



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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JULY 2020

From our Interim Rector

As I marked the thirty-seventh anniversary of my ordination to the diaconate this past June 11th I was aware, as I look back over those years, what a privilege I have had to see glimpses of God's Kingdom, God's will for the world through the circumstances of lives and people of faith I have known.

The "heavenly banquet" or "Kingdom" or whatever you want to call the time when God's will, God's dream for all creation is fulfilled will look much different than we may well imagine. There will be no "mansions" or "streets paved with gold"; there will be no 'us' and no 'them'. There will be no correct theology or creeds to recite. And of course, "sorrow and pain will be no more." We will find "that peace of God which passes all understanding" and justice and mercy will be so entwined that one feeds the other, but for now I'll take the glimpses.

On June 7th, Trinity Sunday, two seminary trained clergy along with a nine-year-old girl and a homeless woman, all properly gloved and masked, distributing communion in small encapsulated packages of wafer and juice as people stopped their cars on Allen St. across from St. Stephen's Church. The real presence of Christ was evident; the kingdom of God had drawn near.

I heard the sound of the kingdom in the voice of a young Lakota man as he read the Narrator's role in the Passion Story on Palm Sunday five years ago at the Church of the Messiah, in Iron Nation on the Lower Brule Indian Reservation. He was not a spectator, but a participant in the recalling of the story of God's love for creation, for his people, the Lakota, and for all people. I was reminded that when God's will is done on Earth as it is in Heaven all have a voice to be heard and the kingdom of God draws near.

I have seen glimpses of the kingdom in the face of a Native American Deacon who buried six of her children as a result of tragic and sudden deaths and "yet even at the grave she made her song, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

I have heard words of God's dream for us in the voices of couples as they have exchanged their marriage vows to live a life committed to honoring each other. I have seen it in the eyes of parents and children, even infants, as they come to the waters of life at the baptismal font to be marked as Christ's own forever.

As volunteers have come to St. Stephen's bringing food and hands so that the hungry could be fed, the kingdom of God has drawn near. In the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of cries for racial justice, in just the ordinary times of this not so ordinary time in which we are living God's will, God's dream for our lives keeps appearing, sometimes with only a glimpse, but always with a glimmer of hope.

One morning in the 1982, in the Church of the Holy Communion, in S.E. Washington, D.C. I watched in awe as a seventy-five year old white woman put her arm over the shoulder of a seventeen year old black teenager and gently pulled him toward her in an act of love and support. I knew then that this journey of service I was embarking on through the church was going to be quite a "trip." I have not been disappointed...

Thank you for letting me continue to serve with and among you at St. Stephen's Church, even for this interim period. Of course, we know that all of this pilgrimage is an 'interim' and along the way God gifts us with a glimpse of what God's dream for the world looks like.

God's peace be with you,
+ John

Revenues and Expenses

for St. Stephen's through May 31, 2020

Revenue

Actual Income (budgeted and unbudgeted) through May 31, 2020 - \$220,362.32*

Budgeted Income through May 31, 2020 - \$178,710.42

(Overbudget by \$41,921.90 or 9.3%)

Pledge Income

Actual Pledges (Plate and Pledges) Received through May 31, 2020 - \$124,086.91

Budgeted Pledges through May 31, 2020 - \$118,717.08

(Overbudget by \$5,369.83 or 2.25%)

**The Diocese has given us assistance due to COVID-19 of \$27,464.36 as of 5/31/2020. This is accounted for in the above totals.*

Expenses

Actual Expenses (budgeted and unbudgeted) through May 31, 2020 - \$167,115.37

Budgeted Expenses through May 31, 2020 - \$178,710.49

(Underbudget by \$11,595.12 or 2.7%)

As of May 31, 2020 – net positive \$53,246.



Did You Know?

- **Kevin W. Coakley** received his BA from Williams College. While a student, he worked for the Sports Information Office, coordinated the Center for Learning in Actions' Sunday night tutoring program and coached at Crossover Academy's basketball-focused program at Brayton Elementary school.
- High Honors - Herberg Middle School: **Sophia LaMalfa**
- High Honors-Reid Middle School: **Anthony Trapani**
- **Andrew Gillman**, graduating from BART and recipient of John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

July

Happy Birthday:

2 Wendy Coakley, Cynthia Hand

5 James Donovan

7 Gabriel Carrington

10 Karla Ann Boudreau, Tom Drury

13 William Frazier

14 Mike Coakley

20 Austine Bodensstab, Michael DiGrigoli

22 Phillip Blanchard, Elizabeth Chisum

23 Trinity Cookis, Jayvon Dillard

24 Sarah Fenton

25 Isabella Ameen, Lynne Blanchard

28 Beverly Appleton

Happy Anniversary:

2 David Oakes & Elizabeth Oakes (2005)

11 Mary Adams & David Adams (1964)

12 Jeff Pringle & Karen Wallace (1986)

13 Marietta Cawse & Jim Cawse (1974)

14 Evelyn Pieloch & John Pieloch (1973)

17 Tonya Reynolds & Robert Reynolds (1994)

21 Heather DiGrigoli & Seth DiGrigoli (2007)

23 Jamie Bannon & Steven Bannon (2005)

28 Ursula Champagne &

Michael Champagne (2007)

A Note from Your Editor – Constance Bullard

I am honored to have been asked and have accepted the baton from Joan Kurber to be the new Editor for *The First Order*. I am grateful to have covered for her at times over the past ten years, so hope that the transition is seamless for all of you. As I settle in, feel free to contact me with your thoughts or ideas about *The First Order*. This is your monthly newsletter, not mine. Please send your thoughts to: mail@ststephenspittsfield.org. Thank you for your support and prayers.