

The Witness

Volume 28, Issue 2

Welcoming Worshipping Working

February 2024

Special points of interest:

Sunday

8:00 AM Service

10:00 AM Service with coffee hour following the service

Wednesday

12:15 PM Service

Nello February



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Blessed with Discomfort, Anger, Tears and Foolishness

By The Rev. Ian M. Delinger, Rector

You may have taken note when Bishop Lucinda has visited and used the Franciscan Benediction as the final blessing over the people at the end of the service.

May God bless you with DISCOMFORT, at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships

so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with ANGER at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,

so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with TEARS, to

shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough FOOLISHNESS to believe that you can make a difference in the world,

so that you can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.



No hands but yours – serving lunch at 40 Prado

It may seem out of place or provocative or quaint. At one gathering last year where the Bishop offered this blessing, there was audible laughter at “*May God bless you with enough foolishness that you can make a difference in the world.*” The idea of being blessed with discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness – all words with negative associations – is indeed a bit unusual. But taken as a whole, there is nothing unusual about it!

Writing portions of the Annual Report and collating the final document gives me the opportunity to review not only what goes on in the parish, but what some of our

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from front page)

tremendous partners do. When I am reminded what they do, I see how they are blessed with discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness to do the work they do. Jack and Nathan at 40 Prado; Garret, Emily, Branna, Cliff, Kelly and Dre at the Food Bank; Anne at Smart Share Housing; Susan, Shannon and Tony at Hospice SLO County and Berkeley at Wilshire Hospice; David at ASN; Dusty, Serrin and JBird at GALA Pride & Diversity Center; the Grass Roots II volunteers in our Children's Chapel; Jill, Alley and Cody at TMHA; the teachers, administrators and staff whose stories I've heard while serving on the SLO Coastal USD Common Ground Advisory Task Force; and the wider teams that they represent, and so many more people. Even in the "Happiest City in America", their day-to-day work is heroic!

In our own St. Stephen's history, The Rev. Tom Tarwater worked with Maxine Lewis to feed the hungry kids who walked past their house one their way to school every morning ... and now there's 40 Prado. Joyce Pillow taught the pregnant girls and unwed mothers who weren't allowed at SLO High in the house that used to be on the slab in our parking lot. We have Peace Corp alum, several people who established educational and development programs in parts of the world where they were much needed, those who have volunteered their professional services to those who could otherwise not afford them. There is a lot of need in this world, and we need those – and need to be those – who are blessed with discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness to fill the need. Humanity is challenging work!

We often get too comfortable or too uncomfortable with discomfort to do the hard work, and we feel that we can't make a difference. But there are people who are blessed with enough with discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness to change this world to a better place.

We are trying to put together a Social Outreach & Justice Committee together. Currently, Molly Supat and Kathryn Bumpass are in the early stage of what that might look like. Such a committee needs people who are comfortable with discomfort, who know how to constructively channel anger, who are not afraid to shed tears and who aren't afraid to fail in order to possibly succeed. This month, reflect on who – whether you or someone you know – might be this blessed on behalf of St. Stephen's and serve on the Social Outreach & Justice Committee. You can get in touch with Molly or Kathryn.

Many ask, "If there is an all-loving God, why doesn't He intervene and fix everything?" I would say that, as the Body of Christ, we need to be the hands and feet of the all-loving God that we believe ourselves to be and be moved by the discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness to begin to fix everything. In that mindset, Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) wrote the obvious companion piece to the Franciscan Blessing:

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world*

Unwind & Connect: Brewed Blessings Await at Coffee Hour



Join us for a delightful parish family activity right after the 10 am Sunday Service. Your participation is valued, and no experience is necessary—experienced volunteers are ready to assist.

If you're interested in hosting a coffee hour after the 8 am service, please indicate when signing up.

Shrove Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Join Fr. Ian at Old SLO BBQ at 670 Higuera Street location at 7.30pm.
Park at St. Stephen's and walk 3 blocks to Nipomo & Higuera.

Shrove Tuesday's name comes from the Germanic-Old English word "shrive," meaning absolve, and it is the last day of the liturgical season historically known as Shrovetide. Because it comes directly before Lent, a season of fasting and penitence, this was the day that Christians would go to be "shriven" by their confessor. Shrove Tuesday also became a day for pre-fasting indulgence. In particular, the need to use up rich ingredients such as butter, milk, sugar and eggs before Lent gave rise to the tradition of eating pancakes on this day.



