

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2023

The Scroll

St. Stephen's



United Methodist Church
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The Message of Advent

I love Christmas! It's one of my favorite times of the year—the traditions, the singing, the family, the food, and the birth of our Savior! What's not to love? Our faith traditions not only focus on Christmas but also spend intentional time getting us ready for this holy day. Not just the external things of decorating and preparing spaces to look appropriate for the season. But the internal preparation of the heart and soul to explore the cosmic glory of the incarnation of God!

One of the most meaningful tools of Advent is the Advent wreath and the themed candles we light. I don't know about you, but this year, I could really use some "hope, peace, joy, and love." While there is always some level of violent conflict occurring around the world, this year, it feels "closer" than it has for a while. Indeed, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the loss of life in Israel and Gaza are at the forefront of our minds, yet there are numerous other armed conflicts around the globe. According to the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in Switzerland, there are currently forty-five armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, more than thirty-five in the rest of the African continent, twenty-one in Asia, seven in Europe, and six armed conflicts in Latin America. The world needs hope, peace, joy, and love. And the world needs the followers of Jesus to carry His light into the world so that those blessings may push out despair, conflict, sorrow, and hatred.

As we light these candles this year, let's think of them as more than a cherished tradition. Let's consider them a means of God's grace, blessing the world.

Let's light the first candle as a sure and certain hope that outshines the darkness of despair.

Let's light the second candle as a clarion call for peace, directing the world away from the discord of hostility towards the harmony of peaceful coexistence.

Let's light the third candle as an expression of joy, driving back the sorrow and sadness of a broken world, still acknowledging the need around us, but also claiming that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let's light the fourth candle as a beacon of love that overwhelms the hatred that leads to so much pain and animosity, personal and global.

As we approach the Advent season this year, we don't have to pretend that everything is "Merry and Bright." It wasn't the night that Jesus was born, and never has been. Rather than ignore the inner challenges or the external ones, we can counter the brokenness of the world with the blessings of the incarnation, of the Word-made-flesh. Jesus brought hope, peace, joy, and love into the world in a way that it hadn't fully known before. And the world continues to need us to carry those blessings out into it, to outshine despair, conflict, sorrow, and hatred.

May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ transform us personally so that we may be agents of transformation for our home, for our communities, for our Commonwealth, for our country, and for the world.

Peace and grace to you,
Pastor Spencer

Thanks for the Welcome Center

As I reflect on the past year during this season of gratitude and thanksgiving, one of the main things that comes to mind in the life of St. Stephen's is our Welcome Center. Ever since it reopened to provide refreshment and fellowship on Sunday mornings, the Welcome Center has given us a glimpse of hope in various ways. It has provided a space to mingle, share laughter, exchange stories, find a breather, enjoy nourishment, and learn more about the life of the church. It has welcomed not only the old but also the young, not only our regular attendees but also newcomers.

I have always believed that one of the sure signs of the health of any church is people's desire to linger afterward without agendas, or as I like to call it, "loitering." When people loiter with open hearts, that's when the Holy

Spirit moves most impressively: forming relationships, fostering friendships, and strengthening communities. I believe the Welcome Center has been a space for such things to happen organically. I am immensely grateful to the Fellowship Committee for spearheading the effort to reopen the Welcome Center, especially Mary Morrison and Ruth Porter. I also want to express my appreciation for all those committees, groups, and individuals who have responded to volunteer as hosts for the Welcome Center in 2023.

Once again, I want to emphasize the importance of this effort to those reading this—let us continue to build this beautiful ministry of the Welcome Center together!

Grace and Peace,
Minoo

Manger Ministry

In keeping with St. Stephens' eight-year tradition, our church is dedicating our Christmas offering to provide families in our community with a safe and stable home. We call this our Manger Ministry, which celebrates the birth of Jesus in a manger, the only place available to his family on Christmas Eve.

Through the Manger Ministry, St. Stephens partners with a local non-profit called Homestretch to cover the yearly costs of housing one or two families who are participating in a two-year program. This program empowers families to move from crisis to long-term stability and financial independence. During their time with Homestretch, parents work at a job, contribute to their living costs, and are required to

improve their parenting, vocational, and financial skills.

Over the years, the families that St. Stephens has helped have successfully graduated from Homestretch and secured new jobs, affordable and stable housing, and a deep appreciation for the tremendous support our church has provided. This year, thanks to the kindness and generosity of our congregation, we are supporting two families with babies and very young children.

