

# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

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MAY 2023



*"It is not because things  
are difficult  
That we do not dare;  
It is because we do not dare  
That things are difficult."*

- Lucius Annaeus Seneca

## What's Happening at St. Stephen's?

There is a lot  
going on at  
St. Stephen's. Your  
Wardens and Vestry  
want to keep you  
up to date...

### Celebrating Pentecost with Baptisms!

This year, Pentecost will be observed on **Sunday, May 28**. And we'll be celebrating with baptisms at the 10 AM and 5 PM services! We'd love to have you join the celebration.

### YPF Youth Overnight

The Young People's Fellowship (YPF) is planning an overnight stay at St. Stephen's from **Friday, May 19 to Saturday, May 20**. The group will volunteer at St. Stephen's Table Friday evening.

### Bike to Church Sunday and Blessing of the Bikes

May is National Bike Month! After our 10 AM service on **Sunday, May 21**, we'll join other Campus of Downtown Churches for coffee (from Nick Russo of Crosswalk Coffee), snacks, and a Blessing of the Bikes. Meet at the Common on First Street.

## BIKE TO CHURCH and Blessing of the Bikes



Sunday, May 21st, 11:15 am

The Common

Pittsfield, Mass

Sponsored by the Campus of Downtown Churches

*Campus of Downtown Churches is a collaboration of Cathedral of the Beloved, First United Methodist Church, South and First Church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and Zion Lutheran Church.*

## **Berkshire Pride Festival –**

### **St. Stephen's is a Sponsor**

This year's Berkshire Pride Festival is set for **Saturday, June 3**. St. Stephen's is a sponsor of the 2023 festival and will have an engaging presence at the Common on First Street. Please contact the Parish Office if you'd like to volunteer to staff our table starting at 11 AM (set up at 10 AM).

### **Property Updates**

Your intrepid Property Committee has been busy (as usual) this spring. Projects have included:

- **A successful Spring Workday** (with more workdays coming):
  - Planted spring flowers in the front step pots.
  - Raked and cleared trash from the shrub gardens and side lawn.
  - Swept sidewalks.
  - Installed new solar lights at Allen St door church sign.
  - Removed name tag board and brochure holder from first-floor landing walls.
  - Cleaned and organized the boiler room.
  - Cleaned out a large portion of "junk" from the undercroft. This challenging effort will continue throughout the spring.
  - Installed a new lock on the dungeon bathroom door.
  - Installed grab bars in the stalls of the first-floor women's restroom.
- **Continued progress on the stained-glass windows:** The chapel windows have been fully restored and are installed back in the chapel. They are temporarily covered from the outside to protect them while we wait for the permanent protective layer of laminated glass to be installed on the outside of all stained glass on the lower level/street level of the church.
- **"Eternal" entrance lights:** Light fixtures at both main entrances have been outfitted with super-efficient LED bulbs and will remain lit throughout the night, seven days a week. This will improve visibility at each entrance and enhance public safety around the building.
- **Heating system upgrade:** This massive project continues to move forward as planned. Our engineering consultant recently completed a final

walk-through of the entire facility in preparation for the delivery of his feasibility study.

### **Building Use**

Jewish Family Service has renewed its lease with us and will continue to occupy a portion of our third floor for at least another year. We're grateful to our tenants – Berkshire Immigrant Center and Jewish Family Service – for their vital work in the community and are proud of our partnerships with these outstanding organizations.

### **Partnership with Downtown**

#### **Pittsfield, Inc. Supporting Family Art**

Working with Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. (DPI), St. Stephen's hosted our second Kids' Paint & Sip on Saturday, April 22. More than fifty children and adults enjoyed a fun day of painting, playing, and snacking. St. Stephen's also supported the effort with nine volunteers – many thanks to our volunteers!

Additional Paint & Sip events at St. Stephen's are planned for later this year, in conjunction with other DPI events, such as the First Friday Artswalks in October and November and the Festive Frolic in December.