(for more: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/dfms/pass-the-syrup-its-shrove-tuesday/>)

Our "pre-fasting indulgence" will be to feast on BBQ! Fr. Ian will make a reservation if more than 6 people let him know they will be coming. Otherwise, look for us in the back room.

From the Vestry

The Vestry meets on the 3rd Sunday of the Month (usually) to discuss the business affairs of the parish. Here are some highlights of the meeting on January 21, 2024:

The Vestry visited the Children's Chapel which is now shared with Grass Roots II. Kathleen Pennington described how the space-sharing is working and how ongoing communication will ensure that any issues are dealt with before they become problems. The Vestry also visited Room 4 & 5, which is being used for storage. Fr. Ian and Kathleen gave some history of the space and what needs to be done to clear out the space. The Vestry also visited the slab where 660 Pismo used to be and were updated on a recent conversation with Smart Share Housing about the possibilities for housing, in particular renting the space to a tiny home owner.

Two more proposals for Continued improvements under the Re-Fresh campaign were approved. Gates will be installed behind the barns where Grandmother's House Children's Center stores large toys. The sewer line from Ramsden Hall will be repaired/replaced.

The Rev. Jen Crompton, Campus Chaplain, share their campus ministry work at Cal Poly. They emphasized how the presence of The Episcopal Church is in stark contrast to the dominant Christian culture on campus; their ministry is one-to-one as students have not indicated that they want to engage in group activities; and Rev. Jen and an enthusiastic Freshman are hosting weekly pop-ups for students to drop in for stress-lessening activities.



The next meeting is February 18, 2024. 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.

Hands On Stewardship

Thank you to Bill Crewe, Lynn Hollister, Kay Lewis, Elizabeth Potter and Kathleen Pennington for counting the collection and preparing the deposits during January.

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

Thank you to Sophia Agbo, Kay Lewis, and Cheryl & Craig McCollum and for hosting Coffee Hour in January.

Thank you to Ethan Stan and Spud Schroeder for taking the trash cans to the street for pickup in January

Thank you to the Altar Guild for their service in making sure that everything is in their right place for Sunday morning.

Thank you to Cheryl McCollum & Elizabeth Potter for helping in the office in January.

Thank you to the helpers who folded, taped and labeled The Witness.

Thank you to Clark Lewis for picking up the no cook bags to distribute to those in need.

Thank you to the A/V Team for their diligence in streaming the services.

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



Come Join Us!



A Celebration of Harp Concert

A 1 hour concert to avoid conflict with Super Bowl !

Sunday February 11, 2024 2 PM

Medieval Songs  Spanish Dances  European Salon Music

Harpists Jennifer Sayre, Nancy Thym, Jan Walters

admission - free will donation - partial proceeds to St. Stephen's Church

Free Parking in church lot on Pismo Street

Reception following

for further information contact: jsayre@historicalharpociety.org

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 2024 by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. All rights reserved.

POSTMASTER: Please send address corrections to: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1344 Nipomo Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401-3935

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



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Annual Meeting Election Results

Vestry Members (3 years)

- Bruno Giberti
- Gail Taylor
- Vacancy

Delegates to Diocesan Convention (1 year)

Sophia Agbo
Kay Lewis
Gail Taylor
Liz Frost (Alternate)

Creation Care Reflections: Me and beef, or confessions of an ex-Texan

I grew up mostly in Texas, which is beef country. And my family ate a lot of beef. My parents survived the Great Depression, but just. My Dad told me once that there had been times when he and his mother had nothing to eat but potatoes. In the period of prosperity that followed World War II, my parents, like many others who had endured the hardships of the Depression, could afford to eat meat again. To my Dad and Mother no evening meal was complete without some kind of meat, and most commonly it was beef.

Why am I telling you this? Because the production of beef contributes a large amount of the greenhouse gases that are warming the climate. As part of their digestive process cows expel methane, a gas far more damaging to the climate than carbon dioxide. This is particularly problematic in feedlots.

In the rich world, especially the United States, beef is in high demand. We love our burgers and steaks. As the demand increases, more cattle are raised and more methane produced. I am NOT going to suggest that anyone never again eat a burger or steak. Here's the "Confession" of this article's title: I not only grew up eating beef, but I still do. I just eat less of it. And that's good news, because eating less of it still helps the climate significantly.

I recently heard in a newscast on NPR, an interview with a climate scientist who was making this very point. In fact, she argued that eating beef only once or twice a week might be the single most helpful thing we as individuals can do for the climate. The effect of doing this, she argued, is big, much bigger than the careful recycling of bottles, cans and paper we all do. The recycling helps but the impact of reducing somewhat our beef intake is much greater.

