



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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MARCH 2020

From our Interim Rector

On Ash Wednesday the invitation was:
"I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word."

By the time you read this we will be at least a week into Lent, the season of self-examination and repentance. English priest and liturgist Percy Dearmer wrote the following to guide us in our Lenten journey.

"Now quit your care and anxious fear and worry;
for schemes are vain and fretting brings no gain.
Lent calls to prayer, to trust and dedication;
God brings new beauty nigh;
reply, reply, reply with love to love most high;
reply, reply, reply with love to love most high."

To bow the head in sack-cloth and in ashes,
or rend the soul, such grief is not Lent's goal;
but to be led to where God's glory flashes,
his beauty to come near;
make clear, make clear, make clear where
truth and light appear;
make clear, make clear, make clear where
truth and light appear.

For righteousness and peace will show their faces to
those who feed the hungry in their need, and
wrongs redress,
Who build the old waste places,
and in the darkness shine.
Divine, divine, divine it is when all combine!
Divine, divine, divine it is when all combine!
(Hymn 145, vss. 1,2 &4)

Lent is not a time to be anxious about what you are doing, but rather a time to be open to that which God is offering to you. Simplify your life these next weeks. Give yourself more time for prayer, the reading of scripture and quiet listening. Our Wednesday evening Lenten program is intended to give you food for personal reflection and spiritual growth.

No Lenten discipline should be an object in and of itself, but is intended to take us closer to the Holy One of God. This Lent may you use self-examination and repentance; prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and the reading and meditating on God's holy Word to move you more fully into the presence of our risen Lord.

God's peace be with you,
John

Angels Among Us

I'm sure you know of a few Angels among us. Your editor would like to mention three in this issue.

I have difficulty walking, especially in snow and ice. When I lost my excellent paper deliverer, I requested that the paper be delivered to my back door or front porch, as Marcia had always done. That has happened perhaps 4 times in the last month and a half, despite at least 10 calls to the paper. Now the angels: Edie Mingalone walks her dog past my house each morning and sees to it that the paper is on my front porch; and when Edie was taking care of an ailing dog one morning, Harriet Cuyler did the same. I cannot tell you how grateful I am – thank you, Edie and Harriet!

Did you know that each and every month, Joan Morrow sends cards to everyone with a birthday or anniversary? She often includes a note and makes sure in this way that parishioners know St. Stephen's loves and cares about them. Thank you, Joan. How many years have you been doing this?

On icy or snowy days, when walking is difficult, Joan Evans graciously offers to drive Jean Gray and me to scheduled undertakings such as money-counting; we are ever so grateful for this kindness.

I would like to suggest that you let your editor know of any angels in your life: 413-499-3799 or joankurber@gmail.com Thank you!



SAVE THE DATE:

Men's Hike & Lunch

ON SATURDAY,
MAY 9

All St. Stephen's men are invited to a morning hike and lunch on Saturday, May 9. We'll gather around 9 am at John Culver's house in West Stockbridge, take a moderate but invigorating morning hike, and return to John's for lunch that will wrap up by 2 pm. Not interested in a hike? Join us for lunch! It's all about getting to know one another better.

The rain date is Saturday, May 16.

More details to follow as the date approaches.

For more information, contact Craig Reynolds (cmreyn@gmail.com).

Parish Profile Committee Update

Listening Sessions

At the time of the submission deadline for this article, our first listening session was a success and our second one is around the corner. We are grateful to be sifting through the responses and enthusiastically pondering how they'll focus our creation of your parish profile. If you attended one or both of our listening sessions, we thank you wholeheartedly. We also thank those of you who responded by email. If you still plan to submit your thoughts by email, please do so through our profile@ststephenspittsfield.org address by March 13th.

Parish Video

Now that March is here, let's dive in to the video project you've been hearing so much about. In short, we'll be looking for you to join us before or after church on March 8th or March 22nd. Profile committee member, Chris Plankey, is our cameraman armed with nothing more than his cell phone. Please find him near the front entrance on one of these dates. The before church sessions will begin at 9 a.m.

During your short time on camera, we'll be asking you to answer the same questions posed during our listening sessions:

1. "What 3 things are most important to you about St. Stephen's?"
2. "What is your greatest hope for St. Stephen's?"
Plus, we've added a 3rd question:
3. "Looking ahead at the upcoming year... The time is ripe for..."

You are welcome to share your response to however many questions you like. It should only take a few minutes and there's no pressure to "reserve" a time slot. To make other arrangements outside of Sunday mornings, please contact Chris directly at (413) 442-9854 (office landline, no texts) or email your profile committee at profile@ststephenspittsfield.org.