Members of St. Stephens have given out of their love for God and in celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas. Please consider donating to the Manger Ministry by using an envelope marked "Christmas" in the offering on Christmas Eve or by sending a donation to St. Stephens marked for the Manger Ministry.



NOVEMBER CROP HUNGER WALK

The CROP Hunger Walk took place last month, raising awareness and funds to combat hunger in our community. It was a wonderful event filled with compassion and a commitment to our church's mission. The walk brought the community together to join in solidarity against hunger. Participants walked through the local area, spreading awareness and raising funds for those in need. We are grateful to everyone who participated in this important event. Your support and dedication are making a difference in the lives of those facing food insecurity.



A Disciple's Path

Are you ready to deepen your faith and grow as a disciple of Christ in 2024? Our Waypoints group is excited to announce our upcoming six-week Discipleship Class, using a curriculum called “A Disciple’s Path” by James A. Harnish and Justin LaRosa, led by our lead pastor, Rev. Spencer Broce. The workbooks will be provided.

When: Six consecutive weeks from January 7 to February 11, 2024

Time: Meetings every Sunday, noon to 1 p.m. (*Feb 11 an exception)

Location: St. Stephen’s UMC, Room C40

Our Discipleship Class is designed to help you grow deeper in your faith and strengthen your connection with our church community. It’s an opportunity to:

- **Learn and Apply:** Learn about our discipleship within the context of St. Stephen’s UMC and discover how to apply these insights to your everyday life.
- **Build Relationships:** Connect with fellow members of St. Stephen’s UMC who are also seeking to grow in their discipleship. Build friendships and support one another on your spiritual journey.
- **Discover Purpose:** Explore how your unique gifts and talents can be used to make a positive impact within our church and the broader community.
- **Strengthen Commitment:** Reaffirm your commitment to following Christ and become a more active and engaged member of our church family under the guidance of Pastor Spencer Broce.

Additional Details:

- **Childcare Provided:** We understand that many of you have family commitments. That’s why we are pleased to offer childcare services during the class, from infant to youth, so you can focus on your spiritual journey while your children are well cared for.
- **Refreshments:** Food will be provided for both registered participants and their children.
- **Limited Space:** To ensure that everyone receives the attention and support they deserve, we have a maximum of twelve spots available.
- **Registration Deadline:** The deadline for registration is December 17, 2023. Be sure to secure your spot before it’s too late!

Scan the QR code to register.



We believe that the journey of discipleship is one that we undertake together, as a community. This class is not just about acquiring knowledge; it’s about growing in faith, deepening relationships, and living out the teachings of Jesus in our daily lives.

We look forward to seeing you at the Discipleship Class, guided by “A Disciple’s Path,” led by Pastor Spencer Broce. Let’s make 2024 a year of profound spiritual growth and community connection. See you in class!





HOLY PUMPKIN!

Trunk or Treat kept our volunteers busy as we welcomed 240 guests.

One of our goals is for Trunk or Treat to serve as an outreach to the families in our community. This fall, we doubled the number of individuals who visited! God provided us with beautiful fall weather and a lot of wind. Mostly, He gifted us fellowship with church friends and new friends who joined us for a day of fun. We also added a petting zoo. Heavenly Hearts Petting Zoo is a rescue center for unwanted and mistreated animals. If you have not yet been part of Trunk or Treat, join us next year. We will save you a parking space.

Children's Ministries is gearing up for the Advent Festival taking place on December 2!

We are especially excited that we will be having our 2nd Annual Pop-Up Christmas Pageant! We call it a pop-up pageant because we do not rehearse. You simply show up, get a costume, and learn a song. Then, with your friends, tell the story of Jesus' birth to the audience. Want to participate? We will meet you in the Sanctuary at 2:45 p.m.

We are also excited to announce that a meal (and cookies) will be provided after the Christmas pageant, as well as the opportunity to make an Advent wreath with your family.

Advent Season is a great time to serve others – Just ask the children.

Children's Ministries has filled the Advent season with the opportunity to serve others through our gifts and our presence. Join us!

Dec. 2: Recreate the night of Jesus' birth at the Advent Festival, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Dec. 8: Bring happiness to others at MPK (wrap Christmas gifts for Grace Ministries) and SHINE (design Christmas ornaments for an assisted living community), 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Dec. 9: Bring joy to others through your presence and song during the Lessons in Carols service, 11:00 a.m. Both the Cherub Choir and Christ's Choir will perform.

