



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2021

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

24901 ORCHARD VILLAGE RD.

SANTA CLARITA, CA 91355

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*Grounded in Tradition + Striving for Justice + Growing in Faith*

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**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**  
**Vestry Annual Meeting Minutes**  
**January 26, 2020**

1. Members present: Rev. Christopher Montella, Marv Aardahl, Joe Merkens, Marian Krabach, Cindy Swaisgood, Tish Yahnker, John Fortman, Tessa Lucero, Richard Holdredge, Shari Schlaman and Bill Brintnall. Also: John Nelson.
2. The ballots for the vestry and diocesan council representative vote were handed out.
3. Vestry opening prayers by Rev. Christopher Montella.
4. The clerk was designated to take the minutes: John Nelson
5. The outgoing vestry members were acknowledged and celebrated: Tessa Lucero, Tish Yahnker, Richard Holdredge, and Shari Schlaman.
6. The list of candidates for the vestry were announced: Shari Flay, Bob Gregor, Kathleen Jensen, Dave Morrow, Caroline Nold, Steve Plote, Rachel Rieckhoff, and Don Rimac.
7. Representatives for the Diocesan Convention candidates were taken from nominations from the congregation: Dave Fencil, Julia Nelson, Kathy Gero, Brenden Krabach, Caroline Morgan, Bill Brintnall, Mark Young, Mark Bridgeford, and Victoria Bennet.
8. Introduction to St. Stephens, the vestry and support staff- Rev. Christopher Montella
  - a. The Sunday dinners enabled parishioners to engage each other in new ways.
  - b. Many parishioners were noted for their contributions to the church's efforts.
  - c. The gala fundraiser the children and youth went better than expected netting over \$32,000.
  - d. The HR Committee was able to standardize the church and school handbooks into one unified policy.
  - e. A new liturgy structure was initiated complimented by new altar linens and vestments.
  - f. The music director was celebrated inspiring a standing ovation. All the choirs were also applauded.
  - g. Difficulties from the recent wildfires and the Saugus shooting were a difficult time, but the community rallied.
  - h. Looking ahead to 2020 the focuses are:
    - i. Christian Formation
    - ii. Financial Stability
    - iii. Pastoral Care
9. Treasurer's Report- John Fortman
  - a. Contact information for John Fortman was shared.
  - b. The parish and preschool represent one community and thus share costs.
  - c. The preschool made over \$36,000 over the August 2018 to July 2019 fiscal year.
  - d. Parish income was \$10,000 in the red performing much better than expected. This amount represents just 6% of the projected pledges.
  - e. For 2020, the budget has 92 contributing units with a total of \$249,380.

- f. There is still \$6,000 remaining in the capital fund which is designed to be used for large expenditures.

10. Transition- Marv Aardahl

- a. The process of transition was described:
  - i. On 8/13/2018 the prior Rev. departed, and the Diocese support began.
  - ii. On 3/1/2019 Rev. Christopher performed as the guest celebrant.
  - iii. At the Mutual Ministry Review, the vestry established the search process to be a Priest-in-Charge Under Special Circumstances. The next MMR will occur in March 2020.
  - iv. The new Transition Committee formed on Nov. 2019.
  - v. The transition survey will go out on March 2020.
  - vi. Story day will be from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2020.
  - vii. Completion of the church profile is expected on 5/25/2020.

11. Ken Higginbotham's 64 years as an acolyte trainer was celebrated and he received a framed congratulations from Bishop Taylor.

12. The vote results for new vestry members: Shari Flay, Kathleen Jensen, Dave Morrow, Steve Plote, and Rachel Rieckhoff. They were presented along with the remaining vestry members.

13. The vote results for Diocesan Convention: Dave Fencil, Julia Nelson, Bill Brintnall Alternates: Brenden Krabach, Caroline Morgan.

14. Next meeting is February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 6:30 PM.

15. Ending prayer by Rev. Christopher Montella.

Dear Friends in Christ,

On behalf of the Vestry, Staff, and ministry leaders of St. Stephen's I am pleased to present to you the 2020 annual report. I think it is safe to say that 2020 was a year no one predicted and unlike anything anyone had really ever experienced before.

The year began with a great deal of enthusiasm. We had just come off a very successful stewardship campaign in the fall of 2019, a wonderful Christmas celebration and an exciting annual meeting in late January where we elected 5 new members to our vestry leadership. We had high hopes and big plans for what we would do in 2020 and it seemed that we were well poised to accomplish much of what we set out to do.

As we all know things began to unravel pretty quickly shortly thereafter. By the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday in late February, news of the COVID 19 virus was already making headlines. A week or so after that we discontinued the distribution of wine during services and on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> we held our last indoor person worship service. A pause we thought would only last a few weeks would keep us out of the Sanctuary for the remainder of the year and for almost 14 months to the day.

Of course, St. Stephen's is resilient, and we pivoted quickly to an online format choosing to broadcast our services live on Facebook in order to maintain a sense of community gathering rather than posting recorded videos. It was a blessing to see how quickly the members of our community became accustomed to engaging with technology. Watching the comments pile up in the Facebook feed, the greetings, the love, the welcome was a beautiful thing to behold and stands as a testament to our commitment to maintain community even when the demands of our time required us to be separate.

In the end, our ability to livestream our services and offer an exceptional level of production helped us to maintain the Sunday morning real estate in people's lives and helped maintain the bonds of community.

I would like to personally express my gratitude to my husband, Erick Long, who did not hesitate when I overtook our living room and turned it into a chapel/production studio for the first 3 months of the pandemic where he served as cameraperson, technical director, intercessor and all-around problem-solver. He truly is a gift in so many ways.

None of this would be possible without the creative thinking, talent, dedication and love of John Noonan, Dave Melton & Steve Plote who jumped in almost immediately to help tackle the technical challenges of bringing our worship experience into a virtual setting. I know that the detail of their work is covered later in the report on the St. Stephen's Tech Guild, and I hope you will take the time to read it.

Speaking of the Tech Guild, I would also like to thank and applaud Shannon Brintnall, Julie Johnson, Katarina Nelson, Carolyn Randall, & Cheryl Sena who joined the guild and stepped up to help prepare all of the elements needed for Sunday services and to run our technical operations.

Big thanks go out to our phenomenal Altar Guild, led by Mary Mercogliano. The members of the guild rolled with every twist and turn with grace and creativity - especially when we began to do services outside in the courtyard.

Thanks also to all of the vestry members that helped host our virtual coffee hours and audio zooms each week and most especially to Richard Holdredge who hosted or co-hosted every audio zoom on Wednesdays and Sundays for over a year, whether he needed to or not. Richard's dedication to making sure that folks who were not computer savvy had an option to listen to worship was indeed an example of love in action and I give thanks for his ministry.

I want to express my profound gratitude to our music director, Judy Baity. Just as I was working with the Tech guild to figure out how to bring our worship into a virtual setting, Judy had the daunting task of figuring out how to make music with our choir even when they were unable to gather. I am so proud of what Judy and our choir members accomplished in the last year. I will cherish many of the musical moments they brought to us forever.

Another leader in our community who had to pivot quickly to a virtual format is our Children's ministry coordinator, Julia Nelson. Julia's creative thinking quickly enabled us to seamlessly move our Sunday School program online ensuring that the littlest among us would not get left behind as everything about the way we do church changed overnight.

Additionally, our preschool had to reinvent itself as a virtual entity also. Thanks to the guidance of Preschool Director, Amanda Foster Picard and our incredible team of faculty and staff, we were able to move many of our classes and chapel online. Due to the strong leadership of our director, the preschool board, and the Vestry we did not have to lay off any staff and were able to return to in-person classes in the fall of 2020. While registration was reduced due to capacity limits, the school remains strong and healthy and financially sound.

An unexpected byproduct of moving our entire operation into a virtual setting was that we were able to welcome or welcome back folks into our community who either had moved away, were related to local members, or found us online. As a result, I am happy to say that St. Stephen's welcomed several new parishioners into our community even during the pandemic and a number of them are now attending with us in person or continuing to join us via livestream a year later!

I am also happy to report that giving remained steady during this time. While we did receive the support from the Payroll Protection Plan, it was the members of this congregation that kept our operation stable and functioning during this unprecedented time.

Zoom, the virtual meeting resource, became like another member of the staff interfacing with almost every aspect of parish life from coffee hour to committee meetings, YESS

(which met twice a week for over a year!), SAGES, book discussions, EfM and more. This wonderful tool allowed us to see and hear each other in real time as physical distance became the name of the game. Erick and I were grateful to have taken our “Sunday Dinner on Thursday Nights” concept and brought the virtual “Conversations from the Hearth” to life where we got a chance to get to know more about many of our long-time parishioners and we also got to virtually meet many folks who had joined us since the pandemic began.