### **St. Stephen's Awarded Grant to Support Family Art Initiative**

The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts recently awarded St. Stephen's a \$1,900 grant to support our partnership with Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. The grant will pay for materials, snacks, and publicity for the events planned for later this year. Kids' Paint & Sips have become wonderful ways for families in our community to engage with art – and with St. Stephen's!



### **Sunday School Dates in May: May 14 and May 28**

Safe Church Practices: When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

# Peaceful Planning

## *Do I Really Need a Lawyer to Prepare My Will?*



Perhaps this topic would have been a good place to start the Peaceful Planning Series, but now that we have discussed many of the aspects of estate planning, we should consider this question before moving forward. First, let's consider the case for not using a lawyer to draw up a Will.

It is the age of the internet where just about anything can be found online, including information about Wills. Try it yourself: search for Wills and you will find a literal plethora of information and forms for doing your own Will. Some of it is free and some can be obtained at modest cost. It is also important to know that almost all lawyers use forms for language and content. You can go to any law library and find shelves and shelves of what are called Form Books. One of the warnings lawyers get in law school is that almost every line in a Form Book was tested through litigation, so let the user beware.

The same advice should be applied to forms found online. You can, however, draw up a perfectly acceptable and valid Will with several of the forms offered online at little or no cost. This is based on

your computer skill level and knowing exactly what you want to achieve with your Will. It will save you from having to make an appointment with a lawyer and paying legal fees. But is it a good thing to do? Let's consider the case for using a lawyer.

One good reason to use a lawyer is the Attestation that comes at the end of the Will. The Attestation requires two witnesses who will attest to you being in relatively sound mind and body, and that it is your signature on the Will. Using people at the law office will avoid using family or friends as witnesses. There is also a "self-proving" Affidavit that should be signed by the witnesses that excuses them from appearing at Probate Court to verify their signatures. This Affidavit requires attestation by a Notary Public. Law offices have access to both witnesses and Notary Publics, so even if you draw up the Will by yourself, you may end up in a law office anyway!

Most lawyers do not charge very much for drawing up a Will. It is a good way for them to introduce themselves to you and hopefully keep you as a client for future legal needs, including probating



your estate. Lawyers may also offer free storage of the Will if you don't want to keep it in your home. Again, this may offer the law office the opportunity to probate the estate later.

Finally, discussing your estate with a lawyer may reveal some aspects of your estate that you may have not realized the importance of or just overlooked. A lawyer may be able to give you an objective overview of your estate and avoid any potential pitfalls. As indicated above, many lawyers only charge a modest fee for a simple Will in the hope of gaining a client and a later probate case. It is, of course, a good idea to check the amount of the fee when scheduling the appointment.

Whether you consult with a lawyer or draw up your own Will is really a matter of personal preference and your comfort level in using your computer skills. A third "hybrid" option would be for you to draft a Will and take to a lawyer for comments.

In a future edition, we will return to the issue of trusts, particularly "irrevocable trusts," for protecting your assets from creditors and potential creditors. When we get into trusts, you most definitely will need a lawyer.

Peaceful Planning is brought to you by the Stewardship Committee. This article was written by Stewardship Committee member William O'Neill, a retired attorney. St. Stephen's does not provide legal or tax advice.



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.

Stay safe and take care, Connie Bullard, Editor of The First Order

## May

### Happy Birthday

- 1 Kareen Billetter
- 2 Leila Drury, Michele Rousseau
- 4 Caden Monterosso
- 8 Meagan Ellis
- 9 Naoma Sammons, Marjorie VanDyke
- 10 Marie Sutton
- 11 Dorothy Lambert, Judith Lussier, Craig Reynolds
- 12 Kristine Rogers
- 15 Andrew Gillman, Ella LaMalfa
- 16 Alexander Gillman, Cole Harrington
- 17 Bill Chandler, Thomas Smith
- 23 Ann Phipps
- 24 William Travis
- 26 Jack Haviland
- 27 Marilyn Barnaby, Melissa Patnode
- 28 Sara Garinther
- 30 Constance Bullard, Stephanie Talanian
- 31 Andrew Macfarlane

### Happy Anniversary

- 3 Myron & Jean Gray
- 7 Peter & Janice Furcinite
- 22 Michael & Joan Evans
- 23 William & Linda Engle
- 24 Peter & Andrea Stasiowski,

A Milestone!

