



December 2020

Dear Beloved Community,

I pray you may experience Emmanuel—God with us in this season. I keep pondering how do we stay connected at a time when so many need to be separate to protect their health and reduce risk from COVID? How do we encourage one another to keep Hope and Faith alive and tend to the grief of loss of normalcy upon so many other losses?

In answer to these questions, we have brought meals and newsletters with stories and information to tend to your grief. Your caring for each other team has formed a calling tree to keep in touch by phone. Postcards have and will be sent out.

We are connected through the love of Christ and each have many gifts—so it is I invite your thoughts, prayers, and discerning for how God is calling us to stay connected. We need one another especially now. Send your thoughts by email at hope@stgeorgestc.org or call 832-922-7022. I give thanks for each of you as you pray for me and Susan and our families as we grieve the loss of our mothers.

In Fervent Hope,

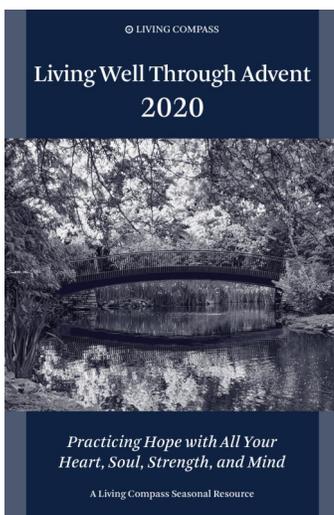
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Robin+".

Pastor Robin+

Please be sure to confirm your pledge for 2021. You can call Ann John with the amount, mail in your pledge card, drop off your pledge card during the week, or place it in the offering plate on Sunday at our 11 AM service.

5 people have dared to greatly pledge for the first time!

P.S. I hope you will join us as we practice Hope this month!



Ways to join us:

- Read the Devotional you were sent last month
- Daily Devotionals during Noonday Prayer on Facebook: St. George's Texas City
- Listen to Sunday Sermons

If you are using Zoom for our services or other meetings, here is the updated information

Meeting ID: 977 818 3721

Passcode: 715836

Join us for worship services for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany

*How will you make space for God to come anew in your heart and home?
Here are some tools to help.*

Advent

Sunday Services

9:30 AM Online via Facebook: St Georges Texas City

9:30 AM Online via Zoom (*Meeting ID: 977 818 3721 & NEW Passcode: 715836*)

11 AM In-Person

Practicing Hope with all Our Heart

Noonday Prayer M-F 12 PM on Facebook: St Georges Texas City

Starting Monday, November 30th all the way through Friday, December 24th, we will have our Noonday Meditation centered around Hope. We will be using the “Living Well Through Advent 2020” booklet. We hope you might join us online and share with your family and friends!

Advent Calendar in a Bag

Before Advent started on Sunday, November 29th, Pastor Robin & David delivered Advent Calendars in a Bag to some of our families and friends. A fun way we are passing the stories of our faith to our baptized, newly confirmed, and other families we know and love.

Check out John and Bre with their bags!

Thank you Sharon, Susan, Lynn, Ann, Marie, Byron, Raquel and Pastor Robin for putting them together!

Didn't get a bag? We still have a few. It's not too late to get one and discover treats and ways to pray as we prepare for celebrating Jesus' birth and coming.



Christmas Eve Service

This year, we will have a candlelight Christmas Eve Service in-person at 3 PM (with masks and social distancing). There will also be an online service available.



Instead of our usual no-rehearsal pageant, we will be having a Virtual Christmas Pageant: Do Not Be Afraid. **AND, WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PUT THIS PAGEANT TOGETHER BEFOREHAND.** We will start recording the week of Monday, December 7th on Zoom—join the fun from the safety of your home. If you are able, you can choose to record your video at St. George's. If you are interested in being a part of the pageant, we have many parts—all ages are welcome! Let Raquel know by texting her at 409-739-5118 or by emailing her at raquel@stgeorgestc.org.