Though it all looked completely different, we continued to experience a rich and dynamic worship experience over the course of the year with a paired down and intimate Holy Week experience, a wonderful celebration of Pentecost which saw us return to our beloved Chapel to broadcast services. In the fall for All Saints’ Day, we returned to the main altar with a new streaming program that allowed us to create an even more dynamic virtual worship experience and our Christmas Eve worship was splendid though instead of a packed church we had the names of all of our parishioners represented on ornaments that decorated the two Christmas trees that flanked the altar rail.

2020 brought with it more than just the pandemic. On Memorial Day, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, everything seemed to shift as news of the death of George Floyd broke setting off waves of protests across the nation. The illusion that we as a nation had somehow overcome the sin of racism was shattered. Acknowledging the existence of institutional racism and gaining a deeper understanding of concepts like privilege and power, who has it, who doesn’t and why became part of our collective work as a nation and as a faith community. Our journey with this work has not always been clear and there are many different perspectives on how our congregation should be responding to this moment in time.

I am grateful for the institution of the St. Stephen’s Anti -Racism Coalition in the Spring of 2021 under the leadership of Mary Jo Higginbotham and look forward to our continued dialogue, education, and action as a community of people bound by our baptismal vows to seek and serve Christ in all people and to respect the dignity of every human being.

In the midst of all of this, I was humbled and thrilled to be called by the vestry to serve St. Stephen’s as its third rector - a call I wholeheartedly and enthusiastically accepted. I began service at St. Stephen’s as rector on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. It is the joy of my heart to serve this community and I will be forever grateful for this call.

It is impossible to capture an entire year, especially one like 2020, in just a couple of pages. I wish I could acknowledge every individual member of our community and ministry leader for their contribution to our communal life in the last year. This report would not be complete without a few more expressions of gratitude. I wish to thank our 2020 Wardens, Marv Aardahl & Joe Merkens and the St. Stephen’s Vestry for their leadership, dedication, tenacity and wisdom. My heartfelt thanks go also to our

Treasurer, John Fortman who rose to the challenge of managing parish finances through the storm of the century!

Finally, I want to acknowledge our beloved Parish Administrator, Tracy Stapp who ran “command central” out of her kitchen for over a year. Tracy’s patience, compassion, ingenuity, skill and heart have been foundational for so many of us, especially throughout 2020 and for all that Tracy is and does, I give thanks.

I hope that by the time you read all our reports you will see what a dynamic and active year St. Stephen’s actually had in the midst of incredible challenge. I hope you will see this report as a testament of the indomitable spirit of our congregation. I pray you will rejoice at what we have accomplished and resolve yourself to participate in the work we have yet to do.

I ask God’s blessing on each and every one of you and on those you love. I can’t wait to see what the Holy Spirit has in store for us next.

For now, this is me sending you love and wishing you peace,

Christopher+

## **Senior Warden Annual Report for 2020**

### **Marvin Aardahl Sr. Warden 2020**

Greetings in Christ to all our family of St. Stephens Episcopal Church of Santa Clarita, CA.

Simply put, what a year it has been! Starting with our annual meeting, where we said good bye to 5 exceptional Vestry members: Richard Holdredge, Shari Schlaman, Tish Yahnker and Tessa Lucero and welcomed 5 new and committed members on to our 2020 Vestry: Sheri Flay, Kathleen Jensen, Steve Plote, Rachel Rieckhoff, and Dr. Dave Morrow. (Due to Covid 19 work load, Dr. Morrow had to resign and was replaced by Bob Gregor). The newly formed Vestry experienced a spiritually centered retreat in February, 2020 hosted by Rev. Christopher and Erick Long at their home with an exceptional guest speaker leading part of the retreat, the very Rev. Canon Gary Hall. It was an exceptional planning, and learning retreat.

Then life changed for all of us in March 2020, when the Covid 19 pandemic hit the US hard. School closures, quarantines, and all future “live” meetings and church services went virtual. Thank god for Zoom meetings, and the brilliant work by Rev. Christopher, Erick Long, and our newly formed media and communications committee, to adapt to this new atmosphere, with virtual “live” church services without missing beat. Enthusiastic and spiritual fulfilling services that brought us all together as a parish family once again.

As I recapped in last year’s annual report, and in accordance with the responsibility and authority provided in St. Stephens by-laws, the Vestry voted to proceed with a “Priest-in-Charge Under Special Circumstances” search process, designating Rev. Christopher in this call process. During this transitional period, we created a transition team, made up of current 2019 Vestry members and reported to the new 2020 Vestry progress, with not only our call process, but transition in general. This included an MMR (Mutual Ministry Review) with Canon Satorius from the Diocese, and a phase 1 questionnaire implemented throughout the parish. Due to the pandemic guidelines, and inability to conduct a final live MMR, and questionnaire follow-up, including History Day and questionnaire results, the Diocese instructed the 2020 Vestry to move forward with the call process.

The biggest and most important decision, that the 2020 Vestry made happened during a special Vestry Meeting in April, without Rev. Christopher present to discuss the calling of Rev. Christopher Montella, to be St. Stephen’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Rector. It was an enthusiastic and unanimous decision by the Vestry, with input from St. Stephens parish, to move forward with this call. The Vestry moved to bring Rev. Christopher, into our meeting, to officially provide him our decision, and he graciously, enthusiastically, and yes, emotionally, accepted. Therefore, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Rev. Christopher Montella became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rector of our Parish. Praise God! The installation celebration, has been put on hold until that time when our Bishops, and congregation, can once again, meet together, in

our beautiful sanctuary, and celebrate Rev. Christopher's ministry along with Erick Long. It will be very special, indeed!

During the 2020 Vestry year, we also realized, that when we became a parish, we did not incorporate. This is a standard practice for most Episcopal Churches, which move from a Mission, to a Parish status, but based on a variety of circumstances, we had not incorporated. This was also changed midyear 2020, and with the help from Mark Young, and approval by the Diocese, St. Stephens Episcopal Church of Santa Clarita, filed for incorporation with the California secretary of state. We are registered as such with the state, and due to the time-consuming process of filing with the Federal Government for a Corporation Non-Profit status, will submit this completed application 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2021.

Finally, we had eight members of the Vestry, having served on the Vestry for several years past their tenure going off Vestry at end of the January 2021 annual meeting: Jr. Warden Joe Merkens, Cindy Swaisgood, Malcolm Blue, Marion Krabach, John Fortman, Bill Brintnall, Robert Hall, and yours truly Marv Aardahl, Sr. Warden. Vestry membership, is a huge commitment, and these members served our Parish in a most professional and dedicated manner. So it was extremely important that the nominating committee, search out candidates that fill this large vacancy in the same dedicated, and spiritually centered commitment. The nominating committee included those outgoing members, along with non-Vestry parish member Dave Warburton, to find those unique candidates. We did! The new Vestry members, which have been approved by the 2020 Vestry, along with the Parish, are: Julie Johnson, Aubrey Hardman, Shannon Brintnall, Jen Aston, Jay Clark, John Noonan, Claudia Alexopoulos, and Jason O'Leary.

In closing, I wish to thank each and every one of my dear parish family for their love, patience, and support as your Sr. Warden for the past 3 years. Because of this, we have done great things, in restoring and growing our beloved St. Stephen's in ways that our heavenly father has guided us to do. God Bless you all!

Respectfully submitted,

Marv Aardahl, Sr. Warden 2020

## **2020 JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT**

Thank God 2020 Is Over!!! Oh what a year to forget, or should we?

Many felt like screaming "Stop the world - I want to get off." Musical by Anthony Newly and Leslie Bricusse, but we all knew this was impossible.

Several weeks ago, I sat down and opined and wrote down my thoughts to be included in my report to you as a chronology and historical presentation of what occurred during our church year 2020. I started to type and then deleted. Later, I sat down and wrote and then crumbled the paper. This process continued for over 6 weeks. Everything that I penned was not the message and take away I wanted to report from 2020.

Then, I realized that 2020 was the year that our Lord guided us through what appeared to be an impossible journey. He lessened our fears and anxieties and gave us His Peace. All the work by Rev. Christopher, the Vestry, Committees, Ministries and all of our Parishioners made all of us at St. Stephen's stronger, closer and committed to our faith and love for our family's friends, and community,

Yes, we are prospering and surviving the Era of Zoom. Now, I challenge everyone to make St. Stephen's more glorious in 2021, be proactive, volunteer for committees, ministries and projects, and events. May God Bless and give you peace.  
Respectfully submitted,

Joseph C. Merkens, 2020 Junior Warden

## 2020 Annual Report, Formation

It's easy to think that Formation is just another word for adult education, but The Episcopal Church Website says that "Christian formation is the lifelong process of growing in our relationship with God, self, others, and all creation."<sup>i</sup> Educational opportunities, group discussions and seminars give us the chance to get to know each other better and to grow spiritually.

