



CHRISTMAS LETTER

[Fr. Phil Mason](#)

My Dear Friends,

Advent is drawing to a close and St. Stephen's is preparing for a beautiful Christmas Eve. On Saturday, December 14, we were treated/blessed with a beautiful presentation of the traditional Kings College Cambridge setting of *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*. Our newly refurbished organ was sounding heavenly and the St. Stephen's Chancel Choir sang lovely settings of some of our favorite old carols. My favorite, which always brings tears to my eyes, was the Polish traditional "[Infant Holy, Infant Lowly](#)." Between each carol Scripture lessons were read, as we were invited by the "Bidding Prayer" (see below) to, "hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion until the glorious redemption brought to us by this holy child Jesus."



The congregation joined the choir in singing some of our favorite carols--[O come Emmanuel](#), [Joy to the World](#), and more. The highlight for many was when the service began with the very beautiful six-year-old Mia Sanchez singing like an angel--acapella from the pulpit--the beginning verse of "[Once in Royal David's City](#)." It was truly stunning and there was scarcely a dry eye in the Chapel. I am so very grateful to Anne Jones with the baton, Allen Hennig at the organ and piano, the Chancel Choir, and all who worked hard to make this a very special evening.

It is my heart's desire that this beautiful Advent season will be the prelude to a wonderful Christmas experience for all of us. It is that yearly time that we can gather together and welcome Christ into our heart once again and renew our commitment to the love that

came down from heaven that starry night.

AT 5:00 P.M. CHRISTMAS EVE, we will have our own special version of "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever." We will look on as our children re-enact, in their own special and sometimes chaotic way, the beautiful ancient story and awaken the Christ Child within our hearts.

LATER AT 9:00 P.M. CHRISTMAS EVE, that holy night, we will gather in the beautiful St. Stephen's Chapel for our traditional Christmas Eve service. Led by Anne and the choir with Allen at the organ, we will sing our favorite carols once again, and celebrate the nativity of our Lord. In the glow of the candle light with the scent of frankincense filling the air, we will sing "[*Silent Night*](#)" to the "*Holy infant, so tender and mild.*"

As we return to our homes and the warmth of our families, may we "*sleep in heavenly peace*" and may "visions of sugar plums dance in our heads."

Merry Christmas and Peace and love to all,
[Phil+](#)



THE BIDDING PRAYER

[FROM: A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS](#)

Dear people of God, in this season of Advent our responsibility and joy as God's people is to prepare ourselves to hear again the tidings of the angels, to go even to Bethlehem and see the very son of God lying in a manger. Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion until the glorious redemption brought to us by this holy child Jesus. And, let us look forward to the yearly festival of his birth with hymns and songs of praise. But first, in silence, let us pray for the needs of the whole world..., for peace and justice on earth..., for the unity and mission of the church for which he died...And because God rejoices in it, let us remember in God's name, the poor and helpless..., the cold, the hungry and the oppressed..., the sick and those who mourn..., the lonely and unloved..., the aged and

the little children..., as well as those who do not know the love of God. ... Finally, let us remember before God Mary, the mother of our Lord and the whole community of saints, that no one can number whose hope was in the Word made flesh and with whom in Jesus Christ we are one forever more. AMEN.

SENIOR WARDEN NEWS

[Nancy Cooke-Jenkins](#)

The Christmas spirit is alive and well at St. Stephen's!! Saturday, December 14th's packed house of *Lessons & Carols* is a reminder to us of the glory of the season and the holiness that surrounds it. Many, many thanks to Fr. Phil, Anne Jones, Allen Hennig, and Charlotte Carter for orchestrating this moving presentation. Thank you to all the participants and attendees.



On Sunday, December 15, Santa's elves were busy, busy, busy. It was a heartwarming scene to see and participate in the wrapping of gifts for the special people listed on our Christmas tree! Our outreach to 32 families and 86 children will help provide joy and good cheer to these households. Thanks to Ashley Barrett, Richard & Darelle Jordan, Darryl & Sharon Krebs, Mary McIntosh, Anita McNabb, Jeannetta Watson and the Youth for their hard work in shopping, sorting, paper gathering, and dedication to this very worthwhile ministry. *All* the volunteers deserve an extra hug of gratitude for their help wrapping and delivering all the gifts and meals. Our church family working as one in our community to help others makes for a truly, shining moment.

