

The Witness

Volume 26, Issue 12

Welcoming Worshipping Working

December 2022

Special points of interest:

Sunday

8:00 AM Service
10:00 AM Service

Tuesday

5:00 PM Centering
Prayer via Zoom

Wednesday

12:15 PM Service

Hello
December

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Anticipation vs. Expectation

By The Rev. Ian M. Delinger, Rector

Do you know how loud a generator is? Perhaps you do if you own an RV and have needed one where there isn't a power hook-up. When I was in San Juan, PR for my Spanish classes, the electricity went out in the area of my hotel and the generators kicked in. It was 3pm, and I was going through church emails when there was a clear breach of power followed by a fairly swift return of power. It was obvious to me because the generator for the hotel was directly below my second story window. As I traversed the area in the afternoon, small generators outside restaurants and bars in the touristy area added to the cacophony of the hustle & bustle of Candado. And when I returned in the early evening, I asked the front desk "Have they given an estimate of when the power will be restored?" It was clear to me that I wouldn't be able to sleep with the noise of the generator. "They said 24hrs." She was willing to move me to another room if the power wasn't restored by bedtime. Before the outage, my *expectation* was that there would always be power.

Life doesn't always go as planned, and there's a saying among the therapeutic world that is perfectly encapsulated in the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to:
accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

So, what did I do knowing that this generator would keep me awake, after a short sleep the night before, and on top of being physically exhausted, my first day of 4hrs speaking and listening completely in Spanish made me also mentally exhausted? I thought of Advent and The Incarnation: in *anticipation* of what is to come.

The human world is messy. We humans spend a LOT of energy, probably much of it negative energy, trying to make it NOT messy. Yet, we have an *expectation* that life will be or should be easy. We try to *manage expectations* by *anticipating* future outcomes. Without prejudicing your thoughts, reflect on what you do to make your daily life easier, better, happier, more fulfilling. What amount of energy does that require to meet those expectations?



(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from front page)

There was nothing within my control about the power outage and the generator. So, I had a binary choice: be angry about it, or manage my expectations so I can accomplish the most that I can. Events in our lives fall short of our expectations. I am fully aware that I not only fall short of my expectations, but I also fall short of YOUR expectations. We all (and I'll speak only for myself) do things that upset others, cause damage or fall short of what we promise. Sometimes we're even semi-aware that our actions will have negative consequences. We're human! That's what we do best!

But December – ADVENT – is the time during which we *anticipate* the coming of something...SOMEONE who can give us a different perspective and a different path. God – that omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omni-everything entity, came into this world as Jesus the Messiah *precisely* to offer a different perspective and a different path to being a human being! To blow apart our previously-held expectations. That's what we are waiting for during Advent. Our *anticipation* of God-made-Flesh is an exercise in reflecting on what we read in the Gospels, and we are waiting for in Christ's coming again to sort us all out.

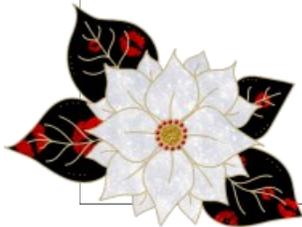
Our expectation is that Christ will make all things new. That is the promise. But the evidence in the Gospels is that it should not be our expectation as much as it should be more of an anticipation. For the people of the 1C, the expectation was that the Messiah would come in a powerful and glorious way. Instead, Jesus arrived through the pain of human birth in a stable. The beautiful painting of the Holy Family created for St. Stephen's by Gini Griffin captures some of the humility of the Messiah entering the messiness of humanity.

But as in the Gospels, Jesus' Second Coming is probably not going to be the fix-all we want. We have some work to do. WE need to amend our behavior; WE need to apologize; WE need to forgive; WE need to repent or "turn" toward God. Advent was once known as the "Little Lent", a semi-penitential season, hence the seasonal color being purple. While repentance is a sub-theme to Advent, the main theme is *anticipation*...waiting for The One who will guide us to this "better place". That anticipation should cause us to manage our expectations better.

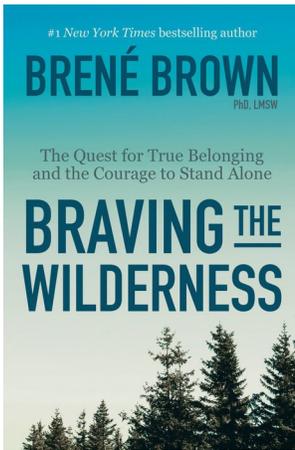
God, as Jesus, came into this messy world of what it is like to be a human in order to show us and give us a different path. That path begins with asking for forgiveness, acknowledging shortcomings and moving toward something more heavenly. We come on Sundays for refreshment and healing (ref Sermon on October 30, 2022:

Our imperfection is one of the reasons we are here every Sunday, and if we were Scottish Presbyterian or some other Calvinist denomination, our imperfection would be the only reason we were here every Sunday.