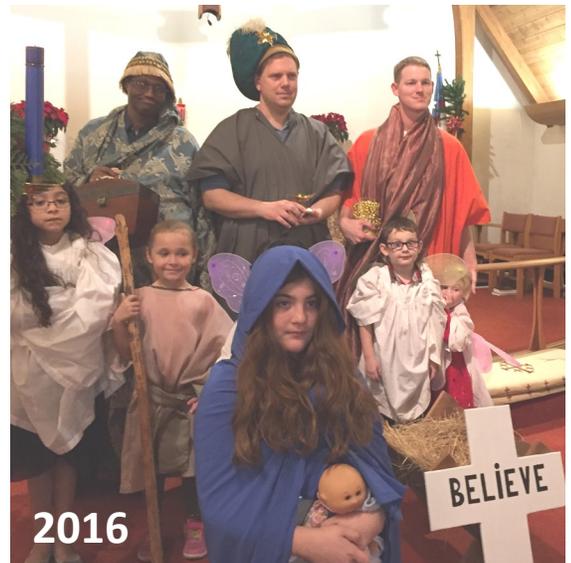


A few of the characters: Mary, Angel Gabe, Joseph, Elizabeth, Caesar, King Herod, Donkey, Star, Sheep, Shepherds, and Magi.

You will be able to watch (anytime) the Virtual Pageant on early Christmas Eve Day. For those attending our Christmas Eve service in-person, you will be able to watch the pageant in Quin Hall after the service—while maintaining social distance. Refreshments provided.

Christmas Eve Pageant from Ages Past . . .

Do you see anyone you know? Send us your favorite Christmastime photos at St. George's! You can send them to raquel@stgeorgestc.org or you can drop a copy off at the church.



Epiphany Service

On Sunday, January 3, 2021, we will be celebrating Epiphany in-person at 11 AM or at 9:30 AM online via Facebook or Zoom.

Blessing Kits for claiming the Light of Christ over your home or business will be available soon for you to pick up so you can bless your home and/or business for the new year!



AMAZON SMILE

Make a big difference with little effort. List St. George's as beneficiary on your Amazon Smile Account. Shop for gifts at smile.amazon.com/ch/74-60210811

Amazon will give a percentage of sales to St. George's. You purchase what you need and they give over and above to St. George's!

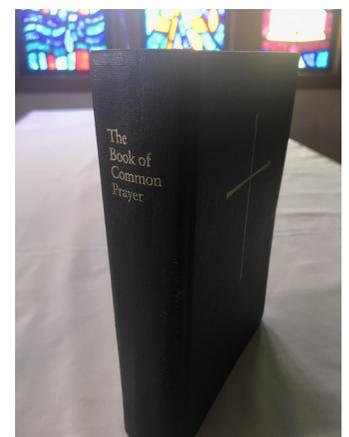
Invite family & friends to sign up!



To choose St. George's, without the link, you can go to smile.amazon.com and click Get Started. It will lead you to the pick your charity page. Type in St George Episcopal Church; then scroll down until you see St George Episcopal Church Texas City, TX. Click Select.

The Book of Common Prayer

Would you like to borrow a Book of Common Prayer to follow along with us during services like Noonday Prayer? Let us know! They will be available for pick up once you sign up. If you are unable to pick one up, let us know.



The Basis for Hope

When you've experienced a deep loss, it tends to dominate your life.

You feel despair, but Jesus came to give you hope.

You feel sadness, but Jesus came to bring joy into your life.

Your life is in turmoil, yet Jesus came to bring peace to your life.

Much of your time is dominated by tears, but Jesus came to wipe away every tear.

