

ST. STEPHEN'S OFFERINGS

Newsletter of St. Stephen's Parish, Pittsfield MA



Introducing our new quarterly newsletter!

Craig Reynolds

We are excited to announce the launch of our new quarterly newsletter, *St. Stephen's Offerings*! This newsletter will complement our weekly email update and help keep our parish connected.

Published seasonally each fall, winter, spring, and summer, *St. Stephen's Offerings* will provide updates from each of our ministries. We'll look back at highlights from the previous quarter and look ahead to what's coming up.

Sarah Morrison, our Parish Administrator, will compile articles and produce the newsletter each quarter. We welcome news, articles, and updates from all areas of parish life. Please submit your material to Sarah.

Many thanks to Connie Bullard and Rob Langsdale for their outstanding work on our previous monthly newsletter over the years.

We hope you enjoy our inaugural issue of *St. Stephen's Offerings*! As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

What's inside our latest issue:

From the Wardens - 2
From the Rector- 3
Property Overview - 6
Treasurer's Report - 8
Stewardship - 9
Altar Guild - 10
St. Stephen's Table - 11
Christian Formation - 12
Mission and Outreach - 14
Holiday Music Event - 15

St. Stephen's Looks Ahead to a Busy Fall: An Update from Your Wardens

With fall here and 2024 on the horizon, St. Stephen's leadership has several initiatives underway:

Welcoming/Hospitality

Efforts are underway to make St. Stephen's even more welcoming, particularly for newcomers. Ideas include making coffee hour more accessible and creating additional space for families and children in the sanctuary - closer to the Guild Room, where our comfy Nursery Nook is located, and the Sears Room, where our Sunday Funday group gathers twice a month. We also hope a renewed and creative focus on nametags and other acts of hospitality will help everyone connect more easily - newcomers and "veterans" alike. More details coming soon!

Go and See 2023 Meetings

Several Vestry members met with various community groups over the summer to explore local needs. It's clear that hunger/food insecurity is a growing concern. Our own St. Stephen's Table is serving an increasing number of guests. It's also clear from our meetings that the many efforts to address food insecurity exist in well-intentioned but isolated "silos." There is little coordination among the dozens of food pantries and meal sites spread across the city. This has benefits (e.g., flexibility) and challenges (e.g., complexity, overlap, inconsistency). These initial meetings will help guide us as our outreach, community partnerships, and mission continue to evolve.

Upcoming Vestry Retreat

The Vestry will hold a mini retreat in November. We'll dedicate a three-hour block of time to considering larger issues - welcoming/hospitality, outreach efforts, community needs, ecumenical partnerships, our vision for mission, etc. - and what we can do in 2024 to respond to God's call for St. Stephen's.

Vestry Elections

At the upcoming Annual Meeting in January 2024, we will elect new Vestry members including a new Co-Warden and two new representatives.

Other "Housekeeping" Issues

- Due to ongoing problems, we plan to end our agreement with Otis Elevator and secure a new elevator service provider.
- We've received estimates to refresh the dining room and first floor and are working with contractors to define timelines, final details, and modifications to routines during the projects.
- Quotes to upgrade parish IT systems are being reviewed.
- Berkshire Community College is once again using our Auditorium to hold ESL classes for the 2023 fall and 2024 spring semesters.
- An organization called Better Life Partners has started using our Dining Room on the 2nd Wednesday of each month to provide non-medical support services to their clients in the Berkshires. Better Life Partners describes itself as "a virtual and in-person, community-embedded, whole-health solution for individuals and populations with substance use disorders."

We look forward to an exciting fall at St. Stephen's! Let us know if you have any questions.

Josie Ellis and Craig Reynolds

Belonging to God and One Another

During my 10 days being sequestered with COVID, I had plenty of time to pull together material for the confirmation class this fall. It's always interesting to consider what to include in a confirmation class - we're no longer in a time when we ask confirmands to memorize the catechism in the Book of Common Prayer and consider it 'done!'

What do confirmands need to understand to help make sense of our traditions and worship? What tools does our faith provide that will support them in their lives? How much do I share about how the Episcopal Church is engaging the issues of the 21st century?

