

# St. Stephen's WITNESS

All Are Welcome!

March 2024

## The Past and the Future

Ten years ago, a well-known Christian author and contemporary theologian named Brian McLaren published an excellent book called *We Make the Road by Walking*. I have several of his previous books and several written since then, but that book is one of my favorites. I bought the book, as you can guess, because the title is absolutely intriguing, *and* happens to be accurate to my experiences over my life. Theories and directions have too often been rather useless because of the very special and unique realities that made my journey just exactly that, *my* journey!

As we built up to the celebration, and then had that great Sunday service marking 70 years for SSOV, I found myself thinking about the title of that book and how true and important the *title* wording is, not just for individuals, but for all who participate in this *church*. It was a genuine pleasure to see the pictures and hear the stories of SSOV since its beginnings, and especially over the construction of the worship center and the wonderful facilities you now have. The service, with all the great music participation, the really excellent address by Bishop Brenda Bos, and the presence of many people from the past and from the other two churches, was just a perfectly wonderful experience. However, though it may not have been an *elephant*, the big question that was palpably present in the room was *what will we be and do from here?* What will we become?

Any honest person is aware that the financial and membership realities at SSOV at this time present some options and possibilities. By the time you read this we will have had our Annual Meeting, and, *organizationally*,

perhaps some decisions and directions may have been decided and adopted. I am writing to describe the way the *future* history will be formed by the collected decisions and faith of each member as we move into whatever lies ahead. The times we are living in are not easy or simple, conscious intentionality and awareness are absolutely the best ways for us to “build the road by walking it”. It definitely is going to require us paying real attention to what God is asking of us each step along the way. The big challenges and issues are actually usually rather simple to decide and choose. The values or principles involved are usually loudly debated or clearly identifiable, and one simply makes a choice that aligns with the values of love, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity that Jesus demonstrated over and over.

So, we do not usually make our mistakes in the big things. Our troubles come from the accumulation of choices and decisions we make in the smaller things we do and say. The times when we may not even have been aware that we *made* a choice, and certainly not a choice that will come back to bite us. It is too easy for our tiny and casual decisions of the minute to add up and drop on us as a heavy statement of the kind of person we have become. The season of Lent we are presently in is really about *exactly* those kinds of things. I am sure there is *nobody* at SSOV who is giving up criminal or overtly harmful behaviors for Lent.

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### The Staff

The Reverend James Fuller  
The Reverend Father  
James Seipel

Office Manger:  
Doretta Rapp

Office Assistant:  
Yvonne St. Andrew

Music Coordinator:  
Alexandra Caselli

Communications Coordinator:  
Thomas Rapp

Our purpose it to glorify God by  
**welcoming** people in His love,  
**encouraging** commitment to Jesus  
and **equipping** in the Spirit, to grow  
and to serve in the world.

### Join us on Sundays

Virtual Worship: Sundays  
YouTube.com 1 pm (St Stephens  
of the Valley Lutheran Church)

In-Person Worship:  
9:30 am

### Let's stay in touch!

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

 [/ststephenspalmdale](https://www.facebook.com/ststephenspalmdale)

## Work Day!



Many hands make light work and we need your hands! We will gather at 9 am on Saturday, March 23rd to do what needs to be done to get our campus ready for Holy Week. ANY time you can give will be greatly appreciated.

## Financials

# \$8,052 Overage

## Ministry Giving

Jan. Giving: \$24,222

Jan. Expenses: \$16,170

# \$8,052 Overage

## Ministry Year to Date

Giving: \$24,222

Expenses: \$16,170

# \$6 Overage

## Mortgage Income Received

Jan. Giving: \$1,456

Jan. Expenses: \$1,450

## February Council Highlights

- Council approved the Fireworks Booth Fundraiser with HM McKinsey and Barbara Counts as co-chairs.
- The Lent and Easter offerings have been designated for Scholarship Fund.
- The Raise Right Fundraiser has been cancelled due to cumbersome processing requirements.

## Thank You!

... to Phil Counts, Hunter Harsh, Jeff Pichan and Chris Skinner for all your hard work getting the first of two bathrooms back in working order in Faith Hall. If you haven't seen their fantastic work, walk on over there after worship! ... to EVERYONE who had ANYTHING to do with the 70th Anniversary celebration on Sunday, February 11th. It was an awesome day! Many thanks to Bishop Brenda Bos for her uplifting and hopeful message that day.

## Lenten thoughts about wealth

Instead of the superficial "How's it going?" a wise colleague asks friends, "How is your soul?"

The question requires effort. To answer it I must plunge deep inside -- below the constantly churning waters of everyday joys, hopes, ambitions, desires, anxieties and disappointments. These are so strong, especially our desires and ambitions, that if we are not careful they can absorb all our time and energy.

