



# ST. STEPHEN'S SPIRIT

The Newsletter of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Wilkinsburg PA

JANUARY 2022

Ponder prayerfully these spiritual resolutions for the people of God in 2022:

## **Stay connected with the local faith community**

Gallup conducted their yearly poll. In December 2020 they revealed that American citizens' reporting of their own mental health was at an all-time low with an increase in anxiety and depression in every group except one. The only group that reported a positive increase in their mental health were those that attended regular religious gatherings.

At the same time, however, people have stopped attending church at record numbers, whether in person or online.

It shouldn't surprise us that participating in a faith community has benefits. Scripture tells us where two or more are gathered in God's name, Jesus is more evident (Matthew 18:20). Hebrews instructs us to encourage one another daily, even more so as time goes on (Hebrews 3:13), and that was over two thousand years ago! The writer of Hebrews continues to say we should not forsake our assembly to protect us from a heart of unbelief.

Also, not surprisingly, we have a spiritual enemy Jesus talks about often in the Gospels that seeks to keep us from meeting together and enjoying those benefits. It doesn't have to be in large groups or a church building. It can be in homes or parks or virtually. Strive to continue meeting together and encouraging one another in the faith.

## **Be open to what God is doing**

We get stressed when plans change. And a great deal of our plans were canceled last year; many vacations were canceled. People lost jobs or had to start working from home while trying to get their kids on virtual school. But God is still there. People responded with great creativity. We learned new things, found new ways of accomplishing goals. Sometimes better ways we never would have otherwise.

Make plans loosely, knowing that we aren't promised a perfect adherence to our plan but that whatever happens, God is at work and will use it all for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28). We can even see these "plot twists" as opportunities.

## **Slow down; take time to rest**

Our American culture is fast-paced, filled with constant entertainment and activity. But it is God's heart that we take time to rest; we understand who we are before God when we are still (Psalm 46:10). Lockdowns and social distancing have forced many to be still and invest in relationships in the home and with God, where before we hid behind furious activity. 2020 showed us what we couldn't do, what we weren't able to do by our own will. We rely on God who is living and active and able to do anything.

## **Speak the life of the Gospel into the chaos of the world**

More than ever in our generation, in the midst of great uncertainty and fear, the world is searching for something that is real, secure, loving, and good. Our solution in an earthly life filled with uncertainty and chaos is to cling tightly to Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:17).

Each of us has an influence in our relationships, whether family, friends, coworkers, or social media, whether large or small. Be a good steward of that influence by speaking the hope and life of the Gospel into those relationships (1 Peter 4:11). Don't get dragged down into arguments that don't matter (2 Timothy 2:23). Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Encourage others and lift their eyes to God (1 Corinthians 8:1). That's what they need to hear.

## **Love your neighbors**

Did you perhaps meet your next-door neighbors for the first time in 2020 because of the blocks from going to your place of employment and other limits of the pandemic? Why? They reached out to see how their neighbors were doing. What did they need? Friends and neighbors are as open as ever to relationship and to being kind.

Find ways to reach out to neighbors. Be intentional about participating in bringing relief to those in need in your community (Hebrews 10:24). That is the heart of God and part of preaching the Gospel (Matthew 5:16).

## FOOD OF THE MONTH

### TEA AND COFFEE



#### Prayer cycle for January

**"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."**

**Isaiah 40:31**

### Want to share a snack at coffee hour?

Thanks to those of you who have brought snacks to share at coffee hour. All of January is open. If you'd like to bring something, let us know what date works best for you.

Thanks!

[ststephenswilkinsburg@gmail.com](mailto:ststephenswilkinsburg@gmail.com)



### BIRTHDAYS

January 3 - Maria Sprenkel

January 24 - Beth Hardie

A SPECIAL THANKS TO EVERYONE

who worked to create the

Christmas beauty of our

church, and to the altar guild who does the job every week!

We are grateful to you for your labor of love: Gerry, Karen, Beth, Chuck, Pam, Dave, Melissa, and Chris. And thanks to all who donated for the poinsettias. God bless you.





## **ANNUAL MEETING LUNCHEON SIGN UP**

**JANUARY 23, 2022**

**Following the 10:30 a.m. Service**

**Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_**

**# Attending \_\_\_\_\_**

**Select one sandwich served on multi-grain bread**

**# \_\_\_\_\_ turkey # \_\_\_\_\_ tuna salad # \_\_\_\_\_ veggie**

**Select one salad**

**# \_\_\_\_\_ green # \_\_\_\_\_ fruit**

**Please return by January 16!**

### **Important Advent and Christmas Dates to Remember**

January 1 - New Year's Day, January 5 - Morning Prayer in the Sanctuary, January 17 - Vestry Meeting and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,

**Are you interested in joining our Bible Study? We meet Thursdays from 12-2 p.m. in the library. We are reading the gospel of Mark. Call Melanie Sprenkel with questions: 412-725-1174**

**Mission of the Month:  
Bethlehem Haven Women's  
Shelter**

Bethlehem Haven's mission is to provide care for homeless individuals that leads toward self-sufficiency. For thirty-nine years they have provided nearly 13,000 nights of shelter. Each year they provide nearly 60,000 meals, see about 600 people in the health clinic, fill countless emotional and physical needs and provide employment training. If you are interested in donating, you can send a check to the Church with "Bethlehem Haven" in the memo line or donate on their website:

[bethlehemhaven.org](http://bethlehemhaven.org)

**WE NEED DONATIONS FOR THE BLESSING BOX, PLEASE!!!**

**We always need more donations for this beautiful ministry. The supplies listed below have been the most popular. Thank you!**

**Pancake mix and syrup**

**Small boxes of cereal**

**Mac-n-cheese**

**Coffee and tea**

**Boxed pasta and pasta sauce**

**Toiletries and paper products**

**Dish and hand soap**

**Cookies and crackers**

**Dry Soup Mixes**

**Cans of food or milk with pop tops**

**Instant oatmeal**

**Brownie mix**

**Peanut butter and jam**

**Rice and stove top stuffing**

Sunday Worship 8AM & 10:30AM

Contact Us

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Parish Staff  
Rev. Chuck Esposito Priest in charge  
Soon Choi, Dir. of Music Ministry  
Melanie Sprenkel, Parish Ministry Coordinator  
Gerry Dalton, Financial Admin  
Dave Stefanik, Caretaker  
Elise Morris, Archivist & Historian

**THERE'S A NEW PRAYER CYCLE BOOKLET IN THE SANCTUARY! GRAB YOUR YELLOW BOOKLET AND START PRAYING!**