In 2020, our Lenten Program on *The Grace of Les Misérables* was cut short by stay at home orders due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Since then, we have learned how to make better use of technology to further the formation of our congregation. Events that happened in 2020 include two discussions sponsored by the Daughters of the King, a movie discussion of *Selma* and a book discussion of *So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. The Education for Ministry group hosted open seminars during the month of July for anyone in the congregation who might be interested. The Daughters of the King also began a weekly Gratitude Circle which continues every Wednesday via Zoom. All parishioners and their friends are invited to join. A new group focusing on Anti-Racism and Social Justice formed in the fall and they hosted two discussions on voting. Education for Ministry began a new term in the fall with five second year participants studying the New Testament via Zoom. Reverend Christopher led an Advent study based on the second reading from the lectionary each week and the St. Stephen's Book Group reformed planning a January start with the book *Hallelujah Anyway* by Anne Lamott. The group meets on Wednesday mornings and is open to all.

The Vestry seeks to promote formation and support ministries. If you have an idea or a passion for something that you would like to share, or would like to know more about the options mentioned above, please contact Kathleen Jensen (current Formation Portfolio reporter).

Submitted by: Kathleen Jensen

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<sup>i</sup> "About Christian Formation." *Episcopal Church*, 18 May 2018, [episcopalchurch.org/posts/lifelongformation/about-christian-formation](https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/lifelongformation/about-christian-formation).

## ALTAR GUILD

The ministry of the Altar Guild is to prepare the elements and space used for our worship. This includes vesting the altar in seasonally appropriate colors, maintaining the silver and crystal, cleaning the linens and preparing the priest's vestments. Mid March to the end of May brought a different time for us. As things were shut down in March and Rev. Christopher transitioned to services live-streamed from his home, the Altar Guild took a back seat on the preparations.

It was with much pleasure to once again assist with the preparation for weekly services, first in the chapel, then for in-person outside then in the sanctuary. Figuring how to make these spaces feel like "us" while services are live-streamed was a challenge, yet felt very familiar and brought a sense of normalcy to members of the Altar Guild.

We have appreciated members of the Men's Group, most specifically Steve Plote, and the assistance with the changing of the banners.

While all members of the Altar Guild have supported our ministry, I must specifically recognize Donna Maldonado and the amazing flower arrangements that she has created for special services.

We continue to look for someone to join Donna Fitton in preparing for and cleaning up after services the second Sunday of each month. Currently our members include:

Miriam Aardahl  
Karen Fencil

Donna Fitton  
Cathy Gero  
Mary Mercogliano

Donna Maldonado  
Joanie Stanzione

Faithfully submitted,

Mary Mercogliano  
Altar Guild Directress

## **2020 Buildings and Grounds Annual Report**

Vestry: Steve Plote

This past year we had several projects related to COVID-19 and getting both the preschool and the Church to be operational during the time of the Pandemic.

For the preschool we had to build a glass partition wall between two rooms so that one could be an observer if we had a sick child who needed to be isolated until they could be picked up by a parent. This required a professional contractor and we used Silverman Construction and Bernardo's Painting to complete this task.

There were repair projects around both the preschool and church that were handyman level fixes. The Buildings & Grounds committee were able to attend to these which included rain gutter cleaning, plumbing repairs, conduit repairs, tree trimming, etc.

We also set up to provide in-person outdoor Sunday worship in the Courtyard of the Church for a dedicated group of parishioners. We observed all standard COVID protocols and met state and county guidelines for attendance; even on one rainy Sunday morning.

Other projects in the fall which required professional service were a blower motor failure on the HVAC system which required replacement, and we rekeyed all the doors to the Preschool and Church to prevent misuse of the facilities.

Cost reduction projects included a separate ADSL internet service for the preschool instead of two basic phone lines, changing the watering cycles for the sprinkler systems, and fixing the standup water pipe.

One critical project for the Church was to upgrade the Internet service to improve the streaming of the Wednesday and Sunday services. We did this with a purchased, passive antenna directed to a VZ cellular tower and using a MIFI Hotspot for high-speed uploads and downloads to the church Facebook page. The tech guild then upgraded the streaming video system from iPhones and Switcher to vMIX and tilt zoom Cameras to move the streaming services from the Chapel, back to the main Church Altar in time for the All Saints service in November.

There have been 12 incidents of vandalism or unknown people entering buildings during this pandemic season. We did a thorough analysis (with help from the Sheriff's Department) of what it will take to fully secure the campus from outsiders and obtained bids to upgrade the security systems of both buildings with lights and cameras. As an interim step (3) Ring spotlight cameras were purchased and installed: one over the Tuff Shed and Spurling hall Electrical and HVAC equipment area, one covering the Preschool courtyard walkway, and one covering the Church breezeway / Narthex doors. Additionally, Padlocks for after-hours security were purchased and installed on the gate by the Church Office and the gate by the upper parking lot and Spurling Hall lounge.

We are now seeking bids to get new, push bar gates and fencing amendments done for both these entrances. More on that and other projects in 2021.

Another professional contract we sought was for the repair and replacement of a fallen soffit at the preschool in September. We contracted Daniels' Roofing to do this and requested bids to take down additional soffits which are in the process of sagging from their connected roof beams and may fail in the coming months. Additional repairs to the roof will take place in 2021.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the tech guild for their work on the new camera, audio system upgrades and V-Mix streaming service application. I'd also like to thank those who installed the systems, trained the operators, and especially those who record and prepare the reader video and music clips. Your dedication and hard work are fully appreciated by me, the staff of St Stephens, and the Vestry.

## **2021 Yearly Report for Children's Ministry**

As with all the other areas of the church, Children's Ministry became very challenging this year. My original goals for the year were swiftly changed to accommodate the ever-evolving pandemic restrictions. Offering easily accessible religious learning opportunities as well as trying to maintain the children's connection to church seemed most important.

Since the first Sunday of the pandemic lockdown on March 29, 2020, we recorded and posted Godly Play stories online during the Sunday school year. Parents have access to the weekly content through the St. Stephen's Episcopal Parent Page Facebook account. The Facebook page allows children at a time of their choosing to view a video of the Godly Play story along with a fun craft or activity. The lessons also contain PDF's of additional content for parents to do at home with their children.

For summer when Sunday school was out, we had planned to host vacation bible school. However, after much deliberation, it was decided that it was best to cancel in-person vacation bible school and not to try to put on a virtual VBS. Yet, with most of the children having to stay home this summer and not able to attend live church, I felt that it was important to offer something to keep them involved with church. My solution was to continue weekly video lessons on the Facebook page using object-oriented lessons. Those who participated in the lessons, received monthly kits with surprise activities to accompany the weekly lessons.

Additionally during the summer, Reverend Christopher formed Pathfinders for children in 3rd - 5th grade. The group met every Thursday afternoon on Zoom for online games and conversations. Once school started, attendance in Pathfinders dropped due to some of the children aging-out and school schedule conflicts, so further meetings were put on-hold. However, we found that Pathfinders seemed to be successful and meaningful to this age group, and we would like to continue with a Pathfinders program once the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

With the start of school in the fall, the Godly Play videos resumed, following the regular Sunday school schedule, with monthly packages of craft supplies delivered to accompany each lesson. With the technical help of Katarina Nelson, we recorded and posted a total of 42 Godly Play and object-oriented lesson videos for 2020.

The new school year also brought surprises to all the youth of the church. Pencil cases full of school supplies were blessed in a service and delivered to around 40 youth of the church. We hoped that the pencil cases would remind them that even while physically away from the church, they still had the prayers and support of St. Stephen's during what might be a difficult school year.

For the Advent and Christmas season, we had to cancel the Advent Fair, but Reverend Christopher and Sheri Flay led a stocking decorating party over Zoom for all church youth who wanted to participate. Plain stockings containing decorating supplies were delivered to those children who RSVP'd in time for the Zoom meeting. In addition, Sunday school children received Advent-in-a-bag which contained fun activities, LED Advent candles for their personal wreaths, and suggestions for counting the days through Advent.

To accommodate a pandemic Christmas Eve, Reverend Christopher planned a special online Family Christmas Eve service tailored for our younger members with a revised, shorter eucharist. Bible passages were read by YESS members, a children's story was read by Sunday School members, and music was provided by several other of our youth.

There were many changes, scrapped plans, and hard lessons throughout the year as we tried to make meaningful connections with our youth. Zoom-fatigue, technology malfunctions, and changing pandemic restrictions made it difficult, but I believe that the message came through that our youth are valued and that the church will always be there for them.