As I've indicated above, you don't have to become a vegetarian or vegan. Just modify your diet a little and know your decision to do so will significantly help. I also urge you to discuss this question with your family and friends.

Kathryn Bumpass

DRINK THIS CUP

Br. Dennis Gibbs

When I first entered my life of sobriety twenty-six years ago, I made an immediate return to parish life. One issue that quickly became apparent was what to do when offered the chalice during Communion. On one hand the words of Jesus felt important – “Drink this, *all of you*: This is my Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

“*All of you*,” including me.

Therein lied my dilemma. I wanted to be included. I wanted to share in this deeply meaningful part of Communion. I wanted to drink in the forgiveness. I wanted this sacred moment with Jesus. Yet, I knew in my innermost self that I was, as I still am, an alcoholic, and my recovery required absolute abstinence from alcohol in any form.

I tried intinction, dipping just the tiniest edge of the wafer into the wine. Not good (for me)! Even that slightest taste spoke to me in a dangerous way. I tried crossing my arms to deflect the cup and leave the communion rail. But that didn't feel right either. I felt as though I was denying myself the fullness of the sacred connection of Communion.

I know that technically if one has received the bread without the wine, they have received full Communion. But I needed more. I needed the engagement with the chalice. It is important to me and therefore I know it is important to Jesus. I also know that Jesus would not want me to be uncomfortable during Communion, or worse yet, jeopardize my sobriety. So, what was I to do?

In quiet reflection one day the answer came. Kiss the cup! That way I hear the words, “The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.” And I can engage with the chalice of wine in a way that is honoring, respectful, and leaves me feeling the sweetness of the moment.

I took the idea to my rector. Her response was. “That’s wonderful. They (meaning the chalice bearers) will get used to you! And so, that is what I have been doing since that time, and it still feels like a sweet and intimate moment with my Lord.

I have witnessed different variations of honoring the cup without taking the wine. Some people prefer the standard practice of crossing one’s arms over their chest and receiving the blessing. Others sometime reverently touch the chalice without drinking. Some simply turn and walk away. Some parishes offer grape juice as an alternative for those who cannot drink alcohol. The important thing is that all of these practices, when offered with reverent intention, are fine. The receiving of Holy Communion is a deeply personal and intimate moment with Jesus. If it feels right to you, it is surely right with God.

Brother Dennis Gibbs is a member of the Community of Divine Love, an Episcopal monastery dedicated to prayer and justice located in San Luis Obispo.



Souper Bowl of Caring

Millions of people watch the Big Game while millions of Americans struggle with hunger. What if each person watching the game gave just one non-perishable food item or one dollar to feed their neighbor in need? Don't sit on the sidelines. Join our Sunday School kids in making a difference in our community.

It all started with a single prayer in a church in South Carolina in 1990 "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat." Since then over \$170 million has been generated through Souper Bowl of Caring drives like ours.

Bring non-perishable foods to church on February 11, 18 and 25. Food and funds collected will be given to Grass Roots II, a community based organization providing emergency food, clothing, household items and referrals to those in need in San Luis Obispo for over 45 years.



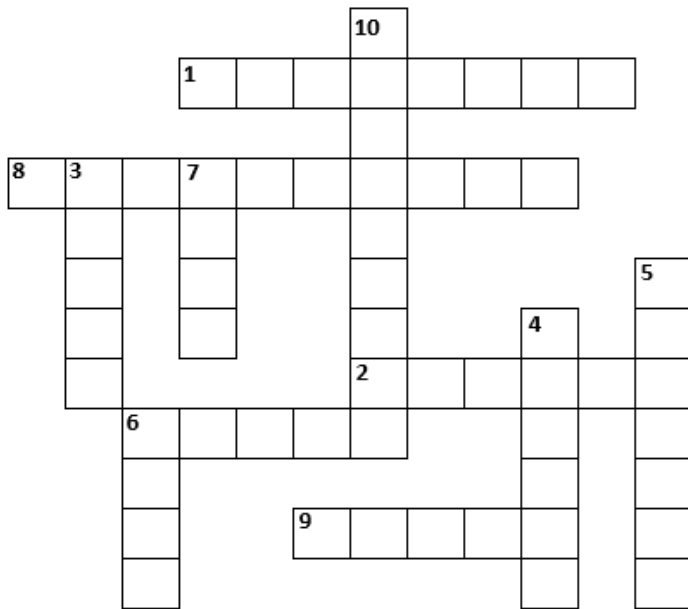
You Too can be an Easter Bunny!