I'll admit - I'm unapologetically Episcopalian. And the biggest challenge I faced was paring things down to three sessions! Several years ago, I was asked to put together a presentation for an Ecumenical confirmation program - one for 8th graders of the local Congregational Church, our Episcopal Church. It was a single session - and my task was to sketch an overview of the history of Western Christianity (VERY broad strokes!), and then explain a little about what differentiates the Episcopal Church. My colleague from the Congregational Church sent me a list of questions from the group in advance of my presentation. My favorite question was, "What are you an Episcopalian?" So I always include that answer in my confirmation presentations now!

Spoiler alert confirmands - here's my answer, in bullet form.

I am an Episcopalian because:

- I get to believe in evolution and the Bible (Darwin was an Anglican).
- I don't have to check my brain at the door.
- I can claim my own beliefs without implying that others are wrong.
- Worship is sacramental and liturgical,
- And the Church is diverse and inclusive of everyone: any race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background.
- I appreciate that we respect those of different faith traditions, with values and perspectives that differ from our own.

- And we believe Science is valid, using our God-given intellect to promote the well-being of humanity and Creation.
- I think our wide middle way of being the Church offers something incredibly valuable to the world. Finding a way to be in healthy, respectful community together without having to agree on everything.

Friends, I wonder what your answer would be? Why are you an Episcopalian? Or perhaps, a better question - Why St. Stephen's? In what ways does this community support and sustain you?

During the fall we ask these questions in connection with Stewardship. And I appreciate that! But as the Rector, I'm interested in how we invest in our relationships with God and one another. That's the core of a healthy, vibrant faith community - being invested, together. The more we invest in this community, the more of ourselves that we share, the more we engage in these relationships - the more we come to realize the ways in which the Spirit sustains and supports us in our lives and in our community. The more we come to understand, deep in our souls, that we are members of God's Beloved Community.

Which brings us to our theme for these last few weeks after Pentecost: Belonging to God and One Another. Each fall, I'm reminded how much this 'season's' liturgy resonates with the events in the world around us. This year, the prayers sustain us while our hearts break as violence in the Holy Land continues to horrify us and give us words to pray for peace.

Beloved ones, prayer matters. Pray for those who are suffering, those who are afraid, those who are displaced, those who have died, those who have been kidnapped, those who have been killed and those who grieve. Pray. Even if your heart is breaking and you have no words, lift your heart to God.

Relationships matter. I encourage you to reach out to your Jewish and Muslim friends. Even if you don't know what to say, let them know that you are thinking of them. That you recognize that this must be a heart-breaking time for them.

FROM YOUR RECTOR

LOOKING AHEAD TO THIS WINTER

The Campus of Downtown Congregations clergy have met several times. Together we're planning joint events, and trainings, as well as coordinating our responses to the needs of the greater community. (The group: Rev. Mike Denton - First and South; Becky Crane - First and South, and Cathedral of the Beloved; Pastor Joel Bergeland - Zion Lutheran; The Rev. Jenny Gregg - Cathedral of the Beloved; Rev. Jennifer Kimball - Cathedral of the Beloved; Rev. Stephen Dale - First United Methodist; and myself.)

I'm excited about a collaboration with the Campus of Downtown Churches this Advent. We're coordinating our musical offerings and adding a few - in a series we're calling Comfort and Joy. The first draft of our collaborative series is below. Hope you'll join us for as many of these events as you can. At this busy time, it's helpful to take time for music in community, and to participate in bringing joy to others.

Advent 1, Dec. 3: We'll gather with Cathedral of the Beloved on the lawn of St. Joe's at 1pm, and say a few prayers, then head out together to carol at the following locations: Berkshire Medical Center's ED; Mt. Greylock nursing home; the House of Corrections; and the Shelter (hopefully at FUMC), then enjoy a reception at Zion.

Advent 2, Dec. 10: New England Bell Ringers Concert at St. Stephen's (3pm)

Advent 3, Dec. 17: Zion Lutheran's Yule for Fuel concert (3pm), and Youth Caroling through YPF

Dec. 20: Zion's Beer and Carols, 7pm.

Dec. 22: Cathedral of the Beloved will host a Longest Night service (location TBD)

December 31, Christmas 1: Joint worship hosted by St. Stephen's - a Eucharistic service with carols.

Lastly, thank you for your generous support of the discretionary fund. I've included a write-up about the work we are able to do for the community through that funding.

