



The Servant

St. Stephen's Parish Newsletter

Vol. 16, No. 1 Christmas, 2007

even today
we can still see
to kneel to a child.

Season be yours throughout this
Christmastide.

Peace
Fr. Lee †

May the blessings of this Holy

Youth Group

St. Stephen's Youth Group, SWAPS – Scripture, Worship, Amusement, Prayer, Service, is now meeting every Sunday at 12 noon, taking a break on December 30 and January 6.

Change in Service Times Beginning January 6, 2008

Beginning January 6, 2008, The Feast of the Epiphany, we will move our main service to 11 a.m.

Sunday School and Adult Education will go from 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

There will be an early short, said service at 8 a.m.

San Esteban will continue to meet at 9 a.m. on Sunday and 5:30 p.m. on Saturday.

WoW!

We have a very full and varied series of services and programs for WoW! through the end of the year. Here is a summary of our upcoming events:

Dec. 19 – Angel Tree Party. We will host 20 children and their caregivers for our Annual Angel Tree Party. These are children of parents incarcerated at the State Prison. (See related article about how to participate in buying gifts for these children.) We will open gifts, have a dinner together and worship.

For many people this was the highlight of WOW last year, an “early Christmas” as many people noted in sharing this time and gifts with these children.

Dec. 26 – The Feast of St. Stephen. Our Patronal Feast comes on Wednesday this year. Join us for a festive Holy Eucharist and special program for our Feast Day as a parish.

Stewardship 2008

We are wrapping up our Stewardship campaign for the coming year. If you have not made a pledge as yet, please send your pledge card to the church or put it in the offering plate. We have yet to meet our budgeted amount for pledges for 2008. Your pledge is very important to our ongoing ministries. Thank you.

Rector's Reflections

This continues to be a very rich time for me and I give thanks for our common ministries at St. Stephen's. I especially thank all those who helped make my 15th anniversary celebration a very wonderful evening. Our offering that night was \$300 for St. Andrew's Seminary in Mexico City. Thank you for your generosity.

I am looking forward to our celebration of Christmas. Please note our schedule for Christmastide. Please also note our revised meeting times beginning on January 6, 2008.

As we enter this Christmastide, I find the words of Ann Weems to be especially moving.

“The World Still Knows”

*The night is still dark
and a procession of Herods
still terrorize the earth,
killing the children to stay
in power.*

*The world still knows its Herods,
but it also still knows men
and women
who pack their dreams
safely in their hearts
and set off toward Bethlehem,
faithful against all odds,
undeterred by fatigue or
rejection,
to kneel to a child.*

*And the world still knows those
persons
wise enough
to follow a star,
those who do not consider
themselves too intelligent
too powerful
too wealthy
to kneel to a child.*

*And the world still knows those
hearts so humble
that they're ready
to hear the word of a song
and to leave what they
have, to go
to kneel to a child.*

*The night is still dark,
but by the light of the star,*

A Change in our Sunday Readings Began on First Advent, Dec. 2, 2007

On Dec. 2, the First Sunday of Advent and beginning of the church's liturgical year, we began using the "Revised Common Lectionary" (RCL) for our Sunday worship. The following article is about using the RCL. This is the last of three articles about the RCL written by The Rev'd Dr. Ruth Meyers, academic dean and professor of liturgics at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois and member of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music for the Episcopal Church.

Articles - Using the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) - Dr. Ruth Meyers (concluding article)

Are there other distinctive features of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)?

A number of critiques of the 1983 Common Lectionary and the Prayer Book concerned the place of women in the appointed readings. One frequently cited example is the story of the woman who anoints Jesus. Matthew and Mark place this passage just before the Last Supper, and at the conclusion of this account, Jesus tells the disciples, "What she has done will be told in remembrance of her." Yet the only place this appears in the Prayer Book is as an alternative gospel for Monday in Holy Week. The RCL extends the Passion Gospel on Palm Sunday in Year B (the year of Mark) to begin at Mark 14:1, placing this story as the first event in the passion narrative and so highlighting Jesus' explanation that the woman anoints his body as a preparation for his burial.

Elsewhere, lengthening an appointed gospel introduces additional women to the story of Jesus. For example, Mark's account of the healing of Jairus' daughter is interrupted by the story of the woman with a hemorrhage who touches the edge of Jesus' cloak. While the Prayer Book omits this part of the story, the RCL includes it.

Many other stories of women in salvation history appear in the sweeping narratives of the optional semi-continuous reading of Genesis and Exodus appointed during the season after Pentecost in Year A. The Common Lectionary focused on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The RCL adds passages that introduce Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel, as well as the story of the midwives Shiphrah and Puah in the first chapter of Exodus.

Another response to the 1983 Common Lectionary was the observation that passages from scripture can be misunderstood because of the differences in cultural and religious context between the ancient world of scripture and of modern times. Recognizing that Christians have at times interpreted

scripture in ways that support anti-Semitism, the task force that developed the RCL looked carefully at each selection from this perspective. Many of the changes in the appointed epistles are the result of efforts to select readings with more balanced treatment of discussions of the Jewish law.

Does the RCL include propers for Holy Days?

Only a few Holy Days are included in the RCL: Holy Name (January 1), Presentation (February 2), Annunciation (March 25), and Visitation (May 31). The RCL also includes Holy Cross Day, but the Episcopal Church has chosen to retain the Prayer Book propers for that feast.

The RCL appoints different readings in each lectionary year for Thanksgiving and All Saints (November 1). Over the course of three years, worshipers will hear a wider selection of scripture, enriching their understanding of these feasts. For example, on Thanksgiving Day, the Prayer Book appoints Matthew 6:25-33, Jesus' promise in the Sermon on the Mount that God will feed and clothe us. The RCL assigns this passage to Year B and introduces Luke's story of the one thankful leper (Luke 17:11-19) in year A, and a portion of the bread of life discourse (John 6:25-35) in year C.