## June

### Happy Birthday

- 1 Steph Mansfield
- 2 Joseph Carchedi
- 3 James Brennan
- 5 Bill Loutrel
- 10 John Garinther
- 11 Audrina Maloney, David Winchester
- 12 Daniel Moon
- 13 Meilani Hamilton
- 14 Linda Engle
- 16 Susan Bedard
- 17 David Turner
- 18 Avery Hartman-Cesar
- 19 Peter Champagne, Alyson Warman, Courtney Hamilton
- 20 Emilia Cobb
- 22 Daniel Lavery
- 23 Pam Aldrich
- 26 Summer Bush
- 29 Marietta Cawse
- 30 Jaylen Hamilton

### Happy Anniversary

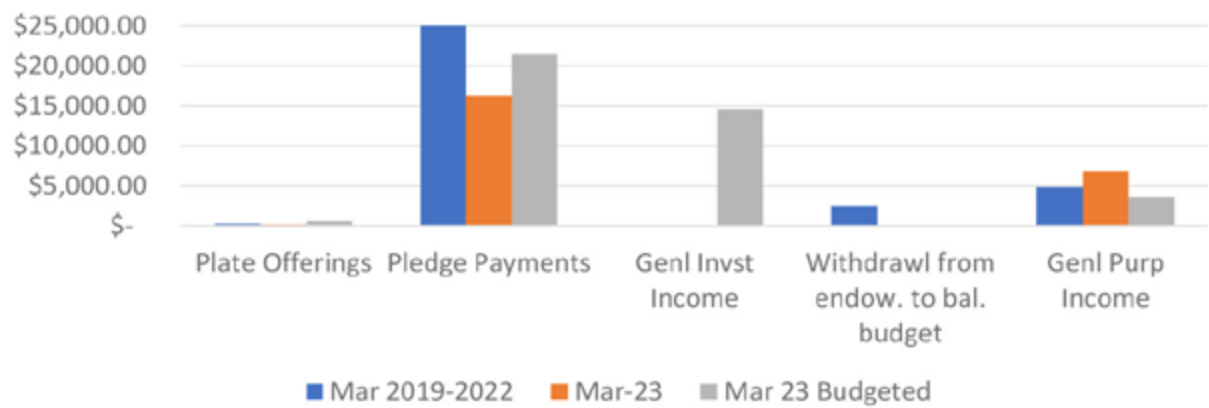
- 6 Thomas & Susan Smith, Scott & Katie Haviland
- 8 David & Mary Turner
- 11 Beth-Anne Hamling & Steph Mansfield
- 14 Jeffrey & Wavelyn Hine, Roy & Debbie Stillman
- 17 Christopher & Veronica Fenton
- 20 Don & Ann Phipps
- 21 William & Paula Morey, Nathan & Maria Zuckerman
- 24 David & Martie Ekstrom
- 25 Scott & Josie Ellis, William & Nancy Travis
- 30 Steven & Mary Wheelock

