



Stewardship

Many thanks to everyone who has pledged their financial support to St. Bede's for 2020! It's not too late to make a pledge. Pledge cards are available in the back of the church; they can be mailed to the church or placed in the alms basins during worship.

All Saints Remembrance

Our All Saints observance at the 10:15 service on November 3 will begin with remembrance of those we love who have died. To include a loved one, write their name (with pronunciation) on the clipboard in the back of the church, or email Siri at shuntoon@stbedesmenlopark.org.

November Soulwork

Soulwork spends two weeks looking at Prayer in the Bible on November 3 and 10. We'll consider biblical prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession and how we might incorporate them into our own prayer. On November 17 and 24, Brendan Deocariza-Nee and Ann Latta will lead an exploration of Restorative Justice, an alternative system of criminal justice that focuses on reconciliation between perpetrators and victims. We'll learn what restorative justice is within a Christian framework, how it can enrich communities, and how we can practice it in our personal lives. Soulwork meets on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. in the Ford Room.

Music@Menlo is coming to St. Bede's on November 8

Art Under a Tombstone explores Russia's artistic transformation and Soviet repression through the music of Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, poems of Aleksandr Blok, and life stories of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Ignat Solzhenitsyn will share unpublished works by his father in this personal and multi-dimensional residency, which features a discussion event on **November 7 at The Menlo School**, followed by a performance at 7:30pm on **November 8 at St. Bede's Episcopal Church** of Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in a minor, and both early and late works by Shostakovich. Curators Gloria Chien and Soovin Kim will also be joined by cellist David Finckel and soprano Hyunah Yu. Ticket discounts of 20% are available to first-time Music@Menlo attendees who are members of the St. Bede's community using the code STBEDES at <https://musicatmenlo.org/festival/focus-residency> or by calling 650-331-0202.

Life Moves Family Dinner

Please plan to join us on Sunday, November 17 in cooking and serving dinner for families at the Life Moves shelter in San Mateo. Children of any age are welcome to help with food prep and cooking at St. Bede's. Children ages 8 and older may help with the dinner service at Life Moves. Please click on the link here to view the available slots and sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a044dafa72caafb6-life>
Questions? Please contact Coordinator Katie Machemer at (650) 400-1937.

November 24 Collage Vocal Ensemble

For their ninth season, Collage Vocal Ensemble takes inspiration from that most wonderful shape, the sphere, with music by Kirke Mechem, Charles Wood, Ross Lee Finney, and Harry Belafonte among others. They'll continue their tradition of mixing classical and popular music styles in programs of kaleidoscopic variety and mixing music for the whole ensemble with songs for women, for men, and for trios and quartets. Their audiences always have a great time, and so do they! *Admission free; suggested donation \$15; all donations will benefit LifeMoves – Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness in San Mateo County; contributions taken at the door or online at <http://stbedesmenlopark.org/arts-series/>*

Thanksgiving Service

Begin Thanksgiving with gratitude to God for all God's gifts so freely given to us. We'll celebrate Eucharist on Thursday, November 28, at 10:00 a.m.

In This Issue

2	Dates to Remember	7	Activities and Events
3	A Letter from God	8	Vestry View
6	Choir Outreach, Feast of All Souls	9	Birthdays, Anniversaries, Staff Listing

Looking Ahead: Key Dates on Our November and December Calendar

November 2: All Souls Memorial Service, 4 p.m., Christ Church, Portola Valley

November 3: Children's and Youth Ministry discussion, 11:30 a.m.

November 7: Building and Grounds Committee meeting, 12 p.m.

November 8: Music@Menlo concert, 8 p.m.

November 12: Finance Committee meeting, 5 p.m.

November 17: Community outreach: LifeMoves dinner service

November 20: Bede's Bedhead Book Club, 9 a.m.

November 24: Arts at St. Bede's with Collage Vocal Ensemble, 4 p.m.

November 28: Thanksgiving Day service, 10 a.m.

December 4: Building and Grounds Committee meeting, 12 p.m.

December 8: Advent Lessons and Carols, 10:15 a.m.

