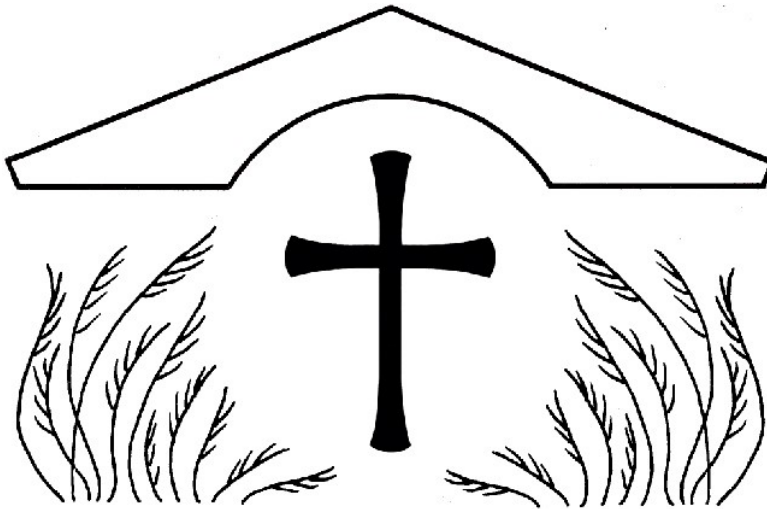


# ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**Second Sunday in Lent**

February 25, 2024



Ministers

Rector

Deacon

Senior Warden

Junior Warden

Minister of Music

Cantor

Administrative Assistant

The People of the Parish

The Rev. Christy Laborda Harris

The Rev. Kate Sefton

Jean Farmer

Meg Nalley

Miles McKenzie

Kristina Ibarra

Jun Kim

**Welcome to the holy season of Lent!** Lent is the 40 day period from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday. Lent is a time of return, a time of refocusing our lives and hearts. It is a time of austerity with extra prayer and meditation to prepare ourselves to appreciate the full joy and glory of Easter and the good news of God's power over death. Traditionally we do not use altar flowers during this season, giving the altar a simpler and more sedate appearance. And we save our joyful shouts of "Alleluia" until Easter. We make these changes in order to set this time aside and mark it as different.

Many people think that Lent is a fearful dark time, but we need to remember that we know the end of the story. We are loved by the God who is stronger than death. There is nothing to fear! We are not observing Lent because we were bad or in order to make God love us. We are observing Lent because we love God and we want to experience God's love for us even more fully.

"Walking in the Wilderness" is a Lenten service written by Pat Bennett and published by the Iona Community.

### The Gathering of the Community

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

Be Still and Know

*please stand*

Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I

am. Be still and know. Be still. Be. Be.

As desired Final

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**Presider** Driven by the Spirit Jesus went out to inhabit a liminal place. For forty days and nights, homeless and weary, famished and footsore, he wandered and watched and wrestled ...

**People** **For forty days and nights, companioned and comforted by animals and angels, he traversed and tested and tempered... And then, knowing who he was, seeing where he must go, understanding what he should do, Jesus, filled with the Spirit, returned from the uncharted place to do the work of the Kingdom.**

**Presider** Jesus, by your example you challenge us to make this season a journey of discovery;

People **As we leave comforting landmarks behind to inhabit and explore our own uncharted places, help us to discern who we are and embrace what we might become.**

Presider Jesus, by your words and actions you show us how to watch and wait and wrestle;

People **As we listen now to those familiar stories and savor afresh your wit and wisdom, help us to recognize where we are and envisage where we need to move to.**

Presider Jesus, you offer us your company in the known and the unknown places;

People **As we touch hands with you now through story and song, and in bread and wine, help us to better understand the threads of our lives and see how to weave them with yours into the patterns of God's Kingdom.**

#### CONFESSION

Deacon God of the in-between thin places, you draw us into the quietness of the desert so that we can encounter ourselves...

People **But we confess that all too often we stubbornly cling to false images rather than face the necessity of change.**

Deacon You call us into the emptiness of the desert so that we can confront our desires...

People **But we confess that all too often we continue to choose our own comfort rather than serving the needs of others.**

Deacon You drive us into the dangers of the desert so that we can engage with your Kingdom...

