

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after The Epiphany  
A Sermon Preached – and Rector's Report –  
by The Rev Ian M Delinger  
on January 18, 2026  
Isaiah 49:1-7 / 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 / Psalm 40:1-12 / John 1:29-42

*Through Your word, O Lord, give strength to Your people;  
Give Your people the blessing of peace.*

COME AND SEE!

*Two of John the Baptist's followers said to Jesus, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and they remained with Him that day.*

"Come and see". That invitation from Jesus not only marks the beginning of His earthly ministry. It is an invitation to every person since Andrew and his companion to follow Jesus in His path to our Salvation. And from what we read in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, the Disciples and others who followed Jesus in His *earthly* ministry "came and saw" many amazing things: Miracles of healing, miracles of multiplication, profound wisdom and the courage of truth in the face of corruption and death. As I have been referring to since the First Sunday of Advent: they were invited to "come and see", and they lived the drama!

Each Sunday ... each day that we choose to engage with Jesus in prayer, worship and discipleship, we are invited to "come and see" where God is in that moment. We are invited to discover the Epiphany of "Come and See", to experience how God through Jesus is manifested in that invitation of "come and see".

So, I want to spend the bulk of this time to review what the "come and see" was throughout 2025. As I deliver the Rector's Report for the Annual Meeting, what did I "come and see", and was Jesus manifested in any of it? And I'm going to

focus the Rector's Report on what the Rector got up to in 2025. What the rest of the parish was able to "come and see" in 2025 is in the Annual Report.

As Rector, my role is to conduct worship, instruct the faithful in matters of the faith, ministry and stewardship, and to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation and Reception. And I recently discovered that it is my responsibility to instruct all persons to make a will as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. I failed in doing that in 2025, so this shall serve as my canonical responsibility for 2026: Please make a will or trust as prescribed on page 445 of the BCP:

*[It is] the duty of Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families, and of all persons to make wills, while you are in health, arranging for the disposal of your temporal goods, not neglecting, if you are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses.*

It is not only my canonical duties to conduct worship, instruct and prepare for Baptism and Confirmation, it is my joy, the heart of my vocation and my humble gift. Thank you for engaging in all of this with me.

In addition to that, there were several endeavors within the parish whose initiation was mine, and I would like to highlight. It started at last year's Annual Meeting with a conversation with SmartShare Housing Solutions about putting a tiny home on the empty slab in the parking lot. You'll have read Ethan Stan's thorough summary of why this did not come to fruition. But it is an example of my commitment to making sure St Stephen's has at least one foot in working with the wider community on its priorities.

In that same mindset, I worked with Grass Roots II and CAPSLO to help serve the unhoused from a strategic downtown location: the Children's Chapel. You will have read about the CAPSLO Downtown Engagement Center in the Annual Report. That came to fruition from conversations that began in mid-2024 and which continue today to ensure that St Stephen's can be a part of San Luis Obispo

supporting the most vulnerable of God's People, which is a very high priority for this City and County.

As a fringe benefit – and a mechanism I won't go into here – the relationship with CAPSLO in developing the Engagement Center led to St Stephen's getting all new office furniture, new tables and chairs for the Boydston Room, and extra tables for Ramsden Hall.

At the Vestry Retreat, I challenged the Vestry on the vitality of the congregation. As a result, we explored the ministry of *Invite Welcome Connect*, that we will introduce to you later this morning. The exploration has brought into one place 9 years of preaching, writing, lecturing, nagging, modeling, sharing examples of, encouraging and whatever other gerund you want to use about my efforts to get us to engage with congregational development. And while we have yet to set forth a concrete action plan for this ministry, we are closer than we ever have been before. I would like to thank the Vestry for their commitment to engaging with *Invite Welcome Connect* and seeing it through to this point.

On a less interesting note, I made sure that we have the full suite of Employee Policies required by the Department of Labor and other State agencies. We had our first all-staff training in March, which will be an annual event!

Worship is what I like to do! Making and sharing the Sacrament is at the heart of my vocation. A general review of worship in 2025 is in the Annual Report. But allow me to share a few highlights:

- Since the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple landed on a Sunday, February 2, I thought it would be nice to celebrate with the traditional Candlemas liturgy. Our large altar candles had been restored, and part of the service is to bless candles. Well...it really wasn't the best setting for what should have been an evening service in the dark! But part of "come and see" is to live and learn!
- There were more Home Communion and Hospital Visits in 2025 than we have had in previous years. While I enjoy celebrating Communion in

people's homes, it also means that our beloved sisters and brothers are not able to join us for Sunday worship. Home Communion and hospital visits have tapered off. But please keep our homebound in your prayers.