December 8: Arts at St. Bede's with Kitka

December 10: Finance Committee meeting, 5pm

December 17: Vestry meeting, 7pm

December 24: Christmas Eve

December 25: Christmas

December 29: Christmas Lessons & Carols, 10am

For the full calendar of upcoming events, visit www.stbedesmenlopark.org and click the link for **News and Events**.

A Letter from God

This sermon on Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 was preached on October 13, 2019.

It's been close to twenty years since I got that letter. I don't think I read it more than once, but I still remember what it meant to me. It was from my grandmother. I had written to her to tell her that after less than a year of marriage, I was getting a divorce. My family had pretty conservative values about marriage; divorce was just not something you did. I was carrying a lot of shame about the divorce already, and I was dreading my grandparents' reaction. Writing them a letter seemed the easiest way to tell them. When my grandmother's reply arrived, hand-written in her perfect cursive, I was so nervous I almost didn't want to read it. But I was so glad I did. Because my grandmother didn't criticize or condemn me; she took my side. She offered wisdom and encouragement, and she told me she loved me. Her words weren't all that new. She had said a lot of it more than once before. But she wrote those words when I most needed to hear them, at one of the low points of my life, and my grandmother's letter gave me the strength to face what I had to face with hope.

Six hundred years before the birth of Jesus, it was a low point—maybe *the* low point so far—in the life of the people of Judah. Judah is a tiny country, the southern half of the old kingdom of David. It's not rich or strong. What it has is control of the trade route into Egypt, and that makes it an attractive target for the empire of Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah can see this. He can see, too, that the people of Judah are asking for trouble. They've been disregarding the covenant with God, that promise that they will be God's people and God will be their God. Judah has been flirting with other gods. And they've been disregarding God's commands to care for the vulnerable people of their society—widows, orphans, the poor, refugees. Jeremiah has warned and warned the people of Judah: Change your ways, or God will have no choice but to punish you. They don't listen.

In 597 BCE, Babylon attacks Judah. The war goes the way you expect when a large, powerful empire strikes a small, weak nation. Judah loses, and loses badly. Babylon swallows up Judah's territory and deports the people it has just conquered to Babylon. It's a long walk from Judah to Babylon, nine hundred miles. That's a lot of time to reflect on what happened, how Judah got to this, what part the people of Judah played in this catastrophe. And it's a long time for the exiles to think about everything they've lost: their homes, their land, friends dead or left behind, being able to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. By the time the exiles get close to Babylon, I imagine they're feeling pretty rotten about themselves. If only they'd listened to Jeremiah! If only they'd been faithful to God! If only they'd fed the poor, protected widows and refugees like they're supposed to, then maybe this wouldn't have happened. Guilt has to trail every step the exiles take on that long walk to Babylon. When they finally arrive, they sit down at the river and cry—grief for everything they've lost, guilt because they've brought this on themselves, fear for a future that seems utterly hopeless.

Then a letter arrives from back home in Jerusalem. It's from Jeremiah. He's sending the word of God to the exiles. And God says: build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat the vegetables you grow. This exile is going to last a while, seventy years, in fact, so you might as well settle down. Go ahead and get married, have children, be fruitful and multiply like I've

been telling you since the garden of Eden. That promise I made to your ancestor Abraham, that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the shore, that promise is still valid. And I know that Babylon is your enemy. I know what they have done to you. But seek the welfare of Babylon. Pray for this city that has brought you into exile, because in its welfare, its peace, its shalom, you will find your shalom.

And God goes on: I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. I hold your souls in life. When you call upon me and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me. And I will gather you from all the nations where I have driven you into exile, and I will bring you home.

How that letter sounds to the exiles! They gather around to hear a scribe read it aloud. They hear it's from Jeremiah, and their hearts sink, if it's possible for their hearts to sink any lower. Here's Jeremiah, writing to say, "I told you so." But Jeremiah doesn't say that. He says, "God is still with you. God loves you. And in God's good time, God will bring you home." The exiles have heard all this before; it's the core of the sacred stories of their faith. But Jeremiah writes when the exiles most need to hear this. They need to know that God hears them and loves them. They need reassurance that they're able to find God here, even so far from home. And they need some hope for their future. God gives them what they need. The exiles begin to cry again, this time in relief. This letter gives them the strength to face what they have to face with hope.

