



# THE VOICE

## View from the Pulpit



The season of the church year that we're in right now is known as Epiphanytide, the season after the Feast of the Epiphany. The Feast of the Epiphany (taking place those famous twelve days after Christmas, as the song about the partridge in the pear tree says) is January 6th and while many of us

may associate that feast day with the Three Kings there are actually three traditional Gospel readings associated with Epiphany: The stories of the wise men, yes, but also of Jesus's baptism in the Jordan River, and of Jesus transforming water into wine. In all three of these tales, we see the widening visibility and increased publicity of Jesus. Spreading from a "local affair" among Bethlehem shepherds and hotel staff, to the Gentile world represented by the wise men from the East, to the beginning of Jesus's public ministry in his baptism in the Jordan River, to his first miracle at the wedding at Cana.

The word "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word epiphaneia which means "manifestation" or "appearance." In each of these three Epiphany Gospel stories, we see Jesus and his mission made manifest to a wider and wider array of people. And so I think it is appropriate, here in the season after Epiphany, to reflect on where Jesus, where God, manifests or appears to us. To ask ourselves where we are encountering the grace and goodness of God these days. Maybe it's hard to come up with an answer here in the dark days of winter, amidst the malaise and frustration of the ongoing pandemic...so think back: where has God appeared or manifested to you in the past? Where have you been you struck with awe, wonder, gratitude? Where have you been able to know Jesus better, to have glimpsed God - even in small or deeply personal ways. Hold those experiences, those epiphanies, close. Treasure them as the gifts they are. As we continue to move through the winter months, may the appearance and manifestation of the divine in those ancient days - and right here in our own - be to us warmth for our hearts and a candle in the night.

Faithfully,  
The Rev. Adam Spencer, Rector



### Annual Meeting

Sunday, February 6, 2022

11:30 AM, via Zoom

There will be links on the St. E's Virtually page of our website, and as a parish letter that will be sent out by email that morning.

## The Warden's Corner

I have been fighting the January blues. I struggle through January every year, starting each morning with a cup of coffee under my SAD light therapy lamp. This January has been especially challenging after the resurgence of COVID disrupted our lives again just when we thought things were improving. I know that I am not alone feeling like every day is Ground Hog Day - again. But as tough as the last few weeks have been, there have been many positive things to celebrate, and these little moments of gratitude and reflection have moved me forward day by day.



Adam taught me be more aware of these silver lining moments by introducing the vestry to the Ignatian spiritual practice of the Examen. At the beginning of each vestry meeting, he leads us through an exercise of mindful prayer, encouraging us to think about where we experienced God in our day. I especially like the emphasis on gratitude. I would like to share a few of the things I have been grateful for through the long dark days of January.

**St. E's Christmas Preparations, Service and Pageant:** I enjoyed helping decorate the church. It was so fun to see everyone pitching in. The pageant dress rehearsal brought back memories of my own children wearing lamb ears and angel wings. Watching the joyful 4:00 Christmas service on our family room TV relieved the disappointment of having our family's plans upended when my son Tommy tested positive for COVID.

**Return to School and Work:** As with other families, getting back to our normal schedule was anything but routine thanks to Omicron. Though our son Will's college delayed the start of the semester, we enjoyed his company during the extra ten days. We also appreciated that he told his siblings to stop complaining about dinner because what we cook is really good. Now that's progress!

**Preparing for the Annual Meeting:** As a warden, I am experiencing this annual ritual from a new perspective as we reflect on the past year while planning for the new one. Looking back, I am astounded at how well we weathered the ups and downs of the pandemic, reopening when safe to do so, and creating worship opportunities to meet the varying levels of comfort within the parish. I am thankful for our ability to listen thoughtfully and respectfully to each other as we navigate the ever-changing COVID landscape.

**Grace:** The word "grace" has come up several times recently. Peter Rossiter and I are interviewing staff, the Vestry and lay committee chairs to reflect on how Adam and the vestry have been working together to serve the parish this year. I am enjoying this chance to connect deeply with parishioners, Pam and Dillon. Grace was used in each conversation to describe St. E's interpersonal dynamic and the letter that Adam sent to the parish encouraging everyone to make choices about virtual and in-person worship that are right for them.

