	McArthur Hall	Kid's Fun & Faith/Parent's Date Night
Saturday, May 16	1:00 p.m.	Courtyard	Church & School Picnic

For more information, contact: Elisa Webster, elisawebster9@gmail.com.



ASK & ANSWER AVAILABLE 24/7

You can now find a form on the church website called ["Ask & Answer."](#) It is available to you 24/7 for all those questions that you don't know quite who to ask. [Fill out the simple form online](#), and we'll get started on your answer.

ORDERING EASTER LILIES

Deadline: Friday, April 3



You may continue ordering and paying for Easter lilies online. Final day to order is Friday, April 3.

To order flowers, click link below:

<https://ststevewimberley.wufoo.com/forms/altar-flowers-order-form/>

To pay for altar flowers, click link: <https://www.ststeve.org/online-giving>. In the "give to" field's pull down menu, select "Altar Flowers." Cost is: \$15.

Whether we are in-person for our Easter Sunday Service, April 12, or viewing it through live streaming, you will be able to see your beautiful donations of Easter Lilies adorning the altar.

PHOTO DIRECTORY UPDATE

The last edited proof of our church photo directory was submitted. Lifetouch usually estimates 15-20 business days before we receive access to our directory. Be aware, though, that COVID-19 guidelines may impact their staffing, etc., and, therefore, may delay the directory delivery.

St. Stephen's will publish an online directory link for you to download the mobile version once it is available.

For more information about the directory during these unusual times, contact, Judy Holmes, (512) 921-7043 with your questions.



BIG SCOOP UPDATE

The Big Scoop Ice Cream Festival is getting a new date. It will not be held in July. Stay tuned for more information.



HALFTIME SERVICE RETURNS

Wednesday, April 8 @ 6:00 p.m.

Chapel

Although you see scheduled events below, please be aware that we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and make adjustments as necessary.

During Lent, we have had a combination of in-person (pre-COVID 19) and on-line delivered special programs of short plays and skits. No Halftime Service is being held during these Lenten weeks. At this time, subject to change, Halftime Service will return on Wednesday, April 8 at 6:00 p.m. in the Chapel. At that time, Halftime will continue its 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Wednesday schedule.

Community of Hope Ministry

HOPE
LIVES

Do you need someone...

*To listen, without judgment, to what is weighing on your heart?
To recognize your needs and respect your rights to your feelings?
To honor any conversation with complete confidentiality?
To support you as you take steps of change on your journey?
To just walk with you and let you be you.*

Each one of us, at some point in our lives, could use a "companion" to walk with us during the challenges of our journeys. A Community of Hope Lay Chaplain is someone who cares about you, will not promise miracles, will not decide for you what you should do, will not take steps for you, and will not rescue you. He or she will be available to you, support you, pray for you, and assure you that you are God's beloved. Please, if you are walking alone, invite one to join you on your path.

For more information during MARCH contact:

Becky Denton, dentonrebecca1@gmail.com or Dot Green, dotgreen@anvilcom.com.



UPCOMING SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The eNEWS is published on Fridays generally every two weeks and delivered straight to your e-mail's in-box. If you have an e-mail address update, please make sure to send these to the church office, office@ststeve.org.

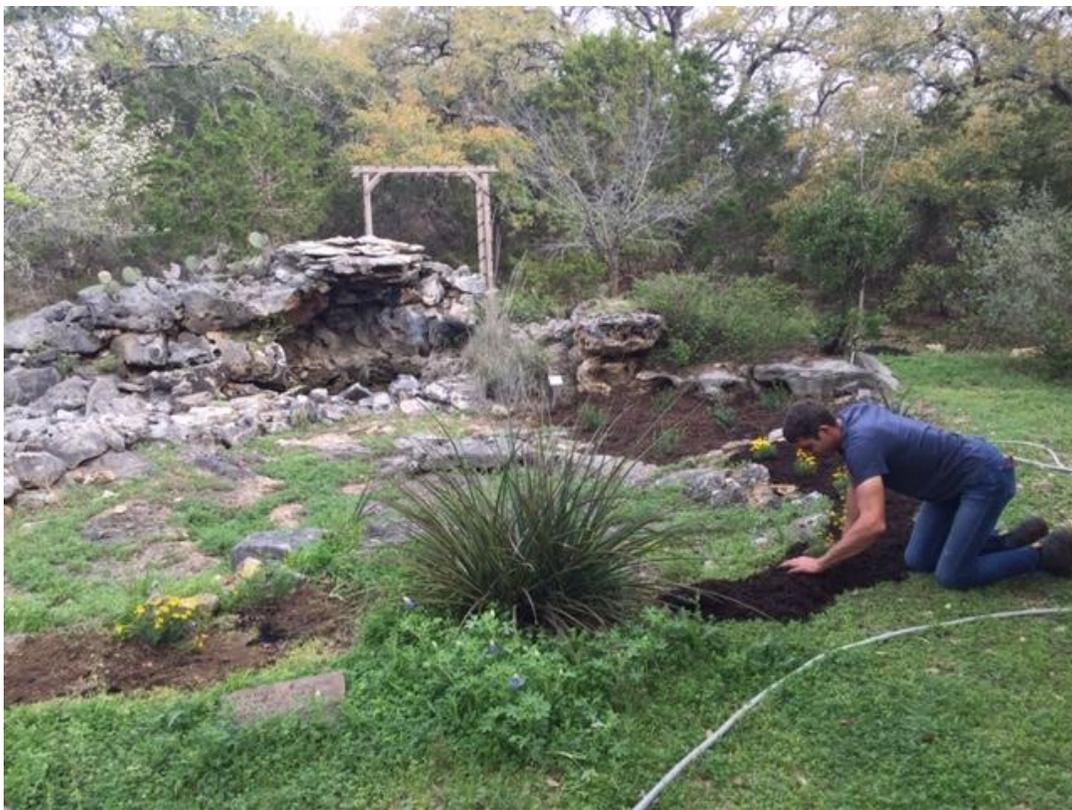
With more than 25 ministries and groups here at St. Stephen's Church, we've got a lot happening! Help us cover your event by submitting articles, photos, and artwork to: *Communications Manager, [Jackie McFadden](#).*

UPCOMING DEADLINES:
12 noon Wednesday or earlier

April 1
April 15

IN THE LIFE OF SSEC

As part of the grant through Keep Wimberley Beautiful, the SSEC Garden Grant Committee was able to have new plants installed in the nature trail area with the help of Wimberley Gardens. The St. Stephen's nature trail is open dawn to dusk, and we invite the parishioners and public to enjoy this natural space all year long. Nature is God's healing hand!



SUN, MARCH 22

Sunday Morning Prayer with Fr. Phil, Anne, Allen (ONLINE), 10:30 a.m.

WED, MARCH 25

Carla Daws' Lenten Program (ONLINE)

Are you on Facebook? St. Stephen's is!

**[Click here](#) to visit our Facebook page
and don't forget to **LIKE** and **SHARE** us!**

Please contact the church office at 512.847.9956, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon Fridays if you have any questions.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)