Be well, and know that you are Beloved of God and this community,
Nina+

WORK OF THE DISCRETIONARY FUND

The purpose of the Rector's Discretionary Fund is to allow our community to assist those in need in a timely and confidential way. The fund is completely dependent upon donations. I wanted to give you a sense for the work we've done through the Discretionary Fund. Thanks to your generosity, we are able to assist our neighbors in significant ways. Without getting into personal details, here's the scope of what's been possible through that funding over the past two years or so:

- *Assistance for a mother and daughter through Stewards of Hope

- *Household items and other support our Host Family (joint support with Zion for Afghan family)

- *Gifts in Thanksgiving (for ministries of volunteers at St. Stephen's) - to Kids 4 Harmony, St. Stephen's Table, Berkshire Humane Society, CATA, and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

- *Youth Group Community Service Projects funding support.

- *Hotel costs for families in need (often working with the Elizabeth Freeman Center).

- *Underwriting a Meal served at Soldier On.

- *Electricity bills for individuals in need. (6 families/individuals and counting)

- * Funds to cover cost for Adult Ed books when necessary

- *Big Y and Dunkin' gift cards for those in need (distributed by the office when needs arise).

- *Pan Mass Challenge donation

- *Thanksgiving Angels donations to offset costs of turkeys, and to pay for our contribution of corn bread.

- *Funds to support the Berkshire Immigrant Center gift card program

- *Cathedral of the Beloved ministry support

- *Human 2 Human ministry support

- *Rent assistance for multiple families in need (7 months of rent assistance and counting)

- *Hotel costs for a temporarily displaced, disabled veteran

- *Support for South Community Food Pantry (as SNAP benefits decrease and food costs increase, there are now close to 1,000 families picking up food weekly).

- * Funds to offset the costs of funeral receptions, and funeral music, etc. for families in need of assistance.

- * Donations to PACC fuel fund (Pittsfield Area Council of Congregations)

- * Gas card assistance

- *Snow suits for toddlers without them at 18 Degrees Childcare program

- *Other outreach to the community: Pride Banners/give away items on table/ Love is Love St. Stephen's business cards, Pride Flag, Banners for building, and battery-operated candles for Easter Vigil joint worship; flashlights for youth sleepover...

PROPERTY OVERVIEW

Significant Property Projects

John Garinther

The Property Committee has undertaken some relatively large projects over the last couple of years. Most of these projects are non-discretionary; in other words, these projects have been put off for a long time and now they are overdue. Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and a hard-working Property Committee, we have been able to make good progress in the never-ending task of maintaining a very old facility. Below is a summary of a few of our most significant projects.

Stained Glass Window Protection

Concern for the protection of our invaluable stained glass windows has been expressed by clergy and parishioners for many years. These windows, mostly commissioned either from the Tiffany Glass Company of New York or Mary Tillinghast (a pupil and partner of the famous John La Farge), are irreplaceable.

We had an unfortunate incident about five years ago when a large piece of asphalt was thrown through one of the Tiffany windows named Suffer the Little Children. It took several months and several thousand dollars to complete the repair. This incident, along with other circumstances, motivated Reverend Nina to prioritize the protection of the windows in late 2021. The Property Committee solicited several proposals and decided on contractor Guarducci Associates in 2022. Work began in July of that year. This work includes not only the window protection, but refurbishment and repainting of the wooden window frames which had been neglected for many years.

Currently, all the windows in the chapel and the lower level of the main sanctuary have been covered by a layer of clear laminated glass on the exterior. As of this writing, the balcony window at the front of the church is being prepared for the installation of the protective glass. The quality of the work done by our contractor is very high. The aesthetics of the church have not been diminished; in fact, unless you look closely, you probably would not notice a change.

This project is planned for completion this year and will provide the parish with peace of mind knowing that these works of art are protected for decades to come.



PROPERTY OVERVIEW CONTINUED

Heating System Upgrade

The heating system in our church is not only old, but is a tangled web of machinery and plumbing that has been patched and repaired too many times to count. The system consists primarily of two boilers and a mile of plumbing to create steam heat for the main sanctuary and the Parish House. The reliability of this system has been decreasing as the demand for consistent heat has been increasing. That increased demand is a good-news story, as it reflects greater use of our church by internal and external organizations. The bad news is that the repairs and the on-going preventive maintenance have become overwhelming - in both cost and man-power. In mid-2022, the Property Committee suggested using a heating consultant to provide us with options for upgrading the heating system. The Vestry agreed and the search began.