Jesus repeatedly warns us not to let our desires and our worries engulf us, keeping us from paying attention to the soul. Our soul is where we connect with God, the source of our greatest strength and truest identity. Without attention, our soul can dry up like a plant without water. As with all the treasures God has given us, we must be stewards of our souls.

The mystics of old and modern prophets (such as Richard Rohr, Marjorie Thompson or Howard Thurman) teach us to employ prayer, holy silence, and other spiritual disciplines to tend our souls and keep worldly worries and desires from overwhelming us.

This month, begin a daily practice of caring for your soul. You might begin with five minutes of spoken prayer followed by five minutes of silence. Or reflect deeply on a Scripture passage Or try prayerful yoga. (Your pastor might be able to give you some resources or ideas.)

With a little practice and attention, you can become stronger, more centered and more spiritually resilient.

How is your soul?

*-Rob Blezard*

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April 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	26 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts	27 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 10:30 AM WELCA @ LCM 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	28 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:30 PM Women's Book Study 7:00 PM Lent	29 6:30 PM Restauration	1 7:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA	2 7:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA
3 <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	4 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts	5 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	6 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 6:30 PM Restauration 7:00 PM Lent	7 6:30 PM Restauration	8 8:00 PM NA	9 8:00 PM NA
10 <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> Daylight Saving Time 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	11 First Night of Ramadan 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts	12 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	13 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 7:00 PM Lent	14 6:00 PM Via de Cristo 6:30 PM Restauration	15 1:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA	16 1:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA
17 St. Patrick's Day <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	18 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts 6:30 PM Council Meeting	19 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	20 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 7:00 PM Lent	21 6:30 PM Restauration	22 9:00 AM Work Day 8:00 PM NA	23 9:00 AM Work Day 8:00 PM NA
24 <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> Palm Sunday 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	25 Holl 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts	26 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 10:30 AM WELCA @ LCM 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	27 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 7:00 PM Restauration	28 7:00 PM Maundy Thursday Worship	29 Good Friday 6:30 PM Restauration 7:00 PM Good Friday Worship	30 8:00 PM NA
31 <a href="#">Virtual Worship YouTube.com</a> Easter 9:30 AM In Person Worship! 12:00 PM Restauration	1 April Fools' Day Office Closed 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 4:30 PM Cub Scouts	2 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:00 PM Band Practice 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM Restauration	3 9:00 AM Blue Livin' Sup-ports 4:30 PM Women's Book Study 6:30 PM Restauration	4 6:30 PM Restauration	5 7:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA	6 7:00 PM Restauration 8:00 PM NA



## Get Involved

**Usher:** Ushers give a warm welcome to visitors, welcome the congregation, pass out bulletins, collect offering, direct communion, and take attendance. Contact the office.

**Scripture Reader:** Readers share two Bible lessons with the congregation. Contact the office

**Communion Setup/Clean up:** Do you like working behind the scenes? Contact Doretta Rapp at [stofficeasst@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stofficeasst@sbcglobal.net) if this sounds like the right job for you!

**Praise Band:** Love to share your gift of music with others? Do you play an instrument? Contact Alexandra Caselli at [aacjazz@gmail.com](mailto:aacjazz@gmail.com).

**Soundboard:** Make sure our choir and band sound great every Sunday! Contact Wayne Kalliomaa if you are interested.

**Tuesdays**

Choir and Band Practice

If you like to sing, join us!! We are always looking for singers. We meet at 4 pm for band practice and 5 pm for choir rehearsal in the Worship Center. Call Alexandra (818-631-2237) for more details.

**Monthly**

At the end of the month food sacks are assembled for our "Feeding Others" program. For more information, contact Cheri Candido.

## President's Corner

What a wonderful celebration we had on February 11th for our 70th Anniversary! It was wonderful to see so many of you there and to welcome back past members and clergy. We are blessed to have Bishop Bos participate in our worship service and deliver the message. I personally found it inspiring and hope you did too. Thank you to everyone who was part of the planning, preparations, and making sure everything ran smoothly.

It's exciting to know that Fireworks Booth fundraiser will be returning this year. This is a week-long fundraiser and there are many opportunities to volunteer and be apart of this event. Watch for more details in the coming months.

Council is still working on continued ways to build a relationship with St. Paul's by having shared opportunities between our council and their vestry, as well as, our two congregations.

Easter actually falls at the end of March this year. That means Holy Week starts March 24th with Palm Sunday. We will be holding Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services at 7pm at St. Stephen's. Easter Sunday activities are being planned; details will be shared in the coming weeks.

*Chuck Lebo*



## Holy Week

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday at 9:30 am. We will gather (weather permitting) in the courtyard and palm crosses will be distributed.

Maundy Thursday we gather at 7 pm in the Worship Center for holy communion and the stripping of the altar.

Good Friday services are as follows: Noon at St. Paul's, 1 pm at Lutheran Church of the Master and 7 pm here at SSOV.