Submitted by: Julia Nelson

## Annual Report for 2020 - Communications

The Communications Committee is responsible for providing publicity and information to the Parish and the local community regarding church activities. In an era when modes of communication are increasing, we have been blessed with the time and talent of several parishioners serving on the Communications Committee.

**Tech Guild:** Due to the pandemic and the need for virtual services, St. Stephen's now has a Tech Guild. This incredible team of parishioners took on the monumental task of upgrading our technology in order for us to effectively provide livestreaming services. This technology will continue to provide virtual attendance for anyone not able to join in person once we are allowed to do so. Livestreaming will also provide another benefit for those looking to share milestones (weddings, funerals, etc.) with family and friends who are unable to attend in person.

**Social Media:** This year Claire Schlaman began working as an intern specializing in social media. She has been working directly with Rev. Christopher in posting on Facebook and creating a new Instagram page for St. Stephen's (@ststephensscv). We are increasing our FB page followers on a weekly basis, and the number of devices livestreaming has remained high and steady since March 2020.

**Website/Weekly emails:** Our Church Administrator Tracy Stapp is also the main source of communicating church happenings via our virtual newsletter that goes out weekly via email to our parishioners. Each month the weekly email spotlights a different Vestry Portfolio (Communications, Formation, Worship, Buildings & Grounds, In-Reach, Hospitality, HR, Children & Youth, Outreach, Pastoral Care, Stewardship, and Interfaith & Ecumenical Relations).

**On-campus Communications:** On-site communications include bulletin boards in Spurling Hall, new inserts for the monument, and large banners to advertise our livestreaming services.

*If your group would like to put upcoming event information on our website or social media, please create and send announcement via email to the Communications committee for review (rachelrieckhoff@yahoo.com).*

Submitted by Rachel Rieckhoff

# Daughters of the King

## Annual Report 2020

The Order of the Daughters of the King (DOK) is an international order which dates back to the 1800's. St. Stephen's DOK Chapter is "The Woman at the Well", referring to John 4:1-40 where Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman about "*living water*".

We define ourselves as an order, not an organization, because we accept a "Rule of Life". We don't just enroll as members and attend meetings - We participate in a period of study and discernment, and then take a lifetime vow to uphold the Rule of Prayer and the Rule of Service. We are strengthened through the discipline of a Rule of Life and supported through the companionship of our sisters.

For so many ministries at St. Stephen's (and indeed our lives in general) 2020 presented a bit of change to the usual way of doing things. The DOK is no exception. We hold monthly chapter meetings which got switched from a luncheon in the lounge to a meeting over Zoom. We have been able to continue presenting monthly programs that vary as they are presented by a different daughter each month. Topics might cover prayer practices and meditation, Bible study, social justice, or crafts. Our annual display of crosses still happened, but in an on-line sort of way. The same is true of our annual Nativity display.

Our order considers planning spiritual events for the congregation to be a main part of its ministry, but the events of this summer changed our focus to racial awareness and as a result we hosted two discussion groups, a movie discussion of *Selma* and a book discussion of *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo.

This year we also started hosting a weekly gratitude circle led by the Rev. Fran Canella. Individual daughters led by Rev. Fran, Karen Fencil and Judy Ferkel contributed to St. Stephen's Immigrant support circle. Daughters also participate in Stations of the Cross during Lent, led by Mary Jo Higginbotham, and contribute to both Diocesan and National events of the Order.

We invite women of St. Stephen's to find out more about our order! If you'd like additional information about DOK, please get in touch with Kathleen Jensen or Mary Jo Higginbotham.

Submitted by: Kathleen Jensen



## **Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations**

Through Diversity, Tolerance, Commitment and Communication combined with a willingness to engage with others. That is how the Holy Spirit Empowers Us to Spread His Word through doing Good Works. It is good to Glorify the Name of God and Jesus Christ. Through Interfaith acceptance and the celebration of humankind in all its magnificent with Faiths, Colors, Cultures, Traditions and Love. Due to COVID-19 our Team has been limited in fulfilling our goals to Outreach to our Community in person. However, the following paragraph contains our accomplishments this year online.

Our Team members have been in communication with the Los Angeles Episcopal Diocese "Ecumenical & Interfaith Life Group" and have had additional access to Digital Evangelism online through the Washington Episcopal Diocese and the National Cathedral. The Team has participated in a "Iftar" which is a breaking of the Ramadan Fast. The other faiths participating were from the Pasadena Islamic Center, Pasadena Jewish Temple, and All Saints Episcopal Pasadena. There has been an involvement in training for the Episcopal Church's "Introducing & Embracing Evangelism Training" Online. Through the World Council of Churches, we participated in a National Day of Mourning for COVID Victims. The team has written on social media, through email, with a Newsletter article on Faith and Evangelism. They have contributed also through the Coffee Hour, Daughters of the King, Midweek Eucharist, and St. Stephen's Discussions on Racial Injustice with The Reverend Canon Eric Law online and in person during the Ministry Fair. We have shared faith stories on the National DOK "Beloved Community Story Sharing on Race." We have read "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo and discussed our thoughts online during Brother Dennis Gibbs "Sacred Journey Series on Race". We participated with Bishop Suffragan Diane M. Jardine Bruce "Trauma and (Un) Truths: Broken Promises in the Name of God." Three Part Series online. We observed a moment of silence at noon to pray for or to meditate on Peace in the World during the United Nations International Day of Peace.

We will continue to research online the Religious Organizations located in the Santa Clarita Valley. There are plans to develop relationships with these groups in the future. This is not a time to speak in terms of doubt or anxiety. This is a time to fill your Life with Good Works through: Peace, Joy, Hope, Love and Prayer!

Contributing to this Portfolio: Reverend Fran, Mary Jo Higginbotham, Kathleen Jensen, and Karen Fencil.

By Cindy Swaisgood



## **2020 Annual Report**

What's YOUR ministry? Many people think that one must be ordained in order to be "a minister." The fact is that all baptized Christians are called to be active participants in the church's total ministry. By examining our own beliefs and their relationship to our culture and the tradition of our Christian faith, we can learn what it means to be an effective "minister" in today's world.

The Education for Ministry (EfM) program provides participants with the background and education to carry out their ministry. Through small-group study, prayer, discussion and guided reflection, members of our EfM group move toward a new understanding of the fullness of God's kingdom.

EfM is a unique four-year distance learning certificate program through The University of the South in Sewanee, TN. Since its founding in 1975, this international program has assisted more than 80,000 participants in discovering and nurturing their call to Christian service. EfM helps the faithful encounter the breadth and depth of the Christian tradition and bring it into conversation with their experiences of the world as they study, worship, and engage in theological reflection together.

EfM Participants follow weekly assignments coordinating Bible reading and chapter study with the help of resource guides, and are responsible for setting their own learning goals. They have an opportunity to share their insights, as well as discuss questions which the study materials may raise. EfM provides an opportunity to deepen your faith and help you discover your own unique ministry.

St. Stephen's currently has 5 participants and all are in their second year, meeting via Zoom and studying the New Testament. Mary Jo Higginbotham and Kathleen Jensen are the current EfM mentors, and they are happy to answer any questions you may have about the program. If you are interested, please let us know, we would love to have you join us!

Submitted by: Kathleen Jensen

## Finance Report

St. Stephen's fared better, financially, than we could have possibly hoped back in March of 2020. As the COVID19 pandemic began broadly and deeply altering how we operate at St. Stephen's, the finance committee and vestry began creating and examining various what-if models, including worst-case scenarios. We were monitoring events literally hour-by-hour.

To be sure, the pandemic brought hardship to St. Stephen's, including to our finances, as you can see in these reports. But, as the weeks and months passed, our congregation and preschool families met this hardship and every challenge with resilience and faithfulness. Financially, we are emerging from the effects of the pandemic with undaunted faith that better days are ahead.

Please keep in mind as you view this report that, though the financial reports are separate, ultimately, St. Stephen's is both the Preschool and the Parish, and that includes our finances. Indeed, we report financially as one to the Diocese. St. Stephen's views the Preschool as a ministry. This view guides our financial decisions concerning the Preschool and its relationship with the Parish.

