

2022 Annual Report



News for the community of St. Stephen's Episcopal Mission

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From the Vicar

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43:19a

To the Faithful of St. Stephen's Mission,

One year ago, I was writing my Vicar's Report for the 2022 Annual Meeting at St. Stephen's Mission in Beaumont. As I wrote to the faithful of Trinity Parish in Redlands last week, the thought of writing reports for two 2023 Annual Meetings could not possibly have been foreseen. But here we are.

As 2022 began, I was working hard on beginning another year as your Vicar while continuing to serve as Dean of Deanery 7, the Eastern Region of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. We were preparing to ordain The Reverend Guy Leemhuis to the priesthood and Stacey Forte-Dupré to the transitional diaconate. We were also coming off of a Mutual Ministry Review,



facilitated by The Reverend Canon Tom Discavage, during which we recognized that I had become the longest-tenured vicar or rector in the 100+ year history of St. Stephen's, that I was beginning to make the move toward retirement, and our leadership needed to intentionally consider what it will take to put our congregation in the best position to continue having clergy leadership.

At the same time our neighbors at Trinity were beginning a transition in their clergy leadership, and our neighbors at St. Alban's Mission in Yucaipa were continuing their struggle to stay open. While I was genuinely excited about reprising my role as priest at Trinity Camp, I was saddened by the health issues that would ultimately result in Fr. Paul Price's relocation to another diocese. For me, being priest at Trinity Camp was a way to pay back the love and grace extended to my daughter Anna, a camper/JC for 10 years, and more than two-dozen other St. Stephen's children and youth who have attended the camp. By the end of June, Trinity became one of more than three-dozen congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles in need of clergy leadership.

Diocesan leadership reached out to see if I would consider leading a different type of transition that would consider Trinity's, St. Stephen's and St. Alban's needs and opportunities for ministry in a collaborative way. I agreed to serve as Priest in Charge of Trinity Parish while continuing my service as Vicar of St. Stephen's.

As announced by Bishop Taylor on June 9, 2022, our ministry team includes: The Reverend CC Schroeder, also Priest in Charge of St. Alban's Mission in Yucaipa; The Reverend Stacey Forte Dupré, then a transitional deacon sponsored by St. Stephen's who recently was ordained priest; The Reverend Pete Wright; The Reverend Jay Tillitt; The Reverend Birbal Haldar; and The Reverend Canon Lou Hemmers, Trinity's Rector Emeritus. Other priests such as The Reverend Canons John Saville and Mary Crist have joined and will continue to join one or more of our congregations over the next 18-24 months as we work to put Trinity Parish in the best position possible to call its next Rector, while bringing new vitality to St. Alban's and keeping positive momentum going at St. Stephen's.



It did not take long before challenges emerged. All three congregations expect the same clergy to be present every Sunday. When I or Reverend Schroeder lead worship at Trinity, for example, there often is a feeling that we are not giving proper attention to St. Stephen's or St. Alban's. By the way, some of those same feelings are expressed at Trinity when I am not there all the time. Our congregations have had to be creative in scheduling special services like Blessing of Animals or Blue Christmas. Presiding at three Christmas Eve services (two at Trinity and one at St. Stephen's) was a new experience. I can only imagine what Holy Week and Easter are going to look like. In my 12-plus years in Beaumont-Banning, I have been involved in

everything from the hospital to the Chamber of Commerce, to the public schools, to local feeding ministries. I am having to recalibrate where and when I can allocate my time and develop a more consistent pattern of presence.

Our clergy team members are having to rethink schedules as they are asked to serve in other congregations. Fr. Tillitt is now spending more of his time at St. Peter's in Rialto, while dealing with his own health challenges. Fr. Wright is being asked to serve numerous congregations in transition, though he continues to give priority to serve Trinity, for which all of us are grateful. During 2023, I anticipate that most of the Sunday work at Trinity is going to fall to Reverend Schroeder, Reverend Stacey and me, with help from Frs. Wright and Haldar, and, of course, Fr. Hemmers. Reverend Stacey and I will share the load at St. Stephen's, and I expect that both of us will occasionally serve at St. Alban's as well. We also have the financial challenges associated with staffing and keeping three physical plants operating, while meeting our obligations to the diocese. Actions taken at the Diocesan Convention related to clergy compensation, insurance and the Mission Share Fund will have a significant impact on how Trinity will proceed with its search process, and how St. Stephen's and St. Alban's will continue to operate.

