



RECTOR'S CORNER

Part 1:

What Do We Do with the Bible?

Editor's Note:

Rev. Sandy is offering a three part series with excerpts from Richard Rhor's daily blog.

"Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who

lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."
- Collect for the Day #28, p. 236 BCP

As Episcopalians we hold that all things necessary for salvation are contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We share that faith perspective with other Christian denominations throughout the world. As Episcopalians we also hold that God's self revelation must not be limited to any one particular document, text, translation, interpretation, or denominational bias. God's gifted, necessary and sufficient revelation knows no boundaries, and we may behold the glory of God as it also speaks and peaks through nature, art, music, literature, cuisine, sport, crafts, gardening, etc. Nothing is void of God's mysterious yet ever present and powerfully creative presence.

This and the next two newsletter editions will contain articles written by Fr. Richard Rhor on the possibilities and power inherent in engaging Holy Scripture in an open and welcoming way. In conversation with human reason, tradition, and shared experience, we have much to learn in our small STORY groups. Certainly there is a plethora of accessible information at the literal level of any story, but our faith testimonies (stories, psalms, fables, parables, letters, genealogies, proverbs, theophanies, epistles, dreams, prophesies, myths, etc.) as multivalent texts, invite participation and encounter at ever deeper and deeper levels of knowledge, experience, emotion, and meaning. Delving the depths of the Bible is a life long journey. Each time we open to the Word of God we are in a position to uncover and/or discover something new. This can be unsettling at times (challenging our preconceived notions) and also salvific (healing), in that encounters with the Holy One invite transformation and growth. There is no "end" to God's depth of love for us, nor end to God's desire to reveal more and more of that love with every visitation. I pray that these essays will help all of us recognize the richness and power of the STORY and each of its 31 chapters. With consent, our faith-filled small group studies (along with our private reflections) may bring us into ever deeper and deeper levels of intimacy and union with the person of Jesus, the Christ of our faith who is the source of the Holy Bible and whose presence permeates all.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." - John 1:3 NIV

Blessings,
Sandy +

What Do We Do with the Bible?

For all its inspiration, for all the lives it has changed, the Bible is undeniably problematic. Put in the hands of egocentric, unloving, or power-hungry people or those who have never learned how to read spiritually inspired literature, it is almost always a disaster. History has demonstrated this, century after century, so this is not an unwarranted, disrespectful, or biased conclusion. The burning of heretics, the Crusades, slavery, apartheid, homophobia, and the genocide and oppression of native peoples were all justified through the selective use of Scripture quotes.

So, what are we supposed to do with the Bible? We'll unpack what Jesus did with the Hebrew Scriptures-the only Bible he knew.

My general approach is to *change the seer and not to change the text*. Only *transformed* people can be entrusted with inspired writings. They can operate in a symbiotic ("shared life") relationship with words and are unlikely to use the Bible to exclude and shame others or as a rationale for their bad behavior.

The Christian's goal is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind into the mind of Christ (see Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:16; and Philippians 2:5). That is why I try to read the Bible the way Jesus did, following Jesus' *hermeneutic* (a method of interpreting sacred texts). Just as we are trying to do with this year's Daily Meditations, Jesus was a master of winnowing the chaff from the grain (see Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17) and "bringing out of the storeroom new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52).

The Bible is an anthology of many books. It is a record of *people's experiences of God's self-revelation*. It is an account of our very human experience of the divine intrusion into history. The book did not fall from heaven in a pretty package. It was written by people trying to listen to God. I believe that the Spirit was guiding the listening and writing process. We must also know that humans always see "through a glass darkly...and all knowledge is imperfect" (1 Corinthians 13:12). *Prayer and patience surrounding such human words will keep us humble and searching for the true Living Word, the person of Jesus*, which is how the Spirit best teaches (1 Corinthians 2:10, 13)-through living exemplars. This is surely what it means to know "contemplatively."