# Financial Update

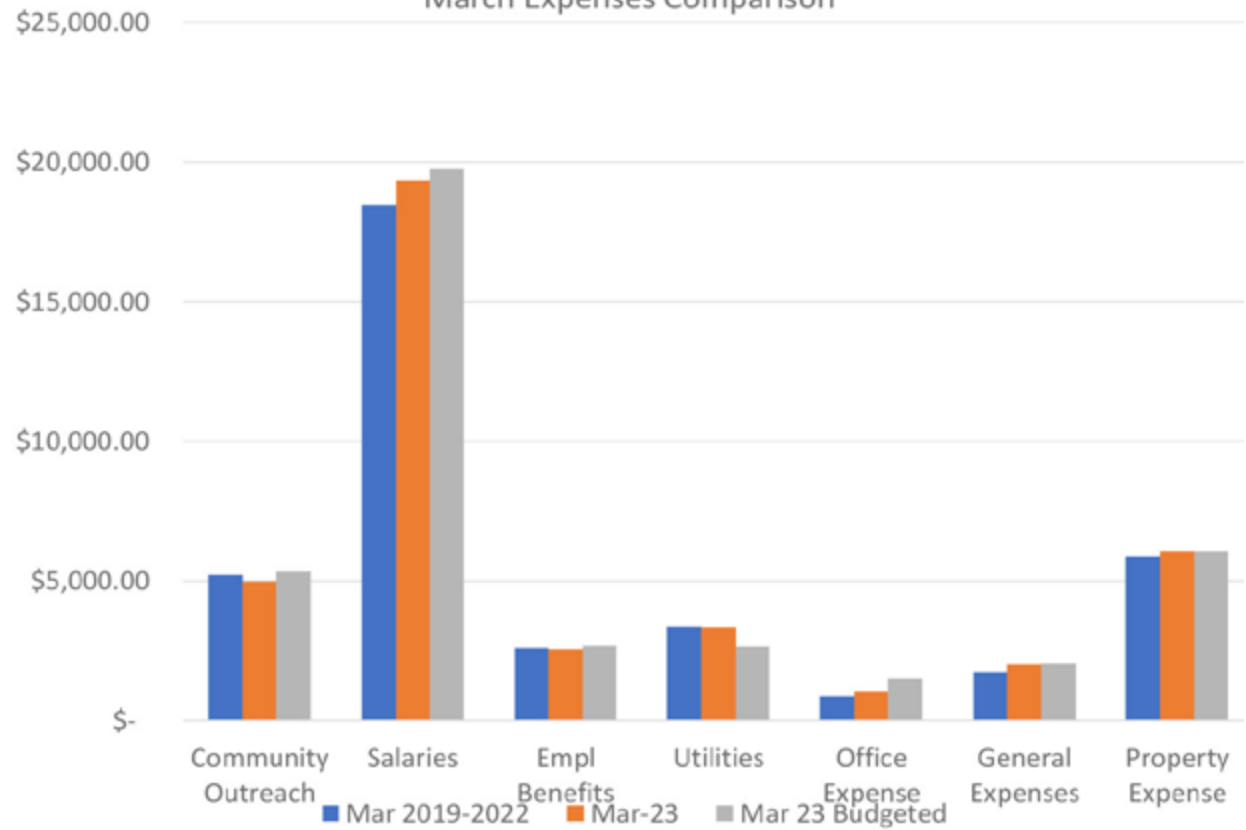
*submitted by Suzanne White, Treasurer*

In the month of March 2023, our operating revenues were \$23,223. Our operating expenses totaled \$39,325. This put us over budget for the month by \$16,102. Pledges are slightly under budget for the year to date. Our first quarter income for 2023 was \$121,855 and expenses \$121,542, leaving us under budget for the quarter by \$313. Online giving is still an easy way to stay up to date on your pledge assuring a steady flow of income for St. Stephens as well as an easy budget tool for you. Please contact our Parish administrator Sarah if you need help setting that up. Below are graphs showing the month of March average income and expenses from March 2019-2022 as compared to March 2023 and compared to what we budgeted per month.

March 2023 Income Comparison



March Expenses Comparison



If you would like to see a full itemized report of the income, expenses, savings accounts, and the balance sheet, please feel free to contact Suzanne White e: [smwhite@gmail.com](mailto:smwhite@gmail.com)