Hesnor Engineering was hired by the church in September 2022 to develop a feasibility study that would give us options for bringing our heating system into the 21st century. After a year of working on the study, we finally received a draft copy from Hesnor this month. The Property Committee is beginning a review of the study and plans to meet with the Hesnor Engineering staff to discuss details and ask questions. This will be followed by committee recommendations to church leadership and difficult decisions about how to proceed.

The heating system upgrade is a long term project; the progress will be conveyed to the congregation through this or other forums.

Boiler Repair

One of the two steam heat boilers had been in a state of disrepair for about three years. It had a water leak that caused us to shut it down. At the time, the usage of the facility was fairly low and we determined that the facility could be adequately heated with one boiler. In late 2022, it was recommended by our heating contractor that it would be prudent to repair the boiler for various reasons. Unfortunately, the proposal for the repair included ordering parts that would take six months to receive. The order was placed and the parts were received in September of this year - just in time for the new heating season.

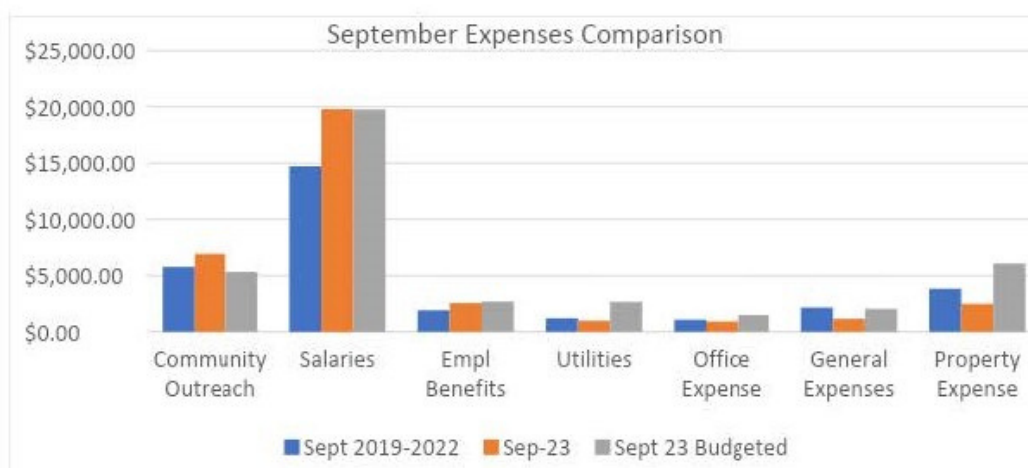
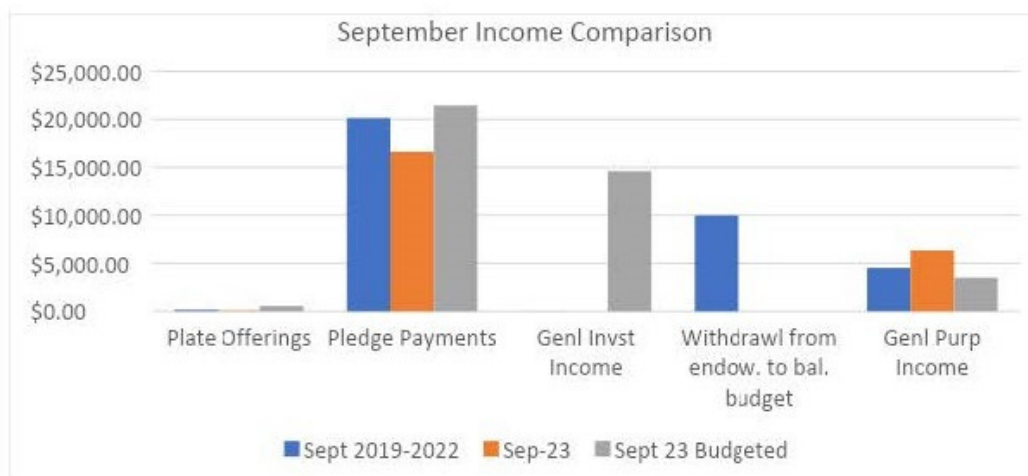


Our heating contractor, Laureyns United, completed the bulk of the repair in mid-October 2023 and the two-boiler system is now up and running. There are a few nagging issues that remain to be fixed, but this was a significant project that we can now check off our list.

