

Please join me in this prayer as we enter the season of Advent together:

“Dear People of God: In the season of Advent, it is our responsibility and joy to prepare ourselves to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God’s loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against him until the glorious redemption brought to us by his holy Child Jesus Christ, and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.”

This prayer, from The Episcopal Church’s Book of Occasional Services, highlights the anticipation and the eager preparation we are called to, both as we remember when Jesus changed our world forever by dwelling among us and as we look forward to Jesus changing our world forever again. The prayer continues:

“But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world, for peace and justice on earth, for the unity and mission of the Church for which he died, and especially for his Church in our country and in this city of Beaumont, Texas.

And because he particularly loves them, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and little children, as well as all those who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.”

God recognizes what a special community we have here. God knows the good work we do together and all the ways we make a difference in the lives of the people around us. St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church is a community that is welcoming, inclusive, and has a heart for service for and with our sisters and brothers. Thank you for being a part of St. Stephen’s and God bless you for the difference you make being here with us. The prayer continues:

“Finally, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and that whole multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one forevermore.”

As we look ahead to the new year to come, I am so very excited to be a part of this church with each and every one of you. We will be a church that comforts people in pain, holds one another when in fear, celebrates great joys together, challenges each other to achieve new goals, and grows and learns with each other in the name of the Lord. As we anticipate and prepare during this Advent, it is blessing to know that we’ll get to share this life with each other. I look forward to the blessing we will be to others in this world because of Christ’s love and because of your love. The prayer concludes:

“The Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and to the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all. Amen.”

Faithfully,

Steven

Citation: The Book of Occasional Services (2003). New York, NY: Church Publishing.