



I BRING GOOD NEWS TO YOU - WONDERFUL,
JOYOUS NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE -*Luke 2:10*

Newsletter December, 2020

Word From Your Priest in Charge

Dear Friends,

Advent is that time of hope and expectation. No doubt, we have all been waiting for this liturgical Season so that we might remember to cling to hope during these difficult months we have had to endure. With hope, comes gratitude; gratitude for all that we have and for those loved ones in our lives. So may we all approach Christmas with hope and gratitude.

I realize that we are all eager to come back together, and my hope is that this will happen sooner than later. In the meantime, I truly believe that these challenging months have their blessings as well. The good that has come from this pandemic, has been the gift of spending additional time with our loved ones. The world stopped and so did our routines. Even still, we are learning new things about each other, ourselves, and what it means to be *Church* outside of the *church building*. Because of the pandemic, we have been forced to find new ways to pray and worship, schedule meetings and even have social time together – all done virtually.

During the remaining time of Advent and as we move into Christmas, I pray you will cling to hope with all your might. I pray that we will all keep each other in prayer and that even as we are distanced, we may still remain close.

Doug and I, along with Sweet Pea and Charlie, wish you all a very Merry Christmas. Feliz Navidad! Please stay safe and take care of each other.

Peace and Goodness,
The Rev'd Gregory Perez

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING CHRISTMAS EVE



I have decided to permit an in-person worship service for Christmas Eve at 6 PM. Here are the guidelines that must be observed by those wishing to attend:

1. **ONLY 20 individuals** will be allowed into the church; **I URGE those individuals with an underlying health condition NOT to attend.**
2. **ALL** individuals present **MUST** sign a waiver (will be provided at the door) and must **RSVP** to either ***ststephens@ststephenslynn.org*** or ***gperez@ststephenslynn.org*** or by calling the church office: **781-599-4220 NO LATER than December 22, 2020.**
3. Those attending must be at the church 15 minutes prior to the service.
4. **ALL INDIVIDUALS MUST WEAR A MASK.**
5. There will be **NO signing** by the congregation.
6. The exchange of peace will not be permitted, unless you are members of the same family.
7. Communion will be brought to you by the presider; only bread will be distributed.
8. **ALL will enter** through the front doors of the church and **exit through** the Anderson Door; An usher will escort you to the place where you will sit.
9. **ALL** will be seated 10 feet from each other (Does not pertain to members of the same household).

If you are currently feeling ill or have tested positive for COVID or have been in the company of someone who tested positive, please do not attend.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR PLEDGE

Pledge Pay Up Sunday Has Not Been Cancelled!

By the grace of God, and thanks to everyone of our pledging member's we have received over \$112,000 in pledge income this year. We need your help to meet our 2020 pledge goal of \$130,000!

Pledge income makes up the single largest source of income for St. Stephen's Memorial Episcopal Church. We rely on this continued support to have an impact here in the City of Lynn. Thank you for all that you have given in 2020! If you still have an outstanding balance – please take a moment to complete your pledge. Please check online through Realm to see your balance or check out the list below. Donations are listed through December 6, 2020. We are eagerly looking forward to 2021, but you can help us end 2020 in the black by fulfilling your pledge today.

Pay your pledge electronically today through the Church website and put your donation right to work! If you prefer to pay by check, please feel free to mail your payment to the Parish Office.

Please email Virginia Fuller at treasurer@ststephenslynn.org with any questions or if you want to know your pledge balance. **Also, if you haven't made your pledge for 2021, we welcome your continued commitment. Please send in your pledge card as soon as you can!**

Giving Number	Pledge Balance
5	1540
12	905
16	400
19	1000
20	120
24	480
27	470
28	180

30	141
31	425
39	1670
40	225
43	223
45	1380
46	213.3
47	237
54	220
56	120
57	780
63	115
65	875
67	666
69	566
70	1162
71	55
72	55

HELP SUPPORT ECCO

Gift the Gift of Cleanliness and Justice

Does your home need a deep clean after all these months? This holiday season, give the gift of cleanliness, calm, and justice to yourself and your loved ones! How? As part of our congregation’s work with the ECCO ([Essex County Community Organization](#)), we are supporting the growth of Shine Together, an immigrant-owned cleaning cooperative. We encourage you to:

1. [Hire Shine Together](#),
2. Purchase [gift certificates](#) for their environmentally-friendly cleaning services for family and friends,
3. Spread the word about this important venture using [this sample email for family and friends](#).

Your dollars will not only buy you excellent, COVID-safe and environmentally-friendly cleaning services at affordable prices, but also creates an opportunity to generate long-term wealth for ECCO communities of color!

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

Thank you to the Vestry for their service to St. Stephen's. Thank you to the Wardens, who continue to maintain the buildings and grounds.

Thank you to ALL MINISTRIES of St. Stephen's that have been serving the people of God during this pandemic.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2020 - PRESIDING BISHOP MICHAEL CURRY

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing.

Perhaps like me, you've sung this hymn for years – in church, at home with your family, gathered with friends and neighbors. Perhaps you've sung it to yourself – in your car, on a walk, or quietly in the dark of night.

Joy to the world!

While we may not feel joyful this year – as the pandemic of disease continues to bring sickness and death, when fear and mistrust – a darkness – threatens to overcome the light – we, as followers of Jesus Christ must bear joy to this aching world. We must shine light into the darkness. *Joy to the world!*

Like much in our lives, proclaiming joy is difficult work – also *good and essential* work – especially now. Though we mourn that which is lost in our lives, our families, and our communities – *Joy to the world!*

While we strive to pull up the twisted and thorny vines of hatred and bigotry and anger – *Joy to the world!*

Through streaming tears and gritted teeth – *Joy to the world!* – because God is breaking into our lives and into this world anew.

While this is a strange year, the ministry He gives us remains the same. We will prepare him room in our hearts by taking on the ministry Jesus demands of us: feed

those who are hungry; welcome the stranger; clothe those who are naked; heal those who are sick; visit the prisoner. Love God. Love your neighbor. Sing joy into this old world. Prepare him room.

St. Luke writes of the first Christmas, “[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” There, in the simplest bed, in the cool of the night, in a trough, in bands of cloth, lies the One for whom no room was made. And yet strangely, there lies the One whom not even the universe can contain.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come. In your hearts, in your homes, in your lives, prepare him room.

God love you; God bless you; and may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church**