

A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

*December 17, 2023
11:15 a.m.*



OUR MISSION

To bring by the power of the Holy Spirit as many people as possible to know, love, and serve God as revealed through Jesus Christ; and to be transformed into spiritually renewed disciples of Jesus who know, love and serve one another and the world.



ST. MARTIN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

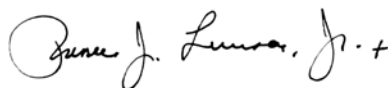
FROM THE RECTOR

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD,
JESUS CHRIST, WELCOME.

Jesus' first words to His earliest disciples were very simple, "Come, follow Me..." (Matthew 4:19) It was a gentle invitation to take seriously the wonderful journey of faith found in Christ. For more than 2,000 years, people of all ages have responded to that invitation through a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ in a community of prayer, study and service. St. Martin's is just such a place.

St. Martin's is a member Church in the Diocese of Texas, The Episcopal Church in the United States of America and the greater worldwide Anglican Communion consisting of more than 77 million people. Our Parish Church considers it a tremendous honor to be a place where men, women, youth and children can grow in their personal relationship with our Lord, come to know and use their own spiritual gifts, and discover a personal ministry to be expressed both in the Church, the greater Houston area and beyond.

I want to personally invite you to participate in our worship services and as many of our activities and ministries as your own commitments and time will allow.



The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr., Rector

Prayers Before Worship

O Lord, we thank You that You have called us as members of Your family into this beautiful house of God. Grant that here we may feel Your presence and the beauty of Your peace, and that, as we return to our homes and work, we may sense Your guiding hand and loving care and be used in the service of our neighbors, our nation and the world, and all You send our way, through Him Who came not to condemn the world but to save it, Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

NOTICES

St. Martin's is a gun-free campus.

St. Martin's asks that anyone coming into a worship service not bring oversized or large backpacks.

**indicates when latecomers may be seated so as not to disturb other worshipers*

THIS WEEK AT ST. MARTIN'S

Christian Education for Adults, Children's Ministry and 7-1-7 Students will not be offered Dec. 24 and 31 in observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays. Please join us next Sunday, Jan. 7, when Christian Education classes resume.

St. Martin's Campus will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25 and 26, and from noon Friday, Dec. 29 through Monday, Jan 1, for Christmas and New Year holidays.

DECEMBER 17

Adults

8+ with the Rev. Wesley Arning

Lectionary-based Bible Study

8:55-9:25 a.m.

Chapel Reception Hall

Theology for Life with the Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

"Blessed are Those who Know Their Need of God: A 12-week Survey of the Sermon on the Mount"

A Christian's Lord – Matthew 7:21-29

10:15-11 a.m.

Bagby Parish Hall

Seekers with the Rev. Dick Elwood

Lectionary-based Bible Study

10:15-11 a.m.

Activity Center, Aerobics Room

For more information about Adult Christian Education, contact Amanda DeViney at 713-830-4110 or adeviney@smec.org.

7-1-7 Students

Sunday Get-Togethers

For students in grades 6-12

10:15-11 a.m.

Student Life Center, Living Room

For more information about 7-1-7 Students, contact Florence Ritchie at 713-985-3843 or students@smec.org.

Children's Ministry

A Family Christmas Celebration

For children through grade 5

10:15-11 a.m.

Children's Life Center

Childcare is available during all morning services for infants through three-year-olds.

For more information about Children's Ministry, contact Rocio Velazquez at 713-985-3807 or rvelazquez@smec.org.

Music Ministry

Young Singers of St. Martin's

For children and youth in grades 1-12

8:15 a.m. | Rehearsal in Children's Life Center

9:15 a.m. | Family Table service in Parish Life Center

For more information about Young Singers of St. Martin's, contact Carole Nelson at 346-335-8677 or cnelson@smec.org.