People **But we confess that all too often we prefer the smooth roads of safety over the perilous pathways of justice.**

**Forgive us, O God, wherever we have chosen to be, or do, or dare less than you have asked of us; and as we walk on in the desert with you, help us watch and wrestle with these things so that we might choose differently in future.**

## ABSOLUTION

God forgives you.  
Forgive others;  
Forgive yourself.

God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal. **Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Word

### THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Let us pray.

God of dispossession, you rebuke our refusal to give up our idols, separate and safe: send us with Jesus on the way of the cross, that we might lose our love of death and take the risk of life, through Jesus Christ, the new covenant. **Amen.**

### A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS (17:1-7, 15-16)

*please be seated*

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 22:22-30

- 22** May all who fear you, O God, give praise; \*  
may the offspring of Israel stand in awe,  
and all of Jacob's line give glory.
- 23** For you do not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty,  
neither do you hide your face from them, \*  
but when they cry to you, you hear them.
- 24** My praise is of you in the great assembly; \*  
I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship you.
- 25** The poor shall eat and be satisfied,  
and those who seek you shall praise you: \*  
"May your heart live for ever!"
- 26** All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to you, \*  
and all the families of the nations shall bow before you.
- 27** For yours is the royal power, O God; \*  
you rule over the nations.
- 28** To you alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; \*  
all who go down to the dust fall before you.
- 29** My soul shall live for you;  
my descendants shall serve you; \*  
they shall be known as yours for ever.
- 30** They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn \*  
the saving deeds that you have done.

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A READING FROM PAUL’S LETTER TO THE ROMANS (4:13-25)

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL READING

Mark 8:31-38

*please stand*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

SERMON

The Rev. Christy Laborda Harris

*please be seated*

*A period of silent reflection follows the sermon*

HYMN

God to Enfold You

*please stand*

God to en - fold you, Christ to up - hold you,  
Spi - rit to keep you in hea - ven's sight;  
so may God grace you, heal and em - brace you,  
lead you through dark - ness in - to the light.

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## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In penitence and faith let us make our prayer, asking for mercy and grace, saying: God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For people in all faiths, that they may triumph over evil and grow in grace, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For the leaders and citizens of the nations, that you will guide them in the ways of mercy and truth, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For all those in danger and need, the sick, the suffering, and the oppressed, that they may not be forgotten, and that we may see our way to reaching out in love and hope, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For the sick in body, mind and spirit, that they may know your power to heal, especially those we name now either aloud or in our hearts... God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For those who have died and those who mourn, that they may rest in the assurance of your everlasting life and love, especially those we now name... God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

Presider            Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who made us in your image, who gathers us in loving arms, and who placed your word on our lips and in our hearts. Receive the prayers we offer this day for all those in need in every place; grant us strength on our journey and breathe upon us with your Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## PEACE

May the peace of God, the comforting peace of familiar presence, the untamed peace of wilderness places, the challenging peace of watching and wrestling, surround and shape your journey onwards. The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**



*You are invited to pass the peace  
distanced and respectfully.*

## The Holy Communion

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Day by Day  
Stephen Schwartz

*please be seated*

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

*please stand*

\*Ostinato Refrain



Turn our hearts to you, O God. With you there is heal-ing,  
whole-ness and for-give-ness, free-dom from fear, last-ing peace.

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EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Presider The Lord be with you.  
People **And also with you.**  
Presider Lift up your hearts.  
People **We lift them to the Lord.**  
Presider Let us give thanks to the Lord.  
People **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Like a tent in the wilderness the table of God stands open and ready as a place of sanctuary and safety, of hospitality and healing. So come, all you who are tired and travel-stained, footsore and famished; come with your fellow travelers and find companionship and comfort; for here, Jesus – who knows what it is to wander, watch and wrestle in desert places – waits to meet us and welcome us in, offering us rest and restoration, solace and strength, for the journey still to come.

Before going out into the wilderness of the Garden, Jesus sat down to eat and drink with his friends. To show them the challenge of the way ahead, and offer them gifts for that journey, he took bread – sustaining and wholesome – gave it to his friends and said, “Take, eat: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.” He poured wine – earthy and warming – and said “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.” He shared these gifts as signs of his continuing presence with them throughout time to come.