If you have questions or observations about these reports or any aspect of St. Stephen's finances, you are encouraged to talk with anyone on the Finance Committee. You may also call the treasurer, John Fortman, at your convenience at 818.281.0420

### Parish

#### Parish – Summary 2020 Income Statement and 2021 Budget

	Year End 12/31/2019	Year End 12/31/2020		Year End 12/31/2021
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
<b>Income</b>				
Pledges	190,195	252,682	250,318	269,272
Plate	51,548	37,800	30,530	29,150
Other Donations	5,300	4,200	2,176	4,200
Other Income	8,817	6,665	4,039	786
PPP Loan Forgiveness	0	0	0	32,365
<b>Total</b>	<b>255,860</b>	<b>301,347</b>	<b>287,063</b>	<b>335,773</b>
<b>Expense</b>				
Mission Share	30,996	36,252	36,252	37,788
Salaries, Taxes and Benefits	208,139	243,595	248,684	247,214
Office and Campus	85,800	84,067	79,627	100,049
Program and Ministries	19,844	22,265	13,020	16,147
Other Expense	2,890	3,010	5,967	2,500
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>347,669</b>	<b>389,189</b>	<b>383,550</b>	<b>403,698</b>
Preschool Cost Sharing	80,004	81,040	64,405	85,539
<b>Total Expense after Cost Sharing</b>	<b>267,665</b>	<b>308,149</b>	<b>319,145</b>	<b>318,159</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-11,805</b>	<b>-6,802</b>	<b>-32,082</b>	<b>17,614</b>

2020 pledges came in remarkably on-target, about 1% less than projected. Due to fewer and smaller in-person services, plate income was down. We did not collect projected income from group meetings, etc.

During the summer, the Vestry agreed to reduce the monthly Shared Occupancy amount contributed by the Preschool to the Parish.

The bottom line for 2020 for the Parish is a \$32,082 shortfall during a year with extraordinary challenges.

The Vestry-approved 2021 budget included \$252,000 for Pledges. The budget above shows \$269,262 which reflects additional pledges that have since been made.

The Parish received \$32,365 from the Diocese as proceeds from its PPP Loan. This amount was not counted as income in 2020 and shows as a Note Payable on our Balance Sheet shown below. We expect the diocese to receive full loan forgiveness this summer when we will call it income for 2021.

### Parish – Summary Balance Sheet

	Year End 12/31/2020		
	Balance on 1/1/2020	Net Activity Through 12/31/2020	Balance on 12/31/2020
<b>Assets</b>			
Checking Account	64,850	-4,699	60,151
Money Market Account	52,798	34	52,832
Rector's Discretionary Account	204	120	324
Other	1,297	933	2,230
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>119,149</b>	<b>-3,612</b>	<b>115,537</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Payroll Taxes and Benefits Payable	998	148	1,146
Vendors Payable	-1,679	335	-1,344
Prepaid Pleges	300	-300	0
PPP Loan*	0	32,365	32,365
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-381</b>	<b>32,548</b>	<b>32,167</b>
<b>Fund Balances</b>			
Operating Fund	25,804	-32,079	-6,275
Children and Youth Fund	31,599	-3,613	27,986
Building and Grounds Fund	52,058	-6,409	45,649
Other Designated Funds	10,071	5,941	16,012
<b>Total Fund Balances</b>	<b>119,532</b>	<b>-36,160</b>	<b>83,372</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balances</b>	<b>119,151</b>	<b>-3,612</b>	<b>115,539</b>

The Parish Balance Sheet does not include the asset value of our real property, and it does not include a Note Payable to the Los Angeles Diocese from 2001, with a balance of \$95,730 on 12/31/2020.

## **Preschool**

Since, for the Preschool, we are reporting in the middle of the year, we include year-end figures from the fiscal year ending on July 31, 2020, and the report the current interim figures as of December 31, 2020.

### **Preschool – Summary Income Statements and Budget**

	<u>Year End 7/31/2020</u>		<u>Year End 7/31/2021 (Interim)</u>		
	<u>7/31/2020 Budget</u>	<u>Year Ent 7/31/2019</u>	<u>Budget To Date</u>	<u>Actual To Date</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
<b>Income</b>					
Tuition & Fees	550,849	432,569	142,540	142,663	275,442
Grants	0	0	7,200	50,542	8,000
Other Income	11,500	7,182	574	278	3,210
<b>Total</b>	<b>562,349</b>	<b>439,751</b>	<b>150,314</b>	<b>193,483</b>	<b>286,652</b>
<b>Expense</b>					
Salaries, Taxes, & Benefit	450,223	431,820	141,587	131,113	290,227
Office & Campus	26,961	24,947	11,506	13,233	19,941
Program	16,565	12,836	2,904	2,551	5,800
Other	1,350	2,877	2,926	1,615	3,102
Cost Sharing Contribution	75,550	81,748	22,580	22,629	65,746
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>570,649</b>	<b>554,228</b>	<b>181,503</b>	<b>171,141</b>	<b>384,816</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-8,300</b>	<b>-114,477</b>	<b>-31,189</b>	<b>22,342</b>	<b>-98,164</b>

Tuition income dropped to zero for the last months of the Preschool Fiscal Year ending July 31, 2020, due to Stay-At-Home Orders. We continued paying staff during this time. The result is a shortfall of \$114,477.

Since last summer, the Preschool received some grants not included in our Fiscal Year End 2021 projections. Through December 2020, the preschool Net Income is ahead of projections by more than \$50,000. The grant funding would not have happened without resourcefulness and leadership from the Preschool Director, Amanda Picard.

Like the Parish, the Preschool also received funds from the Diocese from the proceeds from its PPP loan. We expect to realize one-time income of \$49,982 from the forgiveness of the loan sometime during the Summer of 2021. This expected income is not included in the current budget which goes through July 31, 2021

The Fiscal Year End 2021 budget was created with a conservative eye toward the many unknowns in the Summer of 2020. More recent clarity and better than planned-for outcomes indicate the year will look much better than the 2021 Annual Budget.

## **Preschool – Summary Balance Sheets Fiscal Year End 2020 and Month End 12/31/2020**

	Fiscal Year End 7/31/2020			Fiscal Year 2021 To Date	
	Balance on	Net Activity	Balance on	Net Activity	Balance on
	8/1/2019	through	7/31/2020	through	12/31/2020
		7/31/2020		12/31/2020	12/31/2020
<b>Assets</b>					
Checking Account	54,204	-9,929	44,275	33,877	78,152
Money Market Account	163,912	-59,338	104,574	-22,000	82,574
Other	600	3,148	3,748	-626	3,122
				0	
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>218,716</b>	<b>-66,119</b>	<b>152,597</b>	<b>11,251</b>	<b>163,848</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Payroll Taxes and Benefits	1,088	-1,506	-418	-771	-1,189
Vendors Payable	-5,237	-171	-5,408	233	-5,175
Tuition Held	0	1,197	1,197	1,855	3,052
PPP Note Payable	0	49,982	49,982	0	49,982
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-4,149</b>	<b>49,502</b>	<b>45,353</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>46,670</b>
<b>Fund Balances</b>					
Operating Fund	145,054	-115,622	29,432	18,944	48,376
Operating Reserve	50,000	0	50,000	0	50,000
Capital Fund	25,832	0	25,832	-9,009	16,823
Scholarship Fund	1,979	0	1,979	0	1,979
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>222,865</b>	<b>-115,622</b>	<b>107,243</b>	<b>9,935</b>	<b>117,178</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balances</b>	<b>218,716</b>	<b>-66,120</b>	<b>152,596</b>	<b>11,252</b>	<b>163,848</b>

My thanks to the congregation of St. Stephen's and to Vestry, Wardens, and Rector for the trust and faith you place in me.

Respectfully Submitted

John Fortman  
Treasurer  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

## **Human Resources 2020**

The Human Resources Committee started meeting on Wednesday nights in Oct 2019. We continued meeting in person until Covid hit, and then we met by Zoom. The purpose of the committee for 2020 was to develop an employee manual that would cover both the Church and Preschool. Previously the Church had an employee manual that only covered Church employees, and the Preschool had an employee/instruction manual. The members of the Committee are:

Jen Aston

Mark Young

Bill Britnall

Shannon Murchison, representing the Preschool

Marian Krabach

Brendan Krabach

Over a course of many weeks, the Committee worked on combining and rewriting parts of both manuals. We incorporated new California employment laws that came into effect in 2020. We added or rewrote sections on such areas as Pregnancy Disability Leave, Lactation Accommodations, Discrimination due to Hairstyles, Reporting Harassment, Social Media, and a Professional Code of Ethics. Shannon Murchison provided many “on the ground” observations from the Preschool that enabled us to have their issues addressed. The Diocesan employee handbook was also used for inspiration. In addition, we received input from Rev. Christopher and Amanda.

We were finally able to publish the latest employee manual in September, 2020 after almost a year’s worth of work. We anticipate that the employee handbook will be updated yearly to incorporate new California laws regulating employment.