DECEMBER 18-23

Adults

Saintly Stitchers

Monday, Dec. 18

10 a.m.-noon | Activity Center, Upper Hall East

Saintly Stitchers fill St. Martin's with pew kneelers and other gifts for worship spaces. For more information, contact the Rev. Sharron Cox at 713-830-4131 or scox@smec.org.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Tuesday, Dec. 19

9-11:30 a.m. | Activity Center, Family Room

Knit and crochet shawls to be blessed for those in need of prayer. For more information, contact the Rev. Sharron Cox at 713-830-4131 or scox@smec.org.

Parish Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, Dec. 21

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 7-9 p.m.

Choir Rehearsal Hall

Sing a variety of traditional music in service to the Lord and our congregation. For more information, contact Dr. David Henning at 713-985-3820 or dhenning@smec.org.

Men

Dads' Bible Study

Thursday, Dec. 21

8-9 a.m. | Welcome Center

Join dads with children of all ages for coffee, fellowship and Bible study. For more information, contact the Rev. Wesley Arning at 346-335-8680 or rwarning@smec.org.

7-1-7 Students

Life Groups

Wednesday, Dec. 20

6-8 p.m. | Student Life Center

Students in grades 6-12 connect with their peers for fun activities and great discussions about faith and life. Please bring \$5 to cover the cost of dinner. For more information, contact the Rev. Jane Ferguson at 346-335-8659 or jferguson@smec.org.

A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols originated with an Order drawn up by E. W. Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, for Christmas Eve 1880, at 10 p.m. in the wooden shed which then served as his Cathedral in Truro. A.C. Benson recalled: “My father arranged from ancient sources a little service for Christmas Eve: nine carols and nine tiny lessons.” The suggestion had come from G.M.S. Walpole, later Bishop of Edinburgh. The present form of the Festival was first held on Christmas Eve 1918 in King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, and planned by Eric Milner-White, Dean. Since 1963, a shorter and more informal service has also been presented on television. The BBC programs, and the long playing records of the service, have encouraged countless churches throughout the world to adapt the Festival. Milner-White, however, warned any who might be tempted to substitute more carols for the lessons: “Its liturgical order and pattern is the strength of the service; the main theme is the development of the loving purpose of God from the Creation to the Incarnation through the windows and words of the Bible: the scriptures, not the carols, are the backbone.”

...from service leaflet, King’s College Chapel

VOLUNTARY “O Come All Ye Faithful”
Eric Thiman

INTROIT “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”
Keith Lathrom

Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, saith our God; O comfort those who sit in darkness mourning ‘neath their sorrows’ load. Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them; tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over. Hark, the voice that crieth in the desert far and near, calling us to new repentance since the kingdom now is here. Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way; let the valleys rise to meet him and the hills bow down to greet him.

Text: Isaiah 40:1-3; vers. Johann G. Locarius, (1671), tr. Catherine Winkworth, (1863), alt. Music: *Genevan Psalm 42*, melody by Louis Bourgeois, 1551. Setting by Keith Lathrom. © 2023 All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The Officiant greets the People. Following the greeting, all stand.

HYMN IN PROCESSION *(stand) (sung by all)*

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
 2 God from God, Light from Light e - ter - nal,
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
 4 See how the shep - herds, sum - moned to his cra - dle,
 5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing;

1 come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
 2 lo! he ab - hors not the Vir - gin's womb;
 3 sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of heaven a - bove;
 4 leav - ing their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
 5 Je - sus, to thee be glo - ry given;

1 come, and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
 2 on - ly - be - got - ten Son of the Fa - ther;
 3 glo - ry to God, glo - ry in the high - est;
 4 we too will thith - er bend our joy - ful foot - steps;
 5 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

Refrain

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a -

dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

Words: John Francis Wade (1711–1786); tr. Frederick Oakeley (1802–1880) and others; Music: *Adeste fideles*, present form of melody att. John Francis Wade (1711–1786); harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906.

Please be seated.

THE SERMON “Remember Who You Are”
The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

THE BIDDING PRAYERS *(stand)*

Officiant

Beloved in Christ, in this season of Advent, let it be our care and delight to hear again the message of the Angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by his holy Child; and let us celebrate the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of the Church for which he died, and especially in this country and within this city.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us, devoutly kneeling:

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(kneel)*

Officiant and People

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Officiant: The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

People: **And all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.**

All: **Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

Please be seated.