- I had the great privilege to be invited to give Pastoral Charge at The Rev John D'Elia's installation at First Presbyterian Church. I had no idea what that was, but it was truly an honor to participate and to strengthen these ecumenical ties.

For me, Community Engagement is the "come and see" outside of Sundays.

Community Engagement is where Jesus leads us when we are not in worship.

Community Engagement was the Feeding of the 5,000, the expression of what we do to the least of these we do to Jesus, and of course the Great Commissioning.

Some of the highlights were:

- St Stephen's remains a member of Chamber of Commerce, and I do a bit of networking through the monthly Member Mixers and Good Morning SLO.
- I am in my 8<sup>th</sup> year on the Common Ground Advisory Task Force that was assembled by the Superintendent of San Luis Coastal Unified School District to address inequalities and inequities among the diversity of the student body across the schools in the District.
- I am a member of the SLO PD Police Advisory Committee convened by the Police Chief, and a regular participant in the Faith Community Stakeholders Group for Safe Parking that is convened by the Homelessness Response Manager for the City of SLO. The Safe Parking Program finally commenced in September. The program provides safe parking for 12 persons who sleep in their cars, who have "graduated" from the 40 Prado Safe Parking Program.
- Which brings me to the Welcome Home Village. This village of both transitional and permanent housing is about 2 blocks from my house on Bishop Street at Johnson. I attended the first "come and see" event, the groundbreaking, and had a peek at the housing units just this past week.
- On Campus, I have been more engaged with Pop-Up and mentoring the Student Coordinator for Campus Ministry, Molly Tedeschi. We have been

without a Chaplain for a year now, and Molly's efforts, with my support and the support of the Campus Ministry Board, have proven to create a viable and important ministry of presence on Campus.

- I have dipped my toe into the Latino Outreach Council to ascertain the interest in the possibility of a Spanish Language service here at St Stephen's. At some point, we will need to step into Jesus' role and say, "Come and see" or "Vengan a ver". I am working up the nerve for that.

As with most clergy, my personal endeavors overlap with my ministry. Three things that continue are:

- My Spanish Class for both my personal improvement and my continuing education;
- *Playing With Food*, the radio show I produce for KCBX; and
- Acting as Clergy Convenor for the SLO Deanery, which mostly involves herding the cats who are the other Episcopalian clergy of the County.

The last bit of the Rector's Report 2025 that I would like to mention is my role in the SLO Clergy Residential. We visited a new place, Mission San Antonio. It is remote, adjacent to Fort Hunter Liggett, and because they don't cater and have only one kitchen, only one group occupies this fairly large site at a time. Six of us rattled around in this large half-historic-half-restored site. And my offering was to cook for us. As a spiritual practice, I planned menus, went grocery shopping, packed a pantry and supplies, mapped out each day of prep, cooking and serving, and worked on how to deepen my relationship with God through the act of preparing and sharing food. I have delivered presentations, led a weekend retreat and written a 5-session adult ed class on the spirituality of the preparing and sharing of food. This was the most sustained period of time that I was able to "come and see" what it was like. It was exhausting, but it was also spiritually fulfilling.

Last year – 2025 – marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. Prior to that, in 2001, I decided to "come and see" what it would be

like to live and go to seminary in England. What happened was similar to Andrew and his friend, and then his brother Simon Peter: 3yrs later I was ordained Deacon and a year after that I was ordained Priest. I had committed to following Jesus in a particular way. And I'm still here, and I'm still up for "come and see".

2026 marks 10yrs that we have been together. Just over 10yrs ago, I was invited to "come and see" what St Stephen's was doing and if I wanted to be a part of it. I did want to be a part of it, and you wanted me to be a part of it. So here we are. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting that I have presided over; the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Report that we have compiled together; the 10<sup>th</sup> leadership transition. Our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be May 1.

I have an activity planned for the first Sunday in May for us to "come and see" where we have come and what we have seen together, and to consider what we will "come and see" in our future together. So, give that some thought over the next 3½ months.

Perhaps more importantly, we can be like Andrew in 2026. Jesus called Andrew and his companion to "come and see". After spending an evening with Jesus, they were transformed in such a way that Andrew went to his brother Simon and exclaimed that he had found the Messiah. He basically instructed what Jesus did: *Come and See*.

How can we be like Andrew?

With all that we have done in the name of Christ Jesus in 2025, and with all that we anticipate and look forward to in 2026, have we been transformed by our faith journey in such a way that we will invite those close to us to "come and see"? And what can we invite them to "come and see"? Surely something through which they may, too, experience the Love of God through Jesus Christ.

So, as we reflect on 2025 and look forward to what there is to "come and see" in 2026, I leave you with a greeting:

*I, Ian, called to be a priest of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and the Church, to the church of God that is in San Luis Obispo, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus...*

...and for the fellowship together into which we have been called.