



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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FEBRUARY 2020

Interim Rector's Report

Annual Meeting 2020

*"We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process
Is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road."*

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

St. Stephen's Church began her journey in 1830. Over the past 190 years there have been ups and downs; twists and turns; good times and hard times, but we have always kept our eyes on the one we are following. In "Eucharistic Prayer B" we are reminded that Jesus is *"the head of the Church,"* not the vestry or the rector or even the Bishop or Presiding Bishop, but Jesus the Christ. When we keep our eyes on Jesus, no matter where the road leads us, we know we are not alone and our journey is not for naught.

It is a privilege for me to walk with you on this stretch of the road. St. Stephen's is blessed with many resources, human and material. As God sent Abram out from his homeland, God reminded him that he would be blessed, so that he would be a blessing to others. So, too, it is with us. We have been blessed as a parish, so that we can be a blessing to the community within us, the community around us, and the community beyond us.

Bill Frazier and the team of pastoral ministers that serve with him are a true blessing to the community within us. Those who serve as teachers, mentors and coordinators of our youth and children's ministry; Joy and her singers and bell choir; those who offer adult education opportunities, hospitality, building and ground expertise and leadership skills are all blessings to the community within us. Of course, there are others: the altar guild, ushers, readers and greeters. There are those within in our community who offer their own particular talents to enhance our life together as a faith community, often without notice.

The community around us is served by Dan Moon and the numerous teams of individuals that volunteer

their time, talent and treasure to support St. Stephen's Table. The Cathedral of the Beloved is overseen by the Rev. Jenny Gregg and supported by many within our midst. The parish Discretionary Fund has provided a warm shelter for many who would otherwise have slept outdoors. We have paid rent and kept the heat and electricity on for several of our neighbors, we provided fuel oil for a family in Dalton who otherwise would have spent Christmas in the cold. We have been good neighbors to the homeless and the hungry, the immigrant community and those in recovery, inviting them into our space. We have not let our inability to meet everyone's needs prevent us from meeting some people's needs. We, also, gave gift cards to the Police Department, our neighbors across the street, as an appreciation for those who needed to work the holiday weekends.

We serve the community beyond us through our Diocesan Assessment, donations to the United Thank Offering, and Episcopal Relief and Development and through the many committees and agencies our members give their time to outside of the church.

St. Stephen's is blessed and we are a blessing to those who are far off and those who are near. Through this Parish and our members God's will is more fully done on "earth as it is in Heaven." Thank you for allowing me to walk with you during this part of your journey and thank you for believing that *"God's power, working through us, can do infinitely more than we can ever imagine."*

God's peace be with you,
John Tarrant

Parish Profile Committee

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Profile Committee's charge/job/purpose?

The Profile Committee has three essential jobs:

- 1. CAT Survey:** Administer the Congregational Assessment Tool (parish survey) and report results to the parish, Wardens, Vestry, and Search Committee. Our sincere thanks for your critically important participation in responding to the survey.
- 2. Ministry Portfolio:** The national Episcopal Church asks congregations looking to call new clergy to complete a document called the Ministry Portfolio (see example here). The heart of this document is twelve questions designed to capture the identity and spirit of a parish in a thoughtful, succinct, and consistent manner. (Respondents are required to keep their answers to 1,200 characters or fewer – including spaces!) The Profile Committee is charged with developing responses to the portfolio questions and submitting them to the national church's database.
- 3. Parish Profile:** The parish profile is a less structured opportunity for St. Stephen's to present itself – strengths and challenges – to potential candidates. The profile also allows us to outline the gifts and experience we're looking for in our next Rector. The Profile Committee is charged with developing and "publishing" the parish profile.

Who are the members of the Profile Committee?

- Maribeth Barney, Chair
- Chris Plankey, Member and Vestry Liaison
- Elizabeth Trapani, Member
- Susan Wojtasik, Member
- Craig Reynolds, Member

Who oversees the work of the Profile Committee?

The Wardens and Vestry are ultimately responsible for the administration of parish affairs at St. Stephen's. This oversight responsibility includes the Profile Committee's work.

The Rev. Dr. Richard M. Simpson, Canon to Ordinary and Transition Minister for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, also provides advice, guidance, and counsel to the Profile Committee. Finally, Interim Rector John Tarrant is an experienced and discerning resource available to the Profile Committee.

What is the timeline for the completion of the Profile Committee's duties?

The CAT survey has already been administered and results provided to the parish, Wardens, Vestry, and Search Committee. Again, our thanks for your participation!

The Profile Committee hopes to complete our conversations about the twelve Ministry Portfolio questions by the end of March.

Finally, the Profile Committee expects to have the profile available by Pentecost (May 31, 2020).

