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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE



**First Sunday after Epiphany
The Baptism of our Lord**

Our Mission Statement

Helping Hands - Healing Hearts

Welcome All

Our Vision Statement

*To be an engaging, passionate, spiritually healthy
community, open to all God's people*



SIN, THE BCP AND THE EVANGEL

Posted on [December 17, 2021](#) by [Stephen J Waller](#)

I have been a member of the Episcopal Church since 1960 and a priest of the Episcopal Church since 1973. For some reason, of late, the frequency with which we Episcopalians “address” our “sin” in the liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer has been causing me some puzzle.

My concern has to do with whether or not we members of the Episcopal Church are not too familiar with the word “sin” and therefore not really paying attention to the word itself or to what the liturgies of the Church actually invite us to be doing in our too frequent use of what we call The General Confession. When we gather to pray, be it the Eucharist or one of the Divine Offices the opportunity to confess our sins in a General Confession almost always plays a part of that liturgy. Why?

That we are all of us sinners hardly anyone but the sociopaths among us understands to be true. And, indeed, when I am aware of some sin in my life, I am eager to find a way to confess it and hear the words that my particular sin(s) has/have been forgiven. But, Good Episcopal friends, The General Confessions do not “do it” for me because I understand those Confessions to be General, not Specific....we are confessing the sin of the Community of which we are all a part, how we as the Body of Christ serve Christ and how we do not during a General Confession. We are not confessing our very own particular and specific sins in that prayer...or, at least, we should not be doing that. How does our corporate sinfulness as a community confessed in the General Confession address my own specific sin? I do not believe that it does and I wonder if I am the alone in thinking this. Everyone of us who wishes to confess specific sins may do that anywhere, anytime and, if contrite and if intending to amend ones life, be certain of the forgiveness of God.

The World around us pays attention to what you and I say in our liturgies when they either attend or snoop around the edges of The Church at prayer. I believe that our liturgical focus on “sin” may be one of the reasons that our Churches have fewer folk in the pews. To focus on sin turns out to be less than an inviting Evangel. Just like all of us Episcopalians know that we are sinners....most folk in the World, not in Church, also know that they too fall short of being perfect humans. But unlike the standard member of the Episcopal Church, folk outside the Church do not dwell on it as frequently as we do in our liturgies. I am not asking that we completely remove confession from our liturgies, but I am asking us to be more intentional about the use of the confessions. When one

hears the words: "Let us confess our sins against God and our Neighbor," I wonder if we actually do confess "our" sins" or if we are merely mouthing the words. Mercifully, it is allowed in the rubrics to omit the General Confession on occasion...there are times in the liturgical year when we get a break from too frequent confession...thanks be.

I not only want The Church I love to be an inviting place for us but also an inviting place for those who may stumble inside and pray with us. What I want to hear and what I want others to hear is the proclamation of the Love of God in all our lives preceding our need to bend the knee in abject sorrow for being less than perfect. People are starving to know that they are loved...that we are all the Apple of God's Eye. How might we more effectively communicate that in our liturgies? That is what I believe we Christians need to be about. That is what I believe would be a welcoming word to the stranger in our midst.

The words we use in our liturgies do matter. Our familiarity with those words can sap them of their power. We need to pay attention to those words and sometimes to take a break from some of them to recover the real power of what the BCP asks of us. The words we use reflect what we believe as Christians...they do matter and we need to speak them with understanding and intentionality. If we can do that, the guests among us will sense that these words fill our lives with hope and comfort and purpose...and, just maybe, that guest may want to know what we know in using those words over and over again as we do.

Stephen Waller

Did you know...



that the Plate Income from the 2nd Sunday of every month goes to the Rector's Ministry Fund? This fund allows Fr. Christopher to spread the message of St. Thomas beyond the church campus, reaching into the community to help persons and organizations who are in need.

TO LOOK LIKE *Jesus*

A Call to the Church
and the Nation

Thursday, Jan. 6, at 12 p.m. Eastern

Join Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Washington Bishop Mariann Budde, the Rev. Glenna Huber, and other local and national leaders for a livestreamed celebration of Epiphany, the season of light, from the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, D.C.

This Epiphany, we will proclaim that we recognize Christ alive and moving wherever people are looking, acting, and loving like Jesus. Bishop Curry will invite Episcopalians to commit afresh to becoming vibrant, loving, healing, truth-telling embodiments of Jesus and his light—in our communities and in our nation.

