

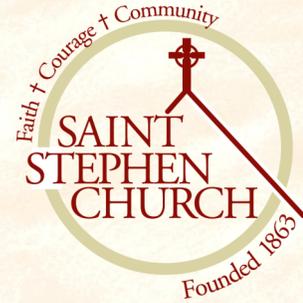
# St. Stephen Church

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God;  
World Day of Peace

January 1, 2021

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 3, 2021



## From Fr. George

Dear Friends

On behalf of all of us at St. Stephen, I wish you and your loved ones a healthy, safe, and happy New Year. We all pray that 2021 will bring about some of the recovery from the challenges of 2020 that we all long for.

I want to thank all those who worked so hard to make Christmas so enjoyable here at St. Stephen. Even though things were different, the one constant was we as a parish family united to experience the love of God at Christmas time. A special thanks to our parish staff and volunteers who made this possible.

I pray that everyone will have a blessed New Year, during which we all more richly share God's love with others.

Fr. George



## January 1: Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Mother of God; World Day of Peace:

Masses will be on Thursday, December 31, Vigil Mass at 4:30pm (Hall); on Friday, January 1, there will be a 7:30 a.m. Mass that is Facebook live-stream only, and in-person Masses at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. in the School Hall. Reservations are required for in-person Masses. Please sign up [here](#).

## Readings for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

Reading I: Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72

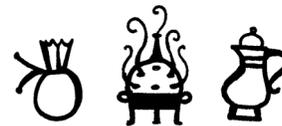
Reading II: Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

The full text of these readings is available at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010321.cfm>. Keep the readings in mind as you ask yourself the questions of the week:

**Teens/Adults:** When have you found the presence of Christ in an unexpected place?

**Children:** Where and in whom will you look for Jesus this week?



## Intercessions for Sunday, January 3

That the Church may continue to be graced with shepherds after Christ's own heart who lead his Church with loving care, we pray to the Lord...

That national and international leaders may be empowered by the Holy Spirit in serving their people as Christ came to serve, we pray to the Lord...

That those whose lives are darkened by the shadow of sin or doubt may be drawn into the light of forgiveness and peace through the grace and mercy of God, we pray to the Lord...

That this Christmas season may be a time of growing in the gifts God has given us, we pray to the Lord...

That our beloved dead may be welcomed into Christ's heavenly kingdom and rest in eternal joy, we pray to the Lord...

410-592-7071 | Parish website: [ssparish.org](http://ssparish.org) | 8030 Bradshaw Road, Kingsville, MD 21087

**Mission Statement:** We, the parish of St. Stephen, will carry out the mission of Jesus Christ as a welcoming, worshipping, Catholic community by sharing, growing and living the Gospel.



## Wise men still seek Him



**And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.**

**Here, then, is essential evidence for faith: conversion.** It is not enough to get “happy” in Church; we have to obey. These Wise Men are walking differently now. They are not going home by the same way they came. They’ve changed direction; they’ve turned around (*conversio*). They are now willing to walk the straight and narrow path that leads to life rather than the wide road that leads to damnation. They are going to obey Christ. They are going to exhibit what St. Paul calls the “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26). They have not just engaged in perfunctory worship; they are showing signs of a true and saving faith. They are not just calling Jesus, “Lord, Lord!” They are doing what He tells them (*cf* Luke 6:46).

No longer mere magi, now they are wise men.

**Walk in the ways of the Wise Men!** Wise men still seek Him; even wiser ones listen to and obey Him. Are we willing to go back to our country by another route? Is ongoing conversion part of our journey home to Heaven? Epiphany means “manifestation.” How is our faith made manifest in our deeds and conversion?

Msgr. Charles Pope, writing at [blog.adw.org](http://blog.adw.org)

### January 2 and 3 Mass intentions

4:30 pm (Hall)	William “Bill” Button (D)
6:00 pm	
8:00 am (Hall)	Harkins Family (L+D)
10:30 am (Hall)	

## The Peace Prayer of St. Francis

“Though written in simple language, the Peace Prayer provides rich material for spiritual reflection.” Dr. Christian Renoux of the University of Orleans, France shares a reflection on each line which we will highlight over the next few weeks.