Not to be left out, our Altar Guild set the scene for the Advent season by "greening" the church and chapel. Mary Goodwin and Mary McIntosh led the decorating team with their talent to adorn the altars, windows, and doors with wreaths and garland with the finest Christmas trimmings.

Lastly, on behalf of your Vestry, we wish you a very "Merry Christmas" and if you are traveling, a safe journey. We look forward to an *exciting* 2020!

Blessings,

Nancy

*"Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set the people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee."
- Charles Wesley*



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Wimberley



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

FAMILY & PAGEANT EUCHARIST 12.24, 5 PM
(Nursery open for infants through preschool 12.24, 5 PM only)

TRADITIONAL EUCHARIST 12.24, 9 PM
(with full choir and thurible burning incense)



Merry Christmas

From Fr. Phil+ & all the St. Stephen's Staff



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, December 24

Wednesday, December 25

Thursday, December 26

Friday, December 27

Tuesday, December 31 (*closes at 12 noon*)

Wednesday, January 1



Holiday Leftovers Coffee Hour **after 10:30 a.m. Service** **Sunday, December 29**

Everyone is invited to clean out their refrigerators of holiday goodies and bring these to share at the late coffee hour in McArthur Hall after the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday, December 29.



ST. STEPHEN'S SANTA ADOPTIONS COMPLETED

This season's Santa adoptions have come to a close; all gifts and full meals were delivered, Sunday, December 15. Our church-wide effort has been a success. See some of the Santa Ministry crew pictured below along with more photos in the "Life at SSEC" section of the newsletter.

THANK YOU, ST. STEPHEN'S!

In case you have been wondering how these deserving families are chosen each season of St. Stephen's Santa, we thought we would walk you through the process.

"We reach out to families whose sons and daughters were enrolled in Camp Good Sam Wimberley the past summer, or were referred to the program by a teacher or social service agency," shares Sharon Krebs. "Children who attend Camp Good Sam must meet specific low income requirements to receive child care and developmental assistance."

This season, St. Stephen's Santa Ministry invited 75 families to participate. Based on the responses we received, we provided meals for 32 families and gifts for 86 kids.

At approximately \$100 per meal and \$100 per child for gifts and added gifts, ***St. Stephen's distributed more than \$12,000 in food and gifts on December 15 to the Wimberley community!***

For more information, contact: Sharon Krebs, krebss@austin.rr.com.



**LAST DAY TO TURN IN
YEAR-END CONTRIBUTIONS**
Tuesday, December 31

December 31st is quickly approaching. Your 2019 contribution needs to be received with a postmark of no later than:

Tuesday, December 31

This will ensure that your contribution is applied to your 2019 church statement. Jeannetta will be in the church office Tuesday, December 31 until 12 noon to receive any monies that you wish to hand deliver.



SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The application process is now officially closed, meaning that the Search Committee is currently in the process of contacting each of the rector applicants. St. Stephen's opened the search to those both in and beyond our diocese.

"We have some very good candidates," assures Co-Chair Sharon East.

Watch your future *eNEWS* editions for more updates as they become available.



CONFIRMATION CLASSES BEGINNING SOON

Confirmation classes will be beginning soon in time for the Bishop's visit in the Spring. Classes will begin Sunday, January 19, 2020 after the 10:30 a.m. service and continue for a total of six weeks. Watch your next *eNEWS* for more details.



NEW LOCATION: FRIDAY COFFEE & TEA FRIENDS

Friday, December 20 & January 3, 9:30 a.m.

OFFSITE: Wimberley Cafe (NEW LOCATION)

The Friday Coffee and Tea Friends meet at Wimberley Cafe every first and third Friday, except holidays, beginning at 9:30 a.m. All women are invited to share this time of fellowship and conversation.