I am thrilled that we will celebrate Adam's first anniversary as rector at the Annual Meeting in February. I am so proud of everything Adam and the vestry have accomplished this year. I look forward the days to come, and will give thanks for the blessing of the sun lingering in the western sky a little longer at the end of every day.

Leslie Alter, Warden

## Notes from the 184<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Chicago

This year's convention took place on Saturday, November 20, 2021 via Zoom. Anne Tuohy, Leslie Alter, Rev. Adam Spencer, Dillon Shipman, and I attended on behalf of St. Elisabeth's. The meeting mingled annual business and traditional worship, with a Friday evening worship service characterized by extraordinary music (supplied in part by Dillon) and a morning prayer and sermon led by Assisting Bishop Chilton Knudsen. I'd never attended an Episcopal Convention before and am grateful for the opportunity to have served as a delegate.

For me, Bishop Knudsen's sermon on the theme of "Abiding" was the highlight of the convention. Her sermon reflected on two scriptural passages, Jeremiah 29:13 ("And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart") and John 15:5 (I am the vine; you are the branches). Bishop Knudsen characterized Jeremiah as a "reluctant, cranky prophet," who nonetheless offered powerful consolation to the 6<sup>th</sup>-century bce inhabitants of southern Judah after they had been conquered and deported to Babylon for a 70-year period. To those captives in a foreign land who might have felt they were caught in eternal exile, Jeremiah counseled them to wait—to abide. And yet, she emphasized that to "abide" didn't and doesn't mean to "drum one's fingers" and do nothing. For, Jeremiah assured them of God's promise: "If you seek Me with your whole heart...I will bring you back." This waiting, she said, is not unlike the period we are caught in now. 70 years doesn't necessarily mean calendar years. It means a very long time—a time that is longer than we'd like. Yet, the promise is that if we abide patiently, if we seek God with all our hearts, God will find us. God can be trusted.

Bishop Knudsen linked these ideas to the Gospel passage about Jesus as the vine and we Christians as the branches by suggesting that this Gospel text, too, is about abiding—abiding in the sense of "deep dwelling," connected as the verb "abide" is to the noun "abode." The vine-branch image is one that encourages us to let God dwell in us as we dwell in him, reminding us that without God, we can do nothing. That's not rhetoric, she said. It's the truth.

And so, she concluded, let us abide with patience by the grace of God. We are the branches; Christ is the vine. Seek God. Feel the connection and its nourishment, she urged, so that we can be nourished for the work God calls us to do.

Following Bishop Knudsen's sermon, the convention opened for the business of discussing the budget, considering resolutions, and voting on nominations.

### The Diocesan Budget

During the convention's discussion of the budget, we were reminded that congregational giving accounts for 50 percent of the entire diocesan budget. Diocesan guidelines ask congregations to pledge 11-15 percent of their normal operating income to support the common life of the diocese. For 2022, they project a 6 percent increase from the 2021 budget but a 5.9 percent decrease from 2020 pledges, a decrease likely due to COVID's impact on congregations.

It was also noted in the budget report that during 2021, the pandemic continued to curtail in-person work and gatherings; the ordination and consecration of Bishop-elect Paula Clark was postponed indefinitely; and the Standing Committee remained the ecclesiastical authority.

### Elections

Notable elections included the re-election of the Rev. Anne Jolly to the Standing Committee for a three-year term.

### Resolutions

Of the resolutions considered, six were approved. Notably, the Convention approved the renewal of the companion diocesan relationship between Chicago/Southeast Mexico/Renk, South Sudan. It committed to minimum compensation for clergy and lay employees. It resolved to support justice for indigenous peoples, particularly by repudiating the “The Doctrine of Discovery,” which is “the idea that Christians enjoy the moral and legal right based solely on their religious identity to invade and seize Indigenous lands and to dominate Indigenous peoples.” The convention also passed a statement framing Israeli actions toward Palestinians as “apartheid” and condemning both Israeli apartheid policies and “the Western roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century colonialist exploits” and our shared complicity in anti-Semitism. There were several “courtesy resolutions” as well, including one sending greetings to Bishop Michael Curry and another offering gratitude to the 12<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Chicago, Jeffrey Lee and his wife.