When history finally gets to the Risen Jesus, there is nothing to be afraid of in God. Jesus' very breath is identified with forgiveness and the divine *Shalom* (see John 20:20-23). If the Risen Jesus is the full and trustworthy unveiling of the nature of God, then we live in a safe and love-filled universe. It is not that God has changed, or that the Hebrew God is a different God than the God of Jesus; it is that we are growing up as we move through the text and deepen our experience. Stay with the Bible and with your inner life with God and your capacity for God will increase.

Just as the Bible takes us through many stages of consciousness and history, it takes us individually a long time to move beyond our need to be dualistic, judgmental, accusatory, fearful, blaming, egocentric, and earning--and to see as Jesus sees. The Bible itself is a "text in travail," according to Rene Girard's fine insight. It mirrors and charts our own human travail. It offers both mature and immature responses to almost everything. In time, you will almost naturally recognize the difference between the text moving forward toward the mercy, humility, and inclusivity of Jesus and when the text is regressing into arrogance, exclusion, and legalism.

SENIOR WARDEN NEWS:

Patrick Cox, Ph.D.

As we open 2019, we look forward to a new year and our annual meeting on Sunday, January 27, 2019. We will be providing reports and news about our church and reflect on the many accomplishments we have achieved in the past year. More information on the meeting is included in this newsletter. The SSEC YOUTH will be hosting a Taco Bar Supreme Luncheon during the Annual Parish Meeting. Proceeds go toward their 2019 mission trips. We encourage all members to attend this very important St. Stephen's annual meeting.



STEWARDSHIP

We are pleased with the participation in our Stewardship campaign for this year and

many thanks to John Stark and Ken Ellis who headed the campaign and the many volunteers who devoted time to these efforts. We very much appreciate all of our members who provide their time, money, talents, and inspiration to all of the activities throughout the year at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and School. We are in the process of planning our 2019 budget based upon pledges.

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

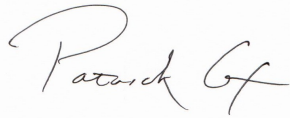
Here is a summary of some of the accomplishments we have recently made on our property. All of these are very important to our facilities and grounds. We have completed major repairs. We are grateful to our Vestry Facilities Committee members: David Reynolds, Andrew Wallendorf, and Ann Robertson. With their supervision, we have completed the following:

- the courtyard porch roof with a metal roof that provides its longevity
- fascia to better support the bottom row of tiles
- posts with new paint to both weatherize and add beauty to the walkways
- staining the Log Cabin where our children meet for Sunday School, giving it a welcoming fresh coat of paint on the porch for all to enjoy
- repairing church window sashes to securely hold the glass
- installing handicap bars in all bathrooms for the safety and comfort of all
- making our buildings more accessible by adding a handicap entrance into McArthur Hall to make it easier to come inside for all our fellowship gatherings and ministerial meetings.

EP PERMIT CASE

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and School have joined with Hays County, TESP, and other nearby landowners to contest the EP groundwater permit from the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District. We participated in the first meeting with protesting parties on the EP groundwater permit on January 9, 2019 at the State Office of Administrative Hearings, SOAH. Judges Howard Seitzman and Rebecca Smith will be mediators for all subsequent sessions. Following mediation, SOAH Judge Summerhays scheduled the hearing for September 19-27, 2019. More information will be provided as this case proceeds.

Blessings and Peace,



FROM YOUR TREASURER:

Joe Blanford

YEAR-END WRAP

The Finance Committee, Parish Administrator, and I are busy pulling together the 2019 Budget for presentation at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 27, and I wanted to take a moment to give you a "heads up" on a couple of fronts:



- The 2019 pledge drive is coming to a close, and I can report that we are at \$505,000 in pledges with 67% of the parish families participating. As I tweak the budget, a few more pledges are always appreciated. That said, "A Big **THANK YOU to everyone** for their generosity!"
- While planning for the coming year, I note that we are in need of someone to underwrite credit card fees for those using credit cards for their pledges. Our 2018 donor graciously signed on for one year and picked up approximately \$1,500 in fees over the last year. Anyone out there interested in being our donor for 2019? Or, would you be willing to add the credit card fee for your payment to your pledge amount?