“He is your source of strength, and He is your stability.” - *H. Norman Wright*

The bible describes God's plan to remove suffering and provide us with lasting comfort and eternal life. To understand it, we need to see why we suffer in the first place. We suffer for many reasons: because we live in a world of sickness and disaster, because of the evil actions of others, and because of the consequences of our own disobedience to God (the Bible calls this “sin”). God is pure and holy: He cannot tolerate sin. Not only does our sin keep us from God, it also has consequences—suffering in this life and physical death followed by eternal punishment.

So, where is the hope? God loves us so much and does not want us to suffer. He has provided a way to release us from the penalty and presence of sin, both now and eternally. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ (who was sin-free), to be born on this earth and pay the penalty for our sins. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven and our slate is wiped clean. And one day He will remove all sin and suffering from the world. This is reason for great hope.

“When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life . . . Because of his grace he declared us righteous and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7 NLT)

Faithful God, I can trust You. You have a plan to take care of me, if I will turn my life over to You. Through You, we have the promise of everlasting life in an amazing place called heaven, a place that is just as real as the air I breathe.

Takeaway: God provides you with real hope amid your grief.

Reflect: What hope has God given you?



From GriefShare

Surviving the Holidays after Loss: Does it get any Easier?

Each holiday after your loved one's death will bring new changes, more memories, and new questions of "Will it be any easier this year?" Be encouraged that it does get easier.

"It may seem like you'll never get through dealing with this loss and pain, but with hard work and God walking alongside you, you will," encourages Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge.

"When you get to the other side of that loss, you'll be able to remember the loss situation, and the positives and negatives associated with the person who's now lost. You'll be able to look afresh at what your life has at the present and the people who around you. You'll be able to see your new purposes, and perhaps even the silver lining of how God uses pain to show us joy, and how sometimes going through difficulty will point us in directions we never would have believed were possible.

Take Courage: You will be able to laugh and enjoy holidays again. You will be able to walk in thankfulness throughout each new year. With Jesus, darkness can never overcome you because He has defeated darkness, brokenness, and death (Revelation 21:4). And because of Christ, you can live with hope as you draw closer to Him and come to know Him intimately.

"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall . . . Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

(Lamentations 3:19, 21-23)

Savior God, because of You, I have hope to keep me moving forward, one step at a time. I place my life in Your hands, knowing You are a sovereign God with a perfect plan—a plan that is much bigger than I can comprehend. I trust in You, realizing there is no one else to trust, no one like You. Forgive me for the times I've moved away from You or doubted You. Draw me into Your loving arms and empower me to walk forward in this life with You. Amen.

Takeaway: The pain of grief does lessen.

From GriefShare

When the Holidays are Hard — Try Looking Beyond the Holidays

“Finally, brothers and sisters . . . encourage one another . . . And the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11)

Imagine: The holidays are coming to an end, and the new year is approaching. As you continue to walk through the grieving process, you will need help and encouragement. The Bible says we were created to be in relationship with other people: to interact with, care for, encourage, and support. God wants us to accept help from other people.

“Healing from trauma or grief happens in the context of community. I don’t know of any other way of finding healing that is not in the context of finding others who can help you,” says David Bueno Martin.

If you do not have people in your life who encourage you and point you toward God’s help and healing, pray that God will lead you to safe, uplifting people who will walk alongside you on your grief journey.

“You have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul. You have . . . set me in a safe place.” (Psalm 31:7b-8 NLT)

Lord, please guide me to people who will support and uplift me through my journey of grief. Give me the courage to take the step of reaching out to people for help. And thank you for the safety of Your presence and Your promises.

Takeaway: Make a point to be with people who will support and care for you through your grief process.

Reflect: Who are the safe people in your life? Those who will not misjudge, but will listen to you, pray with you, cry with you, give you good counsel and point you to the Lord for help?

Consider:

- Attending 1 GriefShare Class either at St. George’s or online at www.griefshare.org
- Getting Daily Devotionals sent to you by signing up through www.griefshare.org
- Spiritual direction from someone trained to journey with you as a soul friend like Lisa Tenney who did the grief scarves with us for All Saint’s Day

From GriefShare

Survival Tips for making it through the holidays with loss

To remember and honor your loved one this season, consider one these ideas.