Submitted by Marian Krabach

## **OSL Report for 2020**

### **The International Order of Saint Luke the Physician**

At the beginning of the pandemic, when the church was figuring out how to adjust to this new world, we discontinued OSL Prayers in the Chapel with our usual laying on of hands. Order members Malcolm Blue and Robert Hill have been serving on the Vestry, and have offered healing prayers within that body. Through his weekly Pastoral e-mails and through Pastoral Care Team contacts, Malcolm has offered healing prayers to parishioners several times. OSL Chaplain Fran Cantella has also participated in requested calls for prayer. Tom Jensen has also provided OSL support when appropriate in his role at Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital.

It has been a challenging year for many ministries in rethinking how we can best support each other. The Order of Saint Luke chapter will be meeting via Zoom this week to talk about continuing our healing ministry using current technologies.

Submitted by Richard Holdredge



## **Laundry Love**

Since August of 2015, the St. Stephen's Laundry Love Team has held an Outreach on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at the Coin Laundry located on Railroad Avenue in Newhall.

Our volunteers have been offering free washes and dries, laundry/soap, fabric softener, bleach, plastic laundry bags, refreshments, water, and camaraderie to our Guests. Clean laundry provides dignity for the less fortunate. Laundry Love encourages everyday hospitality, rekindling trust within the community through human care and unity built by selfless concern and consistency.

Last year's Laundry Love was limited by the Pandemic to only providing services for the first three months of the year. Though we were limited, we were able to provide 206 clean loads of laundry and 108 dries.

We all need Care, Kindness, Hope, Joy and Love. This ministry has touched so many lives, from the low-income families who live in Santa Clarita to the homeless who reside in the riverbed. Charitable works are not simply good deeds, but they should be the way we conduct ourselves daily in our own thoughts, words, and actions. Every time we help one another in times of hardship, we should remember that all life is irreplaceable. We are looking forward to the time when we may all come back together again!

If we work together, we will be one in Faith.

The following volunteers have contributed to our Laundry Love Community during 2020: Kathy McClendon, Joyce Evans, Genoveva Yopez, Rosa Holdredge, Diane Shaw, Tracy Stapp, and the St. Stephen's Congregation.

Take care, Cindy Swaisgood

## **Membership Annual Report**

My service as a vestry member has concluded 12/20

Marian Krabach and I shared the membership duties. Marian was more active than me.

The membership assignment was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Worship as we are accustomed to was changed and amended to follow Diocesan dictates, thus without physical contact to both members and visitors, normal procedures could not be followed to perform the normal vestry procedure. This was a regretful time. In conclusion, I much appreciated the time I spent as a vestry member.

Submitted by Bob Hill

## **2020 Men's Group Annual Report**

Vestry: Steve Plote

2020 was a difficult year for the Men's group due to the lockdown and our normal meeting place to be Dink's in Granary Square. The group always met the first Saturday of each month and there were normally 6-10 attendees that shared breakfast, coffee and the opportunity to discuss the church and projects we could help with around the campus and other organizations. We met in Jan/Feb; and then nothing until we had a meeting on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was a very small group with limited interaction and that was it in 2020 since the pandemic shut everything down in March.

We hope to get restarted in Early 2021 after outdoor dining becomes stabile in the restaurant world. March/April 2021 might be good start.

## ANNUAL MEETING REPORT - MUSIC MINISTRY - February 28, 2021

The year 2020 has been momentous, challenging, noteworthy and very stressful for everyone. The music ministry of St. Stephen's is no exception. Because of the COVID-19 virus, we had to virtually reinvent ourselves, virtually. I would like to re-emphasize from last year that we are most fortunate to have a music ministry that is made up of enthusiastic, devoted and dedicated members who are committed to God and to the service of the music program of this church. This dedication was most evident this past year as we continued to strive to provide music during the redesigned, streamed worship services of our church.

The COVID-19 virus is especially hard-hitting to musical singing groups because of the very nature of what is done and how. It is now extremely dangerous to sing together. With the help of our choir assistant, Caroline Morgan, we sought and found a musical application, Acapella which has become the vehicle by which we can sing individually, in the safety of our own homes, while being joined with other similarly singing choir members to produce a choral musical piece. We started to participate in the streaming worship services in May.

Below is a brief description of the individual groups that comprise our music ministry and how they are functioning during the COVID crisis:

- The **Parish Choir** provides choral music for our regular and special worship services. The choir uses the "Acapella" app for all choral presentations.
- The **Ringers** provide handbell and chime music for special worship services. Currently, they are not functioning on a regular basis.
- The **Stones**, our praise group, provide praise and contemporary music. This group does present music occasionally, also using the "Acapella" app.
- The **Youth Choristers**, formally known as the Children's Choir provides music for special, designated services. Currently, this group is not functioning. Ms. Judy and Ms. Carolyn, aka Carolyn Randall did conduct a Music Appreciation Program for 6 weeks during the spring of 2020. This program taught basic musical skills, introduced the choristers to several musical instruments and had several guest presenters.

In addition, we have been blessed with the special assistance of the following persons:

- Roger Lamb
- Wendy Stackhouse
- Terry Dexter
- Yolanda West

- The Elegant Music String Trio
- The Yahnker Family

We appreciate the beautiful music that has been provided by all of our special musicians.

Other music ministry activities:

- The **Parish Choir** retreat was canceled this year.
- A re-run of the **Jazz Vespers Service** was streamed over Facebook on Sunday, November 22. Guest participants were Lynette Dupree, Jonathan Kirsh, Tony Farrell, Vince Suzuki along with our own Frank Browne, Chris Yahnker, Mark Bridgeford, Christopher Montella, Judith Baity and the **Stones**.
- The music director gives private music instruction to anyone who makes a request. You may start at anytime and there are openings. Currently there is one student who receives instruction over FaceTime.
- Members of the music staff continue to provide arrangements or editions tailored for their specific groups and/or for the congregation.

As always, we wish to thank the congregation for your continued support and to acknowledge the participation and encouragement of our rector, Christopher Montella.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith M. Baity, Music Director

## OUTREACH MINISTRIES



### ANGEL INTERFAITH NETWORK

I retired from AIN in 2019, but during this past year I picked up clothing from two Parishioners whose spouses passed away and delivered the clothing to AIN to give to homeless and others in need.

### USED EYEGLASSES MINISTRY

Because of COVID-19, parishioners cannot donate, and the receiver has declined donations. I have two bags of eye wear in my garage waiting to be donated.



### RECYCLING

As a result of a conversation last April, Diane Shaw & I started this new ministry. Once a month, usually on the last Saturday of each month, Diane Shaw and myself have been collecting from Parishioners in the Church Parking Lot donations of CRV glass & plastic bottles & cans and empty wine bottles (of all sizes) which are brought to a recycling center. The proceeds of which are donated to St. Stephen's. For the 8 times we collected during 2020, we donated over \$800 to our Church. Not only is this ministry helping our Church and our environment, but it provides us with an opportunity to see and chat with Church friends on a monthly basis while being masked and being healthy distanced. For questions about Recycling, please call Malcolm Blue (661.433.4384)

### HYGIENE KITS

The collection of items included in the Kits has been suspended as well as the assembly of the Kits due to COVID-19. However, the Daughters of the King will be joining the monthly Recycling effort to collect non-perishable food for the 2 local Food Pantries so whatever stored items for the Hygiene Kits that can be used will be donated to the Food Pantries in add food items. (For info about Hygiene Kits, please call Rosa Holdredge. And for information about the Food collection, call Mary Jo Higginbotham.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Malcolm Blue



### ANGEL TREE

The St. Stephen's Angel Tree Drive in 2020 sponsored fifty Children providing them with both clothing and toys through the Prison Fellowship Ministries'. The goal of the program is to nurture the bond between an absent parent and child and to provide gifts to their children at Christmas time.

In 2020 due to the COVID Lockdown we were unable to meet in person and select the names and ages of the children from our Christmas Tree in Spurling Hall. We usually purchased one toy and one item of clothing that each parent had requested for their child. We would then wrap and decorate the gifts and leave them under the tree to be delivered by the local Boy Scouts.

This year was quite different and phenomenally successful. The Congregation stepped forward and unselfishly provided all their donations online. The families benefited from the Program and the Congregation enjoyed helping those who are unable to provide for their children while incarcerated.

We look forward to the time when we can meet again in person to provide to the children at Christmas Time.

By Judy Ferkel

## **PASTORAL MINISTRIES REPORT for 2020**

Pre-COVID-19, Pastoral Ministries in 2020 consisted of an attempt to resurrect a ministry established by our former Rector in which parishioner volunteers would personally visit other parishioners hospitalized, in nursing or senior living facilities, in post-hospital physical rehab and Board and Care facilities or who were ill at home. Those who were unable to make personal visits would telephone.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs), we had one who would bring the Eucharist in both forms to those who wanted it but were unable to come to Church Services.