Your Property Committee: John Garinther, Don Phipps, Chris Plankey, Roy Sutton, Al Symonds

TREASURER'S REPORT

In the month of September 2023, our operating revenues were \$23,037. Our operating expenses were \$34,883. This left us a deficit of \$11,846 for the month. Although our monthly pledges are only slightly below our monthly budgeted amount, our year-to-date actual pledge income still exceeds our budget by about 16%. This is good! It means that we are all working diligently and keeping up to date with our giving. Thank You!! In addition, our interest earned on investment income has been slightly higher than we anticipated this year. However, our annual operating expense budget outweighs our budgeted income. This leads to the deficit that must be taken from our endowment to cover these expenses. This is largely in part due to our Parish population decreasing and our economic times increasing. As we approach a new season of giving, would you prayerfully consider adding to your pledge? Your pledge increase would make an impact on managing the exorbitant amount that it costs to keep St. Stephens operating each year. Online giving continues to be an easy way to stay up to date on your pledge, assuring a steady flow of income for St. Stephens as well as a convenient budget tool for you. Please contact our Parish administrator Sarah 413-448-8276 if you need help setting that up. Below are graphs showing the month of September average income and expenses from September 2019-2022 as compared to September 2023 as well as compared to what we budgeted per month.



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 me, Suzanne White, parish treasurer, smwhite1207@gmail.com I am happy to help you.

AN INTRODUCTION TO STEWARDSHIP

Together at St. Stephen's: Refreshed & Restored by the Power of the Spirit

Stewardship is defined as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." Think about that for a moment: As a welcoming church community, we care for one another in countless ways. And we care for the beautiful historic building that houses us as we minister to ourselves and our neighbors. Now zoom out a bit: When the word "stewardship" is applied to our collective work to advance a healthy and sustainable community beyond our doors, it describes all of us – the church and its people.

Everyone can be a steward!

Stewardship is a core component of any work to foster more equitable well-being. Without stewards, there would be no one to actually get things done! Depending on the mission or ministry, some people may feel particularly called to invest lots of time, effort and dollars. Not everyone has the emotional or financial bandwidth to respond to all the challenges our community faces all the time – that would be impossible – but stewardship at St. Stephen's is a shared endeavor.

Everyone can offer something, whether it's prayers, pledges and/or partnership. As the needs – and associated costs – keep growing, we hope all of you can join us in stewardship.

What do we mean by Stewardship Season?

Stewardship Season is a bit of a misnomer, since acts of stewardship are practiced year-round at St. Stephen's. But we traditionally designate a month within the Belonging to God and One Another liturgical cycle to focus on the importance of pledging – a time when we actively think about and prayerfully consider making a regular commitment to the work of St. Stephen's.

This year, Stewardship Season will begin on Sunday, Oct. 22, and continue through Ingathering Sunday on Nov. 19. Your Stewardship Committee chose Together at St. Stephen's: Refreshed & Restored by the Power of the Spirit as our theme, as it expresses the way we feel after worshiping with one another: refueled by God's love and ready to do good – not only through St. Stephen's ministries, but also as individual family members, friends and colleagues.

Stewardship programming has already started and includes:

- Peaceful Planning Adult Education Series, hosted by Bill O'Neill and Rev. Nina Pooley
 - Wills (Sept. 17)
 - Powers of Attorney (Oct. 1)
 - Trusts (Oct. 15)
 - Medical Directives (Oct. 29, featuring special guest Dr. Chris Perry)
 - Required Minimum Distributions from IRAs (Nov. 5)
 - Putting the "Fun" in Funeral (Nov. 19)
- Stewardship Launch & Lunch Oct. 22
 - Stewardship Speakers Jim Alden (Oct. 22), Caleb Harmon (Oct. 29), Susan LeBourdais (Nov. 5) and Beth-Anne Hamling (Nov. 12)
- Ingathering Sunday Nov. 19, when three pledgers' names will be drawn to take home a beautiful Joan Morrow prayer blanket!