- Buy a small, live tree plant in your yard. The tree will be there for years to come and can be decorated with lights each year.
- If you decide to hang stockings, include the missing family member's stocking. You or other family members can put a little gift or notes in the stocking.
- If your loved one had a particular heart or passion for children, animals, flowers, a certain cause, etc., volunteer an hour of your time or some money helping a local organization in his/her honor.
- Create a scrapbook, a photo collage, a quilt, a wood project, a garden, something in his/her honor.



- Find something simple, but meaningful, to place in your home to remember your loved one. A small vase with a single rose, a candle, a poinsettia plant, or a Christmas cactus (these can be planted outdoors)
- Buy or make an ornament that reminds you of your loved one.
- Visit the cemetery and decorate the grave with flowers, a small tree, or a cross.
- Sit around the dinner table or Christmas tree and talk about your loved one. Share good memories, lessons learned from your loved one, and character traits to exemplify.

- If your loved one had a favorite cookie/cake or meal, make that meal in his/her honor and give it to a person who would be thankful to receive it.
- Have a candle-lighting ceremony with your family or close friends. As each person lights a candle, he or she may share something meaningful about the loved one. People could also share a picture, song, poem, or a tangible item that was special to the loved one. End with a time of prayer.
- Have everyone share a special picture of your loved one and the memory associated with that picture.



Plan a night of remembrance not only in honor of your lost loved one, but including other friends who have lost a loved one. Provide ornaments or have people bring a special ornament to hang on the tree in remembrance of their lost loved one. Include food, music, Scripture, and prayer.

Your loved One's Legacy

Part of a person's legacy is the good traits, lessons, deeds, and memories that he or she left with those still living. Your loved one's legacy lives on through you and through all the people your loved one touched in life. The holidays are a nice time to remember and record this legacy.

Write down valuable character traits that your loved one exemplified.

What good lessons have you learned from your loved one?

How will you make a point to pass on those good traits and lessons to other people?

Ideas:

- Send a note to family and friends asking them to write down a special memory and something they learned from your loved one. Compile them into a book to share.
- At family get-togethers, plan to go around the room and share a humorous and happy memory of a time with your loved one. Or have everyone share your loved one's legacy in his/her life.
- Start a memory journal. Fill your journal with special memories of times with your loved one. This journal will bring you much joy, laughter, and bittersweet tears in the years to come.
- Be sure to tell others that it's okay for them to talk about your loved one in your presence.

From GriefShare

Be Thankful

Thankfulness is a healing tool. There's always something to be thankful for:

"I'm grateful I had my father for as long as I did, that he was the person he was, and that God had uniquely given him to me." – Phil

"I am so grateful for our church and how well they've cared for us." – Carla

"I'm grateful that Christ came into my life. It's very hopeful to know I'm not alone." – Krista

"I'm grateful to have my family." – Shay

"I appreciate God's forgiveness because I know I can stand before God righteous. I thank God for the gift of my salvation." – Nicole

Dear God, I am thankful for . . . (Circle what you are thankful for.)

The time I had with my loved one.

I'll see my loved one again.

My loved one is no longer suffering.

What I've learned from my loved one.

How God is helping me, comforting me, and providing for me in my grief.

My family.

My church.

My friends.

Good memories.

God and His promises.

My GriefShare group.

Write anything else that you are thankful for today.

If you are anyone you know feel suicidal

Thoughts of wanting to escape the pain are normal in grief, and you may even have thought you cannot live without your loved one. If you have considered taking your life or how you would plan to do that — pick up the phone.

“Many times individuals have thoughts of, I just don’t want to live anymore,” says H. Norman Wright, an expert in crisis counseling and intervention. ***“Anytime you have a pattern of suicidal thinking, let somebody else know, because the main problem right now is that the only person you’re talking with is yourself, and you’re not getting good advice from yourself.”*** Find somebody you trust. It could be a pastor, a counselor, a very good friend who is going to listen to you.

