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St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Beaumont Texas

From the Rector of St. Stephen's Church:

Peace and grace to you through our savior Jesus Christ.

We all know that natural disasters are, well, a natural part of life. It feels anything but natural, however, when it is we and our loved ones who are adversely affected by them. Our hearts go out to everyone in Beaumont and the wider Southeast Texas community after the widespread damage of Tropical Depression Imelda.

It is at these times we turn most readily to God: we give thanks to God when we have been saved, we pray and confront God when our loved ones have been hurt, we seek answers and comfort from God, and we let God use us to tend to one another and to start healing the brokenness. Rest assured, God is among us and we the people of St. Stephen's will restore our community together.

I want to keep you all informed of what we know so far and how the church is responding to the needs of the people. While additional flooding continues, so far about a dozen homes and businesses of members of our church have been flooded, some for the second time since 2017. Some saw inches of water and remain in their homes, others feet of water and have been displaced. The need will vary but we are committed to being a family to all. Thanks be to God no one has been physically injured; the emotional and psychological injuries suffered we can diligently address in time.

At St. Stephen's, the church building and parish hall saw minor water intrusion. Our offices and child care buildings seem unaffected. Starting this Sunday, September 22,

our plan is to continue our services at the church as normal. We will have our regular 8:00 am and 10:00 am services, with a fellowship breakfast and Christian formation between. September 29 we will still have our annual Service Sunday and October 6 will still be the annual Blessing of the Animals. Together we will continue the ministries of Serving the World, Spreading the Word, Building Fellowship, Forming Christians, Worshiping Together, and Pastoral Care even as we clean up and rebuild.

Just as many of you sent funds to Episcopal Relief & Development to help victims of Hurricane Dorian a few weeks ago, the wider church is here to support us as well. Our Bishops and staff of The Episcopal Diocese of Texas are praying for us, planning visits, and preparing to assist Southeast Texas with the financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual help we need. It is indeed good to be part of the wider Episcopal Church as we are surrounded by friends and family who will abide with us through the crisis.

In the days ahead, please contact the church (409-892-4227 or office@ssecbmt.org) if you need anything--whether it is help rebuilding a house or rebuilding a sense of peace and normalcy. If you are interested in helping others and want to know how, please contact us as well.

I, personally, will be glad to see each of you again soon. Until we can again be present to each other in person, may you feel the abiding presence of God in your life. May faith, hope, and love grow in me, in you, and in all of us for the work we do together.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*



The Rev. Steven M. Balke, Jr.



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