Anyone who would like to learn more about the approved resolutions and the diocesan budget, or to hear a recording of the Friday worship service or Assisting Bishop Knudsen’s sermon can find convention materials online at the following link: [episcopalchicago.org/governance/2021-diocesan-convention](https://episcopalchicago.org/governance/2021-diocesan-convention)

Respectfully submitted,  
Carla Arnell, St. Elisabeth’s Diocesan Convention Delegate

## **Updated Diocesan COVID-19 Guidelines (1/5/2022)**

To address rising concerns about the Omicron variant of COVID-19 and in-person worship, Bishop Chilton Knudsen encouraged clergy and lay leaders to adapt worship and ministries in whatever ways make sense to keep their communities safe.

She also asked that the following temporary changes be made until the current surge is under control:

- All church attendees should be masked at all times, **including clergy and lay readers who are preaching, reading or singing.**
- KN95 and N95 masks are strongly encouraged, followed by surgical masks (blue/white disposable). Cloth masks are not considered sufficient in preventing the transmission of the Omicron variant.
- Social gatherings that involve the removal of masks for eating and drinking (coffee hours) should be suspended.
- Anyone who is immunocompromised, unable to be vaccinated, or feeling sick should worship online. No one who is concerned about getting sick should risk their health to attend church in person.

Ongoing COVID-19 prevention practices, including social distancing and increasing ventilation, are especially important with this more infectious variant.



**COVID-19  
UPDATE**

## Wednesday Adult Formation

### February Adult Formation:

*"Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way and Presence"*

**February 9, 16, 23 at 7:00 pm**

Perhaps the most important theological question there is for a Christian is Jesus's own question about himself from the Gospel of Matthew, "Who do you say that I am?" Join us for a discussion of Diana Butler Bass's new book "Freeing Jesus" which takes on that question along with the question "How can you still be a Christian?" Bass challenges the idea that Jesus can only be understood in static, one-dimensional ways and asks us to instead consider a life where Jesus grows with us and helps us through life's challenges in several capacities: as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence. Come discuss who Jesus has been for you in your life, how you have understood him or haven't understood him and let's explore together how we might understand him anew. **This formation opportunity will be offered on Zoom, the link can be found on St. E's Virtually on our website and in the eReflect.** Please purchase a copy of the book from your favorite book seller.

### February 2 – No Class

February 9 - Read Chapter 4 "Lord"

February 16 - Read Chapter 5 "Way"

February 23 - Read Chapter 6 "Presence" and Conclusion



### Lent Adult Formation

*A Series on Hope*

**March 9, 16, 23 and April 6 at 7:00 PM**

(We will not meet on March 30, spring break)

During challenging times, the church and our faith tradition can be a wonderful source of hope. Join Adam and Elizabeth Clemmitt, our Associate for Spiritual Wellness, for a Lenten Series on Hope. We will discuss the meaning of hope and explore finding hope through poetry, scripture, and the liturgies and imagery of Holy Week. This formation opportunity will be offered on Zoom.

March 9: What is Hope?

March 16: Hope through Poetry

March 23: Hope through Scripture

April 6: Hope through Holy Week

## St. E's Flower Dedications Chart



With the start of the new year, we welcome parishioners to join in donating flowers to our weekly services which are featured at that altar. The donation is a lovely way to celebrate special occasions like birthdays & anniversaries for those in your family and recognize the memory of those who have passed away. And best of all those who donate are welcome to take their flowers home with them after the service to enjoy. There is a form next to the chart in the hall. Please fill that out and send it to the office with your payment. If you

have any questions, contact Polly Baur.

## Annual Campaign

We have received 50 pledges totaling \$229,904. That is 11.4% above last year’s total pledge amount of \$206,400, and just a hair below our goal of \$230,000 to \$240,000. We expect one more pledge to come in and that should push us above \$230,000.

	Total pledges	Increase or decrease
2019	\$204,599	
2020	\$201,387	-1.57%
2021	\$206,400	2.49%
2022	\$229,904	11.39%

We expect all but one of the households that pledged in 2021 to pledge for 2022. We have eleven pledges from households or individuals that did not pledge for 2021.