For more information, contact: [Ann Robertson](#) or [Marsha Acock](#).



Remembrance Day Service

Saturday, January 4, 11:00 a.m.

Chapel

The holiday season can seem very lonely, especially for those who have experienced the death of a loved one. To acknowledge that loss, we invite you to attend a Remembrance Ceremony and to share the hope that we experience as we continue to live out our lives in the light of Christ.

Please join us for this special ceremony on Saturday, January 4, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. in the Chapel. Fr. Phil will be presiding and Tom Dawson will be providing music.

For more information, contact: [Dot Green](#), or [Becky Denton](#).



WIMBERLEY VALLEY CANCER SUPPORT MEETING

Wednesday, January 8 @ 11:30 a.m.

OFFSITE: Wimberley Chamber of Commerce, Members Room

The Wimberley Area Cancer Support Group, sponsored by St. Stephen's Church,

meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Members Room. Each participant brings a brown bag lunch. All who have been diagnosed with cancer or in the past are invited to attend and share a time of relaxation and conversation with others who share their experiences.

For more information, contact: Sharon East, sharoneast@verizon.net or Dave Boyd, davemarcyboyd@anvilcom.com.



TED Talkers
Wednesday, January 8 @ 12 noon
McArthur Hall

Please join us Wednesday, January 8 at 12 noon for the viewing of "The story we tell about poverty isn't true" by Mia Birdsong.

On TED Talkers days, we watch a pre-selected TED Talk video at 12 noon, eat our brown bag lunch, and discuss the topic in a non-judgmental setting with coffee and water provided. It all wraps up by 1:00 p.m. You are encouraged to bring a friend, neighbor, and join in the next sure-to-be-lively, mind-stimulating discussion. We'll save you a seat!

TED TALKERS SCHEDULE

JANUARY 8, 2020

JANUARY 22, 2020

For more information, contact: Jo Bourke, jobourke33@gmail.com, 512-468-1267.



Roadside Cleanup 2020 Dates & Wish List

With record-breaking attendance at the Saturday, December 14 Roadside Cleanup, ministry volunteers were able to fill up 30 bags of trash, remove several large discarded items, and collect 18 bags of recyclables.

"There was more trash this time than some volunteers said they'd seen in four years,"

Becki noted.

Mark your calendars now for the 2020 Roadside cleanups to find out first hand what new fun surprises are in store. Ideally, we would like to have a crew of 20 with each cleanup to more easily cover the 5 mile stretch.

Speaking of making things easier...

If you are looking for a way to help out this beautification ministry without donning gloves or waking up early, consider purchasing and donating money for a sturdy, long-handled grabber.

**A donation of \$25 will purchase one preferred grabber.
We're in need of a dozen more.**

We would love to have you join us for a cleanup in 2020:

**March 21, 2020
June 13, 2020
September 19, 2020
December 12, 2020**

For more information, contact: Becki Smith, colorsmith1@yahoo.com.



DEER CREEK CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE
Wednesday, December 25 @ 3:00 p.m.

OFFSITE: Deer Creek Wimberley, 555 FM 3237, Wimberley

On Christmas Day, December 25, at 3:00 p.m., Carla Daws and SSEC's Community of Hope will share a Holy Eucharist service with the residents as part of the regular 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month ministry. **All are welcome to attend.**

For more information, contact: Sharon East, sharoneast@verizon.net and Connie Maverick, joemaverick@verizon.net.

