

## EPISCOPAL VISITATION THIS SUNDAY AT ST STEPHEN'S

Join the Sunday worship [link to the Livestream](#) tomorrow, March 29, 2020 at 10am for an unprecedented event. The bishop of the Diocese of California the Rt Rev'd Marc Handley Andrus will preach and preside at the first Episcopal visitation of a parish since the COVID-19 crisis began.

*In praise of St Stephen's Church Belvedere, the bishop singled out our parish in his teleconference with the diocese, describing how we have risen as a model and shining example of the ways in which a parish can turn on a dime to connect with one another in and around the Sacrament, as well as partner with other churches in uncertain times.*

*"Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found (BCP, Collect for The Fifth Sunday in Lent)."*

As many of you have these last few days, I have been popping outside to walk in my neighborhood to get a little reprieve from sheltering indoors — albeit with proper self-distancing. Yesterday, I saw the image on the left — a heartwarming and encouraging home-made poster on a neighbor's house. Today, the image on the right was sent by a friend. While I smiled at one and laughed out loud at the other, I find that both hint at two emerging ethical threads I see surfacing ever more starkly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first might be dubbed the "flattening the curve ethic" and the second the "herd immunity ethic."

According to the flattening the curve ethic, increasing restrictions on physical engagement and mobility must be embraced to flatten the bell curve of new infections, so that medical resources will be less taxed and mortalities minimized. On the other hand, according to the herd immunity ethic, the virus should be allowed to burn through the population wiping out a percentage of people while developing immunity in the survivors, with a less disruptive bearing on markets and business-as-usual. I hear the extremes of both ethics bandied about by commentators and Op-Ed writers, as well as many moderate versions in between.

The news about the virus and how to manage in its throes is confusing at best and whipsawing at worst. Proscriptions change from day to day, even hour to hour. All of us are pivoting and adapting on the fly, scurrying to get food and supplies, cancelling

social and work plans, flagging from conflicting news cycles and glitch-prone Zoom conferences.

Yet, in all the pandemonium, moments of peace, grace, and beauty break forth. Families, friends, and households are finding new ways to be together — cooking meals, playing games, having long talks and going on walks. Electronic communication networks are being updated, upgraded, and expanded to reach and connect more people. Our environment is getting a breather. Acts of compassion and kindness abound.

In the weeks to come, we will likely see harrowing images and hear alarming reports. We will grow weary of confinement and miss gathering in person. We will adapt to new conditions, and we will continue to wrestle with uncertainty.

Life is about making difficult decisions in the context of uncertainty. Yet in all the confusion, we who walk the way of Christ rest ever in the certainty of God's love, of God's grace, and God's saving hand in all that transpires. May we continue to pray that among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found.

— CTT+

## **SUBSCRIBE TO TIDINGS: THE WEEKLY, DIGITAL NEWSLETTER OF ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH**

We need your help to stay connected. Going forward the *Tidings* digital newsletter will serve as our primary, weekly communication. If you would like to receive *Tidings* or are having or problems receiving it, please [email the office](#). You can get the latest news on worship livestreams, bible studies, classes, groups, and programs at [St Stephen's Central](#).

## **INTERACTIVE SERMON FOR PALM SUNDAY**

FR. Ellsworth and MO. Trainor are considering a more interactive teaching approach for the sermon on Palm Sunday. To help them address queries you might have about the [Palm Sunday liturgy \(BCP, p. 270\)](#), the reading for the [Liturgy of the Palms \(Matthew 21. 1 — 11\)](#), or the [Passion Reading \(Matthew 27. 11 — 54\)](#), please send your [questions to the office](#). The clergy will curate the questions and work to include them in a panel-like discussion of this ancient rite.

## **PICK UP A PALM FOR PALM SUNDAY**

If you would like a palm frond for Palm Sunday (5th April), please come by the courtyard of St Stephen's Church and pick up a palm from the basket. For protective reasons, please wear gloves to handle the palms. Palms will be available for pick up from the bench in the courtyard Friday, 3rd April, or Saturday the 4th.