

July 19, 2020

From the Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Beaumont, Texas:

Greetings and a blessed Sunday to you all,

For everyone who attended church with us this morning, this is the letter I promised was coming. I have a few points of news to share with y'all:

First, I have been remiss in commending to you all the amazing work Jamie Anderson and our childcare staff have been doing these past few months. Jamie and her team were already working hard to provide a high-quality after-school and summer-school program even before the pandemic. Then, after the pandemic struck and everything changed quickly, our childcare team went right to work creating a safe place for the children of essential workers so that parents who needed to go out into the world to serve the greater good knew their children would be in good hands. Make no mistake, this service to the community carries a measure of personal risk for everyone on our childcare staff, but Jamie has been working constantly under the guidance of the Texas Department of Health and Human Services to try to make it as safe as possible. Our childcare team has had to work even harder than usual, risking their own health and safety to provide for the needs of others, and I ask you to join me in praising and thanking them for answering this call.

Second, seriously, Jamie and her team are doing amazing work. It's worth emphasizing.

Third, we are working hard to provide dual-stream (that is, both online and in-person) worship at St. Stephen's, and to do it we need your help! Just like we used to call upon you to serve as acolytes, altar guild, ushers, and more, we have a new set of volunteer opportunities and we cannot hold online and in-person worship without these volunteers. I have included here a form with the volunteer jobs we need filled:

<https://forms.gle/r4YcutDKVfHTC7yh7>

Please look the form over and prayerfully consider whether you are able and willing to try serving the church in one (or more) of these ways. I promise I will provide adequate training and together we will help keep moving St. Stephen's forward in our worship together.

Finally, I want to continue to make it easier to be in touch with me as your pastor. I hope you know you can still reach me just the same as always by the church telephone (409-892-4227) and email (sbalke@ststephensbmt.org), but I have now created a way that you can easily schedule appointments with me at:

<https://stevenbalke.youcanbook.me>

Whether you are seeking pastoral care, counseling, or just have important matters to discuss, please consider this another way you can set up a virtual office hour appointment with me. I am, as always, interested in your questions, suggestions, and feedback.

I enjoyed worshipping with y'all today and look forward to the next steps as we continue to follow the path of discipleship as the Body of Christ together. God bless you!

Steven

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial "S".

The Rev. Steven M. Balke, Jr.