LESSON I: ADAM AND EVE REBEL AGAINST GOD AND ARE CAST OUT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Genesis 3:8-15

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild

creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

H Y M N (*stand*) (*sung by all*)



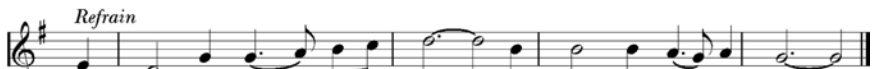
1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
 All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.



Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772–1847); tr. composite; adapt. Charles P. Price (b. 1920); Music: *Bereden väg för Herran*, melody from *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697; Copyright: Words: © 1982, Charles P. Price.

Please be seated.

LESSON II: GOD ESTABLISHES A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Genesis 22:15-18

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the

sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

H Y M N *(stand) (sung by all)*

1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
 2 Shep - herds in the field a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your
 3 Saints be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, watch - ing long in

all the earth; ye, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
 flocks by night, God with you is now re - sid - ing;
 hope and fear, sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing,

Refrain

now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 yon - der shines the in - fant Light: come and wor - ship,
 in his tem - ple shall ap - pear:

come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born King.

Words: James Montgomery (1771–1854), alt.; Music: *Regent Square*, Henry Thomas Smart (1813–1879).

Please be seated.

LESSON III: THE PROPHET ISAIAH FORETELLS THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN *(stand) (sung by all)*

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re -
2 Joy to the world! the Sa - vior reigns; let us our
*3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room, and
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, re -
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow far
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness, and

heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Words: Isaac Watts; Music: *Antioch*, G.F. Händel.

Please be seated.

LESSON IV: THE ONE WHO IS TO RULE ISRAEL WILL BE BORN IN THE VILLAGE OF BETHLEHEM

Isaiah 11:1-3a, 4a, 6-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its

hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

H Y M N (*stand*) (*sung by all*)

1 O lit - the town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
2 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
3 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

1 A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
2 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav - en.
3 cast out our sin and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

1 yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
2 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
3 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

1 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
2 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
3 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835–1893); Music: *St. Louis*, Lewis H. Redner (1831–1908).

Please be seated.

LESSON V: THE ANGEL GABRIEL ANNOUNCES TO THE VIRGIN MARY THAT SHE WILL BEAR THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM “Advent Blessing”

Kris Crunk

Youth Choir of St. Martin’s

Bless all you sons and daughters who await the coming child; the only Son, the Promised One. Who comes to us born in a stable. Bless all the children of the light, with their brilliant faces. Lift high your candles, show the night; that Christ overcomes the darkness. Alleluia. The light of Light overshadows. Brighter than the things of earth, Son of God, humble birth. Bless all who worship in this place, the coming breath of heaven. The One whose life and death becomes salvation to the nations. Alleluia. The light of Light overshadows. Brighter than the things of earth, Son of God, humble birth. Alleluia.

Text: Randy Cox and Kris Crunk. Music: Kris Crunk. © 2012 Choristers Guild.

LESSON VI: JESUS IS BORN TO THE VIRGIN MARY

Luke 2:1, 3-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HYMN *(stand) (sung by all)*

1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that
2 For lo! the days are haste - ning on, by

glo - rious song of old, from an - gels bend - ing
pro - phets seen of old, when with the ev - er -

near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,

“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its

heaven's all - gra - cious King.” The world in sol - emn
an - cient splen - dors fling, and all the world give

The musical score consists of six systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo and style are indicated by the title as a hymn to be sung by all while standing.

still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Words: E.H. Sears; Music: *Carol*, R.S. Willis.

Please be seated.