The worship service will feature the witness and voice of a diversity of people who are the face of Christ—from ordained Episcopal ministers to unhoused people who are also leading the church. Artists will include Kory Caudill, composer and musical director for Concert for the Human Family, and Chanda Leigh Adeogba, lead musician for Imagine Church-Atlanta.

Bishop Curry also will offer a videotaped address to the nation later that day.

Join livestream:

<https://vimeo.com/656339395>





Information Sheet Homeless Count

Dallas and Collin Counties Point in Time (PIT) Count, January 25, 2022

Once a year, along with communities across the country, we count our homeless friends. The Count, a requirement under Federal Law, helps communities understand the extent of homelessness, changing trends, and the measure of their success in making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring. It's also an important reminder that in Dallas and Collin Counties, everybody counts.

Purpose:

The purpose of the HUD Point-in-Time (PIT Count) is to obtain a snapshot census of people experiencing homelessness in our community on one night in January.

The count includes people who, on the night of the count, are:

- Sheltered (living in emergency shelters or transitional housing)
- Unsheltered (staying outdoors or places not designed for habitation including vehicles, streets, parks and abandoned buildings)



Photo by [Matt Collamer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The data collected during the PIT count helps our community understand the extent of homelessness, changing trends, and the measure of success in making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring. It's also an important reminder that in Dallas and Collin Counties, everybody counts.

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Under U.S. Law, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds most homeless services housing providers, through such CoC organizations. MDHA is the designated lead agency for Dallas County.

Sign Up in the Narthex

Teams should be no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 people. Because of COVID restrictions in 2021, MDHA did not use volunteers for the count, instead they used professionals and counted people over a period of time. St. Thomas has had a team every year since 2017. It would be nice to have more than one team this year.

Dallas and Collin Counties Point in Time (PIT) Count, January 25, 2022

Register with MDHA for “Point In Time” Homeless Count



Go to <https://mdha.pointintime.info/register.cfm> or scan the adjacent QR code with your phone or QR code app.

When registering, I've already registered the following information:

Organization Name: Episcopal Church of St Thomas the Apostle

Group Name: St Thomas Doubters

Search Area: The area(s) to search I chose Dallas County Northeast as primary, Dallas County Southeast and Dallas County Southwest as alternates. From past experience, the chosen areas will give us the best opportunity to find homeless individuals.

COVID Protocols

There are new procedures concerning COVID-19 that were not required for Volunteers in the past.

Please note especially Item 3. They include:

1. Community volunteers must not be immunocompromised or at risk for severe COVID
2. Community volunteers must be fully vaccinated including booster
3. **Community volunteers will email a Negative Rapid COVID test on 1/25 to mdhainfo@mdhadallas.org.**
4. Community volunteers will wear a protective gear - at least a surgical mask, no cloth or mesh mask

**** Given my recent experience getting COVID testing, I advise that you register for a Rapid Test well in advance. I've used CVS and they provide a 2-week window ahead of your preferred appointment date, time and location.**

Blessing Bags / Donations

Each year, the volunteers have assembled items to distribute to the homeless **1) during the PIT and 2) to hand out leftover bags in our normal travel around town.** Attached is an “Item List” of products we normally include in Blessing Bags. Feel free to purchase items for the bags to donate In-Kind in quantities of 10, 20 or 40 items.

Last year we provided over \$400 worth of items for 20 people. We the 4 volunteers last year, each donated \$100. Contributions are **not required** to participate in the PIT Count. **Even if you are not participating in the PIT Count searching for homeless, your donations would be very helpful.**



We plan to assemble the Blessing Bags after lunch on Sunday, January 23, 2022, about 2PM at the church.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me:

Charles Mullins, ph (214)558-2399 or email: cmullinsjr@gmail.com

Goal is to assemble 20 or 40 Blessing Bags. If donating items, please buy in quantities of 10, 20, or 40 each of like or similar items.

If donating CASH, average cost of 1 Blessing Bag is \$25.