Dec. 17: Celebrate the coming of baby Jesus with your church friends at the Living Nativity, 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Dec. 24: Welcome Baby Jesus! 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.



Church and Society Events and News

St. Stephen's United Methodist Church will host its annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observance on January 14, 2024 at 4:30 pm. The guest speaker for this event will be Rev. Camille Henderson-Edwards, who serves as the director for Economic, Health, and Gender Justice at the General Board of Church and Society. In her role, she advocates for economic, health, and gender justice through legislative and policy initiatives. Rev. Henderson-Edwards also leads a monthly online seminar called "Letters to My Daughters," which explores various topics, including the maternal mortality crisis in the United States.

We invite you to join us for the worship service, followed by a service project where we will assemble layette kits for mothers and their newborn babies. These kits will be donated to the Northern Virginia Assistance League. After the service project, we will have dinner for fellowship. Please mark your calendars and join us on January 14th for this special event.

JUSTICE JANUARY

The Church and Society Committee of St. Stephen's UMC welcomes you to a month of events focused on maternal health and our church's response.

- On Friday, January 12, 2024, at 6 p.m., the MPK kids will be creating no-sew blankets to add to the layette kits that we will be assembling on January 14th.
- On Sunday, January 14, 2024, at 4:30 p.m., we will have our annual Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr. worship service. Our guest speaker for the service will be Rev. Camille Henderson-Edwards, the Director for Economic, Health, and Gender Justice at the General Board of Church and Society. Following the service, we will have a service project where we will assemble layette kits. The evening will conclude with a dinner.

- On Thursdays, January 18 and 25, at 7 p.m., we will gather online for "Letters to my Daughters." This online seminar will feature video presentations by Rev. Camille Henderson-Edwards, focusing on the maternal mortality crisis and ways that the faith community can respond.
- Lastly, on Thursday, February 1, 2024, we will participate in United Methodist Day at the General Assembly. Please refer to the article below for more details on this event.

UNITED METHODIST DAY AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - FEBRUARY 1, 2024

United Methodist Day at the General Assembly is an event supported by the United Women of Faith and the Church and Society Committee at St. Stephen's UMC. This day provides an opportunity for Methodists from all over Virginia to come together and advocate for our neighbors by meeting with our representatives. It is a time to learn about the pressing issues faced by people across the commonwealth and to connect with one another. We celebrate our

Church and Society Events and News

(continued)

United Methodist faith, which values justice, advocacy, and compassion.

If you are interested in learning more about United Methodist Day at the General Assembly, we invite you to sign up for our preview session on November 30 at 7:00 p.m. This will give you an overview

of the event before deciding to join us on February 1. If you are already planning to join us in Richmond, please register for UM Day using the provided link.

If you have any questions or would like to sign up for a carpool, please reach out to Max Brewer or Victoria Bryant Bateman.

HOLLY WREATHS

Submitted by Lori Broce
(affectionately called “Holly Blobs in the Broce family”)

- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 34-36 large marshmallows
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 2 tsp green food coloring
- 4 cups corn flakes
- Red cinnamon candies, Christmas mini M&Ms, or sprinkles

In a large saucepan, melt butter and marshmallows over low heat, stirring constantly. Add vanilla and food coloring, stirring until well blended. Remove from heat.

Gently mix in cornflakes until they are covered with the green marshmallow mixture. Drop spoonfuls onto wax-paper-lined cookie sheets. If desired, shape each one into a wreath before decorating with candies. Alternatively, decorate each “blob” with candies to resemble berries or use sprinkles.

These wreaths make great neighbor gifts. If desired, shape into one large wreath with greased hands and add candies as berries. Finish with a pretty ribbon!

WARNING: Do not try to sneak one of these by popping it into your mouth secretly. Your tongue will turn bright green and give you away! Heehee

Enjoy!

USHERS NEEDED

Every Sunday, our ushers play a crucial role in ensuring that our guests feel welcomed and comfortable during our worship services. They work behind the scenes to make this happen. Each team consists of 3-4 ushers, and currently, we have two teams for

the 9:00 a.m. service and three teams for the 11:00 a.m. service. However, we need more ushers to help share this responsibility. We invite you to join this important ministry at St. Stephen's, where all are welcome, including youth. If you're interested, please contact Roger Hartman at rogerhartman47@gmail.com or indicate your interest on a Connect Card.

SAVE THE DATE

February 11, 2024—Joint Service for St. Stephen's 68th Anniversary (All Star Weekend) Service at 10:00 a.m.