The early twenty-first century seems like a low point for Christianity. Sixty years ago, mainline denominations like the Episcopal Church commanded a lot of respect and influence. Our bishops got their own TV shows. We had all the resources we could ever need, people as well as money. People wanted to join us; our churches were bursting at the seams. It made total sense to build a four-hundred-seat sanctuary in west Menlo Park. Of course this new congregation would need that much room. Now, every survey about religion in America confirms what we can see with our eyes: there are many fewer churchgoers than there used to be. This beautiful sanctuary is too big for the size we are now. The last eighteen months or so, we have felt the effects of the housing crisis, as beloved members of our community move where they can afford to live. There's no social cachet to being an Episcopalian. We don't have the respect and influence in our culture that we used to. And too often, our grief over what we've lost and our fear for the future show up in hurtful, nasty behavior towards each other. (I'm thinking of a couple of recent slugfests on Twitter.) We know our culture has changed, we know the people in church today are here because they are truly committed to their faith in ways people of the past were not, and that's a good thing—yet somehow it may feel as though it's our fault, that we should have done something to prevent this. It may feel as though, without having moved, we are in exile.

I want to be clear about this: God is not punishing Christianity, or the Episcopal Church, or St Bede's, with shrinking numbers and declining influence. God is not punishing us for anything we have done or failed to do. Are there things we could have done differently in the last few decades? Oh, sure, there always are. But what-ifs and if-onlys are not going to address the challenges of today. They don't comfort our grief or ease our guilt. The question facing us is

not what we should have done in the past. It's how we will live now in the present, and how we can look to the future with hope.

It's at our lowest point that we get a letter. Not an email, not a Snapchat that will disappear in a few minutes, but an old-fashioned hand-written letter, meant to be reread and savored. We don't really want to open it. We're afraid of what it might say. But we are so glad that we do. This letter is from God. And God doesn't criticize or condemn us; God takes our side. God writes to us in exile and God says, "Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat the vegetables you grow. This change is long-term, you're going to be living this way for a long time, so make a home here. Seek the welfare, the shalom of this alien culture you now live in. I know this culture doesn't care about Christianity at all, I know how alien it feels to you, but pray for it anyway, because in this culture's welfare you will find your welfare."

And God goes on: "I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare, to give you a future with hope. I hold your souls in life. When you call upon me and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me, for I, your God, want to be found. And I will gather you from all the alien places where you now dwell, from the grief and guilt and fear that surround you in this exile, and I will bring you home. Not to the old place of respect and influence, but to a new home that is better than anything you can dream for yourself. I, God, I see you, I love you, and I am here with you."

The exiles remained in Babylon for seventy years. Two more waves of exiles joined them as Babylon completed its conquest of Judah. This became an incredibly fruitful time for the religion of Judah. The exiles learned new ways to worship God in the absence of their temple. They wrote psalms and prayers, they retold the history of their people and their faith, they compiled the sayings of the prophets into new books of scripture. Exile isn't a holding pattern. It is God doing something new, something that couldn't have happened if things had stayed the way they were. We may not be able to recognize or name it yet, but God is doing something new in us. And in this time of exile, we get to witness and be part of the new thing God is doing.

There's a prayer that has been on my mind this week as I have sat with Jeremiah's letter to the exiles. I learned it at Holden Village, where we spent part of our renewal leave. It goes:

O God, you have called us to ventures where we cannot see the end, by pathways untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us good courage, not knowing where we go, to know that your hand is leading us wherever we may go. Amen.

Be of good courage, friends. God is leading us through this time of exile. And God is doing a new thing among us.

Peace, Gia+

Outreach, choir style!

