



# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

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SEPTEMBER 2020

To the dear people of St Stephen's

There are simply no words to convey our deep sorrow that our beloved interim rector, The Rt. Rev. John Tarrant died of a heart attack on August 23, 2020. John was the answer to our prayers over this past year – full of love, generosity and compassion - a humble servant doing God's work. It is with incredibly heavy hearts that we share this news and we take comfort in knowing that God holds us through all things.

A private service was held on Saturday August 29th at St. Stephen's and broadcast on the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts YouTube channel where it remains available for you to watch. The link may be found on the St. Stephen's website.

We invite you to hold Pat, Jessica, Mary, Alec, his grandchildren, and entire family in prayer during this time of grief. Many have asked for Pat's address: 88 Pleasantview Drive, Dalton, MA 01226.

Donations in John's memory can go towards the ministry of Cathedral of the Beloved OR St. Stephen's Table. Please make check payable to 'St Stephen's Church' with donation intent in the memo. St. Stephen's, 67 East St., Pittsfield MA 01201

Your wardens,

Tom Dillon

Erin Sullivan

Poem for +John's Funeral  
Service leaflet from Pat Tarrant

## Ascension

And if I go,  
while you're still here...

Know that I live on,  
Vibrating to a different measure  
-- behind a thin veil you cannot see  
through.

You will not see me,  
so you must have faith.

I wait for a time when we can soar  
Together again,  
-- both aware of each other.

Until then, live your life to its fullest.

And when you need me,  
Just whisper my name in your heart,  
... I will be there.

Colleen Corah Hitchcock

# Sing The Lord's Song in a Time of Change and Challenge

By: Valerie Andersen

In the midst of a world-wide pandemic that has sent our lives into a topsy-turvy spin, one thing remains steadfast. The Lord said "I am with you always" and so it is. As we reflect on the coming church year, let us ponder how we will sing the Lord's song: how we will lift up our problems and sorrows and blessings to sing with God's kindness and take care of each other. Stewardship means taking good care of something. We are blessed to be in a caring community of parishioners, clergy and staff. How do we take care of our loving community?

Your Stewardship Committee (Leah Luczynski, Craig Reynolds, Al Symonds, and Valerie Andersen and John Tarrant) has been meeting to plan steps to help us all take care of each other and our church. At this time of clergy transition, pandemic and change, it is even more important for us to protect and care for each other and celebrate our strengths: YOU. We thank God for all of the time, energy, donations and devotion in making worship so meaningful and fellowship so uplifting even when we can't be together in person. Thank you for your patience and prayers as we weather this time of change and challenge with strength and grace.

To kick off this year's stewardship campaign, "Sing the Lord's Song - in a time of change and challenge" we will host another harvest dinner on October 17. Dan Moon and his catering staff will again prepare a delicious meal. This time, however, it will be a to-go meal. Each family will be invited to sign up for a time to drive or walk by the church to pick up the full meal. After all meals are distributed, we will host a virtual parish meeting so you can eat your meal as you listen and watch the call for your spiritual generosity whether that be time, talent or treasure. We will give out pledge cards with the meal and mail pledge cards to those who do not attend the meal. The in-gathering of the pledge cards will be All Saints Day weekend, October 31 and November 1.

We also are preparing short descriptions of each ministry: what they entail, what is the time commitment, how you can help and who to contact. These will be placed on St. Stephen's website soon and also published on card stock that people can take, when paper is allowed to be displayed for distribution. Remember, participation in a ministry is also an act of grace and stewardship, and many ministries need your help.

Please save the dates of October 17 for the harvest dinner, and October 31 and November 1 for the in-gathering of pledges. Until then, please prayerfully consider how you want to sustain and grow this loving community and what your role will be to take good care of it.

## September

### Happy Birthday:

- 2 Anne Jones, Nicholas Trapani, Maria Zuckerman
- 3 Susan Cahill
- 4 Melissa Morin
- 5 Robert Langsdale
- 6 Alex Demary, Jean Gray
- 7 Janice Furcinite
- 8 Beth-Anne Hamling
- 9 Everett Heiss
- 10 Virginia Donovan
- 11 Matthew Fenton, Louis Senecal
- 13 Donna Chandler, Audrey Harrington, Mary Wheelock
- 14 Daniel Doyle
- 17 Magdalena Plumb, William Plumb
- 18 Steven Wheelock
- 19 Jezzmyne Dowling-Black
- 22 James Behnke
- 24 Aloha Winchester
- 25 George Church III
- 26 Jamie Bannon, Christopher Fenton
- 29 Susan Smith, Davie Adams, Helene Robillard
- 30 Katie Haviland

### Happy Anniversary:

- 1 Sarah Novak & Glenn Novak (1980 - 40th!)
- 3 Leila Drury & Tom Drury (1972)
- 12 Jayne Church & George Church III (1980 - 40th!)
- 15 Suzanne White & Joe White (1984)
- 19 Virginia Smith & Craig Smith (1987)
- 23 Lois Symonds & Alfred Symonds (1967)
- 25 Diana MacFarlane & Bill MacFarlane (1993)

**HELD OVER BY POPULAR DEMAND:  
Jessica Hansen.....August 4**

## Did You Know?

- **Soleil Laurin** made the Honor Roll at Miss Hall's School for the second semester

# Revenues and Expenses

for St. Stephen's through July 31, 2020

## Revenue

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**Actual Income** (budgeted and unbudgeted) through July 31, 2020 - \$278,319.89\*