For the "person in the pew" at St. Stephen's, the most notable effect of our collaborative ministry is that since July, Reverend Stacey has shared equally in presiding on Sunday mornings, and also leads at least one of the services during the week. She also led a study on Revelation and, prior to her

ordination, joined Mark Milliron in facilitating a Lenten retreat at St. Martin's Church in Twentynine Palms. I commend to you Reverend Stacey's report for a complete description of all the activities she does both at St. Stephen's and around the diocese. Her ordination to the priesthood on January 14, 2023 will go down as one of the greatest days of my own priesthood.

I believe Reverend Stacey represents the future of the church and a new direction for the church. As I wrote to her recently, it's not about her chronological age. It's about the times in which she has been ordained and the freshness with which she approaches scripture, theology, ecclesiology, etc. This is her time and I believe St. Stephen's is enormously blessed to be with Reverend Stacey at the beginning of what I believe will be an enormously fruitful priesthood.

With all of that said, I believe 2022 and early 2023 have been exciting times. Just this past Friday, I gave Don Ranney the final payment on Phase 2 of our Pet Memorial Garden and the other improvements we have made to the east (alley) side of our property. Including the survey of the property, a total of \$20,459 has been spent so far on this project that not beautifies but also protects the church building from increased vehicular traffic and other activity on the adjacent alley. A big thank you to Carol



Hamre and her committee for their hard work and creativity in bring this project to life. With the completion of this phase of the garden project, St. Stephen's has now spent a total of \$256,970 on repairs and improvements to our physical plant since 2014. This amount does not include the value of the beautiful baby grand piano Val Emerson donated to St. Stephen's before moving to Canada in late spring of 2022.

Our 17th Annual Christmas Tree Festival was three days of fun, food and fellowship with the theme, "Miracle on 8th Street." This morning, Carol's Kitchen, H.E.L.P., Inc., and Table of Plenty will each receive \$6,500 for a record total of \$19,500. Overall, the Christmas Tree Festival has raised a total of \$206,254. We appreciate Bishop John Taylor's presence at the Wassail Party where he experienced firsthand the joy others have experienced coming to St. Stephen's for this venerable community event. Thanks to Sharron Dunn and her committee, which included people from the organizations benefitting from the event.

I will say more about our finances when we present the 2022 Financial Report and 2023 Proposed Budget. For 2022, St. Stephen's had operating income of \$207,092.31 and operating expenses of \$213,900.30. Our proposed 2023 budget calls for expenses of \$240,094.00, including a \$14,400 Diocesan Mission Share Fund pledge, and no Diocesan Mission Development Grant for the first time since 2008.

A few vital statistics to show St. Stephen's "by the numbers" for 2022:

- We have 102 households with 161 worshipping members, including 14 under the age of 16. Another 20 persons have been identified as worshippers who are not members of the congregation.
- Our Average Sunday Attendance was 51 compared with 48 in 2021. Easter attendance was 139. Christmas attendance was 70. While we no longer livestream every service, we continue to have a regular on line (Facebook) Sunday presence.
- We had 6 baptisms; and 9 persons were confirmed, received, or formally renewed their baptismal vows during Bishop Frank Brookhart's visit on January 23, 2022. We also gained 5 members by transfer from other Episcopal congregations.
- We lost 7 members by death and 1 person resigned from the church.



Most of our ministries and organizations resumed in 2022. They include:

- St. Mary's Guild meets most months. In addition to the Christmas Tree Festival, the Guild had its spring event; supplied hygiene bags to area ministries; and made contributions for Reverend Stacey's ordination and the Pet Memorial Garden project. The Guild's overall 2022 outreach giving totaled \$22,800.
- Daughters of the King meets monthly and provides ongoing intercessory prayer support.
- Altar Guild supports all Sunday, weekday, and special services.
- Zoom Bible/Book Study led by Scott Hamre meets on Tuesday evenings.
- Grief Support Group facilitated by Chaplain Mike Whittaker meets twice a month and helps support our Blue Christmas service.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.
- Blessings in a Backpack provides weekend food for Palm Innovation Academy students and their families.