What drives the timelines for the completion of the portfolio questions and development of the parish profile?

Timelines are driven by many factors, but four issues stand out:

- **Gathering Input:** It will take time for the Profile Committee to gather input from the parish and the larger community.
- **Careful Wording and Review:** Given the importance of these assignments, it's critical that the committee create the best possible presentations of the parish's identity and spirit. Quality presentations – presentations that are authentic, accurate, and compelling – take time to develop. The committee expects to create multiple drafts of each document and conduct several editing/review sessions.
- **Building Consensus:** Again, the importance of these assignments requires the committee to build a careful and enduring consensus about our responses, and building consensus takes time.
- **Space and Time for the Holy Spirit to Work:** The temptation is to see the search process as

a hiring campaign. But as followers of Jesus, we understand that a Rector search includes dimensions not typically found in a corporate or non-profit employee hire.

How will the Profile Committee gather input from the parish and larger community?

The Profile Committee plans to conduct “listening sessions” and personal interviews to gather essential contributions/ideas from parishioners and community members.

How will potential candidates access the ministry portfolio questions and parish profile?

Our responses to the ministry portfolio questions will be added to the national church’s database of parish profiles. Candidates looking for positions will be able to access St. Stephen’s portfolio, including our responses to the twelve standard questions. Our parish profile will be published on our parish website. Diocesan and national transition staff will publicize the availability and location of our profile. Interested candidates could also find our profile via direct referrals, web searches, informal word-of-mouth, movement of the Holy Spirit, and methods we can only imagine at this time.

Will parishioners be able to access the parish profile?

Yes. Definitely. As soon as the profile is published on the website, parishioners – and the general public for that matter – will be able to view all the information. Please note that there will not be a paper-based or “hardcopy” version of the profile

Stewardship Committee Report

Valerie Andersen

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, I am pleased to report that as of December 30, 2019, we have received a commitment of pledges for the 2020 church year in the amount of \$216,920.00! This is a \$42,406.00 increase from last year’s pledges. We are very happy that 36 people increased their pledges and 17 people are pledging for the first time. We are continually awed and grateful for the generosity of our community. Stewardship means taking care of something, and our parishioners have shown that we are a community in loving hands. This news will be wonderful to share with rector candidates as it will demonstrate that we are a thriving church, taking care of each other even in a time of transition. It is our hope that we can use endowment income and pledge money and other income to try to reduce the amount we have been relying on from the endowment.

Our goal is to work towards having a balanced budget without dipping into endowment. We thank each and every one of you who give your time, talent and treasure to be the heart and hands of Christ through our church. We truly are stronger together!

PROFILE COMMITTEE LISTENING SESSIONS

Listening sessions are scheduled for February 9th and 23rd. Please grab treats on your way through coffee hour and join us in the dining room immediately after the 10 o'clock service. We'll meet for an hour or so and hear your responses to the following: “What 3 things are most important to you about St. Stephen's? What is your greatest hope for St. Stephen's?” We hope you'll join us so we can hear what you have to say! Out of fairness to everyone, brevity is important. Please answer each question in 3 sentences or less. Tricky we know! Unable to attend in person? Email your responses to profile@ststephenspittsfield.org.

My BIO Story

Paula Morey, BIO Leader

My BIO story goes back to 2014 when a presentation was made in the auditorium at St. Stephen's Parish from members of the InterValley Project and the local Berkshire Organizing Project whose organizers spoke about the need for people to move beyond direct service to community organizing and making "systemic changes" to issues around the social justice needs of Berkshire County.

Up to this point, I had been volunteering for many years with St. Stephen's Table, feeding people in need of a hearty meal. I often wondered if there was a way to determine what the root cause of this need was and to work to reduce such need. I was intrigued. I signed on. What I learned was that, working together, collecting stories and gaining power through action and collaboration with our legislators, community and statewide partners, we are able to effect the needed changes that could result in happier, healthier and more dignified lives for all Berkshire County residents.

When I reflect back on all that has been done over these past 5 years, I am amazed. Oh... we still do feed people in our community through the food pantries, feeding programs and farmers markets, and the need is great, but through the efforts of community organizing, working within the system, we were able to make some gains, such as; increasing the buying power of the Food Banks in Massachusetts through an increase in the MEFAP (Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program) budget and we continue to advocate for additional funding through programs like MFTP (Massachusetts Food Trust Program), to further the availability of healthy food enterprises.

I never knew how fulfilling working with and learning from experienced organizers and partners could be. It takes a community and its members to effect systemic change.