**Budgeted Income** through July 31, 2020 - \$250,194.58

(Overbudget by \$28,125.31 or 11.2%)

### **Pledge Income**

Actual Pledges (Plate and Pledge Payments) Received through July 31, 2020

- \$157,712.37

Budgeted Pledges through July 31, 2020

- \$166,203.92

(Underbudget by \$8,491.55 or 5%)

*\*The Diocese gave us assistance due to COVID-19 for a total of \$30,981.76. This is accounted for in the above income total.*

## Expenses

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**Actual Expenses** (budgeted and unbudgeted) through July 31, 2020 - \$218,472.58

**Budgeted Expenses** through July 31, 2020 - \$250,194.58

(Underbudget by \$32,000 or 12.8%)

As of July 31, 2020 - net positive

\$59,847.31

## from the Diocese of Western MA

Dear parish leaders,

Over the past month we conducted a survey of our congregations to get a fuller understanding of your financial situation through the first half of the year, and your outlook for the rest of the year. The survey has been completed at this point by almost all of our 51 congregations. Here are the results:

Congregations were asked to rate the financial outlook for 2020. 85% report they are "fine" or "okay". Seven reported the outlook is "not good" and none reported that the outlook was "bad". Most of our congregations are forecasting a surplus, some of them fairly significant. The average surplus was around \$12,000. Apparently, with strong pledge fulfillment, financial assistance made available through the diocese, and the PPP loans, congregations of all sizes have been able to reserve funds to be used over the rest of the year. This is fantastic news in the midst of otherwise very challenging times! Of the congregations we heard from, only two showed a material deficit through mid-year.

At this point, 71% of our congregations have online giving capabilities. Pledge income overall has maintained, and in many cases has exceeded expectations. This is a testament to our strong stewardship practices and our faithful membership. There have been few requests to the Trustees for extra withdrawals from investments. The other Province One (New England) dioceses all report similar scenarios. Overall, we are in good shape financially. Some churches are struggling, but most of those were already facing challenging situations before the pandemic began.

**These results are encouraging.** They exceeded our expectations and made us hopeful. The PPP loan/grant was intended to protect paychecks and it accomplished that in the short term and gave us time to prepare and adapt for the rest of the year. While none of us can control what tomorrow will bring, our churches have shown tremendous resilience and adaptability. We go forth with hope and faith and a willingness to respond to what is emerging in our ministries. The work to which God calls us continues, especially our work with the most vulnerable in our communities.

*Steve Abdow,*

*Canon for Mission Resources*

## Share Your Voice

Please feel free to send us any news, photos, thoughts, poems, or jokes to help us all keep in touch. This forum is yours and we'd love to hear from you. Please send them to [mail@ststephenspittsfield.org](mailto:mail@ststephenspittsfield.org). Got any tips on how you're getting through this time? Got some good news or an upcoming event to share? Consider this your First Order Blog.

I wish all of you peace and the hope that we will be together again safely and in good time.

Connie Bullard, Editor of *The First Order*.

Below is John's monthly article for *The First Order*, published posthumously.

September has arrived and we are approaching Fall. This will be the third season we have been in the midst of a pandemic. Schools are struggling as to how they can safely open while meeting the educational need of their students and the vocational and health needs of teachers and other staff. Many businesses are still suffering. Some have simply closed. People have lost their jobs on all levels of the economic specter, including some from St. Stephen's. Of course, there is the virus which has sickened millions and killed tens of thousands. Again, families at St. Stephen's have been affected.

With an abundance of caution, we began in-person worship at St. Stephen's. Through the first three weeks of August we have averaged just over 40, total, at the three in-person services (Saturday at 5:00 pm and Sunday at 8:00 & 10:00 am). With the permission of the Bishop we began offering communion to those who wish to receive. We are asking people to pre-register for the service they will be attending. This has worked well, although as of yet we have not reached our capacity of 50, so we have been able to accept those not registered. This all seems a bit strange, but such are the times in which we are living.

Church School will not begin yet, but we do have tables set-up where children of the same family can sit for simple activities. We will continue to offer online worship and we are encouraging those with underlying health issues or those not comfortable coming to gatherings to participate in this online offering.

We will do more experimenting with Zoom gatherings. We are going to have a "take out" Harvest Dinner in October. We encourage thoughts and ideas from you as to how we can be a community in the midst of social

distancing. St. Stephen's continues to feed the hungry, offer hospitality to the Cathedral of the Beloved, and advocate for the poor. This winter is going to be hard and long for many of our most vulnerable neighbors.

The search for the next rector goes on thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Profile and Search Committee and strong support from our Diocese. You will get regular updates from the Search Committee as the process proceeds.

Your prayers and patience are appreciated.

I will conclude with the **Scottish Blessing** I used at Pat's cousin's funeral in July.

*May the blessing of light be on you, light without and light within.*

*May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great peat fire, so that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.*

*And may light shine out of the two eyes of you, like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm. And may the blessing of the rain be on you,*

*May it beat upon your Spirit and wash it fair and clean, and leave there a shining pool where the blue of Heaven shines, and sometimes a star.*

*And may the blessing of the earth be on you, soft under your feet as you pass along the roads, soft under you as you lie out on it, tired at the end of day;*

*and may it rest easy over you when, at last, you lie out under it.*

*May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be out from under it quickly; up and off and on its way to God.*

*And now may the Lord bless you, and bless you kindly.*

God's peace be with you,

+John