St. Stephen's provides financial and/or volunteer support to Banning and Beaumont Chambers of Commerce, Banning-Beaumont Student of the Month Program, Beaumont Educational Support Team, Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Geronimo Pass, Carol's Kitchen, Girls' Friendly Society, Guide Dogs, H.E.L.P., Inc., House of Decision, MasterPeace Ministries (Damaso), Nathan Carpio's Christmas Drive, San Geronimo Memorial Hospital Chaplaincy, Table of Plenty, Trinity Camp, Union of Black Episcopalians, Winter Wish. We also continue to award the Charles Winans Memorial Scholarship.

A big question we need to consider is our Sunday Schedule. When we returned to in person worship, we held three services so proper space could be maintained. We reduced that to two and often have an equal number of persons at each service. Our attendance numbers and people we have to staff the services suggests that we have one service with fellowship and Christian education following. Obviously we would want to have something early enough to keep those who want an early start but late enough to still connect with those who need to make a later start. There are also those who want a spoken service and those who want music and singing. Reverend Stacey and I

will be coming to you for help on this one.

There are many people to thank. Jeanne Bartholomew (secretary), Judy Sullivan (sexton), Marti White (bookkeeper), Deborah St. Martin (auditor) have continually improved our operations. Janet Wales provides musical support at no charge in a variety of settings and seasons. Joy Williams (Bishop's Warden), Scott Hamre (People's Warden) and the rest of our Bishop's Committee: Rebecca Blosser, Patti Malott, Rose O'Neill, and Victoria Vaughan have provided steady, faithful counsel in challenging times. I especially want to thank Victoria, who is completing her second (non-consecutive) three-year term today. It truly takes a village.

As long as this report is, much has been left on the cutting room floor, including some photos that will be included in what we send on email and post on the ststephensbeaumont.com website and Friends of St. Stephen's Facebook page. Thank you for your continued prayerful support of our mission and ministry. Stay tuned!

Bill Dunn+

January 29, 2023

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

CURATE'S REPORT

by The Rev. Stacey Forte-Dupré

Dear Faithful Community of St. Stephen's,

This past year has proven to be such an incredible time of transition. Some of us have had those connected to us leave this earth for glory, relocate to other places, or decide not to return to church since the COVID pandemic. St. Stephen's feels smaller since familiar faces are no longer worshiping with us. This year has been an incredible time of transition for me as well. I have gone from postulant to candidate, ordinand, to deacon, and then ordinand again when it was time to be ordained to the priesthood.

At last, we are ordained! Thank you for walking that journey with me and for the beautiful reception following my first Sunday. Your support and your prayers throughout the years have held me and your continued prayers are needed. St. Stephen's, when you all raise up a priest, you all raise up a priest – you do solid work! I feel so confident that am walking in my calling and doing what I am supposed to be doing. Thank you; my heart is full. God is good, and God's mercy endures forever.



Speaking of transitions, at my diaconal pre-ordination retreat in June, I learned from Bishop John Taylor that he would assign me to a collaborative ministry team in Deanery 7 that would include St. Stephen's – Beaumont, St. Albans – Yucaipa, and Trinity – Redlands that the Very Rev. Canon William E. Dunn would lead. This collaborative ministry approach is new, visionary, and experimental within the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles (EDLA). However, EDLA leadership decided to travel this uncharted path as the needs of the diocese are mandating change as the number of clergy vacancies increase, thereby making necessary creative solutions that still follow the canons of The Episcopal Church.