1) New Unisex Toiletries (prefer no "Travel Size")

- a) Warm Socks, (like cotton crew socks) white are best because they are easiest to clean
- b) Full bars of soap.
- c) Toothpaste, regular size, ie 5 – 6oz tubes
- d) Toothbrush, Med or Soft bristles
- e) Condoms (should be available for women whose partners do not have one)
- f) Ziplock bags (2 or 3 per bag) to store toothbrush and soap.
- g) Cotton gloves

2) Men's Hygiene

- a) Men's deodorant
- b) Disposable razors

3) Women's Hygiene Products

- a) Women's Deodorant
- b) Feminine hygiene pads, level 2 or level 4
- c) Tampons
- d) Disposable razors

4) Food

(Please remember, homeless people probably do NOT have access to can openers, spoons, knives or forks, so they must be EASY to OPEN and EAT. Should also be in SINGLE-Serving sizes OR non-perishable food in resealable containers.)

- a) Canned protein (like tuna, chicken, sausages) in "easy-open" pouches or pop-top cans
- b) Cups of soup, either microwaveable or add hot water (ex. Ramen noodle cups)
- c) Packaged crackers, like peanut butter crackers.
- d) Protein bars
- e) "Canned" fruit cups
- f) Juice boxes or boxed milk
- g) Nuts, dried fruit or Trail Mix, or similar healthy snacks; again **EASY-OPEN** packages

PLEASE AVOID perishable fresh fruit (especially NO BANANAS), because the bags may sit in the Church Office or the back seats of our cars for days before we hand them out, and the fruit will rot!

We plan to assemble the Blessing Bags at the church after lunch (about 2PM) January 23, 2022.

If you have any further questions, please contact Charles Mullins, phone (214)558-2399, email: cmullinsjr@gmail.com

Giving on line

If you would like to help fund Blessing Bag(s), under "Fund" and please select "General Fund - Plate/Non-Pledge Income". Email pam@thedoubter.org so that plate donation will go towards buying the necessary Blessing bag items.

Parish Schedule

Week of January 9th

9 Sunday		The First Sunday after Epiphany
	8:00 am	Rite One Eucharist/Nave
	10:30 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave *Also Live-streamed on Facebook
10 Monday		Office closed.
11 Tuesday		
	6:00 pm	Mission Outreach/SR
12 Wednesday		
	Noon	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave
	6:00 pm	Study of Paired Saints/SR
	7:00 pm	CoDA/ZOOM
13 Thursday		
14 Friday		
15 Saturday		
	8:00 am	Step Up/SR
		Serving Altar Guild Members
Room Codes:		SR - South Room; NR - North Room; CG - Community Garden; PH - Parish Hall; CR - Office Conference Room; K - Kitchen; N - Nave; IG - Interior Garden; M-Music Room

Epiphany Study



Paired Saints: Exploring Desire, Embodied Spirituality, and the Renewal of Sacred Imagination

I will lead a study of **Paired Saints** for five Wednesday evenings during the season of Epiphany, January 12, 19, 26, February 2, and 9. Everyone is invited. There is no prerequisite, and no books to read. We will learn about three sets of same-gender saints who have been celebrated by the LGBTQIA+ community for many generations: Ss. Perpetua & Felicity, Sergius & Bacchus, and Polyeuct & Nearchus. Sessions will feature media presentations, icons, and lots of discussion

of same-sex desire and holy love in antiquity and its influence in the present. I will issue a prospectus on the sessions in the near future. Please attend, either in person or online, and bring your imaginations with you!

Stephen V. Sprinkle, Your Theologian-in-Residence

Power of Prayer - a Thank you!

For a couple of years now, the congregation has been praying for a young man named Hank, who has been incarcerated. I am happy to say he was released in November and I had the opportunity to see him this week. He said his 7 years in the system were blessed and that he never had anything bad happen to him. I'd say our God answered all those prayers for him.

I just want to let everyone who prayed know God is listening to us. I also want to thank you all for your dedication.

Blessings to all!