### **Lord, Make me an instrument of Your peace:**

“Like that of Christ, our mission on earth is to bring to others God’s peace – God’s state of “perfect well-being” and completeness. *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for this rich concept of “peace.”



Often used as a greeting of peace, *Shalom* is a wish that those so greeted will find healing and fullness of life. Francis saw this as his mission, too. In chapter 3 of his Rule of 1223, he advised his followers that in going about the world “they should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words...or criticize others, but they should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone...Whatever house they enter, they should first say, “Peace to this house” (C.f. Luke 10:5).

Surely, Francis was an instrument of peace.

-An excerpt from *Franciscan Spirit Blog* by *Franciscan Media*

## World Day of Peace

Every year on January 1, the Holy Father marks the World Day of Peace with a special message inviting all people to reflect on the important work of building peace. This year’s message is the latest in a long tradition of messages for this day that began with St. Paul VI in 1967 and continued with St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis. Pray for Peace:

**“Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: “Never again war! With war everything is lost”. Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.”**

**Lord God of peace, hear our prayer! Amen.**

- Pope Francis, *Invocation for Peace*, 6/4/14

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**Applications are now open for PreK 4 and Kindergarten at St. Stephen School for the 21/22 school year!**

Please share with your friends and family so they can have an opportunity to experience the St. Stephen difference.

Inquire or apply at [ssschool.org](http://ssschool.org)

## Project Rachel

Project Rachel is a ministry that provides a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts wounded by abortion.

**Come to the Waters of Healing one-day retreats** offer a beautiful opportunity for healing to those who have struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion.

The 2021 dates are: 2/27, 4/24, 6/26, 8/28, 10/30.

The retreat is a chance to get away from the daily pressures to focus on a painful time in life, and to begin healing through a supportive and non-judgmental process. Spiritual exercises focusing on God's forgiveness, compassion, and mercy help participants work through repressed grief and anger that may exist. Many preconceived fears of condemnation are transformed into blessings; memories of abandonment, pain, and confusion are replaced by peace and reconciliation.



*"I could never express the depth of gratitude I have for what you and the others provided [at the retreat]. I've never experienced a greater atmosphere of safety, love, kindness, support, mercy, and compassion. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

*Project Rachel Baltimore  
Retreat Participant*

Contact info: dedicated confidential phone & voice mail: (410) 625-8491, Texting: (410) 299-9345  
Email: [projectrachel@archbalt.org](mailto:projectrachel@archbalt.org), or [amy.erardi@archbalt.org](mailto:amy.erardi@archbalt.org)

## Opportunities to support the Ministry of Project Rachel

*Where do your gifts lie? How can you help women and families heal after abortion? We'll focus on different ways to help each week.*

### Prayer

Participate in or organize prayer vigils during healing retreats or daily – (Rosary Groups, Adoration, Private Prayer, fasting) on behalf of healing post-abortive mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings and friends and others who have been hurt by abortion.

Be a prayer partner for retreatants, praying by name for a specific retreatant, and writing a note of support to him or her.

**Friendly Caller Ministry:** If you are aware of a parishioner who is alone, please alert our Friendly Caller Ministry at 410-592-7294 with their name and phone number. A ministry volunteer will reach out and offer a friendly voice after the New Year.

## Faith Formation Notices

### Faith Formation Middle School Home Study

**Gathering:** will be held on Epiphany Sunday, Jan 3 at 10am on zoom! Please contact Robin if you have not received the link yet. [robin@ssparish.org](mailto:robin@ssparish.org).

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade** - Last day of Faith Formation sessions is January 31, 2021.

**THANK YOU for the generous donations of coats and food for our sister parish, St. Benedict in Baltimore.** Once again, our parishioners embody generosity! A special thanks to our Service and Social Justice Committee who helped organize, and to Drew Bonthron who loaded the coats with Bill O'Brien of Mid Atlantic Pools who delivered them in his stuffed work van.