LESSON VII: ANGELS ANNOUNCE TO THE SHEPHERDS THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR

Luke 2:8-16

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM “My Lord has Come”

Will Todd

Shepherds, called by angels, called by love and angels; no place for them but a stable. *My Lord has come.* Sages, searching for stars, searching for love in heaven; no place for them but a stable. *My Lord has come.* His love will hold me, his love will cherish me, love will cradle me. Lead me, lead me to see him, sages and shepherds and angels; no place for me but a stable. *My Lord has come.*

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LESSON VIII: WISE MEN FIND THE CHRIST CHILD AND WORSHIP HIM

Matthew 2:1-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN *(stand) (sung by all)*

Unison or harmony

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on
 2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where
 3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh, come,

Ma - ry's lap is sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with
 ox and ass are feed - ing? Good Chris - tian, fear: for
 peas - ant, king, to own him; the King of kings sal -

an - thems sweet, while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
 sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
 va - tion brings, let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shep - herds

guard and an - gels sing; haste, haste to



Words: W. C. Dix; Music: *Greensleeves*, English Melody.

Please be seated.

LESSON IX: JOHN UNFOLDS THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

THE PEACE *(stand)*

Officiant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And with thy spirit.

The people greet one another

Please be seated.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please see page 27 for upcoming events.

THE OFFERTORY

ANTHEM “This Christmastide”

Donald Fraser

Green and silver, red and gold, and a story born of old. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. Holly, ivy, mistletoe, and the gently falling snow. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. From a simple ox’s stall came the greatest gift of all. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. Children sing of peace and joy at the birth of one small boy. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. Let the bells ring loud and clear, ring out now for all to hear. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. Trumpets sound and voices raise in an endless stream of praise. Truth and love and hope abide, this Christmastide. Green and silver, red and gold, and a story born of old: Peace and love and hope abide, this Christmastide.

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DOXOLOGY WITH ALLELUIAS

(stand) (sung by all) *Lasst uns erfreuen*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here be-
low. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Praise him a -
bove ye heaven - ly host. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.
Refrain
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Words: Thomas Ken (1637-1711); Music: *Lasst uns erfreuen*, melody from *Auserlesene Catholische Geistliche Kirchengeseng*, 1623; adapt. Ralph Vaughan William (1872-1958).

THE PRAYERS *(kneel)*

THE FINAL COLLECT

Almighty God, who hast poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate Word: Grant that the same light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE BLESSING

All stand.

HYMN IN PROCESSION

1 Hark! the her-ald an - gels sing glo - ry to the new-born King!
 2 Christ, by high-est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the Vir - gin's womb.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, join the tri-umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the in-car-nate De - i - ty.
 Risen with heal-ing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,

with the an - gel - ic host pro - claim Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!
 Pleased as man with us to dwell; Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
 hail, the Sun of Right - eous - ness! hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Refrain

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing glo - ry to the new-born King!

Words: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), alt.; Music: Mendelssohn, Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847); adapt. William H. Cummings (1831–1915).

THE DISMISSAL

A Minister says the dismissal. Alleluias are omitted during the season of Advent.

People: Thanks be to God.

VOLUNTARY “In Thee is Gladness”
by Johann Sebastian Bach

Personal prayers are available at the west Side Chapel after this service.

RECOGNITIONS



FLOWERS GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD

- In thanksgiving for the baptism of Preston Blake Frede
by Rebecca Frede and Parker Frede
- In thanksgiving for the baptism of Preston Frede
by the Skelton family
- In thanksgiving for Nicole Gordon on the occasion of her birthday
by her loving parents, Amryl and David Gordon
- In thanksgiving for Baba and Pops Jackson and Papa T and Sissy Throckmorton
by your grandsons, Charlton, Dealey and MacLaren Jackson
- In loving memory of Tom L. Hail
by his family



BIRTHS

- Sept. 14 Brigitte Elizabeth Benak
 Daughter of Caroline and Andrew Benak
 Granddaughter of Carole and Jim Looke



SYMPATHY

- Nov. 13 A. Jerome (Jerry) McHenry
- Dec. 1 Sandra Lovin McHenry
- Dec. 9 John M. Cook III

To mark a special occasion with an altar flower dedication,
visit bit.ly/smecaltarflowers or contact Rebekah Maddux El-Hakam
at relhakam@smec.org.