**And now, remembering that moment, and recognizing that its promise is also for us in this time and place, we too break bread and pour wine to share with one another. And in that action, we recognize and affirm with joy that Christ is present with us now, and throughout time to come; and we join our voices with those of all creation in the unending song of praise:**

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, hea - ven and  
earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

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God of the thresholds, of in between times and spaces, send down upon us now, and on these gifts of bread and wine, that same Spirit who drove Jesus into the desert, that we too may be tempered and strengthened by your Presence and refreshed and renewed through your love.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

As Christ teaches us, we pray,

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:  
have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sins of the world: have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

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The tent side is open, the table is set, and God waits for us to come in from the desert for a while and be refreshed. Wherever you are on your journey of faith,

**You are welcome at this table.**

*All are welcome at the Lord's table. You are invited to come forward when the ushers indicate and stand or kneel at the communion rail. Please extend your hands together to receive the bread. Our bread is gluten free. To receive the chalice, please help guide it to your lips. We are no longer intincting (dipping the bread). If you do not wish to receive the chalice, cross your arms and the chalice bearer will still say the words but not expect you to sip. If you prefer not to receive either bread or wine and would like a blessing, please cross your arms across your chest.*

**Open my heart, open my heart.**

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1. Will you come and fol - low me if
2. Will you leave your self be - hind if
3. Will you let the blind - ed see if
4. Will you love the "You" you hide if
5. Christ, your sum - mons ech - oes true when



I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and  
I but call your name? Will you care for cruel and kind and  
I but call your name? Will you set the pris - 'ner free and  
I but call your name? Will you quell the fear in - side and  
you but call my name. Let me turn and fol - low you and



nev - er be the same? Will you let my love be shown? Will you  
nev - er be the same? Will you risk the hos - tile stare should your  
nev - er be the same? Will you kiss the lep - er clean, and do  
nev - er be the same? Will you use the faith you've found to re -  
nev - er be the same. In your com - pa - ny I'll go where your



let my Name be known? Will you let my life be grown in  
life at - tract or scare? Will you let me an - swer prayer in  
such as this un - seen? And ad - mit to what I mean in  
shape the world a - round through my sight and touch and sound in  
love and foot - steps show, thus I'll move and live and grow in

1. 2. 3. 4.	5. (Final Ending)
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you and you in me?  
 you and you in me?  
 you and you in me?  
 you and you in me?

5. you and you in me.

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POST COMMUNION PRAYER

*please stand*

We thank you God for nourishing us.

**God has called us to journey for a season through the wilderness places; And so, as Jesus did before us, we will set out once more to wander in an uncomfortable landscape and wrestle with its challenges, that through the tempering action of the Spirit, we may emerge ready to do the work of the Kingdom. Amen.**

BLESSING

Look with compassion, O Lord, upon this your people; that, observing this holy season, we may know you more fully, and to learn to serve you with a more perfect will; and the blessing of God the Father, the Son, and be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. We all are one in mis-sion, we all are one in call,  
 2. We all are called for ser-vice to wit-ness in God's name.  
 3. We all be-hold one vi-sion, a stark re-al-i-ty;  
 4. Now let us be u-nit-ed and let our song be heard.

our var-ied gifts u-nit-ed by Christ, the Lord of all.  
 Our min-is-tries are dif-f'rent, our pur-pose is the same:  
 the stew-ard of sal-va-tion was nailed up-on a tree.  
 Now let us be a ves-sel for God's re-deem-ing Word.

A sin - gle, great com - mis - sion com - pels us from a - bove  
to touch the lives of oth - ers by God's sur - pris - ing grace,  
Yet res - ur - rect - ed Jus - tice gives rise that we may share  
We all are one in mis - sion, we all are one in call,

to plan and work to - geth - er that all may know Christ's love.  
so peo - ple of all na - tions may feel God's warm em - brace.  
free re - con - cil - i - a - tion and hope a - mid de - spair.  
our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.

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## DISMISSAL

Let us go forth into the world, journeying with the Spirit.

**Thanks be to God.**

