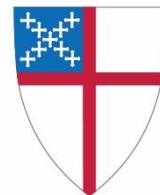




St. Stephen's Episcopal Church



December 2021

email: mark.sowards@ststephensaz.org

Telephone: (520) 458-4432

From our Rector:

Hello St. Stephen's,

Joyous Advent! As I compose this letter, we are starting into the Advent season, the season of waiting and anticipating. We celebrate the end of waiting for the Messiah in the birth of Jesus and we continue to wait for Jesus' second coming.... Beyond our faith community waiting for Jesus, we also wait for other things... most of us wait for some good news with respect to Covid and a longing to return to a normal routine. It is hard to believe that we are almost two years into this pandemic... and it seems like just as we are about to turn the corner on this virus, a new surge and a new variant seems to threaten us again.



So, we follow the science and medical experts' advice, wear masks, sanitize and sterilize, try to social distance, get vaccinated and booster shots, and wait... and wait... and wait... I am heartened that we have largely remained safe while observing these protocols... I have heard of other churches who have had members get the Covid virus and become very ill and in many cases have died.

May we all find ways to celebrate the holiday season while staying safe and practicing patience as we await the days when this virus will be reduced in its infectiousness and allow us to resume life on a more normal basis. Just think, if the Israelites could wait hundreds of years for Messiah, we should be able to wait a few more weeks or months (we hope and pray) for us to get to a point of immunity or protectiveness that makes it easier to relax our protocols. Trust me, I am just as eager as all of you for that day...

Until then, may we all enjoy this season of expectation and anticipation and may you have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Rev. Allison



From our Sr. Warden

I hope everyone is doing well during our extraordinary time. On March 16, our 2021 Vestry Members volunteered to contact our parish members. It's important that we all stay in touch with each other. The Vestry needs to know how the church can help you, how you are doing, or what can you do for the church. If you have not been contacted recently, please call me as listed below.

Due to the Delta variant of Covid, we continue to use to phase 2 protocols (social distancing and all wearing masks). But we can take communion with Rev. Allison doing intinction with the wafer. Until this variant subsides, we will maintain these protocols. Let us give the glory to God that we are still having in-person church.

A team of Pete Criscuolo, Jeff Speer, Sherry Simon and I replaced the first few rows of pews with chairs which were donated by a parishioner. The intent of this to make more space upfront for events that need more room than we currently have. We will see how this works. Please be patient to give this new look a good review.

Please continue to send in your pledges to the church, either by mail or the donate link on our <https://www.ststephensaz.org>.

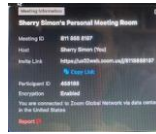
My home number is 520-459-1937; cell 520-227-4483; email: Holsonback@cox.net.

May God continue to bless us all during these extraordinary times!!

We need more Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, and Alter Guild personnel.

If you are interest in any of these positions, please contact Robin StClair at rsцина@gmail.com

From our Jr. Warden



Here is my Zoom meeting room information.

There are new things from Anonymous donors from a new door, sound system and brush mower.

Pardon our dust, due to cutting the new door.

New brush mower takes muscles. If you are looking for a workout, talk to either Tim or me.

Coffee Hour helpers needed!

As we return to having a time of fellowship with each other after worship on Sundays, we can use some helpers to set up the coffee and snacks before and clean up after the coffee hour. Please sign up on the sheet on the snacks table.



Bible Study

Every Tuesday at 5pm join in Zoom for an in-depth review of the Psalms. We use several interpretations for a lively discussion. The zoom link is: 811-888-8197.

Saturday Evening Worshippers:

Please recycle your bulletins for Sunday worshippers if you are not taking them home with you.

From our Administrator Mark

Please notify the church office when you move or change phone or emails. If you change your email, please update your sign-on with our website prior to shutting down the old email.

Our office hours have really changed, but with Covid-19 impacts, they have been very flexible.

Standard hours are:

Tuesday and Thursday 9:00am to 2:00pm

Wednesday 11:00am to 2:00pm.

