



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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From our Interim Rector

It is a joy to have the opportunity to serve as Interim Rector at St. Stephen's Church for the next several months or for however long the search process takes. Interim periods in life are always a bit disconcerting. The past, good, bad, or indifferent, lingers a while and the future can only still be imagined.

As an interim rector my primary role is to prepare St. Stephen's for the coming of the next rector. It is a "John the Baptist" type role. I do not work with the vestry, profile or search committee in reference to the search process, but rather I "keep the home fires burning" so that the vestry, profile, search committee and other leadership can focus time and energy on listening to the Holy Spirit and attending to the ministry of seeking and calling the next rector for St. Stephen's. The Diocese will offer support and council to the governmental bodies in the church as they work the "search process."

A little about myself: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, where my father worked for General Motors. When I was a small boy, our family moved to a small town outside of Flint, Michigan, as my father was transferred from Kansas City to Flint. I have spent most of my life in the Episcopal Church. It was a small Episcopal Church in Otter Lake, Michigan, that spiritually formed me. After attending Michigan State and earning a degree in Political Science, I took some time off from school before moving to Alexandria, Virginia, to attend Virginia Theological Seminary, graduating in 1983. In June of that year I was called to serve as the curate at the Church of the Atonement in Westfield, Massachusetts. It was this call that brought me to New England. Over the next

twenty-two years I would serve in congregations in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts and Connecticut. I spent nine years serving as the rector of St. Paul's in Stockbridge, before moving to Pierre, South Dakota, where I would first serve as rector of Trinity Episcopal Church and then in 2009, I was elected bishop of the Diocese of South Dakota. After serving ten years as bishop, I retired to move back to New England and the Berkshires where our daughter Mary and her family live.

Pat and I bought a house in Dalton in August of 2018 and moved to Dalton July 1st of this year to make it our home. As I said, it is a joy to return to parish ministry, if even only for an interim period.

St. Stephen's is a blessed parish with a strong history of leadership both in the community of Pittsfield and the Diocese. This interim period is a time for us as a parish to listen deeply to God's call and discern the gifts we need in our next rector. It is a time to reflect on the past, interpret the present and seek God's vision for the future. It is not a time to pull back and wait and see, but rather it is a time to offer fully "our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice" (BCP p. 336) to God through our spiritual home, St. Stephen's.

I look forward to sharing this part of our journey together as we walk the "way of love" in the name of Jesus.

John Tarrant, Interim Rector

(Editor's note: We are so pleased to have you with us as we journey toward a new rector and the next chapter in the life and story of St. Stephen's.)

BIO Update

October is the month for the MICA H Celebration... This year's celebration takes place on Sunday, October 27th. Once again, it will be held at the Stationery Factory in Dalton. Doors open at 3:30 pm. This annual event is an opportunity for our member groups to honor one of their members who live up to the prophet Micah's call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly. It's also BIO's largest fundraiser of the year, and there are many ways for you to participate and contribute. Tickets are available at \$45.00 each. This year, BIO will be offering a meal served buffet style and guests will have tables with seating for 8 people. St. Stephen's honoree this year is the Reverend Gwen Sears. Come help us celebrate all that our beloved Gwen does as an active resident of Kimball Farms. You will also hear about all of the current campaigns that BIO is working on to effect positive change for social justice for all citizens of Berkshire County. Learn how you can join these efforts.

Tickets for the event can be purchased from our BIO delegate, Marcie Nevin or from Paula Morey or Susan Wojtasik. We hope to see you there.

A thought for the day

(thanks to *The Eagle* and Joan Rivers)



Yesterday is history,
tomorrow is a
mystery, today is
God's gift, that's why
we call it the present."

October

Happy Birthday:

- 2 Jeff Pringle, Peter Rousseau
- 3 Dennis Carney, Jennifer Gregg
- 6 Isiaha Hartman-Caesar, Ed Wilder
- 7 Claire O'Connor
- 8 Matthew Oakes (11), Rory Jane Shea (9)
- 10 Jeannette Ward, Zachary Michael Wheelock (6)
- 13 Theodore Caesar, Michael La Malfa,
Scott Luczynski (a milestone!)
- 15 Michela Laurin (a milestone!)
- 18 Dion Michael Bianco (15), Anthony Trapani (14)
- 19 David Harrington, Sabrina Reynolds (16),
Michael Wheelock, Carol Wilson
- 22 Brian Cooper, Keith Cooper
- 23 Colin Behnke (10), Martie Ekstrom
- 24 Barbara McShane, Dona Senecal
- 25 Sean Coakley (a milestone!), Quinton Cookis,
William Sosa
- 26 Robert Talanian
- 28 Sue Jenkins, Calvin Luczynski (3)
- 29 Jeffrey Hine
- 30 Crystal Hassan (a milestone!)
- 31 Jasean Davis (14), Catherine Doyle,
Jordan Hamilton (18)