Back to the generator. It stopped at about 10:30pm. But there is another compressor or pump that switched on regularly that kept me awake every night. I worked on managing my expectations and accepting the things I could not change. As we meander through Advent, with the Christmas parties, gift shopping, egg nog, tree decorating and all the other celebratory and fully-realized stuff that comes with this "season of anticipation", let us also offer up to God our flaws and make this a time that we grapple with the difficult stuff so, on that day of The Incarnation, we can celebrate and look forward to the Second Coming without the baggage that we're hiding behind tinsel and tinctures. Because those are the things that we *can* change.



Advent Book Study & Retreat



For Advent, we will be reading *Braving the Wilderness* by Brené Brown. We will gather in Ramsden Hall to share our thoughts and explore Brown's ideas on Sundays from 4pm to 5.15pm. At 5.30pm, there will be a short silent meditation service in the Sanctuary. Bring your own copy of the book. Please read the assigned chapters in advance. The Sundays will be November 27, December 4, 11 & 18.

On Saturday, December 10, The Rev. Canon Martha Korienek, Canon to the Ordinary, will lead a retreat on the Bishop's theme for 2023: *Courage in the Wilderness*. This will be in Ramsden Hall and open to anyone in the SLO Deanery. Brown's book is suggested reading for the retreat. There is a \$10/person donation to cover lunch. Registration information is not yet available but mark your calendars.



From the Vestry

The Vestry meets on the 2nd Sunday of the Month (usually) to discuss the business affairs of the parish. Here are some highlights of the meeting on November 13, 2022:

The Annual Giving Campaign is underway. You should have received pledge materials in the mail. If you have not, you can pick up a pledge packet from the church or request one be sent to you.

Walsh Engineering will prepare construction documents for the rebuilding of the parking lot. These documents (drawings) will be used to get formal bids from contractors.

At the Annual Meeting in January, the parish voted for a planned deficit of \$46k. We have been able to narrow the gap considerably, but not completely. The Vestry is thankful for all who have helped narrow the gap and those who may choose to further narrow the gap before the end of the year.

The changes in the landscaping and replacing the dumpster with a regular trash bin have reduced are expenses, and we are saving considerably!

The next meeting is December 11.

If you have an issue that you think should be addressed by the Vestry, please submit your request no less than 2 weeks before the next Vestry Meeting to the Rector or Wardens. All Vestry Meetings are open to members of the parish. Requests to speak can be made, approved on an individual basis. Executive Sessions are closed to Vestry members only, including the Clerk, Treasurer and Rector.





Victorian Christmas Historic Walk of San Luis Obispo Saturday, Dec. 17th, 5-6:30 pm

Guided stroll past 15 holiday-lit Victorian houses in the SLO Old Town Historic District to recall holiday customs, events, and locales of the 1890s. Flashlights recommended. Meet in front of St. Stephen's Church, corner of Nipomo and Pismo Streets. Free. Leader: Joe Morris, 805-549-0355.

Annual Giving Campaign

The Annual Giving Campaign is coming to a close. Your pledges for 2023 are extremely important in order for the vestry to plan St. Stephen's operational budget. The campaign was introduced this year with weekly reflections on our theme of "More Than Enough" and we want to close with all pledge cards submitted by Sunday, December 4th. If you have not already turned in your pledge card, please bring it with you on December 4th when you come to church. We will plan an in gathering that day and celebrate with an expanded coffee hour after the 10:00 am service. If you haven't received a pledge card, please contact Kay Lewis at 562-537-8802.

The Vestry expresses its thanks for your generosity.



Hands On Stewardship

Thank you to Bill Crewe, Kay Lewis, Carolyn Platt, Kathleen Pennington and Elizabeth Potter for counting the collection and preparing the deposits during November.

Thank you to Lee & Lynn Hollister, Cheryl & Craig McCollum, Bob & Mary and Kathleen Pennington for hosting coffee hour in November.

Thank you to Kathleen Pennington, Elizabeth Potter and Gail Taylor for teaching Sunday School in November.

Thank you to Kay Lewis and her Annual Giving Campaign Team.