For other Holy Days, as well as the Common of Saints (Prayer Book, pp 925-927) and Various Occasions (Prayer Book, pp. 927-931), the RCL makes no provision. The current Prayer Book propers will continue to be used for these occasions.



Points to Ponder

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming, from tender spring hath sprung! Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung. It came, a blossom bright, amid the snows of winter, when half spent was the night.	Isaiah 'twas who foretold it, the Rose I have in mind, with Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind. To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior, when half spent was the night.
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– German, 15th Cent. tr. Theodore Baker (1851-1934) Hymn 81

Adult Sunday School

Martin Willcocks' 2008 adult video-based program will include the History of the Anglican Church and the Episcopal Church, more about the Secret Files of the Inquisition, and of course "Peter and Paul", the miniseries starring Antony Hopkins.

Articles - Greetings from the cloister walk! by Susan Fischer

To my family and friends at St. Stephen's:

Several months of study and formation have passed. We continue to meet monthly at the home of Mary June Nestler. We look forward to January when we will be housed for the weekend at the new Diocesan Center downtown. I hope I get the room with the quilt provided by your crafty hands and blessed talents!

Our spiritual formation readings have been on the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. In a world that continues to pull us into the busy-ness, especially this holiday season, I am continually reminded of one reading by Joyce Huggett about the attitude of mind and heart rather than just activity. It is always of importance for me to 'tune into his presence; and in the quietness, aware of his presence, open our hearts to receive his love. In our prayers that can be wordless contemplation, we are fed by a deep desire for God, and 'instead of seeking God, we are found by him'. Our readings now have moved into outward disciplines - simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. I'll keep you posted!

Our Old Testament study continues to amaze me as I deepen my knowledge of factors that inform our study of the text: archaeology, linguistics, surrounding cultures, origins and where they come from, points of view, geography, social and cultural impacts. Reading the Old Testament always brings something new!

Part of our study in liturgy was to attend a service at the Greek Orthodox Church. I enjoyed learning more about 4th Century Byzantine liturgy that is part of our own prayer book – such as the Prayer of St. Chrysostom used in Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

Thank you for your continued prayers and presence while I move on my journey.

May the waiting time of this season be an opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds as we enjoy the mystery of this season we call Advent.

- Susan Fischer, Postulant

Join us after the Christmas Services

Fellowship and refreshments in the Parish Hall will follow each of the services on Christmas Eve. There will be special foods to come and enjoy. San Esteban is planning to have a celebratory dinner after their 6 p.m. service.

Special Events

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2007

- 6:00 p.m. Family Service Holy Eucharist with Sunday School Program
- 8:00 p.m. Buena Noche San Esteban Service in Spanish
- 10:30 p.m. Christmas Carols
- 11:00 p.m. Christ Mass Festive Holy Eucharist. The Rev'd. W. Lee Shaw preaching. (Incense will be used.)

Christmas Day, December 25, 2007

No Services

Feast of St. Stephen, December 26, 2007

WoW! 6 p.m. Dinner, 7 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 30, 2007

10:30 a.m. A Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols with Holy Eucharist

2008 Service Times for St. Stephen's/San Esteban

Sunday (From January 6, 2008)

- 8 a.m. Holy Eucharist, short said service
- 9 a.m. San Esteban Spanish Service
- 10 a.m. Sunday School and Adult Education
- 11 a.m. Holy Eucharist, hymns and choir

Tuesday

- 7 a.m. Morning Prayer

Wednesday

- Worship on Wednesday
- 6 p.m. Dinner
- 7 p.m. Holy Eucharist
- 7:30 p.m. Program

Thursday

- 7 a.m. Morning Prayer

Saturday

- 5:30 p.m. San Esteban Spanish Service

Calendar

2008 Service Times for St. Stephen's/San Esteban

8:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist: short, said service
9:00 a.m.	San Esteban - Santa Misa
10:00 a.m.	Sunday School for adults and children
10:00 a.m.	San Esteban - Coffee Hour
11:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist Rite II
12:00 noon	Fellowship Hour – Coffee, Refreshments
3:00 p.m.	Bible Study with Pat Pitcher (resumes January 13)

WEEKDAYS

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS

7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

7:30 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship

WEDNESDAYS: Worship on Wednesday (WoW!)

6:00 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. Midweek Holy Eucharist

7:30 p.m. Program

FRIDAYS:

8:30 p.m. Granger A.A. Group

SATURDAYS:

5:30 p.m. Santa Misa - Rite II

6:30 p.m. San Esteban Fellowship Hour

MONTHLY

2nd. Tuesday Hymn Selection Meeting

3rd. Tuesday Vestry Meetings

SPECIAL DATES

Dec. 19	6:00 p.m.	Angel Tree Party
Dec. 23	11:30 a.m.	Greening of the Church after 4 Advent Services
Dec. 24	6:00 p.m.	Family Christmas Eve Service
Dec. 24	7:00 p.m.	Fellowship & Refreshments
Dec. 24	8:00 p.m.	Buena Noche Spanish Christmas Service
Dec. 24	9:00 p.m.	San Esteban celebration/dinner
Dec. 24	10:30 p.m.	Christmas Carols
Dec. 24	11:00 p.m.	Christ Mass Festival Holy Eucharist
Dec. 26		WoW! Celebrates Feast of St, Stephen (6 p.m.)
Dec. 30	10:30 a.m.	Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols

Deadline for the next “Servant” is Monday, January 14, 2008.

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