



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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MARCH 2021

St. Stephen's Table in the Era of COVID

by Craig Reynolds

St. Stephen's Table is our parish-sponsored meal program. It's our "flagship" outreach effort.

History of St. Stephen's Table

Started back in the 1980s, "The Table" as it is affectionately known around St. Stephen's, serves an average of 75 meals every Thursday and Friday, year-round. Until March 2020, those meals were served to guests in the parish Dining Room on the lower level of the Parish House by teams of volunteers. Then the pandemic hit...

The Big Shift

Dan Moon, Coordinator of St. Stephen's Table, worked with a small team of dedicated volunteers, to transform the program to fit the new demands of a new time. Instead of serving guests in the Dining Room, all meals became take-out offerings. Recyclable to-go containers and cutlery replaced plates and silverware. Food was still typically cooked in the lower level kitchen, but an assembly line operation packaged the to-go containers and carried them upstairs where meals were offered to guests from tables set up in the Allen Street entrance. Strict health and safety protocols were instituted.

There were changes among Table volunteers as well. Dan encouraged volunteers who were in high-risk categories to stay home. While the new process typically required fewer hands to prepare and distribute meals, Dan still needed help to pull together 70+ meals each Thursday and Friday evening. A small but faithful group of staunchly committed volunteers stepped up to take on the new challenge week after week.

Suppliers and community support changed too. When food shortages hit local grocery stores and restaurants closed, the availability of surplus foods shifted. Dan and his team scrambled to maintain the supply of meal ingredients. Many suppliers - such as Pittsfield Rye Bakery, Crescent Creamery, and Panera - showed remarkable commitment to the community and continued to donate in volumes comparable to those supplied before the pandemic. Other examples of unwavering support: Blue Q - a high profile Pittsfield company - continued its significant financial support of the Table. Volunteers who pick up the bread, milk, and other items used at St. Stephen's Table continued their vital assistance.

By late spring, the "new Table" was running quite efficiently. Adjustments have been made along the way - like the pop-up canopy that's used on rainy evenings and the hand-warmers that are among the items distributed regularly to guests now that the weather is colder. Despite challenges both large and small, the Table has continued to move forward.

The Loss of Two Dear Friends of St. Stephen's Table

Two losses made challenging times even harder for the Table faithful.

Bishop John Tarrant was an active and enthusiastic supporter of St. Stephen's Table while he served as Interim Rector. John volunteered regularly and offered inspired spiritual support to guests, volunteers, and staff. John's death in August was felt keenly in the St. Stephen's Table community. His faithful presence continues to be deeply missed.

Likewise, Ginger Smith was a long-time, deeply committed supporter of the Table. Dan Moon noted that "Ginger exemplified the spirit of the Table through

hard work, unwavering persistence, and compassion for those in need." Ginger's death in December touched many community institutions throughout the Berkshires, including St. Stephen's Table. The Table community will miss her quiet strength and heartfelt dedication.

What Has Remained Constant During Historic Change

Amidst these massive shifts, three things have remained unchanged at St. Stephen's Table. First, Dan Moon's calm, experienced leadership continues to guide an effort that has become even more vital to the Pittsfield community. Second, parish and community support of the Table has been unwavering - see the examples cited earlier. Finally, the mission of St. Stephen's Table - to feed people in our community wholesome meals - has remained steadfast. And the successful execution of that vital mission - despite unparalleled obstacles in a time of extraordinary need - continues in 2021.

St. Stephen's Table in the Years Ahead

The pandemic has demonstrated the remarkable resilience of St. Stephen's "flagship" outreach program. At the same time, many questions remain. What will St. Stephen's Table look like as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic? How can St. Stephen's Table respond to ongoing changes in our community? How can the parish assure that St. Stephen's Table has the resources it needs in the years to come?

How You Can Support St. Stephen's Table - Now and in the Future

- **Donate Funds** - Gifts in thanksgiving or in memory can be made by sending a donation to the church with the name of the person (or occasion) to be honored or remembered. You can also make a donation online. Go to our [secure giving page](#). Select "St. Stephen's Table" as your "fund" and follow the directions to complete your gift.

Several parishioners have supported St. Stephen's Table via The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Generous legacy gifts have also been vital components of the program's financial foundation. Please contact [The Food Bank](#) or the Parish Office for more information on these options.