That's it. Happy New Year, and I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting!

Blessings,

Joe



Sunday, January 27, 2019
(after 10:30 a.m. service)
McArthur Hall

Mark your calendars now to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 27, 2019. We will all make our way over to McArthur Hall immediately following the 10:30 a.m. Family Celebration service. If you regularly attend the 8:00 a.m. Sunday service, please DO return for the Annual Parish Meeting. The SSEC YOUTH will be hosting a Taco Bar Supreme Luncheon during the Annual Parish Meeting. Proceeds go toward their 2019 mission trips.

At the meeting we will:

- Review 2018 from the Rector, Sr. Warden, Jr. Warden, Finance/Treasurer, and SSES
- Recognize outgoing Vestry wardens and members
- Introduce the new Vestry slate

St. Stephen's will also be satisfying that sweet tooth of yours with a celebratory cake. Church statements will be e-mailed rather than handed out at the Annual Parish Meeting. Please make certain that your most current e-mail address is on file with the church office.

For more information, call the church office, 512-847-9956.



DOK Meeting
Sunday, January 20, 2019 @ 12:00 noon
Meeting Room #1

For His Sake, the Daughters of the King will gather for prayer and discernment on Sunday, January 20, 12 noon, in Meeting Room #1. We welcome you to be with us.

For more information, contact: Dale Cegielski, doilydo@yahoo.com.

TED Talkers
Wednesday, January 23, 2019 @ 12:00 noon
McArthur Hall

Please join us for TED Talkers on Wednesday, January 23, at 12 noon. We will be watching "Seeing Sound: How Synesthesia Can Change Our Thinking" explained by Annie Dickinson, TEDxYouth@Lancaster.

TED Talkers is held twice a month on the second and fourth Wednesday. We watch a pre-selected TED Talk video together at 12 noon, eat our brown bag lunch while watching the video, and enjoy a facilitated discussion of the TED Talk. Coffee and water are provided. It all wraps up by 1:00 p.m.

TED talks are videos created to provide information from a variety of people

knowledgeable on an immense number of topics; they provide information but also invite conversation. Each is about 15 minutes long. If you are curious, visit www.ted.com and select and watch a topic of interest to you: science, ecology, history, you name it!

TED Talkers is open to the general public, and you are encouraged to bring a friend, neighbor, and join in our sure-to-be lively, mind-stimulating discussions. We'll have a warm cup of coffee waiting and there's always room for one more.

TED TALKERS
WINTER 2019 SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 13, 2019

FEBRUARY 27, 2019

For more information, contact: Jo Bourke, jobourke33@gmail.com, 512-468-1267.

Deer Creek Eucharist

Wednesday, January 23, 2019 @ 3:00 p.m.

OFFSITE: Deer Creek Wimberley, 555 RR 3237, Wimberley



On Wednesday, January 23, 3:00 p.m., St. Stephen's will share a Holy Eucharist service with the residents of Deer Creek as part of the Community of Hope's regular 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month ministry. All are welcome.

Deer Creek Wimberley is located at: 555 RR 3237, Wimberley, TX 78676.

For more information, contact: Sharon East, sharoneast@verizon.net.



FAMILY CELEBRATION SERVICE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 2019

10:30 a.m.

St. Stephen's Church

For Adults, Teens, Children, Everyone!

FAMILY CELEBRATION SUNDAY services are held at St. Stephen's Church on the last Sunday of the month during the school year, excluding December. Children participate fully and the sermon follows THE STORY schedule and is adapted for all ages.

This month is the story of God's Messengers!

Free Child care is available for infants & toddlers.

St. Stephen's MelodyMakers lead music & worship.

YOUTH holding Taco Fundraiser at Parish Meeting.