Almost every year since the 1980's St. Stephen's Parish Hall has become a Chocolate Factory, producing hundreds of beautiful and delicious chocolate Easter eggs to be given to children in need in our community and sold to raise money to give to organizations that support children. Last year sixteen Easter Bunnies made over 300 eggs and raised over \$2,000 to donate. Put on your bunny ears and join in on the fun of making chocolate Easter eggs and bringing smiles to children in our community.



Sign-up sheets for Easter Bunnies will be on the bulletin board in Ramsden Hall toward the end of February and order forms to purchase these wonderful chocolate eggs for friends and family or to sponsor Easter eggs for children in need will be in the March Witness, on the bulletin board, and inserted in bulletins in early March. Questions? See, call or email Kathleen (805-546-0880, kapennington@netscape.net)

Lenten Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

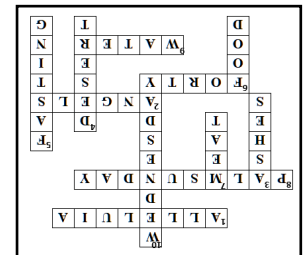
1. A word we don't say or sing in church during Lent.
2. Spiritual beings who ministered to Jesus after his temptation in the desert.
6. Number of days Jesus spent fasting in the desert.
8. The Sunday before Easter (two words).
9. Jesus didn't drink this, or anything else, while in the desert.

DOWN

3. These are used to make the mark of the cross on people's foreheads when Lent begins.
4. A very dry and lonely place Jesus went to before starting his ministry.
5. Not eating or drinking anything .
6. Jesus didn't eat this while in the desert.
7. A food some people don't eat on Fridays during Lent.
10. Lent begins on Ash _____.

Words to use: Alleluia, Angels, Ashes, Desert, Fasting, Food, Forty, Meat, PalmSunday, Water, Wednesday

ANSWER



Get out, get active, and get connected!

Keep your brain and body active with different activities. Meet others who are living in the Early Stages and want to remain cognitively and socially active.

**2nd & 4th Thursdays
10 - 11:30am**

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Ramsden Room
1344 Nipomo Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

RSVP to Laura Deloye
ladeloye@alz.org | 805.342.0956



'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4
NRSVACE
From Bible Gateway

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew Resumes Meetings

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew is a national organization for men associated with Episcopal and Anglican churches in the United States. We honor the first-called apostle, Andrew, the fisherman. Andrew then called his brother, Simon Peter, and the two followed Jesus on His journey.

Please join us for an informal hour of food and fellowship on Saturday, February 3, from 8-9 AM in Ramsden Hall.

The chapter at St. Stephen's has for several decades been informally organized around fellowship, Bible study, prayer and service. It is open to all men associated with the parish. Our activities have included a monthly breakfast meeting, an annual weekend retreat in the Spring, and various service projects.

We welcome all men of the parish to join us at whatever level of participation is comfortable, from just getting our Bible study reading email once a month, to joining us for activities, helping with Bible study, or participating as a member of the National Brotherhood.

Please RSVP to Bud Zeuschner, 2023 Coordinator at rfzjr@aol.com so we'll know how much breakfast to prepare. Hope to see you then!



User Groups on Campus!

You may be aware, or perhaps not, that St. Stephen's plays host to an array of wonderful groups, convening on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Our facilities serve as meeting spaces for various non-profit groups such as Grass Roots II, as well as 12-step groups like Debtor's Anonymous, Al-Anon, and SPAA.

We take great joy in extending a warm welcome and providing accommodation for these groups in our excellent rooms. Whether you are interested in learning more about these groups or wish to inquire about utilizing our rooms for meetings, etc., please don't hesitate to reach out to the office either by email at office@StStephensSLO.org or by phone at 805-543-7212 or come on by during office hours, Monday—Thursday 9am to 1pm

Being More Relational

By Fr. Ian Delinger

When you look at the Bible from a birds-eye view, the main theme that you see is that God wants to be in relation with God’s People. All the stories, from Genesis 1&2 through Revelation, God wants us to be in relationship ... desperately. Over the millennia, we – God’s People – have tried to make sense of what that relationship should look like and how best to achieve it. At points, that relationship looks very transactional: God expecting something in return for in order for that relationship to be good, particularly with a short-term gain. Think the First Passover or any of the sacrificial offerings. But we are also called to be more relational: being patient for long-term mutual benefit without an expectation of any sort of short-term gain. Think “*God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them ... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*” Or The Road to Emmaus. Or the entire premise of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.

