



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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DECEMBER 2019

Advent/Christmas 2019

"Celebrating Advent means being able to wait. Waiting, however, is an art that our impatient age has forgotten... we must wait for the greatest, most profound, most gentle things in the world; nothing happens in a rush, but only according to the divine laws of germination and growth and becoming." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

We have clergy friends in South Dakota who are waiting for their baby to arrive. Their baby is expected April 28, 2020. This process takes time. Everyone understands that. Even their three year-old is willing to wait. There is much in our life for which we are not willing to wait. Bonhoeffer talked about his age being "impatient." Little did he know how much impatience the generations that would follow him would breed; at least those who live in what we call "first world nations."

We at St. Stephen's are going through an Advent time of our own, beyond the season of the church. The vestry has named both the profile and search committees (listed below). We are in the "germination" phase of the process. The profile committee deals largely with 'germination'. They started by offering the CAT survey to the congregation and then spent a day of interpretation with Canon Rich Simpson. From the information gathered through the survey and engagements with the congregation, life will begin to sprout and give glimpses of the essence of what we call St. Stephen's Parish.

This germination, these sprouts will grow into what will become a profile of this Parish. Who we have been, who we are and who we believe God is calling us to become. This germination and growth process will not be perfect, nor will the profile it produces.

The search committee's job is to pray and discern, with Canon Simpson's assistance, who God is leading us to invite to be our rector during

the next years of our "becoming." I believe God will guide, inspire and empower us to live into this "becoming" calling forth both the clergy and lay leadership we need for this part of our journey.

This is our Advent journey; in many ways life is an Advent journey. As Bonhoeffer said, we are always "becoming" as long as we allow germination and growth during each season of our life.

God's peace be with you during this Season of "becoming".

John
Interim Rector

Christmas Services 2019

"All who at the manger finally lay down
All power and honor,
All prestige
All vanity
All arrogance and self-will
All who take their place among the lowly
And let God alone be high,
All who see the glory of God in the lowliness
of the child in the manger:
These are the ones who will truly celebrate
Christmas."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Please, celebrate with us at "the manger,"
God's altar, at St. Stephen's this Christmas.

Christmas Eve: 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Twenty minutes of music and carols will precede both services. Bishop Doug Fisher will be joining us for the 5:00 p.m. service.

Christmas Day: 10:00 a.m.

From our Interim Rector

Our 4th Annual MICAH Celebration!



The Magic of MICAH 2019!

Dondei Dean, BIO Organizer

Every year, BIO member groups lift up a person in their congregation who lives into the Prophet Micah's bold call. Each honoree answers the call differently. Some are quiet helpers who selflessly serve their congregations through hospitality, acts of service, event coordinating, problem-solving and community building. Others are fighters for change, working locally and internationally to uplift communities through music, art, education, and critical resources. Above all, they are all gracious, gentle, and generous in spirit and word.

On October 27th, we celebrated these MICAH honorees for their extensive contributions to their congregations and the wider community. The room buzzed with over 260 guests- friends, family, fellow congregants, and local businesses- who gathered to show support. As the evening began, guests enjoyed dinner and cozy conversation at candlelit tables.

Rev. Sloan Letman and Ann Clark hosted the evening, reminding us of the connection between the direct service that many honorees do, and the systemic change that BIO concentrates on. The honorees' direct work sustains their congregation both spiritually and physically, and embodies the community's faith values. Their daily, local

work makes it possible for their fellow congregants to focus on change on the systemic level.

Each honoree's introducer spoke to the scope and power of the person's role in the community. Many also mentioned their honoree's reluctance to publicly accept an award for their work! The honorees themselves gave short remarks filled with humor and passion. The sincere humility and gratitude with which they spoke showed exactly why they were being honored. Their spirits carried the night, filling us all with admiration and inspiration.

The honorees' actions reminded us all of the importance of generosity of time, talent, and treasure. And inspired by words from Rev. Nathaniel Anderson, the audience was generous with their contributions to BIO. Proceeds from the event totaled \$16,700 that evening. We deeply thank all who gave, everyone who came out to support, and the BIO leaders who spent months coordinating this special evening.

Above all, we thank the 2019 MICAH honorees for serving with power and integrity. We're excited to see everyone next year, and to raise up more powerful work in the community!

A Thank you to the Members of St. Stephen's

My nomination to be the Micah honoree from St. Stephen's, along with 13 other representatives from faith communities in the Berkshires, was indeed an unexpected honor and one that I will cherish. The strong witness of so many who joined together to answer the question "What does the Lord require of you? is to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." We who have been so honored, represent the quiet works of many who answer the call to make a difference. Let us continue to build on the foundations so rightly begun by BIO.

I wish to thank the many parishioners who attended the ceremony. We have shared so much through the years and once again I know what community means and how it strengthens each one to answer God's call. We are inheritors of those who have gone ahead of us and what we do will be the witness for those who follow.

My sincere thanks,
Gwen

Oh, Those Bells

From your Editor

I was so pleased to be present at the 10:00 a.m. service recently when the Bell Ringers performed. I was so impressed with the precision, the ability of some to ring 4 or more bells at the same time, and the overall beauty of the selections. We are so blessed with the music at St. Stephen's – hats off to the bell ringers and their fearless leader, Joy!

Profile Committee Members

Maribeth Barney, Chair; Connie Bullard, Liz Trapani, Craig Reynolds, Diana Macfarlane, Susan Wojtasik; Chris Plankey is the Vestry Liaison

Search Committee Members

Gwen Davis, Josie Ellis, John Garinther, Alec Gillman, Cathy Carchedi, Francie Hills, Susan LeBourdais, David Nevin, Chris Perry and Craig Smith. The Rev. Francie Hills will serve as committee chaplain and Wendy Coakley is the Vestry Liaison.

December

Happy Birthday:

- 2 Sue Tourigny
- 3 Connie Biegel
- 4 Bill Macfarlane
- 6 Lindsay Lynn Devitt (12), Pam Hawkins
- 7 Amanda Beaulieu (a milestone!), Grace Garinther (14), Shane Hassan (17), Adrianna Meyette (13), Suzanne White
- 12 Dylan Thomas (11)
- 13 Sharon Billetter (a milestone!)
- 10 Laura Cookis, Shatava Renee Dowdell (10)
- 11 Tanya Reynolds (a milestone!), Micah Roberts (11)
- 12 Nancy Travis
- 15 Jennifer Stetz
- 16 David Donovan, David Oakes
- 17 Mark Miller, George Stetz (8)
- 18 Madge Buerger (96 years young!), Lois Staffin
- 19 Carol Gendreau, Gunnar Schroder (8)
- 20 Ken Black (a milestone!), Brian Wells (18)
- 23 Mabel Cheyne, Olivia Grace Thompson (11)
- 24 Gerald O'Connor (91 years young!)
- 26 Jason Hassan (a milestone!)
- 27 Jameail Beckett Hand (16), Brody Kaley (15)
- 29 Susan LeBourdais

Happy Anniversary:

- 4 Kristi and Michael LaMalfa (2004)