The Bishop is Coming, The Bishop is

Coming! At least we think she is coming as of right now... pandemic notwithstanding. Bishop Jennifer Reddall is scheduled to be at St. Stephen's for her next visitation on March 27th

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
December 27th

Sunday's service will be In Person and Live Stream.

We need a church treasurer!

One of the key leadership positions of a church is the church treasurer. We thank Cheryl Stone for being our treasurer these past 9 months and for doing a very nice job during a difficult pandemic year. The position entails ensuring our bills get paid, monitoring and reporting on our budget, and keeping our bookkeeper informed of financial transactions. Please let Rev. Allison know if you would like to be considered for this position.

The church needs recommendations for a **janitor (sexton)**. Our current sexton will complete her time with us at the end of October. The contract would be for a total of 6 hours a month (two 3-hour sessions every other week) for a total of \$120 / month.

It is that time again where I ask you if you want Giving envelopes. They sure came in handy this past year with all the remote services. If you want Giving envelopes, please let the office know either by calling, emailing, or stopping by and telling me in person.

Where to sign up for a Covid-19 vaccine?

Please see the following link which has information for residents of Cochise County:

<https://covid-cochisehealth.hub.arcgis.com/pages/vaccines>

If you need help with registering for a vaccine, our church will help you. Currently only 65 and older plus those in certain priority groups like healthcare workers and teachers are being registered (groups 1A and 1B priority).

Birthdays

21 Dec: Carol Dockter

23 Dec: Linnaea Schmid

24 Dec: Rosemary Snapp

25 Dec: Sherril O'neil

29 Dec: Elizabeth York



Spiritual Self-care Support Group - Have you struggled with caregiving for someone with dementia or Alzheimer's? Is your soul suffering from the effects of these diseases on your loved one? We are planning a support group to help caregivers share their trials and find ways to bolster their spiritual health. Please let Rev. Allison know when a good day and time for you would be to participate in this group. We are considering 11am on Thursdays in the Ed Building (with a possible zoom connection for remote attendance).

Changing Hours:

Sunday Worship time will change Nov 7th to 11am start time. Adult forum will move to 12:30am start.

Rev. Allison's office hours will be Wed, Thurs, Fri, 9am to 3pm starting Nov. 3rd.

Advent Discussion Forum – Meets at St. Stephen's on Saturdays at 4pm and Sundays at 12:30pm in the Parish Hall cozy corner. We are using the reflections in the "I Witness" Advent book to talk about some of the themes of Advent... expectation, prayer, waiting, silence, etc... Join us for lively and thought-provoking conversation.

Blue Christmas – Join with others who are feeling less than "holly jolly" this year because of loss, grief, depression which is common around this time of year. We provide a space to remember those who have died and are missed so much this time of year. We provide the Kleenex and a service of honoring and remembering. Dec 19th 4:30pm at St. Raphael's Benson.

Auld Lang Syne – Ready to kick 2021 to the curb? Eager for a new year? We invite you to release all the negatives of the past year and begin to plan for a more positive new year at our New Year's Eve worship service on Dec 31st at 10:30am at St. Raphael's in Benson.

Confirmation/Reception classes begin January 15th 9am to 10:30am for 9 weeks – We will hold informational classes to discuss the Anglican/Episcopal tradition to help those who wish to be confirmed (for those who were baptized as a young child and want to make a personal vow of faith in Jesus Christ), or received into the Episcopal Church (for those whose background is in another denomination, this welcomes you into the Episcopal denomination), or to re-affirm your baptismal vows (for those who may have stepped away from your faith for a while and now wish to rededicate yourself to following Jesus Christ). We will use the book "The Way of Love" as our study guide. Books can be obtained from Rev. Allison for \$8.00.