When COVID-19 hit, both of these ministries were put on hold, but to compensate for those who were in Senior Residences, I asked one parishioner to call them on a weekly basis and the Pastoral Care Team was born. Five of us now make prayerful and caring calls to other Parishioners on a weekly basis. An offshoot of this was a weekly email called Pastoral Ministries UPDATE that was sent out weekly on Thursday or Friday since the end of April 2021. I received few responses to it and so when I termed out from the Vestry, I abandoned it.

Respectfully submitted,  
Malcolm Blue

## **PRAYER CHAIN**

Every week you see in the Sunday bulletin the list of those for whom our prayers have been requested—on average, probably about 50 names. At home, in whatever fashion works for them, there are more than 30 members of St. Stephen's Prayer Chain (including all the Daughters of the King chapter, whose vows include a Rule of Prayer) holding these names up to God in prayer. Ours is largely an electronic operation: The names come to the coordinator from the clergy, from the church office, and from members of the parish and the pre-school by any means available and are then disseminated to the prayer chain via email. If there is further information available later, updates are also emailed.

As a general rule, names remain on the list for at least a month, or by request for longer, some in an "ongoing needs" category because of long-term problems. The first of each month a somewhat enlarged version of the bulletin list (with more detailed information if it is available) is emailed to the chain, replacing the previous month's version. If there were members without computers, the monthly list would be mailed. There is a strict rule of confidentiality; complete information is shared only with the rector.

Because they carry out their ministry quietly and unseen, the members of the prayer chain are virtually anonymous. It is, however, a vital service in any congregation. Anyone who is willing to give a few minutes of time each day, even several days a week, is welcome to join; there are no qualifications or special skills other than dedication and the ability to refrain from gossiping about the list.

Submitted by: Florence Krejci



St. Stephen's Preschool continues to be a ministry that touches the lives of about 70 children and 15 staff members.

The Preschool children continue to grow, learn about the world around us, God's presence in that world, and how to interact with others within it. Preschool is a time for discovery and learning. In our developmental program, children are encouraged to explore their nurturing environment. During the preschool day, there is time for "free choice," circle time, whole class activities, outside play time, music, science, and other enriching activities. Each month, the activities are geared around various themes that include seasons, holidays, and historical figures.

In January and February, staff and families alike felt the optimism that comes with a new year after enduring all the uncertainty and fear of the active shooter in our community that past fall. Our fall school year registration had just concluded when we learned about the stay at home orders that were put in place due to COVID-19.

Never did we think that the Pandemic would last over a year. Unfortunately, we were not able to celebrate all that we normally do in the closing months of the school year. Some of the positive things that came out of this situation were that we celebrated the births of Miss Amanda first son in April and Miss Nelly's first son in June. We had our first ever, drive thru End of Year Celebration so that children could say goodbye to their teachers. We were also able to congratulate Miss Shannon for her 20 years of service to our preschool. Unfortunately, we were not able to offer summer school as staff needed time to create a reopening plan carefully and strategically for the fall.

Before school started this past Fall, we had some maintenance of window screens and the building of glass panels and doors placed between rooms 3 and 4 to create our isolation room. We are able to meet the needs of our community by offering a quality program for students from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

We continue to have to reimagine the various programs that we have offered in the past to generate additional income. Because enrichment classes were very successful in previous years, we now created the program to be sent home. Some of the bag activities that we have offered were "Dough Bags" Bake Bags, and Gardening Bags.

Our website [www.st-stephens-preschool.org](http://www.st-stephens-preschool.org), Google, Facebook, Instagram and word of mouth continue to be some of the first resources for prospective parents.

Teachers and children continue to go about our daily activities, learning, and growing in our safe and nurturing preschool. Teachers and children alike are happy to been able to return to a place they are confident is doing everything possible to ensure safety. We greatly appreciate all the church parishioners who donate school items, personal protective equipment, and volunteer their time to us. In addition, we are grateful to all of

our preschool staff, well experienced and brand new, for the great job they do for our children:

Teachers

Monica Bellows  
Parminder Bhogal  
Laurie Crevier  
Julie Davenport  
Shannon Murchison  
Adriana Santana  
Leslie Viera

Substitutes

Tracey Sherman  
Robin Silver  
Sharie Telles

Assistant Teachers

Gwen Brown  
Sandra Duran  
Jennifer Lackey  
Diana Patino  
Adriana Santana  
Kristen Sargeant  
Brittani Surur  
Christina Troupe  
Nelly Vincent

Church Volunteers

Marv Aardahl  
John Fortman  
Joe Merkens  
Steve Plote

Bookkeeper

Donna Maldonado

Sexton

Maria Lopez

Director

Amanda Foster

Chaplain

Christopher Montella

Program Assistants

Monica Bellows  
Shannon Murchison

Admin. Assistant

Kelsey Feldman

Again last year, because of our savings, we were able to continue to pay our staff through the end of the school year and reopen in the fall. While it could appear to some that there is an exorbitant amount of money in reserves and the capital fund, it is important to understand that nothing is for certain and without these reserves we would risk having to close our doors. As things begin to stabilize and enrollment grows we will also to continue make some capital improvements and upgrade office and classroom furniture and machines. Some of these items include new copy machines, chairs, and our playground. In addition, both California Licensing and the Diocese suggest having an operating reserve in the amount of six months' worth of expenses in case of an emergency or disaster. I have been working hard over the years to ensure these items are achieved.

The Preschool Board continues to be very supportive of the Preschool. They value the importance of ensuring that St. Stephen's Preschool remains the caring, nurturing, developmental preschool that it is. It has been very helpful having the participation of two staff representatives on the board again. I appreciate the expertise offered by all and the time each dedicates to the meetings. The 2020 Board members were:

Marv Aardahl  
Monica Bellows  
Parminder Bhogal  
Shari Flay  
Amanda Foster  
Colleen Gibbons  
Joe Merkens  
Christopher Montella  
Mark Young

Sr. Warden  
Staff Representative  
Staff Representative  
  
Director  
  
Jr. Warden  
President

Faithfully Submitted,

Amanda Picard  
Preschool Director



# PROJECT SHAREtheGRACE

Since Project Share the Grace started in 2007, we have distributed over 24,000 books, games, jigsaw puzzles, boxes of crayons, and other educational supplies directly to disadvantaged children in the Santa Clarita Valley. These materials are distributed to children free of charge. Our slogan is “All children deserve books of their own.”

During 2020, we were heavily impacted by the coronavirus. Due to the coronavirus, Project Share the Grace has been on hiatus. Although we collected hundreds of books and school supplies, we have been unable to distribute them because of the unavailability of places that we normally distribute.

We are hopeful that once people are vaccinated and are freer to move about, we will distribute everything we’ve collected. We will also be taking new donations once St. Stephen’s is back with in-person worship.

When we start up again, donations may be placed in the Project Share the Grace box in Spurling Hall on the back counter. If you wish to contribute money, with which to purchase supplies and books, you can make a check out to St. Stephen’s with “Project Share the Grace” in the memo line and drop it in the collection plate. All donations are tax deductible.

## **Wish List**

Gently used or new children’s books, grades pre-school through sixth grade.

New coloring books and crayons

New school supplies

“All Children Deserve Books of Their Own”

Marian Krabach 805-509-3935

Email: mkrabach@aol.com

**SAGES Annual Report**  
**Sagacious, Active, Generous, Energetic Seniors**

- Open to all members of the Church – age 50 and older
- Monthly no-host luncheons – replaced by weekly virtual “Zoom” meetings a result of pandemic for 2020 and into 2021.
- Sunshine committee chair, Anne Sjolund keeps touch with members by sending birthday/get well cards to members.
- Participation in Project Share the Grace / service projects / fellowship activities. Annual Christmas luncheon at Rosa and Richard Holdredge’s home put on hold as a result of pandemic.

Co-Chairs: Don Rimac and Linda Weifenbach  
Sunshine Chair: Anne Sjolund

Submitted by Don Rimac

## STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT

The theme for our 2020 Stewardship Campaign was Faith Filled Generosity which emphasized “A giving campaign of Time, Talent and Treasure.”

The Bible speaks to us and provides direction as to how we should be willing to give to others and our church.

*“The way you give to others is the way God will give to you.” Luke 6:38*

The members of the Stewardship Committee members were Cathy Gero, Bob Gregor, Richard Holdredge, and Joe Merkens.

Looking back in time, it truly is amazing that our theme Faith Filled Generosity was so very appropriate and prophetic as the SARS-CoV-2 affected our church life so drastically that St. Stephen’s was closed by the County of Los Angeles and the State of California. Our worship services could not be an ingathering of our parish at our Sanctuary. Our various groups, committees and organizations were precluded from meeting at St. Stephen’s and Spurling Hall. Therefore, our financial campaign for 2021 was based upon our faith; generosity and love of God and our parish community.