CONTINUING PRAYERS

Individuals are included on the Continuing Prayers list for numerous reasons, some of which may include recovery from illness, thanksgiving or need for support for special ministry and mission. In addition to praying for participants in cancer support groups, the Alzheimer's Caregiver's Support Group and The Gathering, this week please pray for the following:

Robin Adair	Bella Martin
Bobbie Adams	Ronnie Martin
Carolyn Alban	Janet McDaniel
Katie and Harvey Altmann	Barbara McMahon
Ally Babineaux	Len Menefee
Shelly Bain	Margaret Milner
Kathy Beadnell	Clarine Naskrent
Bob Beeley	Stuart Nixon
Cory Blackman	Ann Noel
Kenny Brown	Deborah Oliver
Cole Cattan	Andrew O'Malley
Debbie Chernosky	Bob Paddock
Doug Clarke	Jim Paddock
Hallie Cooley	Judy Peach
Michael Craig	Betty Polando
Gail Davis	Joseph Powell
Ross Dunn	Ted Reed
Kiersten Dyke	Marjorie Reeks
Jim Easterling	Phyllis Reinhardt
Stacey and John Elliott	Monica Rivera
Charles Flores	John Davis Roady
Julie G.	Joe Rodriguez
Catherine Gonzales	Suzzy Schuwerk
Nancy Gore	Helen and Jim Shaffer
Bette Haidusek	Caroline Shanahan
Ann Halverson	Clif Shoemake
Amy Heath	Bob Spencer
Mollie Hill	Paul Therrien
Marilyn Ingham	LaVonne Waldron
Mary and Jim Jennings	Mary Watters
Mary Anne Kannard	Eric Zoerb
Candi Keebler	Atticus
Dick Kilday	Henry
Reggie Lang	Laura
Rhea Latta	Lynne
Bruce Michael Lee	
Nancy Liles	
Ryan Logan	

Please be advised that we will be updating the Continuing Prayers list twice a year in the weeks after Easter and All Saints' Day. The list will be completely redone. To add or remove someone on the Continuing Prayers list, please contact Valerie Rivera at 713-985-3817 or vriviera@smec.org.

CONTINUING PRAYERS

Prayers for those on Active Military Duty in the Armed Forces:

Lt. Col. Wesley J. Hunnell
Capt. Blake J. Kidd
Capt. Jack Mullen
1st Lt. Alex Mullen
Lt. Paul Piana
Lt. Col. Thomas C. Plant
LCDR Bradley Hoffman

Please be advised that each year the week after Veterans Day, this list will be completely redone. To add or remove someone on the Military Service Prayers list, please contact Valerie Rivera at 713-985-3817 or vriviera@smec.org.

SERMON NOTES

Christmas

AT ST. MARTIN'S

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Sunday, Dec. 24

Advent IV Service | 8 a.m. • *Christ Chapel*

Spoken service with Holy Eucharist.

Family Table Services | 9:15 a.m. • *Parish Life Center*

Come to the first family friendly Christmas Eve service with Holy Eucharist.

11 a.m.* • *The Church (No Eucharist)*

Music and Nativity Liturgy. This shorter family-friendly service recounts a live Christmas story reenactment.

Traditional Services | 1, 3:30*, 6 and 8:30 p.m. • *The Church*

Holy Eucharist; festive music by the Parish Choir, Gloria Dei Organ, brass and timpani.

**These services will be livestreamed on St. Martin's Facebook and YouTube channels.*

Riverway Contemporary Service | 6:30 p.m. • *Parish Life Center*

Join Riverway, a casual, modern service with Holy Eucharist. We will gather and celebrate the birth of our Lord. All are welcome.

The service will be livestreamed on Riverway's Facebook page.

CHILDCARE: For infants to 3-year-olds will be provided at the 9:15 and 11 a.m. services as well as the 1, 3:30 and 6 p.m. services.

PARKING: Additional parking will be available on Christmas Eve at the 5005 Riverway parking garage (next to Hope and Healing Center).