And, lest I forget, there is another transition. Bishop Taylor, The Rev. Canon Tom Quijada-Discavage, Fr. Dunn, in his capacity as priest-in-charge at Trinity, along with Trinity's vestry and St. Stephen's bishop's committee felt that I could best fulfill my ministerial duties and responsibilities, serve the diocese and the church, and begin my transition and formation as a newly ordained clergyperson in a curacy. I agreed with their assessment. As a result, Bishop Taylor appointed me a curate, and I began to officially serve in that capacity on July 5, 2022, at St. Stephen's Episcopal Mission Congregation. My curacy consists of assisting our vicar and working as part of the collaborative ministry team for the three congregations: Trinity, St. Alban's, and St. Stephen's. Much of my ministry and activity in 2022 has been as a postulant/candidate for holy orders and a transitional deacon.

Ordinations

June 11, 2022 - The Rt. Rev. John Harvey Taylor, 7th Bishop of Los Angeles, ordained me to the Sacred Order of Deacons.

January 14, 2023 - The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church, on behalf of Bishop Taylor ordained me to the Sacred Order of Priests.

Parish Ministry

Presided at Deacon's Masses at St. Stephen's & St. Alban's

Presided at weekday worship service (Thursdays, some Tuesdays)

Served as Deacon of the Mass with Bishop Taylor at St. Alban's in October

Preached

preached at St. Alban's, Trinity, and St. Stephen's

preached at St. Stephen's, Santa Clarita by invitation of the rector, the Very Rev.

Christopher Montella, while a postulant/candidate

Christian Education & Formation

taught the 6-week Revelation study series

co-facilitated with Mark Milliron the 1-day Lenten Retreat

attending & participating in weeknight Bible study

Pastoral Visits

Offered Invocations at St. Mary's Guild Meetings, Christmas Tree Festival Tea, and Spring Tea Event

Attended St. Stephen's Bishop's Committee Meetings, Trinity Parish's Vestry Meetings, Staff Meetings, and Liturgy Planning Meetings; Met with Janet Wales to plan and chose music for worship

Preparing for sermons, Bible study, liturgy & worship service

Diocesan Ministry

Board of Trustees – Bloy House, The Episcopal Theological School at Los Angeles

Served on Search Committee for Dean of Bloy House

Deacon: Juneteenth Jubilee Service
Presider: 2023 Martin Luther King, Jr Service
Planning Committee: 2023 MLKJr Service

Province VIII Ministry

Co-Leader of Black, African, and Caribbean Ministry Network of Province VIII of The Episcopal Church

Duties & Responsibilities:

Monthly Gatherings of the General Body

Occasional Meetings of the Council of Advice

Regular Meetings with my Colleague to plan meeting agendas, guest speakers, & meeting curricula

Assisted in Planning the 4-week series on *Civil Discourse* open to any and all of Province VIII

Served as Lead Consultant to the UBE host Chapter for the 2022 Regional UBE Conference

Other Episcopal Church Related Ministry

The Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE)

President of H. Belfield Hannibal Chapter (Greater Los Angeles area)

Duties & Responsibilities

Monthly Chapter Meetings

Monthly Executive Council Meetings (chapter officers)

Monthly Meetings of Regional Area Chapter Presidents with Regional Director

Served as Consultant to the Planning Committee for the 2022 Regional UBE Conference

Attended the 2022 UBE Regional Conference in Seattle, WA

Ecumenical and Community Ministry & Service

Participated in the Thanksgiving Worship Service at Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Served as Spiritual Advisor at Board Meetings for Carol's Kitchen when Fr. Dunn could not attend due to scheduling conflicts or pastoral emergencies

Other Activities

Clericus (Clergy Gatherings)

Diocesan-Wide

Deanery-Wide

Black Clergy of the Diocese

Deacon's Discretionary Fund

Christmas Gift Donation to a Family via the House of Decision Program

UBE Membership: To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, I gifted an elder on a limited income who describes themselves as an ally and is not of African descent a year's membership to UBE through the H. Belfield Hannibal Chapter. I remain anonymous as the benefactor.

A monetary donation of \$250 to the International Diaper Program to purchase feminine hygiene products for the girls and women in Nairobi, Kenya so that they do not have to stay from school or work when they experience their menses.

Continuing Education

Currently auditing Pastoral Liturgics course at Bloy House.