Happy Anniversary:

- 3 Ann and Ev Heiss (1954-65 years!)
- 4 Teddy and Bill Carter (1970)
- 6 Jennifer and Michael Laurin (1995)
- 11 Christine and Craig Reynolds (1986)
- 12 Francis Hills and Marc Britt (2013)
Aloha and David Winchester (1963)
- 13 Leah and Scott Luczynski (2006)
- 23 Cathy and Joseph Carchedi (1982)
- 25 Claire and Rory O'Connor (1952)
- 27 Marie and Roy Sutton (1978)
- 29 Donna and Bill Chandler (1977)
- 30 Lynne and Philip Blanchard (2010)

Gwen Sears, Micah Honoree

By Susan Wojtasik

BIO looks forward each year to its Micah celebration. Each of BIO's nineteen member groups selects one of its own who exemplifies the Micah virtues – to love justice, practice mercy and walk humbly with his/her God – to honor at this event.

St. Stephen's is pleased to announce Gwen Sears as our Micah Honoree for 2019. Gwen has been a member of St. Stephen's Church since 1952, a time when Pittsfield and its religious institutions enjoyed the benefits of a booming economy and robust population. As a young wife and mother Gwen began her service at St. Stephen's with a focus on Christian education. She became Director of Religious Education for a Sunday School at St. Stephen's which provided the foundations of Christian life for hundreds of children.

Gwen's commitment to religious life led her to study for and be ordained as a deacon in the Episcopal Church. Her responsibilities in Christian formation grew to include adult education, summer camp experiences, retreat leadership and curriculum development both in and beyond St. Stephen's. She chaired the diocesan division of Christian education, and served with Carol Siegel as co-chair for the task force for Health Education for Pittsfield Schools. As deacon, Gwen shared preaching responsibilities, presided at weddings and funerals, and played a major role in parish visiting and counseling. Her work with people in the parish was valued so highly that it took five attempts at retirement before the clergy and people could be persuaded to let her go.

Gwen is currently a resident at Kimball Farms Retirement Community in Lenox. Formed by her lifelong love of gardening and inspired by encounters with the holy places, immense sky, and green leas of her beloved Iona, an island off the coast of Scotland she has often visited, Gwen has been moved to learn about and practice care for our fragile earth. To this end she has engaged fellow residents in a landscaping project to create a wild flower meadow on the Kimball Farms campus that supports important pollinators, bees and butterflies which are vital to the health of our environment.

We are grateful to Gwen for her lifelong dedication to nurturing God's people and God's good earth. Please join in honoring her at BIO's Micah Celebration on October 27th at the Stationery Factory in Dalton. Tickets are available from Paula Morey, Marcie Nevin or Susan Wojtasik.

Altar Flowers

The schedule of people who give flowers for the altar has greatly diminished. Won't you please consider giving flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion? The cost is \$45 and you may choose what flowers you wish in the arrangement – and what message you wish to convey. We have grown to expect flowers on the altar and they do add to the beauty of our services. Think about it and give me a call (499-3799) or email (joankurber@gmail.com) expressing your wishes. Thank you!

Once again, we also seek volunteers to do the flower ordering and arranging. This group of volunteers has become smaller and the same two people have done the arranging for three weeks in a row – surely there is someone out there who loves to work with flowers and could pitch in every 5 weeks or so. Speak to Sarah if you feel so inclined.

Did You Know?

- That **Cameron Langsdale** made High Honors at BART for the 4th quarter; and **Andrew Gillman** and **Nathaniel Gillman** made the Honors list. (Again – after the fact, but I can pick these things up only when they appear in the paper!)
- That **Nicholas Trapani** made High Honors at Taconic High School for the 4th quarter.
- That the following St. Stephen's parishioners took part in the Josh Billings (if I missed anyone, I apologize – the list was long and the print tiny!): **Luke Breslin**, **Charlie Sawyer** and family, **Erin Sullivan**, **Sharon** and **Matt Billetter**, and **Jim Brennan**. Congratulations to one and all for all that energy expended!