

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



January 23, 2022

## GOSPEL

*what makes good news*

by Drew Downs

This most familiar word, gospel, is very particular. It's a church word. And not just any church word. We associate it with Jesus. His life and ministry. What he commands.

The word means "good news" which is also familiar. But not necessarily as a church word. We associate it with something we like to hear. Like someone has gotten into college or a test came back negative. This good news is news that brings relief or joy.

What connects these versions of good news is the idea that what God is doing **is** good news. That what Jesus is preaching **is** good news.

When Jesus describes the scripture's fulfillment in his bringing the good news to the poor and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor, we're called to see that as relief and joy. He's naming what good news means for us.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*Winter 2022*

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## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

### **Rector's Report to the Annual Meeting**

To the people of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, the Terre Haute community, and the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, I give thanks everyday for being with you and serving as your rector. It is a blessing for which I give constant thanks to God.

### **This past year**

- We gathered to celebrate our principal feasts as directed in the Book of Common Prayer and including our patronal feast, December 26th.
- We partnered with the Farrington Grove Chorale to resume our annual lessons and carols.
- We strengthened our partnership with our neighbor churches through HolyPALOOZA, High Point Youth Group, and developing ministries of service.
- We used our building and technology in innovative ways to gather as the body of Christ.
- We continued our partnership with Manna From Seven, offering a permanent home for a vital feeding ministry to our community.
- We supported the Wabash Valley Homeless Coalition through its cold-weather emergency shelter, the annual Point-in-Time Count and through service on the board.
- We offered Ashes-to-Go and take-home packets.
- We observed a Holy Lent through simplicity and daily devotions.
- We supported a postulant (Joanna Benskin) at seminary at CDSP and witnessed her ordination to the priesthood.
- We have celebrated the lives of those who have died and those celebrating new lives in Christ.
- We have given the grace of Jesus to one another and to countless people in Terre Haute and its neighboring communities.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*Winter 2022*

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**This work continued and changed in 2021 as we continued to adapt to a global pandemic.**

We continue to live into our calling as beacons of Christ to the Terre Haute community. The question of how we maintain church during the pandemic has dominated our thinking. But it is our call to serve that keeps pulling us together...and in new directions.

Even as we resumed worship in our building on Pentecost, we did so with a new commitment to both/and: that we would need to keep our commitment to those who could not be with us in-person. We also continue to offer a printed weekly worship reflection for those without internet access and a recorded devotion for those who do.

We joined the diocesan Church Buildings for Collaborative Partnerships initiative to help us better understand and utilize our church building as a resource that has real value to our community.

And we are investing in new protections for our stained glass windows, hoping to not only protect them for our appreciation, but for their value in visually communicating the gospel to our community.

As we enter 2022 with a mixture of hope and fear, I am once again reminded of a gospel that preaches hope, not fear. Trust in God, not in money. Love, not certainty.

We may be living in the most uncertain of times. But our faith is not about certainty. It doesn't indulge our fear. In fact, it commands us to stymie that fear! To trust when trust seems stupid!

God will manifest in our neighborhood with or without us. We can trust in that. So our work is to join in that work with new vigor and hope and love for this community.

May Christ be our light, our guide, our way through the darkness, and may his inspiration guide us in love for and to one another. Amen.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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We welcomed into the faith through baptism in 2021

Stephanie Alexander

Lucy Bayles

Matthew Floyd

Stella Wayton

We welcomed the mature affirmation of faith through confirmation in 2021

James Greene

Andrew Miller

Keegan Parkhurst

Megan Price

We witnessed the renewal of faith in 2021

Lisa O'Donnell

Jonnee Western

We witnessed the bonding in holy matrimony in 2021

Steven Turner and Elizabeth Wagley

We surrendered to God's care through Christian burial in 2021

Barbara Burns

Paul Campbell

David Fuller

Joe Sanders

Ross Matthew Woodburn

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