Paul McCright

Liturgical Assignments & Lectionary

Sunday, January 9, 2021

LEMs: Sub-Dcn: 2nd LEM: N/A Ext: T. Torres

Lectors: 10:30 In-Person Service
1st: J. Brown 2nd: J. Knight
POP Congregational Volunteer

Ushers/Greeters: K. Carson, A. Montague, J. DeuPree

Acolytes: **Crucifer:** D. Hess **Torches:** R. Rippamonti & A. Galue

Counters: J. DeuPree & L. Pearson

Lectionary

First Reading

Isaiah 43: 1-7

Psalm

29

Second Reading

Acts 8: 14-17

Gospel

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

PRAYER LIST

Healing in the Lives of: Ben Gloria Ann Patricia Ginger
Annie Sandy Merjen Jack Harold Kelly
David Rusty Chase Maxine Anne Diana Sherry Peter
Alan Steven Phillip Gary Don Kaden Etta Patricia Mo John S.

In Thanksgiving For: Annie Jones

God's Grace for: Children of Belize Anne Nelda

Guidance: Gwen Emri

In Prison: Allen Orlando Steven Aaron Brandon GR
Stephanie Frank

Serving in the Armed Forces: Alex Aaron Connor Joyce
Collin Tyler Jesse

Seeking Employment: Bryan Maurice Brook Robin Vicki
Trey Gabby Gabriel Gail Oliver Aarib

Holy Death: Glen Paul

Rest of the Soul: Jeff Harold Carol Bryan

In the Diocese: **Bonham:** Holy Trinity: The Rev. Cn. Rob Smith
Cedar Hill: Good Shepherd: The Rev. Marc Dobson

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day

The Rev'd Virginia Holleman

Christmas 2, Year C – 01/02/2022

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalms 84:1-8

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

In the Name of God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit. AMEN.

My father was a West Pointer, a career military officer. He was always fair but as a child I did not always think of him as being warm or loving. I think he was but it wasn't always apparent to me as a small child. He was very strict, and he could be stern when we didn't live up to his standards; what was apparent though was that his word was as good as gold, and if he thought we had been wronged he set out to make it right, and he could be as protective and defensive as any mother bear with her cubs. Today we call that integrity, but to me as a little girl it meant I could count on him to do or be what he said he would. He was reliable. And probably of all the characteristics I look for in other people, these are the ones that I admire the most – integrity and reliability.

As a kid I suspect that - without really thinking about it - my picture of what God was like was somewhat colored by what I thought my father was like. If Daddy was strict or demanding or generous or funny, then that probably wasn't too far off from what God was like in a similar situation. I daresay this might also have been true with Jesus when he was a small child. If he had an image of his heavenly Father as being loving and just, I don't think it's unreasonable to think that he very well may have learned that at the knee of Joseph, that Joseph himself was more than likely loving and just.

We don't know much about Joseph - Scripture tells us very little - but what it does say is very telling. Matthew tells us that Joseph was a carpenter – “Is this not the carpenter's son?” the people of Nazareth ask when the adult Jesus starts teaching in the synagogue (13:55). Mark describes the same scenario, and we learn from him that Joseph taught his trade to Jesus – “Is this not the carpenter, Mary's son?” those same people ask (6:3). We know from Matthew and Luke both that Joseph was a descendent of the House of David. Matthew also tells us when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant before they had lived together, that he was a righteous man and unwilling to publicly disgrace his young bride-to-be. In ancient times, girls were betrothed when they were about twelve years old though they generally were not married until the girl had reached maturity at the age of thirteen. But the engagement was legally binding and in essence the girl became the legal property of her future husband or his family. For Mary to have become pregnant before she and Joseph lived together was an affront to him and his family, and literally damaged his property. He was legally entitled to have her killed, stoned to death. But, “being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, [Joseph] planned to dismiss her quietly”

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day

(Matthew 1:19). This is not someone hung up on what his legal rights are or what other people think but someone who is obviously compassionate and kind, someone who is merciful and not given to vindictive behavior. It's not hard to see why God would have entrusted his son to the care of this man Joseph.

But more important than any of this to the Christian story, Matthew tells us that Joseph listened to God and responded to God's message. Before Joseph can take any legal action to divorce Mary, God sends his angel to Joseph in a dream - a very common way in Scripture for God to speak to human beings - "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She is to bear a son and you are to name Him Jesus" (1:20). Does Joseph argue that he has been wronged and the girl needs to be put away? No, Joseph consents - he takes Mary as his wife and, by naming the baby, he adopts him, thus providing the child with the ancestors from the House of David that are necessary for the Messiah - just as if the child Jesus had been Joseph's own biological son.