The St. Stephen's students and families are especially invited to join us on January 27, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. in the church sanctuary.



Taco Bar Supreme Fundraiser

Sunday, January 27, 2019, after 10:30 AM Service

McArthur Hall



The SSEC Youth will host a Taco Bar Supreme Luncheon during the Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 27, 2019, after the 10:30 AM Service. Proceeds go toward their 2019 mission trips. They invite you to save your appetite and come fill up your plate!

For more information or to RSVP, contact: Alli Regonini, alliregonini@gmail.com, or call her at 361-585-9671.



**Bring Donations
TODAY
through
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3
Chapel or Church Narthex**

To fight hunger and poverty in our own Wimberley Valley, SSEC and SSES will be collecting food for this year's Souper Bowl of Caring. You will find the list of the 10 most needed items attached to grocery bags in the chapel and church narthexes. Simply take a bag, fill it, and return it to a narthex *by Sunday, February 3rd*.

100% of our donation goes directly to Crisis Bread Basket.

St. Stephen's has been a generous participant in the past! Let's continue this wonderful tradition by filling those bags with food.

For more information, contact: Mary McIntosh, Mary.mcintosh@att.net

- HEALTHY CEREAL
- PEANUT BUTTER
- JELLY
- TUNA (CANNED MEAT)
- CHILI

- CANNED MEATS
- CANNED MILK
- SOUP
- CANNED FRUITS
- CANNED PASTA



ST. STEPHEN'S
Episcopal School
Wimberley, Texas • Founded 1989

SSES First Friday February Event



Friday, February 1, 2019 @ 6:00 p.m., Gym

Head on over to the SSES Family Bingo Night. All ages are welcome. We'll have small door prizes, snacks, and a ton of fun. BYO cups with lids. We'll provide the lemonade and water. *Friends of St. Stephen's welcome!*



Adult Confirmation Classes Begin February

Rev. Sandy invites you to attend the Spring adult confirmation classes to begin, deepen, broaden, or strengthen your understanding of and commitment to Jesus Christ within the Episcopal Church. Upon completion of the study, you may elect to be:

BAPTIZED: welcomed into the household of God and sealed by the Holy Spirit as Christ's forever.

CONFIRMED: by the bishop claiming the baptismal vows now lived out in the Episcopal fellowship.

RECEIVED: as a member of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church within the embrace of the Episcopal Communion at St. Stephen's

REAFFIRM: your commitment of ministry to Christ's people.

All those interested are asked to call the church office, 512-847-9956, or e-mail Rev. Sandy, scmartus@ststeve.org, to register and make arrangements to receive their study materials before the first day of classes.

CLASSES

(Sundays, 12 noon until 1:00 p.m., location TBA depending on class size)

February 10
February 17
March 3
March 10

CONFIRMATION/BAPTISM DAY

March 17, 2019
10:30 a.m.

For those who wish to celebrate their commitment publicly to Christ and his church here at St. Stephen's, Bishop David Reed will be with us on Sunday, March 17, 2019 during the 10:30 a.m. service.

In preparation for Sunday's celebration, candidates and their families will be our guest for dinner with the Bishop and Vestry on Saturday, March 16th. Dinner will be preceded by a lovely Evening Prayer Service held in the Chapel at 5:30 p.m. Following the worship on Sunday, March 17th, we will gather with the entire congregation for cake and coffee.

Any youth who wish to participate are invited to join Youth Pastor Alli Regonini's preparatory classes, which will be held on Sunday nights. Contact Alli, alliregonini@gmail.com, for dates and times.

For more information, call the church office, 512-847-9956, or e-mail Rev. Sandy, scmartus@ststeve.org.

LIFE AT SSEC

Along with the close of 2018, came Rev. Anne Adams-Harris' retirement from preaching. She was recognized by the congregation and Rev. Sandy on December

30, 2018. With the beginning of the new year, we welcomed Hartley Nicole Combs Vest and mother Brittany Paige Vest into the SSEC family during Hartley's baptism.