Thank you to All who supported the Food Bank Turkey Trot and the Thanksgiving Dinners for the residents of Transitions Mental Health who are on either side of us.

Thank you to the helpers who folded, taped and labeled The Witness, Rosey Parks, Becky Moseley, Cheryl McCollum and Gail Taylor for handling the office, Clark Lewis for picking up the NCBs to distribute, the A/V Team for their diligence in streaming the services.

Thank you for reading The Witness and watching the services from home.

General Information

The Witness is a monthly newsletter published by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, San Luis Obispo, CA to provide information about the parish to the congregation. Subscriptions are free to anyone. Send request along with your name and mailing address to the church office. Donations to help offset distribution costs are appreciated.

Make checks payable to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

The Church's e-mail address is: office@ststephensslo.org

Contribution of articles is encouraged. Please e-mail submissions to witness@ststephensslo.org
The deadline for emailed submission of articles is the third Friday of the month. Email any questions to witness@ststephensslo.org © Copyright 2022 by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. All rights reserved.

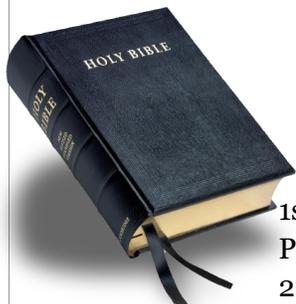


If you would like to make a donation to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church



Scan. Pay. Go.

You can scan this QR Code with your phone and be taken directly to our PayPal site or go to paypal.me/ststephensslo



Bible Selections

	4-Dec-22 Advent2A
1st Reading	Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm	Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
2nd Reading	Romans 15:4-13
Gospel	Matthew 3:1-12
	11-Dec-22 Advent3A
1st Reading	Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm	Psalm 146:4-9
2nd Reading	James 5:7-10
Gospel	Matthew 11:2-11
	18-Dec-22 Advent4A
1st Reading	Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm	Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18
2nd Reading	Romans 1:1-7
Gospel	Matthew 1:18-25
	25-Dec-22 Christmas Day
1st Reading	Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm	Psalm 96
2nd Reading	Titus 2:11-14
Gospel	Luke 2:1-20



Christmas Flowers

Each year the Altar Guild decorates our church with beautiful greenery and vibrant flowers for Christmas Day. If you would like to donate toward the Christmas flowers, please fill out this form with a check made payable to:

St. Stephen's with a note on the memo line "Christmas Flowers"

Place it in the offering plate or mail it to:

*St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1344 Nipomo Street, SLO, CA 93401*

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name of donor: _____

Memorial or thanksgiving to be noted in the Christmas Service Booklet: _____

Deadline for inclusion in Service Booklet is Dec 18.

December Celebrations

Birthdays

- 2-Dec Nancy Cook
- 4-Dec Eli Enney
- 5-Dec Stephanie Olsen
- 11-Dec Kathanne Lynch
- 13-Dec Andrew Johnson
- 15-Dec Isabelle Preston
- 27-Dec Larry Myrick



Anniversaries

- 23-Dec Dick & Kate Riggins

If we are missing your special day, please reach out to the office and we will gladly add you to the list. We want to celebrate with you.





CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

Words to Find

Angel	Jingle
Bells	Jolly
Carolers	Lights
Celebrate	Mistletoe
Chesnuts	Noel
Christmas	Nutcracker
Decorations	Ornaments
Eggnog	Poinsettia
Festive	Presents
Fruitcake	Snowflakes
Garland	Snowman
Gingerbread	Tinsel
Holiday	Tree
Holly	Yuletide

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P U P C H R I S T M A S N D N L I C
Y U L E T I D E O M H F C P U U F E
L D C T I N S E L C O K R R T M R L
I E A E I M Y N P Z L E H E C V U E
G C R G U L I J O L L Y O S R C I B
H O O G I X A S Y W Y S L E A L T R
T R L N N N N B T R F N I N C X C A
S A E O O H G D M L R L D T K C A T
F T R G E M E E G C E M A S E Y K E
E I S B L S L O R M I T Y K R C E K
S O S N O W M A N B Y T O B E L L S
T N K V M X H D L Y R A W E Z S G T
I S V C H E S N U T S E J I N G L E
V O R N A M E N T S C G A R L A N D
E P M P O I N S E T T I A D T R E E
    
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Advent Wreath Puzzle

Spot the 11 differences in the one on the right



Answer, going clockwise: no flame on top candle, added 2 berries, added pine needles top left of second candle, berries beneath candle upside down, missing pine needles under the three berries, bigger flame on bottom candle, band around candle, added pine needles top left of third candle, four berries at the bottom, missing pine needles on top right of fourth candle, flame on fourth candle flipped vertically.