FAIRFAX FISH

FAIRFAX FISH

(For Immediate Sympathetic Help)

One of St Stephen's First Outreach Ministries

Have you wondered what this program is, or how FISH helps those in need in our community? The year was 1967 when seven churches took on a joint venture that provided short-term emergency help to their neighbors in the community.

St. Stephen's was one of those churches and continues today supporting FISH with monthly financial assistance and a group of volunteers.

FISH is a faith community-based, non-denominational, non-profit all-volunteer organization that provides urgently needed assistance to people who need a boost to overcome a temporary obstacle. FISH exists to help meet these temporary financial needs. FISH also makes emergency food deliveries to those in need, utilizing church food pantries and supplementing the staples with perishables purchased with FISH funds.

HOW FISH OPERATES

FISH serves people in Fairfax City and its surrounding neighborhoods, working in close coordination with Fairfax County's Coordinated Services Planning Agency (CSP), which connects those in need to private non-profits. CSP interviews the clients, determines their needs, and reaches out to FISH and similar organizations to provide help.

Volunteers are recruited from the member churches. Volunteers serve as telephone captains and drivers from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays). Each of the 14 member churches provides a representative to the operating FISH Council. Volunteer "telephone captains" take calls from CSP social workers every business day from 8:30-4:30 and determine if FISH is able, in accordance with our policies and guidelines, to respond to the need. If the CSP request involves an emergency food delivery, FISH makes food deliveries to those in need, utilizing church food pantries and supplementing

the staples with perishables purchased with FISH funds. Each member church has at least one duty day per month, and each church has a representative to the operating FISH Council, which meets monthly. Four member churches operate a food pantry.

HOW FISH IS FINANCED

Fairfax FISH receives much of its funding through the support of its member churches and individual donations. Other sources of income include a grant from Fairfax County and being an agency partner with the United Way & Combined Federal Campaign. Through being an agency partner with the United Way and Combined Federal Campaign, many of you kindly donate at work to FISH. Your recognition of helping our neighbors in need contributes to a stronger Fairfax County. We want to encourage donors to remember Fairfax FISH when they contribute to the United Way #8305 or Combined Federal Campaign #72413.

CLOTHING CLOSET

Fairfax FISH operates a clothing closet located in Fairfax Presbyterian Church. Hours of operation are 9:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of each month. Donations of seasonal, gently used clothing are always welcome and may be dropped off during hours of operation. This year, 272 adults and 55 children visited the Clothing Closet. In addition, the closet assisted several churches' "Grace Ministries" events with clothing for homeless participants in church-run hypothermia shelter programs.

This past year, FISH was able to financially help 456 households with housing and utility assistance consisting of our funding and provided food for 149 families and clothing to over 600 adults and children. Special appreciation goes out to the 84 FISH volunteers for their dedication and faithfulness to the program. This year, FISH volunteers dedicated nearly 6,800 hours and drove 4,611 miles serving members of our community. The primary success of Fairfax FISH is due to its volunteers and supporting churches. You can learn more about this wonderful program on its website, www.fairfaxfish.org. Go "fishing" and check us out or contact Dick Collier at 703-861-4780.

Christmas at Grace Ministries

Thanks to the “extravagant generosity” (one of St. Stephen’s guiding principles) of the St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church community and friends, in 2022 we provided over 600 children from 215 families with wrapped, age-appropriate Christmas gifts. Their families also received shelf-stable groceries, produce, bread, and diapers. Additionally, we gifted Browne Education Campus in Washington, DC, with 35 family activity gifts for their preschool to eighth-grade students.

With your help, we hope to share even more this year. The number and size of guest families participating in Grace Ministries and First Fridays/Green Groceries has steadily increased throughout 2023.

Detailed gift suggestions for infants to 17-year-olds can be found below. There will also be a Giving Tree in the Gathering Space, with tags grouped by specific age ranges. We kindly ask that you wrap the gifts (although we are happy to assist if needed) and label them by age and gender, if applicable. Please remember to include batteries if required. We also appreciate donations of wrapping paper, tape, and Christmas labels.

You may drop off packages at the church during regular office hours or when attending services or meetings. The deadline for drop-off is Thursday, December 14, and distribution will take place on the 16th.

Thank you so much for your support. Grace Ministries and our families truly appreciate it.

Suggested Gifts for Most Age Groups: Books, sports balls, puzzles, art supplies, science, building and craft kits, board and card games.

Infant to 3: Attachable mobiles, plush animals and dolls, pull toys, bath toys, picture books.