On Friday, October 18, 10 of St. Bede's musicians took their talents on the road and presented a short lunch time concert for the inmates who are part of the Choices program at the San Mateo County jail. The program of all-a cappella works consisted of pieces that are a regular part of the St. Bede's choir repertoire: motets from the English, Italian, & German traditions, Spirituals, and hymns. Singers and audience alike had an uplifting experience, and the choir hopes to be invited back in the future. Many thanks to Nancy Stork, who tutors in the Choices program through Project Read, for facilitating this event, and to all who took time from their busy weekday to share their musical gifts!



*Pictured from left to right:
Back row: Chris Filipowicz,
Katherine McKee, Orlia Budge,
Nancy Stork, Colby Roberts
Front row: Katina Mitchell, Rani
Fischer, Irene Lawrence, Becky
Zeren, David Chu*

The Feast of All Souls: Commemorating the Faithful Departed

Please mark your calendar on November 2 at 4 p.m. for the annual All Soul's service of music and remembrance celebrated by the choirs and clergy of St. Bede's and Christ Church, Portola Valley. This year's service, to be held at Christ Church, and will feature Dan Forrest's *Requiem for the Living*. Premiered in 2013, it has become one of this decade's most popular sacred choral works. Like Herbert Howells and John Rutter before him, Mr. Forrest chose his own set of texts for his Requiem. Sung in Latin and English they are a combination of the traditional Roman Catholic Requiem mass texts and passages from Matthew, Job and Ecclesiastes.

The choirs will be accompanied by a chamber orchestra (flute, oboe, horn, percussion, harp, violin, 'cello, and organ) which will include St. Bede's members Kathleen Thompson on violin, Laura Gable on percussion, and Rani Fischer on organ. Vocal soloists will be drawn from both churches' choirs. The solos designated for "boy soprano" will be shared by Allison and Ryan Newman, members of St. Bede's Sunday School and children of our alto soloist/section leader Naomi Braun.

For a wonderful performance of this work, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTsqM7CDYgcsi>, a performance by musicians from Bob Jones University, where Mr. Forrest earned his bachelor's and master's degrees, and where he taught from 2007 to 2012. You can hear Mr. Forrest discuss the work on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLUcL88g40E>; excerpts of the piece serve as background music to his discussion.

– Kathy McKee

Family Sharing is upon us for this Holiday Season. For many years St. Bede's has offered our hand to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto.

Volunteer: Looking for an opportunity to reach out to the community and make a difference? This year St. Bede's will be volunteering at Ecumenical Hunger Program Wednesday, December 16th from 1:30 to 4:30, handing out toys or food baskets to families that are served by EPH. We would like to get an advance sign to help EPH with their scheduling. Please contact the Angela Sherry directly, email, zzbs@aol.com or cell, 650-823-3919. If there is interest, we can meet at the church and carpool over together.

Family Sharing: Last year was a huge success with our Family Sharing concentrating on teenagers, who are often forgotten during Christmas time. As we did last year, we will give each teen a large, festive Christmas stocking filled with small gifts and gift cards age appropriate. The plan is for each parishioner participating, to buy a stocking, fill it with small fun items like candy, nice pens, cute socks and top it with a gift card worth \$25 or \$50. We'd like each teen to receive \$50 in gift cards plus a few goodies. Gift card suggestions are: Amazon, Costco, Ross, Target, Wal-Mart, Costco, to name a few. There is no limit as to how many we purchase and donate, EHP says there is a huge need for this age group. We'd like to give equal amounts of stocking for both boys and girls, along with gender neutral stockings.

Parishioners are needed to sign up to purchase and create these stockings, or to donate toward their purchase. Sign-up sheets will be out during both coffee hours on December 8th and 15th, the second and third Sundays of Advent. The deadline to drop off your items is Friday, 14th. Please contact Angela Sherry, if you would like to sign up earlier. She can be reached through email, zzbs@aol.com.