**A special thank you to the over 60 teens in grades 6 thru high school** that participated in our November service project and made ceramic cookie plates, ornaments, home-baked cookies and food donations and/or casseroles. Projects were distributed to both St. Stephen and St. Benedict parishioners. Thank you to volunteers who served as Santa's helpers by delivering the gift bags to the porches of some of our parishioners.

**Parents and Grandparents of college students:** If you would like a care package sent, please submit the name and specific mailing address of your college student to us. Please be as detailed as possible. Contact Robin at 410-592-7294 or [robin@ssparish.org](mailto:robin@ssparish.org). If you would like to volunteer with ministry, please let us know!

### Adults needed to connect with college students!

If you would like to pray for, correspond with, and support our care package ministry, please sign up here: <https://ssparishcollege-adults.weebly.com/>

## Games for Kids' Bingo Needed

If you are shopping after-Christmas deals, we are looking for donations of Games or Craft Kits for our 19th Annual Kids' Bingo! The event will be virtual this year, but we anticipate it being as fun as ever with lots of items for our winner's choice prizes!

We're looking for items that are valued around \$15 (with a cost to you of around \$5). You may leave items on the Parish Center back porch, labeled Kids' Bingo. If you have any questions, please contact Robin at 410-592-7294 or [Robin@ssparish.org](mailto:Robin@ssparish.org). Thank you for your generosity!

## Christmas Greetings from the Committee at St. Steven Bomu, Kenya

Dear Mary, Fr. George Gannon, Fr. Paul Breczinski and all parishioners,

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all at St. Stephen Maryland. Fr. Gregory Massawe, Fr. Kizito Ssendegeya, Deacon Moses Nkurizinza and all Christians pass heartfelt greetings to you all. It's our hope that all is well despite the pandemic.

Thanks for the Christmas cards, this will be shared with our Christians through the Chairperson of our Small Christian Communities.

We were blessed to have Deacon Moses Nkurizinza join us for his pastoral mission at our Parish.

We are thankful to Almighty God for helping our dear Priest Fr. Kizito Ssendegeya. Currently he is in Uganda for renewal of his passport to get the digital Passport. We are expecting to have him back before the celebration of Christmas.

Due to the pandemic the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of health and an Interfaith council have issued guidelines on how we can celebrate Mass. In July we began with only 100 Christians for Mass, but this was later revised to church capacity as long as there is a social distance maintained. For the old Christians, with guidance and support of our Priests, there is usually a Mass for them on Saturday evening since they cannot attend Sunday Mass as per guidelines from the Ministry of Health.

For the updates;

a. We have a deacon who joined us for his pastoral work.

b. From the bank transfer received from St. Stephen Maryland, we were able to put cushions on the kneelers of the church pews. This has been a concern from our elderly members that it was very painful to kneel on the bare timber of the pews. God bless you all for your continuous support. Please pass our gratitude to the partnership committee and all Christians at St. Stephen Maryland as Christians can now adore the Holy Sacraments every Friday Evening without feeling pain on the knees.

c. We are saddened to inform you the passing on of one of our Key church member, Mrs. Elizabeth Mugo, which occurred mid-November.

Thanks for your prayers. Despite the extension of night curfew and uplifting of cessation of movements from and into Mombasa County as well as other counties, things have not returned to normal as some of our Christians have not resumed work. It has been a challenging period for some of our Christians who lost their jobs, others have gone without pay for a number of months and others have received pay cuts from their employers. Through the Archdiocese of Mombasa, we submitted names of 474 Christians to Caritas Kenya (a religious organization) and were shortlisted to receive a monthly stipend of \$40 for three months and this started in November 2020.

Let's continue praying for the end of the pandemic, which has brought many challenges in the society.

May the Almighty God bless you and bring joy and happiness this Festive season of Christmas and New Year.

Yours in Christ,

Felix Muindi,

Parish Treasurer,

On Behalf of the Partnership Committee.