- **Donate Time** - If you're interested in volunteering at St. Stephen's Table, contact Dan Moon via the Parish Office. A variety of volunteer opportunities are available. If you have experience cooking for large groups - or are willing to learn - your talents would be particularly useful.
- **Help Plan for the Future** - Provide your support and input to the Vestry, clergy, and staff as parish leaders consider the larger strategic questions about our outreach efforts in general and St. Stephen's Table specifically.
- **Pray** - Pray for our guests. Pray for our volunteers. Pray for Dan Moon. Pray for our suppliers. Pray for justice. Pray for peace - God's peace.

A special thanks to Lois, Joan, Pat, Jessica, Mark, Doug, Mary, Jill, Mickey, Don, Bob, and many others whose support of St. Stephen's Table in the last year has been truly above and beyond.

March

Happy Birthday:

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

Happy Anniversary:

- 13 Crystal and Jason Hassan
- 25 Noreen and John Reynolds

Revenues and Expenses

for St. Stephen's through January 31, 2021

Revenues

Actual Income through January 31, 2021 - \$71,361.91

Budgeted Income through January 31, 2021 - \$42,085.46

(Overbudget by \$29,276.45 or approx. 41%)

Pledge Income

Actual Pledges (Plate Offerings and Pledge Payments) Received through January 31, 2021 - \$44,809.28

Budgeted Pledges (Plate Offerings and Pledge Payments) through January 31, 2021 - \$23,596.75

(Overbudget by \$21,212.53 or approx. 47.3%)

* Note - The above surplus is in part due to one-time payments that happen in January. This overage will even out as the year goes on.

Expenses

Actual Expenses through January 31, 2021 - \$43,966.61

Budgeted Expenses through January 31, 2021 - \$42,040.78

(Overbudget by \$1,925.83 or approx. 4.3%)

Note from the Editor:

"When my brothers try to draw a circle around me, I shall draw a larger circle to include them."

Sara Garinther forwarded to me an article about the late Rev. Pauli Murray, a woman I soon learned was a pioneer in the fields of religion, but also in race, transgender and equality issues. Refusing to be labeled, she lived a life of independence and courage, long before those traits were welcomed.

Please follow the links provided to learn more about this amazing leader in the Episcopal Church:

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/blogs/episcopal-explained/episcopal-saint-remembering-pauli-murrays-life-and-work>

<https://youtu.be/L3u98p8PDlc> My Name is Pauli Murray: New Film on Black Queer Legal Pioneer Who Inspired RBG & Thurgood Marshall. Variety calls her "one of the titans of civil rights." Streaming documentary premiered at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival.

Thank you, Sara, for sharing this wonderful person with us!



Yo, Dear St. Stephen's Friends,

The 'experts' tell me that the best healing advice for broken bones is simple: rest, exercises, and Tender Loving Care! The Tender Loving Care aspect has been heavy duty! Daily I receive wonderful cards and e-mails wishing me good healing! MERCI AND SUPER THANKS!!

It is my pleasure to share that my recovery is going well. Sometimes I overdo the exercises, and my body sends out the signal: be patient! That is reinforced by my splendiferous caretakers: Craig/Christine!

I have finished Physical Therapy (exercises still ongoing), and will continue Occupational Therapy and accompanying exercises, until my arm heals completely: spring!!

My profound Thanks to ALL of You who have been so gracious and thoughtful! I have been blessed by the superb care my family has given me. The healing would not have been this successful had it not been for them.

May we gather soon again in the spring! How I miss in-person services and seeing all of you! Stay Safe, Stay Well! Thank you so much for being a large part of my good healing!

Peace and Love,
Joan of Morrow



Dear Friends,

God is good all the time and so we are able to move forward. I'm sliding back into retirement and you will be starting your next chapter with Nina. Both of those things sound pretty awesome to me.

Thank you for your many expressions of gratitude you shared with me at our Annual Meeting. Your generous gifts filled my heart to bursting. Thank you.

I can't wait until we get back to in-person worship. At The Peace, I'm just going to stand in the middle of the center aisle and wait for a gigantic group hug.

That will be the best gift of all!

Be safe. Take care of yourselves. Take care of each other. Help those in need. Love absolutely everyone.

David