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

Monday, Dec. 25

Traditional Service | 11 a.m. • *The Church*

Holy Eucharist; Celebrate our Lord's birth with hymns, anthems and the Parish Choir.



ST. MARTIN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

For questions, contact the Reception
desk at 713-621-3040.

Witness to Dignity

*The Life and Faith of
George H.W. and Barbara Bush*

From AMAZON reviews

“What a fulfilling life the Bush senior lived.
Most interesting and inclusive book.
Excellent read.”

— Jean Texas

5.0 out of 5 stars **Great Life**

Reviewed in the United States on January 14, 2023
Verified Purchase



Available in the St. Martin's Gift Shoppe and wherever fine books are sold. Dr. Levenson will gladly sign books for anyone who asks.

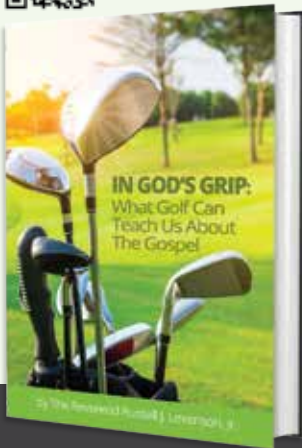
For more information, contact Barbara Shoemaker at
bshoemaker@smec.org or 713-985-3840.

A NEW BOOK by the Rev. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.



Order Your Copy Today!

<https://a.co/d/9hypX4Q>



“IN GOD'S GRIP: What Golf Can Teach Us About The Gospel”

“This delightful little book on what golf can teach us about the most important questions people have about their lives is a truly great read. As a former teenager caddy at the oldest 18-hole course in North America (the Chicago Golf Club), who caddied for the likes of Charlie Coody, Ben Crenshaw, Tom Weiskopf and others, and is pleased to serve as a divinity school dean, I recommend it wholeheartedly.”

— Dr. Doug Sweeney, Dean of Beeson Divinity School

“This is a book about God's help.”

— Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

Place orders now at St. Martin's Gift Shoppe
or wherever fine books are sold, contact Barbara
Shoemaker at bshoemaker@smec.org or

713-985-3834.

DONATE BLOOD SAVE LIVES

Monday, Dec. 18
9 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Student Life Center

Schedule your next appointment.

bit.ly/smecblooddrive

Walk-ins Welcome!



*Receive a cozy, limited
edition hoodie! (while supplies last)*



Gulf Coast Regional
Blood Center

Questions? Contact Justin Jacobson Avery
at events@smec.org or 713-985-3838.

Year-End Contributions to St. Martin's Episcopal Church



The Internal Revenue Service requires that, in order to be tax deductible in 2023, cash, check or credit card contributions to St. Martin's Episcopal Church must be received by the Church or postmarked by the United States Postal Service **no later than Friday, Dec. 29, 2023**; this includes any payments to your 2023 pledge, prepayment of your 2024 pledge and payment of your Building for the Ages pledge. The Finance staff is required to check the postal cancellation dates on all receipts in early January to ensure our legal compliance to this rule.

For more information, contact Debbie Hutchison at
dhutchison@smec.org or 713-985-3803.

Joyful Living

JOYFUL GIVING

2024 Stewardship is here! Please join us and prayerfully consider what St. Martin's means to you and your family and make an annual commitment in the form of an annual pledge. We are grateful for your stewardship pledges. Your generosity makes everything possible.

To make your pledge online, visit
bit.ly/smec2024stewardship

Questions? Contact Ashley Pratka, Director of Development,
at apratka@smec.org or 346-335-8658.



Join us in January as we begin a new series, "Just for Epiphany."

The small group discussions will focus on the Letter of James. Participating in the four-week Bible study provides a meaningful opportunity to meet fellow Parishioners and builds a sense of community.

Registration runs Dec. 28 – Jan. 12 at bit.ly/justforsmallgroups.

For questions, contact the Rev. Wesley Arning or Kathy Johnson, Director of Membership, at smallgroups@smec.org.

 SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR
Healing and Wholeness
Order of St. Luke

St. Martin's International Order of St. Luke (OSL) Healing Community offers a service of prayer for healing and wholeness on the first Wednesday of each month. This short service is held for anyone in need of prayer for themselves, friends or family.

Next Service
Wednesday, Jan. 3 | 5 p.m.
Parish Life Center or via Zoom
bit.ly/oslservice

For more information, contact Amanda DeViney at
713-830-4110 or adeviney@smec.org.



Activity Center

TOTAL BODY STRETCH


Thursday, Jan. 4 | 2 p.m.
Aerobics Room

Sign up at bit.ly/smecactivitycenter
MOST CLASSES ARE FREE!

This class is designed to help stretch the entire body, loosen muscles and joints, and leave your body feeling realigned!

For more information, contact Sarah-Hampton Cambas at 713-985-3835 or scambas@smec.org.

*The
Order
of the
Daughters
of the King*



**SATURDAY, JAN. 6 • 10 A.M.
CHILDREN'S LIFE CENTER**

SPECIAL SPEAKER

LINDA SHUBERT

Linda Shubert, Texas Gulf Coast Chapter Coordinator of the American Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela will share the deep joy she has found through persevering the trials of the pilgrimage experiences in Spain on the trail.

For more information, please contact Tracee Tindol at tmartin@smec.org or 713-985-3811.

THE
 *family table*

The Baptism of Our Lord

Sunday, Jan. 7

9:15 a.m. • Parish Life Center

The rite of Holy Baptism is a special occasion for St. Martin's — a service of joy that underscores the communal aspect of worship and expresses God's presence in the midst of His people. Whenever possible, St. Martin's welcomes new members into the Body of Christ on festal days that emphasize the meaning of our Baptism. People of all ages and stages of life are invited to enter into a lifelong journey with Christ through the sacrament of baptism.

For more information, contact Rocío Velazquez at rvelazquez@smec.org or 713-985-3807.



THEOLOGY *for* LIFE



DR. DAVID PETERSON

Question? Contact Amanda DeViney at
adeviney@smec.org or 713-830-4110.

DAVE ON THE LIFE OF DAVID:

Lessons of Faith from One of the Old

Testament's Most Famous Characters

**Sundays, Jan. 7, 14 and 21
10:15–11 a.m. • Bagby Parish Hall**

Among the Old Testament's diverse cast of characters, the man named David is one of the headliners. His life with God was a roller coaster. No one is more heroic, and no one is more shattered than King David. His life is an illustration of experiencing God across life's full gamut.

In these sessions, we will consider how David experiences God in his call, in the pain of his disastrous failure and God's discipline and their eventual reconciliation. The Bible pays David the high compliment, as "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). We will consider what that means.

ST. MARTIN'S PRESENTS

A VERY SPECIAL LENTEN RETREAT

MONDAY–THURSDAY

March 18–21 • 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

March 22 • 8:30 a.m.–2 p.m.

The Scout Center

Only four spots remain!

Theresa Harrison returns to St. Martin's to guide retreatants in creativity with the icon of the Annunciation, the moment of the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary.

For more information, contact Tracee Tindol at
tmartin@smec.org or 713-985-3811.



Registration fee: **\$495**

*Includes all supplies and lunch at
Café St. Martin's.*

**Register now at
bit.ly/iconretreat2024**





ACOLYTE APPRECIATION DINNER

Sunday, Jan. 7 • 4 p.m. • Bagby Parish Hall

Acolytes who serve in Family Table and The Church – along with their families – are invited to a dinner that will recognize their contributions which enhance our worship services.

Planning to attend? Sign up at bit.ly/acolytedinner.



FEAST OF LIGHTS SERVICE

Sunday, Jan. 7 • 6 p.m. • The Church

Parishioners and friends are invited to this beautiful candlelight Epiphany service that also celebrates St. Martin's Acolytes' and their devotion to supporting worship. The highlight will be a sermon given by a senior Acolyte.

For more information about the dinner or service, contact the Rev. Jane P. Ferguson at jferguson@smec.org or 713-621-3040.