If you, like many, are "camera shy," we promise any stumbles or fumbling will be left on the cutting room floor. To produce a powerful marketing video of modest length, no one's time on camera will appear uncut in its entirety. I hope you'll eat a good breakfast, practice your "lines" (or write down your response ahead of time and bring it to read), give yourself a little pep talk, take a couple deep breaths, shake off those nerves, step up, smile, and view this opportunity through a spiritual lens. While 20-20 vision allows one to see St. Stephen's as it is today, clearly and in focus, unassisted by glasses or contacts, this is the year 2020 after all, so let's fine-tune that definition a bit. What is your 2020 vision for St. Stephen's?

March

Happy Birthday:

- 1 Sadie Watford
- 2 Henry Morris
- 3 Christopher Harrington, Nicole Marcil (9), Andrea Stasiowski (a milestone!), Brooke Thomas (10), Mia Thomas (10)
- 5 Joshua Reynolds, Jim Sayers (2)
- 6 Erica Hanger, Laura Szczepaniak
- 7 George Mathes
- 8 Elizabeth Harrington (92 years young!)
- 10 Zachary Senecal (21!)
- 11 Christine Reynolds
- 12 Brayden Billetter (11), Jacob Billetter (11), Grant Morin (10), Virginia Smith
- 13 Makailey Cookis (a milestone!)
- 14 Wavelyn Hine
- 15 Tyarah Dowling-Black (11), Doreen Sosa
- 16 William Engle, Angela Moon
- 17 Grady Pedersen (21!)
- 19 Mary Turner (a milestone!)
- 20 Gary Curry
- 21 Ian Borosky (16), Jim Currie, Wendy Goodwin (a milestone!)
- 22 Tommie Coles (94 years young!), Jaden Coscia (19), Pat Moynahan
- 23 Joan Evans, Megan Pedersen
- 24 Joy Mullen, Debbie Stillman
- 28 Caleb Bodestab (3)
- 30 Marianne Rud
- 31 Gerry Crane

Happy Anniversary:

- 13 Crystal and Jason Hassan (2004)
- 25 Noreen and John Reynolds (1972)

BIO update

by Paula Morey

The 2020 Annual Convention was held on January 26th at Knesset Israel where officers for the year were elected and the annual budget was approved. But the most exciting part of the convention was the full participation of attendees in round table conversations and sharing around three of the campaign issues which BIO has been actively working on: Immigrant Justice, Transportation and Racial Justice. This was the beginning of our "listening sessions". Other opportunities to join a listening session were offered in South, Central and North County throughout February.

To highlight a couple of the campaigns that BIO is currently working on:

Wheels for Wellness....If you were fortunate to be able to attend the convention, you would have seen the rollout of the banner for this program which is expected to be launched in April, 2020. What is it? This is a volunteer community car ride service. The hope is to actively emphasize people's ability to get where they need to go. We learned at the convention that this program has now been fully funded. BIO was able to contribute to the startup costs with part of the grant received from T4MA (Transportation for Massachusetts).

Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC) are co-administering the program. We have a plan to recruit and orient our first group of volunteer drivers before the program's official launch in April. If you're interested in becoming a volunteer driver, please contact Wendy at (413) 464-1804.

Driving Families Forward – An Act Relative to Work and Family Mobility....This bill (H.3012 sponsored by Reps. Farley-Bouvier and Barber and S.2061 sponsored by Senator Crighton) would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver's license, regardless of immigrant status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with REAL ID requirements.

- Tested and insured drivers make the roads safer for everyone. We want all drivers to know the rules of the road, pass the same driver's test, and be

properly registered and insured. It's in our state's interest to increase the number of insured drivers in order to boost our economy and make our roads safer.

- Driver's licenses increase public safety.
- Driving is essential to mobility in Massachusetts, especially in Berkshire County, where public transit options are far too limited to enable many residents to get to work, take their children to the doctor, or buy groceries.
- Immigrants who are currently barred from driving are a vital part of Massachusetts' social and economic fabric. An estimated 185,000 undocumented immigrants lived in Massachusetts as of 2016 – roughly one-fifth of the immigrant population.

- There is bipartisan support for driver's license legislation across the U.S. Fourteen states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico already allow residents the right to apply for driver's licenses regardless of immigration status, including our neighbors Vermont and Connecticut.

Most recently, the Massachusetts Major Cities Chiefs of Police Association has endorsed this legislation and our hope is that the larger Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association will follow suit. Berkshire County legislators and Senator Hinds have all endorsed the bill; we have the support of the Mayors and DA Harrington and our work now will extend to constituents outside of the Berkshires to counties not yet on board.

If you would like to join in the effort of working on any of BIO's campaigns, please see Marcie Nevin, Susan Wojtasik or Paula Morey. More information is available on our website at berkshireinterfaithorganizing.org or like us on facebook.