But this is only the first time in this story that Joseph listens and responds to God. After the Wise Men had visited Herod proclaiming the birth of the Messiah, Herod sets out to destroy the young child. Again the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and warns him to flee with the child and his mother. Again Joseph listens and consents, and again the child is saved by God's initiative and Joseph's willingness to do what God is asking of him. When it's safe, the scene is repeated and Joseph returns from Egypt with his family and settles in Nazareth - we have again the dream, the message, Joseph listening and obeying - four accounts in all in Matthew in which the young child is saved by Joseph because he listens to God's messenger and does what God expects of him. In other words, Joseph is reliable.

To digress a moment from Joseph - it's very important for Matthew to establish for his audience that Jesus fulfills the Messianic expectations for the Jewish people. The coming of the Messiah is foretold in Scripture, and Matthew makes sure that his Jewish Christian readers realize how each step of the journey that brings this baby to save the world is in fact a fulfillment of Scripture. Think back to the first Joseph you encountered when you first began Bible study, possibly when you were very young - Joseph and his coat of many colors. The first Joseph did not escape to Egypt but was actually sold into slavery and taken there. But because God was also with this Joseph, he was able to save God's Chosen People by later bringing them into Egypt to escape a terrible famine. Egypt becomes a place of refuge, not just for the infant Jesus and his parents, but also for the earlier Hebrew people before them. But Egypt is not the Promised Land, and it's Moses that leads the Children of God up out of Egypt and slavery and into the land that God had promised them. It's with Moses as their leader that the Hebrew slaves become a free people, become God's people. And so it is with Jesus that he too comes up out of Egypt - "Out of Egypt I have called my son" Matthew writes - so that God's people who have become enslaved to sin can once again become God's own. Matthew sees Jesus not just as the Messiah or the Son of God,

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day

but also as the new Moses who will lead his people once again out of slavery - this time slavery to sin - and into the Promised Land of redemption.

What do we suppose it would have done to the story if at any point along the way Joseph had refused to listen to God's angelic messenger? If, instead of doing as God had asked, Joseph had said: Nope, sorry, I'm not going to Egypt; I don't like the climate and I don't speak the language - we'll just take our chances here! Or if once he had settled his family in Egypt he had balked at moving them once again, this time to Nazareth, some tiny insignificant village in Galilee. Where would we be if Joseph had refused to listen to the Angel who came to tell him about Mary's expected baby and the role God expected Joseph to play? Where would we be if Joseph had not been a righteous and just man, a man who was merciful and compassionate and willing to listen to God and do what was asked of him? A man upon whom God could rely to help God fulfill the promises God had made to the Chosen People?

The miracle of Christmas is not only that God loved us enough to give his only Son to redeem the world but that God also trusted two perfectly ordinary, normal people - unexceptional except in their faith - two ordinary people - just like you and me - to raise this extraordinary Child-God as their own. God singled out Mary, not just because she was obedient and good, but also because she was strong and courageous and faithful. And God singled out Joseph for exactly the reasons Scripture give us - because Joseph was righteous and merciful and could give this extraordinary Child the guidance and knowledge that he would need in following the plan that God had for him. And Joseph could do this, not because he was exceptional, but because he listened to God and allowed God to use him to do God's will. And this is probably the single most important thing that Joseph taught this Child-God Jesus - to listen to God his Heavenly Father and to allow God to use him to do God's will. Joseph becomes for us the model for our own discipleship, a man of compassion rather than strict adherence to the letter of the law, a man of integrity and reliability, a man who has no higher will than to do the will of God. AMEN.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



4th Nelson Collier



9th John VanBuskirk



12th Jan Scogin



24th John Mullen



27th Nan Alexander



29th Kathy Carson



30th Lee Corbin

Parish Office hours are 8:00 AM until 2:00 PM

Tuesdays through Fridays

214-352-0410

Emergency contact: Rev Christopher Blake Thomas 214-352-0410 ext 6

(Please leave message with name, call back number, and brief explanation of urgency. Fr. Christopher will receive an urgent message to call back as soon as possible.)

The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop

The Right Rev. G. Wayne Smith, Bishop of Oversight (Missouri Diocese)

The Right Rev. George R. Sumner, Bishop of Dallas

The Right Rev. Michael Smith, Assistant Bishop of Dallas

The Rev. Christopher Blake Thomas, Rector

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