HHCI Hope and Healing
Center & Institute

SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly Grief Support Group (VIRTUAL)

Presented by:



Rabbi Seth M. Stander, MAHL, Community
Aging Specialist, HHCI CARES

DEC. 20

Wednesday @ Noon CT
Available Online Only



Register today at hhci.org/events

For more information, contact Seth Stander at
sstander@hhci.org or 346-335-8627

WAYS *to* GIVE



TEXT

Text SMEC to 73256



MAIL

St. Martin's Episcopal Church
717 Sage Rd., Houston, TX 77056



ONLINE

bit.ly/smecgiving



BEQUESTS

Contact: Ashley Pratkan at
apratka@smec.org or 346-335-8658



TRANSFER OF ASSETS

Pledging and setting up a recurring gift online
helps you and the church budget

For all stewardship questions, contact Debbie Hutchison at
dhutchison@smec.org or 713-985-3803.

OUR STAFF AND VESTRY

SUNDAY PROGRAM STAFF

Dr. David Henning

Director of Music and Parish Organist
dhenning@smec.org

Mr. Keith Lathrom

Choral Director of the Adult Choir
klathrom@smec.org

Ms. Hannah Cen

Associate Organist
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Ms. Carole Nelson

Coordinator of Children's Music Ministries
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The Rev. Jane P. Ferguson

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Mrs. Ashley Monachelli

Director of Children's Ministry
amonachelli@smec.org

Mrs. Kathy Johnson

Director of Membership
kjohnson@smec.org

Mrs. Barbara Piana

Vergers and Worship Coordinator
bpiana@smec.org

ST. MARTIN'S VESTRY

Vestry Executive Committee

Mr. Tommy Ford, *Senior Warden*
Mrs. Michelle Bain, *Junior Warden*
Mr. Gib Surles, *Missions Chair*
Mr. Dan Meyer, *Treasurer*
Mr. Ryan LaRue, *Clerk*
Mr. Matt Anderson, *Past Senior Warden*
Mr. Bob Heston, Jr., *Parish Stewardship Chair*
Mr. Andy Harvin, *Chancellor**

Vestry Members

Mrs. Nancy Bynon
Mrs. Elizabeth Dukes
Mrs. Whitney Gormley
Mr. Will Hedges
Mr. Matt Mogas
Mr. Roy W. Nichol
Ms. Sherrie Perkins
Mrs. Courtney Schilling
Mr. Logan Walters
Mr. Milton West

Associate Members

The Hon. James A. Baker, III, *Special Counsel to the Vestry**
Mr. David Harvin, *Senior Council Representative 2023-2024*
Mrs. Beth Reeves, *Senior Council Representative 2023-2024*
Mrs. Hope Huber, *Altar Guild President 2023-2024*
Mrs. Kathy Bennett, *ECW President 2023-2024*
Mr. Perry Ruthven, *Men of St. Martin's President 2023-2024*
Mr. Bob Porter, *Usher Representative 2022-2024*

**Denotes Associate Vestry filled at the discretion of the Rector.*



Mr. Dan Meyer
Vestry Representative

OUR CLERGY

Jesus, The Christ
The Head of This Church



The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.
Rector
lthough@smec.org



The Rev. Sharron L. Cox
Associate for Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Ministries
scox@smec.org



The Rev. Martin J. Bastian
Vice-Rector
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The Rev. R. Wesley Arning
Associate for Riverway and Discipleship Ministries
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The Rev. John D. Sundara
Vicar for Worship and Evangelism
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The Rev. Naomi B. Sundara
Chaplain to the Preschool
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The Rev. Lisa R. Neilson
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The Rev. John R. Bentley, Jr.
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The Rev. Alex D. Graham III
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The Rev. Nicolas (Nick) R. D. Dyke
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The Rev. Jane P. Ferguson
Associate for Family and Student Ministries
jferguson@smec.org



The Rev. Richard (Dick) H. Elwood
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The Rev. Gillian (Gill) B. Keyworth
Deacon
gkeyworth@smec.org

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