In 2021 we depended on our top five donors for 50.9% of our pledge total. That dropped to 48.3% for 2022. While our top five donors (the same households for both years) increased their pledges by an average of 5.7%, the pledges from the rest of the congregation increased by 17.3%.

Given that we have been in the pandemic for two years and unable to meet, sing, worship, or eat together in the usual ways, we should certainly be thankful that our congregation was so generous.

Mark Tilton, Stewardship Chair

## St. E’s Book Group

Does Punishment Reduce Crime?

St. E.’s Book Group will discuss Michael Foucault’s “*The Body of the Condemned*” at its regular monthly meeting Tuesday, February 8, at noon in the Guild Room. Masking is required and the brown bag lunch is canceled. In this opening chapter of his most famous work, “*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison,*” Foucault introduces the relationship between knowledge and social control. The themes the Book Group will explore are: Excising Power, Social Critique, History Lessons, and Violence. The group welcomes drop-in. Please direct questions to Joyce Newcomb at [joyceRnewcomb@gmail.com](mailto:joyceRnewcomb@gmail.com).

## ReVive Christmas Baskets



Congratulations to all at St. Elisabeth's!! It was again my pleasure to do this for 2021. This year we sponsored 24 people, 13 families. Glencoe Montessori alone sponsored four families.

ReVive was recovering from a reduced operation for this project so we worked around some gaps in their database by supplementing these gaps in family bios with gift cards. I also had requests from Highland Park Montessori as well as Glencoe Montessori for more and larger families in 2022. I will reach out to them at that time for a better family inventory.

A special thanks to any of you who made extra donations to the Cathedral Shelter to defray the overhead costs of running this program and for allowing me to do this year remotely.

Rene Surgi, Coordinator

## Family Promise

Family Promise provides free family shelter to families – keeping families together during a time of homelessness. Almost all other homeless shelters separate families by female/male. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Family Promise continues to serve families both in the shelter program, in the after-care program with former guests, job training and in the diversion program with families on the verge of homelessness. Family Promise is currently working to find apartments in Evanston for the shelter families while they continue to screen new families. Family Promise still served students in their remote learning pod at the Day Center when schools went remote. Family Promise still pays for remote learning camp fees for some other students; all providing a safe way for students to be able to continue their education while parents can work.



Most of you know Family Promise because St. Elisabeth was one of the charter congregations that sponsored the organization more than 10 years ago. St. Elisabeth has been partnering with St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Wilmette over the past several years where we help serve meals to families. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet people one-on-one and have a good conversation while breaking bread. Because we lack the facilities to host families overnight, many St. Elisabeth members make food and serve it to the families staying overnight at St. Augustine. There has been an average of three families, three adults and seven to eight children in the North Shore program of Family Promise 365 days of the year. The pandemic has forced Family Promise to shelter the families at their headquarters in Evanston. During 2021 some church congregations were able to host again including once with St. Augustine. There is a sign-up online for the meals that is issued once per month.

St. Elisabeth has been making cash donations in 2021 for staffing and updated facilities. Funding is still needed as the need to provide housing has dramatically increased in 2021.

Thank you for your support of Family Promise that makes all of this possible. If you would like more information about how to participate, speak to Lauren Edelston, Carrie Mygatt or Robert Fischer.



## Christmas at St. Elisabeth's

Thank you to Anne Healy and all of her helpers for the beautiful decorations.

## Saint Elisabeth's Calendar

### *Regular Weekly Schedule*

#### **Sundays**

8:00 AM Traditional Language Holy Communion in the church (& via FBL).

10:00 AM Inclusive Language Holy Communion in the church (& via FBL).

#### **Wednesdays**

7:00 PM – Adult Formation via Zoom

\*(FBL) Facebook Live

### *Special Events*

#### **Sunday, February 6**

11:30 AM Annual Meeting via Zoom

#### **Tuesday, February 8**

12:00 Noon St. E's Book Group

7:15 PM Vestry Meeting

#### **Sunday, February 13**

Guest Preacher – The Rev. Anne Jolly,  
*Rector of St. Gregory's Deerfield and  
President of the Diocesan Standing Committee*

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