Dear SLO4Home Volunteers and Supporters,

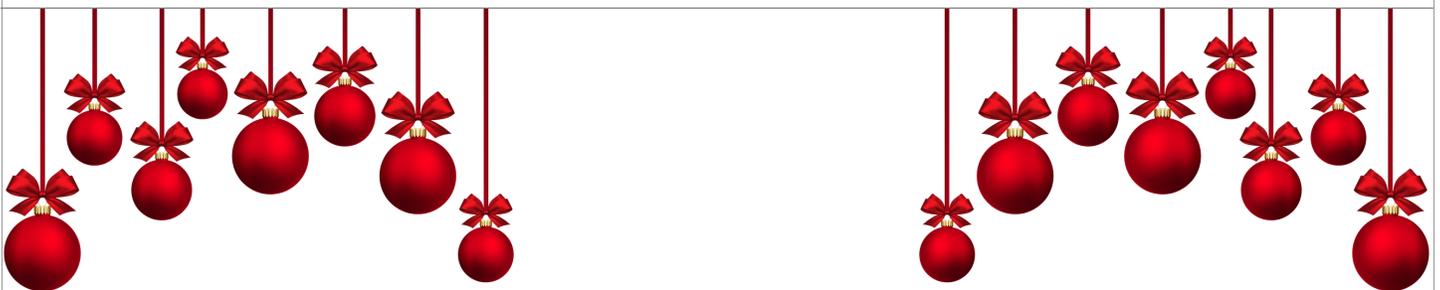
We are in the process of wrapping up CWS involvement with our 2 families. They have interviewed the families and been very impressed with the status and happiness of the refugees. The family members expressed their appreciation for all the help that SLO4Home has provided to them. Christine Baer from CWS has complimented SLO4Home repeatedly for our performance as a Community Partner. This is a tribute to all of our volunteers. You have formed not only a very effective team but a group that has provided exceptional emotional support for our refugee families. Without your compassion and concern, the families would not have made the great progress that they have accomplished. Congratulations to all of our volunteers, you have created a great reputation for SLO4Home. You are the "heart" of our organization!

We are now ready to move on to welcoming a family into Santa Maria. It is anticipated that we will welcome an Afghan family along with a Ukrainian family early next year. We are most impressed with the response we have received from those in SLO4Home and new volunteers in Santa Maria. There will be new challenges, but Lauren and I have great confidence that SLO4Home is up to the task. Our retreat in January will help us reorganize and reflect on our first year in existence. We will look at what went well and areas where we can improve. Lauren and I are excited about the future for SLO4Home.

Thank you again for your commitment to the mission of SLO4Home. We are most appreciative of you efforts and compassion.

Vance D. Rodgers, M.D.
President, SLO4Home

Lauren Brown, PhD.
Secretary, SLO4 Home



Ask Me Anything

On December 5 & 12 at 5:30pm at Finney's on Monterey Street, Rev. Jen (Campus Chaplain) and Fr. Ian will be holding "Ask Me Anything" sessions. Do you or someone you know have burning questions about the Bible? The Church? Christianity? Stop by for a beverage and a snack and ask Fr. Ian and Rev. Jen anything church-related. We'll give you the most honest and transparent answers we can!

(Note: This is not a Bible study or a debate session. It's a social setting for curious minds!)

Send your friends who have questions!

For Kids From Kids TOY DRIVE!!!

Once again this year the kids of St. Stephen's want all of us to think of children in need around us and contribute to their Toy Drive. Donations of new, unwrapped toys, games, clothes and gift cards will be collected at the back of the church at each service through December 18th and given to children served by various local children's services organization through Operation Santa, and also directly to CAPSLO/40Prado and Transitions-Mental Health Association for children in their care.

Children's Wish Lists are on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall and also flyers in the service booklet at both Sunday Services. Don't feel bound by the "wish list." Get whatever you're comfortable purchasing. Sometimes children dream big, but they're always excited and grateful for anything they receive. If you'd like wish lists mailed or emailed to you, or have any questions about the Toy Drive, contact Kathleen (kapennington@netscape.net, 805-546-0880)



Last year's Toy Drive

Of course, checks dropped into the collection plate or mailed to the church are welcome, too. Write "Toy Drive" on the memo line and let us do the shopping for you. The church's mailing address is: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1344 Nipomo, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.



