

A Letter from the Rector

October 19, 2017

Isaiah 43:2... “When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.” So says the Lord. Our God practices a ministry of presence with us in all the highs and lows of our lives.

God would never block the joy from entering into our lives and God likewise does not promise to prevent trouble from cropping up in our lives—as the creatures of God we are called to live into the fullness of all those things it means to be human beings in this world. What God does promise us, however, is that we will never face those troubles alone. Just as the Lord is present in the midst of the beautiful, uplifting moments that we experience, the Lord is always there with us right in the heart of the difficult moments, the tragedies, the struggles. Our comfort can be found not in a God that closes us off from the hard realities of the world but instead in a God who faces them with us.

Likewise, a ministry of presence is what we practice here at St. Stephen’s. Being people made in the image of God we seek out how to live into deeper relationship with our fellow human beings around us. Not to be outdone by a hurricane, we carry forward together our ministry of presence—both inside the walls of our church on Sundays and out in the world during the week.

I invite you jump wholeheartedly into our ministry of presence efforts this season. Our fellowship breakfasts at 9:00 am every Sunday are certainly a great way to get a hot breakfast in the morning for the whole family (without having to get up and cook it yourself!), but they are also an important way we can gather as a community and be present to one another every week. Come to the 8:00 am worship service and stay for breakfast or come to breakfast and then stay for the 10:00 am service. When we gather together at 9:00 am for breakfast, we then break out and join in the ministries that call out to us in particular. Come to breakfast and then go to Godly Play, or practice with the choir, or join in the discussion at Episcobasics, or help the Altar Guild, or just be present with each other and enjoy the breakfast. You are invited to be present in the way that calls out to you.

I also invite you to join our ministry of presence this season as we take advantage of opportunities to be present in the lives of the people of our community out in the world during the week. We will keep on announcing when one of our kids has a play or a sporting event so that we can attend and support them. We will keep on announcing chances to do outreach, chances for formation, chances for community engagement, and more. You are invited to be present in the way that calls out to you.

God built us to be present with each other and practice our ministry of presence, just as God is present with us in all we do. When we do this work we demonstrate that, yes, when we go through deep waters, God will be with us—also that when we go through deep waters, we will be there with each other too. What a blessed time ahead we will have together!

Yours in Christ,

Steven