For Vestry meetings in 2024, I have asked the Vestry to use our 15min of Lectio Divina that opens every meeting to be time to reflect on how we can be more relational in our leadership of the parish. Each month we will reflect on a message from Jesus on how Jesus is calling us to be more relational. At the Vestry Retreat on March 2 we will go into more detail about being more relational, and I will share that more widely after that session.

Each month in The Witness, I will also commend to you to reflect on the same scripture and how Jesus is calling you to be more relational in your daily life. For January, we reflected on John 13.33-35:

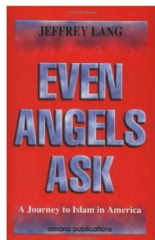
[After Judas had left the Last Supper, Jesus said to His Disciples,] “Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’

Be prepared to read the passage out loud at least twice. *Upon the first reading, I invite you to consider the **word, phrase, image, or metaphor that comes to mind on the first reading.** For your second reading, I invite you to **reflect upon ways in which Jesus demonstrates or calls on us to be more relational** as you share your Gifts of the Spirit.* This is something you may wish to do with a family member, friend or another person in the parish.

May this be a fruitful exercise for all!

Opening Doors of Interfaith Understanding

Opening Doors of Interfaith Understanding is gathering February 12 at 7pm at Congregation Beth David 10180 Los Osos Valley Rd, SLO



Dr Hisham Assal of the Mosque of Nasreen will discuss the book “Even Angels Ask” by Jeffrey Lang followed by Fr. Jim Nisbet presenting his reflections on his visit to La Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona, Spain. A time to get to know one another will conclude the evening.

To join via Zoom: Meeting ID: 813 1355 7874 Passcode: 999098

Travel with Liz Frost

What is on your UNESCO Heritage Site Bucket List?



Monday, February 26 at 5:30PM St. Stephen’s Parish Hall 1344 Nipomo Street, San Luis Obispo, CA

Bring warmth to memories!

Contribute flowers and candles to honor special moments with us.

St. Stephen's Altar Guild expresses gratitude for the Christmas flower donations, enhancing the church's beauty.

Remember, you can contribute flowers and candles every Sunday (except during Lent) at the consistent rates of \$45 for flowers and \$15 for candles. Honor your loved ones and mark special occasions with our congregation.

Sign up sheet is in Ramsden Hall or contact Stephanie in the office to contribute. Labeled checks can be placed in the offering plate for your convenience.



Celebrations for February

Anniversaries

Fred & Carol Astaire February 14

Birthdays

Lynn	Wiech	February 06
Eric	Fisher	February 09
Frances	Edwards	February 11
Al	Williams	February 12
Kathleen	Pennington	February 16
Frances	Robertson	February 18
Raymond	Zeuschner	February 23
Ann	Patry	February 28

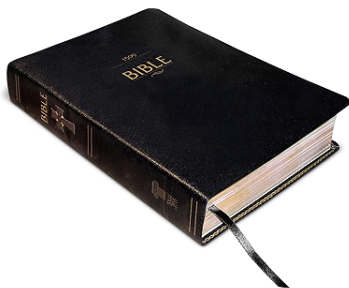
Missing your celebration? Share the details, and let's celebrate together! Reach out to Stephanie in the office at 805-543-7212 or office@ststephensslo.org



The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

— Contributed by Jim Murphy

Bible Selections for February



1st Reading
Psalm
2nd Reading
Gospel

Feb 4 Epiphany 5	Feb 11 Epiphany Last
Isaiah 40:21-31	Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 147:1-12,21c	Palm 46
1 Corinthians 9.16-23	1 Corinthians 13:4-13
Mark 1:29-39	Mark 9:2-9

1st Reading
Psalm
2nd Reading
Gospel

Feb 14 Ash Wednesday	Feb 18 Lent 1	Feb 25 Lent 2
Isaiah 58:1-12	Genesis 9:8-17	Genesis 17:1-7,15-16
Psalm 103:8-14	Psalm 25:1-9	Psalm 22:22-30
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Romans 4:13-25
Matthew 6:1-6,16,21	Mark 1:9-15	Mark 8:31-38

St. Stephen's

Episcopal Church

Welcoming Worshiping Working

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*Violets symbolize
Faithfulness, remembrance,
and humility*



Remember that you are dust
and to dust you shall return.

**ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 14, 2024**

FEBRUARY 14 AT 12.15 AND 5.30
IN-PERSON AT 1344 NIPOMO SLO OR ONLINE
FACEBOOK.COM/STSTEPHENSLO/LIVE (5.30)

Lent Begins

Ash Wednesday is
February 14, 2024.

There will be two services:
12:15 and 5:30pm.

They will both be
Eucharists with the
Imposition of Ashes.