3 to 5: Musical toys, play sets (farm, first responders, garage, medical, cooking, dinosaurs, jungle), coloring books, crayons, markers, stickers, play vehicles.

5 to 7: Action figures and dolls, costume headgear (firefighter, construction, jungle animal, decorated hairbands, superhero), Etch A Sketch, chalkboard and chalk, musical toys, puppets, bean bag sets.

7 to 9: Motorized land, air, and sea craft, plant grow kits, building sets, science, craft, and baking kits.

9 to 11: Science, model-building, craft kits, personal journals, pens, art supplies, LED gloves, scrapbooks.

12 to 14: Advanced science and craft kits, nail care kits, bracelets, sports gloves, frisbees, decorative items.

15 to 17: Personal journals, dart boards, men’s travel and shave kits, makeup sets, wallets, purses, entertainment gift certificates, decorative boxes.

ENDOWMENT FUND OPPORTUNITIES

Most gifts received by charities are in the form of cash. This may not always be the most tax-efficient way to give. It may surprise you that the following assets may be more tax-efficient to give:

- Stock and other securities
- Real Estate
- Life Insurance
- IRA or other Retirement Assets
- CDs
- Bequests from Wills and Trusts
- Annuities

In your estate planning, consider a gift to the St. Stephen’s Permanent Endowment Fund, which will provide support for the ministries of St. Stephen’s for years to come.

Additional information on Endowment Fund Opportunities is available on the St. Stephen’s website or contact Jim Allison, Chair of the Permanent Endowment Committee at 703-323-8132.



Dear St. Stephen's Family: We hope this message finds you all well and cozy as we transition into winter. We have had an incredible time with our youth group this fall, and we are thrilled to fill you in on all the exciting events that have taken place.

DODGEBALL TOURNAMENT:

Our youth group demonstrated outstanding athleticism, unity, and teamwork in a recent dodgeball tournament involving 12 churches and over 20 teams. Congratulations to our talented team for bringing home the trophy!

BOWLING OUTING:

During our recent bowling outing, our youth had a great time showcasing their skills on the lanes. Although the teams were a bit unbalanced due to one of the leaders being an avid player, it was still a fun experience for everyone!

THRIVING YOUTH GROUP AND SUNDAY SCHOOL GATHERINGS:

Our regular youth group and Sunday School gatherings have been vibrant settings for spiritual growth and community support. It

is heartwarming to see our young members actively engaging in discussions and forming lasting connections. We are proud of their growth over the years and look forward to what lies ahead.

SPOOKTACULAR HALLOWEEN PARTY:

The youth group organized an amazing Halloween party, complete with creative costumes, festive decorations, and a lively atmosphere. We even had the chance to carve some pumpkins!

INSPIRING FALL RETREAT:

Given the circumstances surrounding COVID, our retreats have been limited in scope or non-existent. However, this fall retreat provided our youth with a valuable opportunity to relax, worship, and connect with each other and other churches. It was a time of reflection, growth, and shared experiences that will continue to impact them for years to come.

As we approach the winter season, let us continue to support and celebrate the accomplishments of our youth. Their energy and

passion greatly contribute to the spirit of our church community. We extend our gratitude to the youth group leaders and participants for making this autumn season truly memorable.

We eagerly anticipate more exciting moments and achievements in the future.

Blessings,
Youth Ministry Team
St. Stephen's UMC





CIRCULAR BRAIDED CHALLAH RECIPE

Submitted by Rev. Steven D. Martin,
Communications Director

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp instant yeast
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 large eggs + 1 for egg wash
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup lukewarm water

INSTRUCTIONS:

Dough Preparation:

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, instant yeast, sugar, and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together 2 eggs, vegetable oil, and lukewarm water.
3. Gradually add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, stirring until a dough begins to form.

Kneading:

1. Transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes until it is smooth and elastic.
2. Place the dough in a greased bowl, cover with a cloth, and let it rise in a warm place for 1.5 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in size.

Forming the Circular Braid:

1. Punch down the risen dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured surface.
2. Divide the dough into three equal parts. Roll each part into a long rope, about 1.5 feet in length.

3. Pinch the top ends of the ropes together and braid them.
4. Once the braid is complete, carefully bring the ends together to form a circle, pinching them to seal.

Second Rise:

1. Place the circular braid on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
2. Cover it with a cloth and let it rise for another 30–60 minutes.