Easter Sunday the men of St. Stephen's will be providing breakfast from 8 am to 9 am. Worship will be at 9:30 am as we celebrate our risen Lord. After worship there will be a fun Easter Egg hunt for the children.

## Lenten Worship

Lenten worship continues on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm in the Worship Center. We explore the "Meaning of the Cross" for Christians. We will take time during these gatherings for Evening Prayer to do some of our own reflections as discover some of the historical interpretations, and as we seek a deeper understanding of what the Cross of Christ means for us.

## Welcome!

We welcomed as fellow disciples Gail and Ken Kerr, Jeff Pichan, and Marcus Harper on Sunday, February 25th.



## Worship in March

We walk along with Jesus as He shows, and lives out the changing era that His life, death, and soon to be resurrection ushers in. He does so through views on sacrificial living at the temple and telling Nicodemus what God has and is doing for all of creation.

- 3/3 Third Sunday in Lent  
Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19  
John 2:13-22
- 3/10 Fourth Sunday in Lent  
Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22  
John 3:14-21
- 3/17 Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12  
John 12:20-33
- 3/24 Palm Sunday  
Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16  
Mark 14:1-15:47
- 3/31 Easter Sunday  
Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
John 20:1-18

## Easy Ways to Donate to St. Stephen's!



Are you looking for an easy, convenient way to contribute to our church? St. Stephen's offers two eGiving options that allow you to give anytime, anywhere – even on the road! It takes just seconds to use your smartphone to give by text or through Vanco's mobile app.

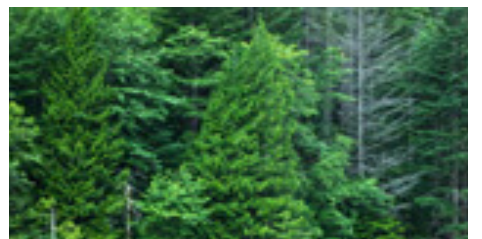
For text giving, simply send a text message to 888-979-6933 with the amount you would like to contribute (for example, \$25). Just follow the prompts.

To give through the mobile app, download the free VancoMobile app from the Apple Store or Google Play and search for our church by name. (St Stephens Church)

Or you can scan this QR Code with your phone's camera and go directly to our Simply Giving site!



We appreciate your generosity, whether you're donating from the pew or going to the mountains!



## Abundance Sunday March 17

To Benefit Grace Resources

*Shampoo, Hand Lotion, Chapstick, Sunscreen, and Deodorant*

Wish List includes: refrigerators, cribs, car seats, baby books, washer & dryers, kitchen furniture, dressers, and night stands. New children's toys are always welcome! Plus travel-size toiletries. To benefit Grace Resource Center, please place items in the shopping cart in the entrance to the Worship Center, or contact Barbara Counts.

## Easter Food Baskets

We will be collecting food baskets for the Migrant Worker Program again this year. Baskets and lists are available in the Worship Center. You can even split the list with another family, if you wish. Also, if you cannot shop yourself, you can make your check out to St. Stephen's and someone will shop for you. All donations need to be back at church by Sunday, March 24th, Palm Sunday.

**Sunday, March 17th is the deadline for the April Newsletter.**

## The Past and the Future continued

We are all thinking about small and seemingly insignificant things in our disciplines for the 40 days, and that is exactly how we will “make the road” as we walk through each day’s opportunities and demands. In the long run the course of our life is *not* the result of following a map or book of instructions, there are always complicating choices. There are bound to be many mistakes and missteps along the way. What determines our character and the “person” we become is a matter of our ideals and goals, and how we catch and correct the slips and failures as we go along. Consciously making certain we do not make that mistake again.

So, what will become of this community of Christians in a world of climate change, advancing digital controls and opportunities, global realities and human needs that challenge selfish nationalism, serious educational, racial, and economic isolation and suffering, and huge problems with ancient divisions and hatred? It will boil down, believe it or not, to how good and conscientious people (like you!) conduct their daily “as usual” lives. The actual answer to the question about what this church will become is going to be found in the composite picture of the accumulated faithfulness and loving outreach of the people who are members. The “Kingdom of God” has always been much more concerned with what *is* and *what’s* coming than with what was true in the past. The New Testament portrays God over and over saying “*Behold, I am making all things new!*” In this “new” world we will be “making the road” by asking for and following God’s principles and guidance, by following Jesus’ example and teaching, and by paying attention and learning so that the road we each are making daily truly does lead SSOV to that goal of God’s will being done, “*on earth as it is in heaven.*”

We are all, in fact, *making the road by walking*. It is early in the year, and it is Lent, let’s practice and learn to consciously do better in the little, momentary words and actions of our lives that often are such a window revealing the depth of our faith in and love of the God we worship. As we say so often in matters of love and caring, it’s the little things that really make the difference!

*Father Jim.*

*St. Stephen's*  
OF THE VALLEY  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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