“Realize that fleeting thoughts like this are quite normal, but when it becomes a pattern, then it becomes more serious. Never neglect it; never ignore it. Reach out. It might be one of the most difficult things you have to do, but reach out and let somebody else assist you, walk with you, and loan you his or her faith and hope at this time when yours is so low. That way you’ll be able to get through it.”

What to do if you feel suicidal:

1. Call 911 or go to the emergency room.
2. Call a friend, family member, doctor, pastor, or counselor immediately, and tell that person you’re feeling suicidal. You should not be alone.
3. Call a suicide help line, such as 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Keep those phone numbers by your telephone or saved in your cell phone.

The bible includes many records of men and women crying to God in desperation and honesty. You can follow their example by reading their words as your prayer to God. A great example can be found in Psalm 61. Read these verses when you have time. For now, here’s a prayer that you can cry out to God.

God, I’m overwhelmed. I don’t like thinking or feeling the way I am right now, and I want all this to stop. Help me remember that You see my tears and hear my every thought. I am frozen and don’t know what to do or who to turn to. Help me to trust that You are with me, even now, and to trust there is no problem or situation too big for You to handle. Guide and direct me to the person or the help I need. Thank you for loving me, and thank you for the Bible because it points me to hope. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

From GriefShare

Inspiring Hope in many languages in the midst of the pandemic

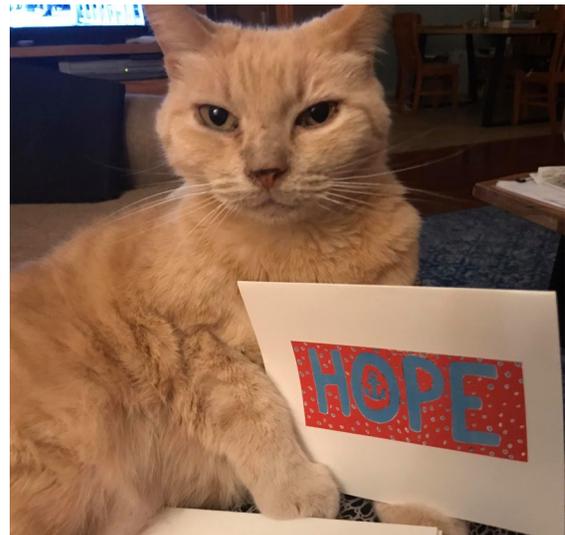
St. George's shared signs of Esperanza with Bishop Monterroso near the end of November. He in turn shared them with all the Hispanic congregations in the Houston area. This is part of a series they are doing for Advent. Not unlike our series on "Practicing Hope with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind."

Follow along with the devotional sent last month or catch it live daily on Facebook:
St Georges Texas City during Noonday Prayer - Monday through Friday.

Sunday sermons at 9:30 AM online and 11 AM in person will also explore how we can practice and be hope in these difficult times! You can always binge watch them!

*Consider giving the gift of Hope this holiday season.
Everyone needs a sign of Hope to remind them God is with them even in this.*

Consider giving A pack of 6 Hope cards as a gift so others can help send love and hope throughout the year!



On Giving Tuesday, we invited friends and family to be Generous and help us continue to create Ambassadors of Hope - who go out and share signs of hope and love in the world one person at a time. Surely we all know someone in need of more hope right now. Your additional donations will enable us to continue to share online and reach more people with the message of Hope. Won't you ask your friends and family to help us share Hope further?

Donations are easily made on our website www.StGeorgestc.org with the Donate button at the top of the page.

Be an Ambassador of Hope this Advent by practicing Hope and then being available for the Spirit of God to use you to give Hope to others! Together we are helping transform lives through God's spirit.