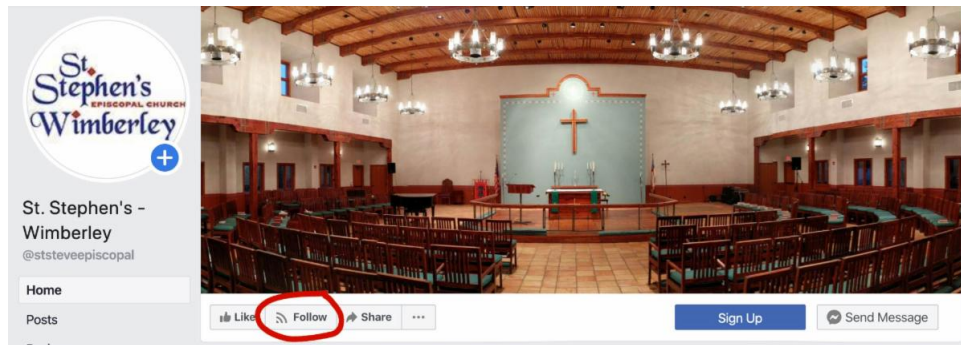


YOGA RETURNS IN JANUARY

McArthur Hall

Yoga classes led by Carla Daws are on hiatus during December. Classes will resume on Tuesday, January 7, 2020 at 4 p.m. in McArthur Hall.

For more information, contact: Cala Daws, geminpisces@hotmail.com.



JOIN THE ST. STEPHEN'S FACEBOOK

Our St. Stephen's Church newsletter, *eNEWS*, comes out every other week. If you would like to receive important reminders and information bites in between the newsletter editions, consider joining the [St. Stephen's Church Facebook](#). Click "Follow" and you will be all set.



BECOME A KITCHEN ANGEL

If you are looking for a ministry that you can serve with a month at a time, Kitchen Angels is for you! Evie Martin and Mary McIntosh can show you the ropes. Once a week during the month you choose, you'll check the laundry basket where the soiled dish towels are deposited, take them home, wash/dry/fold, and return them. And, when you are at church, simply take a look around the kitchen in McArthur Hall to ensure the counters are clear and clean, wash anything remaining, and return those items to proper storage areas so they can be quickly found for next time.

"This is really the major need right now, " explains Evie Martin. "This will be a tremendous help."

Don't have time to commit to a month? How about talking with your group that is using the kitchen and assigning a Kitchen Angel to clean up each time your group has an event requiring the use of the kitchen? Tip: Remember to use the table linens. It makes cleanup that much easier.

For more information, contact: Evie Martin, evieartin@yahoo.com.



EVENING EUCHARIST & PRAYER featuring the Half-time Band **Wednesdays @ 6:00 p.m. in the Chapel**

All are welcome to join us in the Chapel on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. for eucharist, prayer, and contemporary music. Rumor has it that Theo the singing dog will be joining us in some of the Halftime services as well in 2020.

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 DECEMBER and JANUARY, contact:

Sharon East, sharoneast@verizon.net or Connie Maverick, joemaverick@verizon.net



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.

With more than 20 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](mailto:JackieMcFadden).

UPCOMING DEADLINES:
12 noon Wednesday or earlier

January 8

January 22



SAVE THE DATES

FRI, DEC 20 & JAN 3

Friday Coffee & Tea Friends (OFFSITE), 9:30 a.m., Wimberley Cafe

TUES, DEC 24/25/26/27

Church Office closed all day for the holidays.

TUES, DEC 24

Christmas Eve Family & Pageant Eucharist, 5:00 p.m., Church

TUES, DEC 24

Christmas Eve Traditional Eucharist with full choir and thurible burning incense, 9:00 p.m., Chapel

WED, DEC 25, CHRISTMAS DAY

Deer Creek Eucharist (OFFSITE), 3:00 p.m., Deer Creek Wimberley, 555 FM 3237

TUES, DEC 31

Last day to turn in year-end contributions for 2019. Church office closes at 12 noon

WED, JAN 1

Church Office Closed all day for New Year's Day

SAT, JAN 4

Remembrance Day Service, 11:00 a.m., Chapel

WED, JAN 8

Wimberley Area Cancer Support Meeting (OFFSITE), 11:30 a.m., Wimberley Chamber of Commerce Members Room

WED, JAN 8

TED Talkers, 12 noon, McArthur Hall

WED, JAN 8

Deer Creek Eucharist (OFFSITE), 3:00 p.m., Deer Creek Wimberley, 555 FM 3237

LIFE AT SSEC

December was filled with reflections of the past year, community time together, and holiday cheer and parties for humans and furry friends. More photos can be found at the church Facebook and Instagram.





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!](#)