Baking:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Beat the remaining egg and gently brush it over the challah for a golden crust.
3. Bake for 25–30 minutes, or until the challah is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped.

Serving:

1. Let the challah cool on a wire rack before slicing.
2. Serve with your choice of spreads or enjoy it as is.

This circular braided challah is not only delicious but also makes a beautiful centerpiece for any meal. Its rich, slightly sweet flavor and soft, fluffy texture make it a favorite for special occasions or a weekend treat. Enjoy baking and sharing this lovely bread!

CINNAMON BABKA RECIPE

Submitted by Joe Willmore



I'll bet most of you recall the Seinfeld episode where Elaine is looking for a chocolate babka and instead goes with a cinnamon babka. A babka is a traditional Jewish holiday bread that will be a big hit for the Thanksgiving or Christmas seasons.

You'll need parchment paper, a pan or dish (think of something about the size of a large casserole dish or a cookie sheet), a rolling pin, a dough scraper, a spatula, measuring cups and spoons. You can make the dough by hand or use a Mix Master with a dough hook.

INGREDIENTS:

For ingredients, you'll need 3.5 cups of flour, 1/2 cup of whole milk, 3 eggs (plus an extra if you want to do an egg wash—which is optional), cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, white granulated sugar, brown sugar, yeast, and 8–10 tablespoons of butter.

RECIPE:

1. Proof the yeast in 1/2 cup of lukewarm whole milk with a pinch of white sugar. Cover yeast and wait 10 minutes.
2. Make dough using the dough hook (or a bowl and spoon). You'll use 3 cups of flour, 3 eggs, 1/3rd cup of butter or about 4-5 tablespoons of sugar. A tablespoon of honey is optional. Put 1 cup of flour in yeast/milk and mix. Add some of the butter and mix. Add another cup of flour and mix. Add the rest of the butter and mix. Add the 3 eggs and mix. If it's too wet, add a tablespoon of flour and mix, then another tablespoon of flour if it's still too wet. Then mix 5-10 minutes with dough hook (or knead by hand). Test dough to see if it bounces back. Basically, you're making dough here—so if you've done that before, there is nothing new to this process.
3. Rub butter inside a bowl. Put dough in and coat it with butter by rubbing your ball of dough against the sides of the bowl. Cover and let dough rise for 90-120 minutes. You can also do a cold rise in the fridge overnight.
4. Punch dough down and cut in half. Roll each half into a rectangle.
5. Mix filling (4-6 tablespoons of soft butter, grated nutmeg to taste, 4 tablespoons of cinnamon, 1 cup of brown sugar). Mix until you get a brown sludgy paste. Half goes with each rectangle. Smear it over the dough, making sure to leave 1-2 inches empty/clear on one edge. This is enough filling for both rectangles, so either do both rectangles now or only 1/2 and save the rest for the second rectangle (to be done later if you wish).
6. Roll up the dough towards the clear/empty side so you have a log. Place it on the cookie sheet and into the fridge for 5-10 minutes—you want the butter to become harder.
7. Pull out the cookie sheet and cut the log/dough down the middle (so you have two long halves). Place the dough strips against each other with the cut sides facing out (and the uncut sides touching). Braid the dough strips. Adjust the braid to your pan shape and size.
8. Put parchment paper in pan, insert braided dough, and let rise (30-60 minutes).
9. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes. You can use almost any kind of pan or dish—a bread pan, a casserole dish, a cake tin.

Here is a picture of what the babka looks like when you've cut the dough log in half and you're braiding it, and then a picture once they've been braided together, allowed to rise, and then baked.

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ADVENT AT ST. STEPHEN'S

We invite you to join us during this time of preparation for the birth of Christ. Our events are open to all ages.

Sunday, December 3 — First Sunday in Advent

Services at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, December 10 — Second Sunday in Advent

Special Music — Lessons and Carols at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. services

Youth Group Christmas Party at 5:30 p.m. All youth in grades 7-12 are welcome!

Thursday, December 14 — Service of Hope & Healing

Service at 7:00 p.m. This service is dedicated to all seeking hope, healing, wholeness and comfort in the love of God

Saturday, December 16 — Grace Ministries

Food distribution starting at 7:00 a.m. — drive through — first come/first served

Sunday, December 17 — Third Sunday in Advent

Living Nativity — The animals will be here from

10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. — great family activity

Sunday, December 24 — Fourth Sunday in Advent

Join us for our regular worship with one single service at 10:00 a.m.

Christmas Eve worship at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 31

Join us for one service at 10:00 a.m.