New Program for giving in Sierra Vista – Better Bucks: The vestry voted Tuesday to shift our Groceries 4U program to using the Better Bucks booklets to give to those who need some assistance with food, clothing, and other necessities. Please donate to the church to buy the booklets or donate booklets for us to use. Cannot be used for alcohol or tobacco.
website: <https://betterbuckssierravista.org/>

Annual Meeting in January – It is that time again when we meet together as a church to hold elections, approve the budget, and hear the "State of the Church" address from Rev. Allison. This year we have openings for Junior Warden and two vestry members as Sherry Simon rotates off as our Junior Warden and Liz York, Charles Rouse, and Jeff Speer move out of the vestry positions. Jeff has agreed to be the new Senior Warden as Tim Holsonback rotates off his second-year term. This will be a combined in-person and zoom meeting. Jan.23rd at 12:30pm.

SINGERS!

The annual Messiah sing is back! Advent and Christmas portions will be performed on Dec 19th 7pm at St. Andrew's Catholic Church. Any wishing to sing, rehearsals are Saturdays at 10am on Nov 6, 13, 20, Dec 4, 11, 18 at St. Andrew's Catholic Church, 800 Taylor Dr.

Coats for Kids of Cochise County:

The Big Red Box on our porch is for donations of coats for kids in our county. Please donate new or gently used, clean coats. Donations can be made from now through Dec 15th. All sizes of kids thru young adult.

Are you curious about what the 12-steps used in various support groups are all about? Come and learn how the 12-steps have a Christian and specifically Episcopal history in their formation and how they can be used for anyone in any situation. They are not confined to those in recovery from addiction. The 12 steps are helpful for everyday life. Join us on Wednesday evenings in the Parish Hall at 5pm til 6pm as we explore these 12 steps through our Christian perspective. Open to everyone.

Coming soon! First Fridays Film night – On the first Friday of the month we will show a movie and have a short discussion afterwards. These may be full length movies or shorter episodes of a film series. January 7th at 5:30pm we will show season 1, episode 1 of "The Chosen" TV series. It is about an hour with discussion to follow. This series has an interesting view of the events of Jesus' life as portrayed in the Gospels, trying to show more about how Jesus, the disciples, and their interactions may have been (artistic license). Join us for the film and share your reactions.

Ministry Teams Schedule for December

Wednesdays 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

LEM, Lector, Altar Guild – Dottie / Sherry

Saturday 4

LEM – Jeff Speer Lector – Sandra Calhoun Altar Guild – Jill Holsenback

Saturday 11

LEM – Tim Holsenback Lector – Robin StClair Altar Guild – Robin StClair

Saturday 18

LEM – Tim Holsenback Lector – Sandra Calhoun Altar Guild – Jill Holsenback

Friday 24

LEM – Sherry Simon Lector – Robin StClair Altar Guild – Robin StClair

Saturday 25

No Services

Sunday 5

LEM – Nancy Rea Lector – Sherry Simon Altar Guild – Deb Ash

Sunday 12



LEM – Sherry Simon Lector – MJ Mahland Altar Guild – Robin StClair

Sunday 19

LEM – Robin StClair Lector – Nancy Rea Altar Guild – Deb Ash

Sunday 26

LEM – Nancy Rea Lector – Sherry Simon Altar Guild – Robin StClair

December						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 5:00 pm New comer Welcome Service
5 11:00 am Choral service with Holy Communion	6	7 Bible Study (Phalms) 5 pm via Zoom	8 9:30 am Spoken service with Holy Communion	9	10	11 5:00 pm Spoken service with Holy Communion
12 11:00 am Worship In person and Live Stream	13	14 Bible Study (Phalms) 5 pm via Zoom	15 9:30 am Spoken service with Holy Communion	16	17	18 5:00 pm Spoken service with Holy Communion
19 4:30 pm Blue Christmas at St. Raphael's in Benson	20	21 	22 9:30 am Spoken service with Holy Communion	23	24 6:00 pm Christmas Eve Service with Holy Communion	25  No Services
26 11:00 am Christmas Day Celebration	27 New sletter Articles Due	28 Bible Study (Phalms) 5 pm via Zoom	29 9:30 am Spoken service with Holy Communion	30	31 10:30 am Worship Service at St. Raphael's in Benson	