Storied Pilgrimage with Race

SLO Deanery offering of "A Storied Pilgrimage on Race" - Our Diocese has put together a twelve session series which explores the personal stories of those across the diocese on issues of race. It is a holy offering of video interviews, education, action items, and room for reflection. Many of the leaders and clergy in the Diocese have been through the series, and we are offering the series to all those in the SLO Deanery. Each session will be one hour on Zoom and will be led by the clergy of the Deanery. Zoom login information and session pre-work information are below. Each session is stand alone, so you are welcomed to attend even if you have not attended prior session. No reservation is needed, just join the Zoom meeting shortly before 7pm. This series meets the Anti-Racism training requirements of the Diocese.

Next sessions are: December 1 and December 15 at 7PM

ZOOM LOGIN

We will use the Zoom video conferencing service for this gathering. Click this link to attend via your computer or device <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81150369907?pwd=Yzd5UTFwWk80NU1Tak5NQ09>

To dial in call 1-669-900-6833. When prompted put in the meeting id of 811 5036 9907# and when prompted for a password put in 136424#, and then hit # a second time.

Leaving A Lasting Legacy For Our Church Family

Here are some ways that gifting can contribute to the work of St. Stephen's. Including St. Stephen's in your will or living trust will help perpetuate the Love of God that St. Stephen's shares with all of San Luis Obispo. Each of the options below can be designated to St. Stephen's in general, or to a specific fund or ministry of St. Stephen's. For those interested, it would be important to consult a financial advisor.

Naming St. Stephen's in your Will or Estate Plan – The "Simple" Plan: Leaving St. Stephen's in your will or estate plan is the simplest way to leave your legacy. After caring for your family, you can name a percentage of your estate or a set amount of your assets.

Charitable Gift Annuity – Ensuring your own financial stability for life: A Charitable Gift Annuity pays you a guaranteed, fixed dollar amount each year for the rest of your life at a rate based on your age. Cash or appreciated securities serve as the capital. Upon your death, the remainder of the gift annuity transfers to the fund(s) at St. Stephen's which you have designated. You will receive an immediate, partial income tax deduction. The minimum of \$10,000 establishes a Charitable Gift Annuity.

Charitable Remainder Trust –The "Meal" is Yours; The "Leftovers" go to St. Stephen's: With a Charitable Remainder Trust, you also receive lifetime income from your gift. Upon your death, the remainder goes to St. Stephen's. Though more complex than the CGA, it can help minimize many potential appreciated asset issues. The minimum of \$100,000 establishes a Charitable Remainder Trust.

Retained Life Estate –The Big Gift: One or more of the assets which you own at the time of your death (home, farm or land) can be bequeathed to St. Stephen's, while retaining control of the asset(s) while you are living. Upon your death, the property transfers to St. Stephen's. At the time of the gift, you receive an immediate, partial income tax deduction for this future gift.

Required Minimum Distribution: For those seniors age 70½, contributions can be made directly from an IRA account to a charity without counting toward income. This mechanism disburses the contribution to St. Stephen's in the tax year. Discuss the options further with The Rector.

Annual Reports Due: December 30, 2022



Reports of Ministries for the Parish Annual Report are due on December 31. For those of you who lead ministries of St. Stephen's, please have your Reports to Fr Ian, in electronic form, by December 31, 2022.

St. Stephen's

Episcopal Church

Welcoming Worshiping Working

1344 Nipomo Street

805-543-7212

office@ststephensslo.org

www.ststephensslo.org

Office Hours: Mon-Thurs. 9am-1pm

Non-Profit Organization

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Permit No. 57

Address Service Requested



Blue Christmas Service: December 21 at 12:15PM and 5:30PM

Christmas is sometimes difficult for people, and instead of the “happiness” that is forced upon us by the hyper-commercialization of Christmas, many people are “blue” during December. This service is an opportunity for those who find Advent and Christmas difficult to acknowledge that and to be held by God through our difficult times. It will be held at our normal Wednesday Service time. It will be a Healing Service with Eucharist. A second service will be held at 5:30pm, which will be livestreamed.

Christmas Services

December 24 at 4PM – Christmas Eve Service

December 24 at 8PM – Christmas Eve Service

December 24 at 11PM – Midnight Mass

December 25 at 9:30AM – Christmas Morning

We have added an additional service to accommodate for our limited capacity. Please, *please* reserve your spot by emailing or calling the office. We do not want to have to turn anyone away, so reserving a spot will help us manage the numbers. Thoughts are still stirring for Christmas morning, but will not be finalized until after the deadline for this issue.