Berkshire County has always been my home. My parents were mill workers in North Adams - long days for little money - but I never felt that we were deprived. I went to work right after graduating high school. My brother went to college. My family

could not afford to send us both to college and I was ready to go to work. My father was one of eleven children and never had the opportunity for an education beyond the eighth grade. My mother was one of 8 children and did attend high school, but never graduated. They both had to work to help provide for the family. Friends and neighbors had similar stories and some struggled to make ends meet. My father once told me that he would never accept welfare, recounting that his family had, and his mother was forced to take in laundry in order to pay back what little she received. Their stories and others stayed with me into adulthood. I believe that my desire to help make a difference in people's lives is in my DNA.

As a member of St. Stephen's, our mission has always been to "be the heart and hands of Christ: nourishing people, transforming lives." I feel that volunteering with BIO, for me, fulfills that mission.

BIO has a platform through yearly "listening campaigns" where all members of the community are invited to share their stories and to be heard. Out of this sharing, BIO leaders put together issue campaigns to address the top concerns and to determine what can be done to effect the changes which will improve the quality of life for our residents. From jobs to adequate housing to transportation to food security, racial justice and immigrant justice - it's all connected and we are all members in community.

The name BIO (Berkshire Interfaith Organizing) was adopted in 2015 at the founding convention. This resonates with me because the membership is made up of congregations of faith from North, Central and South Berkshire County and now also, community leaders having no faith affiliation. I can't think of another course of action where I would have the opportunity to meet so many caring individuals as I have, working beside and with the organizers and leaders of BIO. I took on the role of Treasurer for BIO three years ago when Rev. Bill Neil prepared for his sabbatical and needed to hand off this responsibility. It has been a pleasure to take

this on and I hope to be able to pass it along to someone else in order to dive into more issue work. So far, I have been trained in accompaniment for our undocumented immigrants which I would like to do more of. Of course, working on grassroots fundraising currently takes up much of my time as well. I am also trying my hand at learning grant writing.

I encourage you to “step out of your comfort zone” and put your toe into the waters of community organizing. You will be amazed how good it feels. No previous experience is required.

February

Happy Birthday:

- 1 Joy Davis (12)
- 2 Alyssa Montgomery (21!), Sarah Moon
- 4 Derek Bodenstab (a milestone!)
- 5 Edward Hughes
- 6 Angelina Rose Pierce (13)
- 8 Kevin Coakley, Anna Marie Hassan (15)
- 12 David Ekstrom
- 13 Judy Culver, Anne Marcure
- 14 Landon Wilson (12)
- 15 Maxwell Jacob Plankey (4)
- 17 Henry Biegel, John Tarrant
- 18 Mackenzie Ellis (21!), Roy Stillman (a milestone!)
- 19 Sophia Paige Wilson (10)
- 21 Madeline Harrington (12), Lance Schroder (12), Tucker Schroder (12)
- 22 Robert Reynolds
- 23 Diane Forsyth
- 25 Doug Demary
- 27 Veronica Fenton, Dawn Mathes
- 28 Lois Symonds

Happy Anniversary:

- 3 Danielle and Patrick Shaw (2007)
- 5 Constance and Henry Biegel (1966)
- 21 Lyla-Jean and Tom Clapper (1981)

Treasurer’s Report

Income and Expenses for St. Stephen’s through December 31, 2019

Expenses

Actual Expenses through December 31, 2019 \$385,783
 Budgeted Expenses through December 31, 2019 \$459,155
 (Under budget by \$73,372*)

**Budget reflects a full-time Rector, which represents approximately \$63,589 of the amount we are currently under budget. Because John is retired, his salary is reduced. If we had a full-time (not retired) Rector, we’d be under budget by approximately \$9,783.*

Revenue

Actual Income through December 31, 2019..... \$392,834
 Budgeted Income through December 31, 2019 \$459,157
 (Under by \$66,323)

Pledge Income

Actual Pledges Received through
 December 31, 2019..... \$254,351
 Budgeted Pledges through
 December 31, 2019 \$285,267
 (Under by \$30,916)

Did You Know?

- That Addison DiGrigoli is one of the students from Herberg Middle School selected to participate in the March 21 Junior District Festival. His instrument is the violin.
- That Pittsfield High School announced Honor Rolls for the first marking period and the following were included: Sarina Reynolds, Isabella Ameen and Kieran Coscia on High Honors; and Samantha Reynolds on Honors. We are proud of you!
- That Andrew Gillman, Cameron Langsdale and Nathaniel Gillman made High Honors at BART for the first quarter of the 2019-2020 school year.
- That Anthony Trapani is on the first quarter Honor Roll at Reid Middle School

(Once again I send out a plea to parents to let me know if your student(s) make the Honor Rolls. I read them all as printed in the Eagle, but don’t know everyone and do not want to miss anyone. You can call me at 499-3799 or email at joankurber@gmail.com)