Free Dances for all of Wimberley

Sunday, February 10, 2019

OFFSITE: Wimberley Community Center

We are all invited to the following schedule of free events showcasing some of our very own local SSEC talented musicians as they perform in the *Big Band Dance/Concerts*. Come on down to hear a great selection of Big Band era dance music as well as a few jazzier tunes. *Beat you there!*

- Sunday, February 10, 2019

In addition to the free dances, the Wimberley Valley Big Band also has a special line-up of paid events, including one on New Year's Eve for you to gather those friends for dancing and laughter. Visit jazzix4u@gmail.com.

For more information, contact: Doug Gillory, fossilridge1@gmail.com.

Community of Hope Ministry

HOPE
LIVES

Do you need someone...

*To listen, without judgment, to what is weighing on your heart?
To recognize your needs and respect your rights to your feelings?
To honor any conversation with complete confidentiality?
To support you as you take steps of change on your journey?
To just walk with you and let you be you.*

Each one of us, at some point in our lives, could use a "companion" to walk with us during the challenges of our journeys. A Community of Hope Lay Chaplain is someone who cares about you, will not promise miracles, will not decide for you what you should do, will not take steps for you, and will not rescue you. He or she will be available to you, support you, pray for you, and assure you that you are God's beloved. Please, if you are walking alone, invite one to join you on your path.

St.
Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Wimberley

MUSTANG ISLAND
Family Camp 2019
TH 7/25 - SUN 7/28

Registration Now Open
Sign Up Today!



TWO WAYS TO REGISTER for Mustang Island Family Camp/SSEC

1. (Now) www.dwtx.org/camps
2. (1/6/19) McArthur Hall during Coffee Hour

TIPS & IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- ☼ Register for session 9 to attend with SSEC families.
- ☼ \$125 deposit required with online & in person registration.
- ☼ COST: (balance must be paid prior to camp session)
Family of 1 (\$395), of 2 (\$535), of 3 (\$700), of 4 (\$860);
families larger than 4: additional child (\$180) &
additional adult (\$270)
infants younger than 24 months at time of session, (\$0)

- ☼ Family-friendly worship
- ☼ Beautifully furnished room & meals
- ☼ Resting under beach umbrellas
- ☼ Buried treasure hunt, campfire
- ☼ Swimming, Fishing, Surfing
- ☼ Building sand chapels, Beach games
- ☼ Biblical-based teaching
- ☼ Closing Eucharist

"It's like heaven with a beachside view."



Newsletter

UPCOMING SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The eNEWS is published on Fridays generally every two weeks and delivered straight to your e-mail's in-box. If you have an e-mail address update, please make sure to send these to the church office.

With more than 20 ministries and groups here at St. Stephen's Church, we've got a lot happening! Help us cover your event by submitting articles, photos, and artwork to: *Communications Manager, [Jackie McFadden](#)*.

UPCOMING DEADLINES:
12 noon Wednesday or earlier

January 30
February 13
February 27



SAVE THE DATES

SUN, Jan 20

Daughters of the King Meeting, 12 noon, Meeting Room #1

SUN, Jan 20

OFFSITE: YOUTH Outing, 5 p.m., EVO

WED, Jan 23

TED Talkers, 12 noon, McArthur Hall

WED, Jan 23

OFFSITE: Deer Creek Eucharist, 3:00 p.m., Deer Creek Wimberley, 555 RR 3237

SUN, JAN 27

Family Celebration Service, 10:30 a.m., Church

SUN, JAN 27

Annual Church-wide Meeting & YOUTH Taco Fundraiser, 11:30 a.m., McArthur Hall

WED, FEB 13

Faithful Families St. Valentines Party, 6:00 p.m., McArthur Hall

Are you on Facebook? St. Stephen's is!

**[Click here to visit our Facebook page](#)
and don't forget to **LIKE** and **SHARE** us!**

Please contact the church office at 512.847.9956, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Fridays 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon, if you have any questions.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)