Bede's Bedhead Book Club

Please plan to join us for light-hearted discussion in the Ford Room **at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month** through November. Our upcoming leaders and book choices are:

November 20: Deb Blackmore on Catherine Fox's *Acts and Omissions*
Reviewers say: "*This novel brims with wit and heart, acknowledging the awkwardness and consolations of Anglicanism in the twenty-first century.*" Deepen your faith and your friendships. Bring your favorite coffee or tea and drop in to the Bede's Bedhead Book Club. Sign-up online on Sign-up Genius or contact coordinator Deb Blackmore at deb@blackmore.com. - Deb Blackmore

Vestry View

This periodic report on the Vestry's actions and decisions is part of our commitment to serving the Bede's community. The October Vestry meeting was divided into two parts: a planning session that reviewed some remaining priorities for 2019 in addition to our regular business meeting. Following is a brief recap.

Vestry priorities for the remainder of this year. Among the priorities that we identified:

- Support the stewardship drive,
- Refine and pass the 2020 budget,
- Report on next steps in the search for a new children's and youth minister,
- Prepare for the annual parish meeting on Sunday, January 26, and
- Continue our outreach focus on housing and homelessness.

Planning for 2020. At its retreat early next year, Vestry will work to identify a few large, multi-year initiatives on which to focus. Key to our discussion will be how vestry can lead these efforts and involve the entire parish.

Stewardship campaign. Van Jepson reported that the stewardship goal is to have 100% participation from 85 families at St. Bede's. As of October 22, we have received \$181,000 in pledges, which is 55% of our goal of \$327,000. The Stewardship Committee (Julie Backlund, Helen Greenwood, Van Jepson and Sue Sartor) will be making follow-up calls over the next few weeks to parishioners who have not yet pledged for 2020. Your gift – at whatever level is comfortable for you and your family – is important to the financial health of the parish.

Re-envisioning Our Children's and Youth Ministry. The first discernment discussion was held on October 13 with a second discussion planned for Sunday, November 3. In addition, there is a meeting of area Episcopal Churches at St. Mark's in Palo Alto on Saturday, November 23 to discuss ways in which churches may be able to collaborate on CYM programs. Please contact Gia if you are interested in participating in either the November 3 or 23 discussions.

Trinity School update. Gia reported that Trinity School will be starting its strategy planning process in January, leading up to work on a new campus master plan next fall. The school's chapel program was revised, starting in September, to offer shorter services that are more age-appropriate. School chapel is now offered Monday through Friday, 8:20 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., and is open to any parishioner who would like to participate in a morning prayer service.

Next vestry meeting: Tuesday, November 19, at 7 p.m. in the Ford Room. Members of the Bede's community at large are welcome to join us for the spiritual practice that opens each vestry meeting. Please contact Gia or one of the wardens if you wish to offer community input, so that we can ensure there is time on the agenda for you.

– *Anne Vitullo, Junior Warden*

Celebrations: November Birthdays and Anniversaries

Anniversaries are like birthdays: occasions to celebrate and to think ahead, usually among friends with whom one shares not only the past but also the future. – Zbigniew Brzezinski

Birthdays:

5 Catherine Norman
7 Nancy Nunn
12 J.B. Pellegrin
17 Charlie Pellegrin
23 Kathy Francissen
24 David Craig
25 Tom Latta
25. Will Latta
46 Jeff Homrig

Anniversaries:

7 Michelle Swenson and Stan Drobac
12 Julie Ha and Anton Wahlman
23 Pam Stevens and David van Greuningen
26. Lin Yu and Kelly Clarke

Milestones

Confirmations, October -- 2019

Strengthen, O Lord, your servants with your Holy Spirit.

Deaths

Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

St. Bede's Episcopal Church

2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA. 94025 • (650) 854-6555 •

www.stbedesmenlopark.org

Clergy and Staff

The Rev. Gia Hayes-Martin, Rector
Katherine McKee, Music Director
Rani Fischer, Organist
Siri Huntoon, Parish Administrator
Angela Sherry, Bookkeeper

Sunday Services and Programs

Holy Eucharist at 8 a.m. (Rite I) and 10:15 a.m. (Rite II)
Soulwork Adult Education at 9 a.m.
Nursery at 10 a.m.
Children's Sunday School at 10:15 a.m.