Our Stewardship Campaign material needed to be presented virtually. We had obtained the campaign materials from The Los Angeles Diocese and The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS). The Diocese and TENS offered assistance by way of seminars which our committee members attended. The information and discussions from the speakers assisted us in the transition from in personal service to virtual presentations.

Our committee adapted and aligned the materials to reflect the future financial needs of our community. We prepared the 2021 Narrative Budget, with the assistance of the Finance Committee, the Vestry and Reverend Christopher. The Narrative Budget was updated to include additional photographs, budget comparisons, graphs and the activities from committees and group members who continued to be vigilant and active during this COVID period by virtually remaining in contact by telephone, email, snail mail and Zoom Meetings.

Richard Holdredge with the assistance of members of our community video taped and edited personal testimonies for our worship services. We would like to thank the Communications Committee and all of the members of our congregation who provided their personal testimonials during our worship services.

A special acknowledgment is appropriated to be given to Tracy Stapp, Cathy Gero, Bob Gregor, Richard Holdredge and Reverend Christopher. They worked tirelessly to prepare, proof read, edit, wrote revisions, formatted and transmitted all of the materials that you have received during this Stewardship Campaign.

Of course, I waited until the end for the reveal. As of today, your Faith-Filled Generosity of 93 gifts of love as pledges to St. Stephen's totaled \$ 269,271.00.

Thank you all for your pledges in support of St. Stephen's and our Episcopal community. Several years ago, I first heard Marv Aardahl say "We are St. Stephen's." In this time of crisis, I now know the significance and meaning of what Marv said. Over 95% of our parish made pledges this year. We are a very strong and faith filled community.

This report would be incomplete if ended without comment of what is more important than financial support. Please remember that there are three items for a successful Stewardship Campaign. Time and Talent are essential to complete our Christian journey through life. Everyone needs to become involved with all of our worship services, choir, bells, ministries, Altar Guild, Daughters of the King, EfM, Sunday School, youth group, social activities, the Vestry, committees and the Stewardship Committee.

The 2021 Stewardship Committee is reforming. The goal is to continue with an all-year stewardship campaign. Please volunteer and give to St. Stephen's your time and talent.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Merkens

## **Tech Guild – 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

The St. Stephen's Tech Guild is a new ministry, established in early 2020. As the technological footprint of our world increases, including here at St. Stephen's, it was becoming apparent that a more strategic approach to our use of various technologies was needed. Then COVID-19 arrived and instantly put the Tech Guild into high gear. The Tech Guild is guided by the Vestry to ensure that established goals are consistent with the overall mission and priorities of St. Stephen's.

The Tech Guild's mission includes the following areas of focus:

- The church building sound system
- The live streaming system
- Internal data networks, including campus WiFi coverage
- External data connections, including various methods of connecting to the internet
- Computers, printers, and other peripherals in support of the operation of the church and nursery school
- Miscellaneous technical items, such as portable sound systems and components

The Tech Guild accomplished the following in 2020:

- Rapid adoption of necessary hardware and software for Rev. Christopher to livestream services from his home when COVID-19 caused in-person services to cease
- Planning and implementing a permanent livestream system installation in the church building
- Upgrading the church sound system to support live streaming
- Investigation of internet connection challenges
- Solved internet bandwidth issue to support live streaming (temporary solution)
- Training staff and volunteers on the use of the livestream systems
- Established a team to support creation of media used in services

Respectfully Submitted by Dave Melton and John Noonan

## **Usher Report 2020**

Due to the pandemic, the role of ushers changed during virtual services. Ushers became the people who helped greet newcomers and guests and greet and acknowledge returning worshippers in the Facebook comment section throughout the service. Rosa Holdredge and Michael Richards were joined by Bonnie and David Warburton every Sunday to carry out this function. Fran Cantella, Desiree Spencer-Walters, Kathy Gonzales, Cathy Gero, Malcolm Blue, Nancy Klein, Michael Branda, Lella Dvorak, Marv Aardahl, Kimberlee Bridgeford, Shari Schlaman, Joe Merkens, Flo Krejci, Ogo Okoye-Johnson, and Cindy Swasigood were but a few of those who frequented the Facebook feed and assisted by added welcoming comments and commentary as well.

When outdoor in-person services were added in fall as an alternative form of worship, Rev. Christopher asked for volunteers to help with this new mode of worship. This form of worship necessitated special safety protocols such as temperature checks, social distancing protocols, and limited movement throughout the service. Michael Richards greeted incoming worshippers, checked temperatures, and provided continuity for this worship experience with the able assistance of Steve Plote who helped to coordinate and train new usher volunteers. Michael was ably assisted during the services by volunteers Linda Weifenbach, Gail Blair, Julie Witter, Steve Plote, and Trish Foley.

Special thanks to all those listed above and to those not listed but who helped with ushering and greeting in any capacity. They helped to make the St. Stephen's community a more welcoming one. Their ability to be creative, engaging, and flexible in this era of change in worship format is greatly appreciated. Their ministry helped parishioners more fully engage and experience a greater sense of warmth and community.

Submitted by  
Rosa Holdredge, Head Usher

## **2020 Worship Leaders Annual Report**

Vestry: Steve Plote

This past year we were mostly virtual for worship, but we had a strong team of readers for the streaming services as well as for the in-person outdoor services in the Fall. Carolyn Randall does the recordings of each speaker over Zoom which are uploaded to the vMIX application to be streamed at the following Sunday service. For special services or special readings Reverend Christopher will do the recordings in the Sanctuary. I have to say it is great to be able to stand behind the Lectern and speak in the sanctuary while being recorded.

We are blessed with a lot of readers, and we attempt to schedule them at least 3-4 weeks between each subsequent reading so no one person feels overworked or burdened by this ministry. There are 16 dedicated readers for streaming and 5 for the outdoor in-person service. I want to thank all of them for their service to the St Stephen's community. It is an honor to work with you all.

If anyone has any questions or want to become a part of this ministry and read an old testament lesson, new testament lesson or Psalm for the streaming service and future in-person outdoor service in 2021; please contact me at [seplote@aol.com](mailto:seplote@aol.com) or 214-502-6201 cell or 661-476-5225.

## **Youth Engaged at St. Stephens (Y.E.S.S.)**

Y.E.S.S. was led by the trio of Rev. Christopher, Sheri Flay, and Caroline Morgan and as we looked back on this year it was hard to remember youth group before Zoom. However, we had some very meaningful experiences before the pandemic started. In February, our Y.E.S.S. members explored "Prayer" over four weeks. The four weeks consisted of: The Power of Prayer; Learning to Pray; Unanswered Prayers; and Recognizing God's Voice. Our time together always begins with a game: Hide and Seek in the sanctuary was a huge favorite and heading into Lent Eleanor suggested Sardines in a Can and won the day with this fun game!

The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was a great success. The tables had a festive Mardi Gras theme with green, gold, and purple beads. Youth group members and their siblings manned the pancake griddles in Spurling Hall while others were busy in the kitchen scrambling eggs and cooking the bacon and sausage. The guests arrived hungry and left with a full belly.

As we entered the wilderness of Lent, it felt like we hardly skipped a beat when the stay-at-home order began. Rev. Christopher had Y.E.S.S. up and running on Zoom in no time. Since March we have had between 8-15 youth meet each Sunday for study and discussion and we added a game night on Wednesdays for fellowship.

After Easter we continued exploring our faith journeys by listening for God's voice in pop music – each Y.E.S.S. member was asked to play a song in which they felt they heard God speaking to them. During the summer when protests and riots were happening the youth wanted to talk about what was happening. This led us to read the book "Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You" as a group and made for great discussion at our Sunday meetings in September. As we continued through the Fall, we kept our lessons focused on the seasons. Around Halloween we talked about fear, and during November we talked about "Gratitude," "Giving," "Appreciation" and "Thanksgiving."

For Advent, the leaders offered up a three-part lesson called "The Arrival." The topics covered during this time were: Traditions and Predictions Surrounding the Coming of Christ; The Holy Family; and Trusting God.

For fun and games during this time Rev. Christopher hosted a "Tacky Stocking Festival" on Zoom for both Y.E.S.S. and Sunday School participants. Julia Nelson prepared 48 stocking kits that were delivered to the participants. We decorated our stockings at home, answered trivia questions, ate snacks and drank hot cocoa. Prizes were awarded for the best stockings and this Zoom party was a great way to head into the Christmas break.

Our youth continued to participate in Sunday service by being readers or providing music for the service. All in all, it was a great year for St. Stephen's Youth!

Respectfully submitted,

Sheri Flay  
Caroline Morgan  
Rev. Christopher