With thanks to you for believing in the power of stewardship,

Your Stewardship Committee: James Alden, Wendy Coakley (chair), Leah Luczynski, William O'Neill, Rev. Nina Pooley (ex officio), Al Symonds and Suzanne White

REFLECTIONS ON ALTAR GUILD

Setting the Table

David Nevin

Several years ago, as I was reaching the end of my term as a warden, I found myself looking for a way to stay connected to St. Stephen's in a way beyond just going back to my pew on Sundays. What called to me then, and still does today is the Altar Guild Ministry which is overseen with such love and care by Marie Sutton. For me it is not only a hands-on ministry but a deeply spiritual ministry. In each of us there is a bit of Mary and Martha. Preparing for the Sunday and Saturday evening services offers quiet moments of reflection and a deeper understanding of the gifts offered to us at communion. There is a reverence and beauty in setting the table and then after the service even in the washing of the vessels and returning them to their cabinet for the next set of hands the following week.



On Saturday mornings it also provides a time for quiet reflection when I can just sit in the church and let the Spirit of God find a way into my busy life. With the sanctuary lights out our beautiful stained-glass windows whisper their stories as the passing light moves through them. Serving on Altar Guild is a simple task requiring only about an hour on a Saturday morning and then setting the altar on Sunday before the service and cleaning up after. No experience required. I am sure Marie would be happy to speak to anyone interested in this ministry as would I and I would be most willing to have you join me some weekend when I am on the schedule to let you share in this ministry and see if it reaches out to you in some way. Thank you for your consideration of this ministry and for your presence in our parish.



Growing Need Evident at St. Stephen's Table

Craig Reynolds

St. Stephen's Table, our outreach ministry that provides hot meals to the community each Thursday and Friday, has seen growing demand in recent months. Some days, for example, we have used up to 18 pounds of pasta, compared to the typical 15 pounds – a 20% increase. We're all familiar with the recent rise in food prices. This trend and other economic challenges have hit many in our community particularly hard.

Table Director Dan Moon encourages anyone interested in volunteering to come down to the Dining Room any Thursday or Friday. If you'd like to contact him directly beforehand, he can be reached at dmoon6648@gmail.com or through our Parish Administrator, Sarah Morrison.

Financial donations to the Table – either one-time or recurring – can be made through the Parish Office or via our online giving portal. Dan expressed his gratitude for the continued generosity of the parish and larger community: "I'm deeply grateful for the financial and volunteer support the Table has received over the years. It's particularly heartening given recent increases in the cost of food. Pulling together a meal today costs three times what it cost when I started with this ministry nearly 20 years ago. We continue to make your donations and the meals we serve go as far as possible."

One recent Table highlight was the YPF effort on September 29. The youth helped prepare and serve the meal before their other weekend adventures. They bring an enthusiasm and understanding to the mission that is inspiring and much appreciated.



Looking ahead, Dan and volunteers will prepare a special Thanksgiving meal to distribute the week before the holiday. Please note Table will not serve meals on Thanksgiving and the Friday afterward.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated group of volunteers makes St. Stephen's Table possible week after week. Dan expressed gratitude for all those who give their time regularly including Lois, Pat, Mary, Don, Craig, Jessica, Nate, Bob, Mark, Joan, Sandy, Doug, and Nina. Thanks also to John and Mary Dickson for bread pickup and Nancy Travis for handling milk donations. We're grateful to Sarah for managing finances. It takes a team to run the Table!

Thank you for your prayers and support as we continue serving meals to our neighbors in need.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION



SUNDAY FUNDAY

Josie Ellis

This is our new name for Sunday school at St. Stephen's. As we continue to be agile in meeting children, parents and teachers where they are in this adventure, this shift adds a bit more flexibility to our program. As you know, our children spend a lot of time in school and adding a 6th day of "school" may not always sound so appealing. This new twist on a name provides our children and our teachers with the ability to discover St. Stephen's from a different perspective.

Some background... Late summer 2022, as the Sunday School committee was preparing our curriculum and our new space, my daughter Meagan (22) and her boyfriend came to a meeting to assist us in moving some furniture. Meagan proceeded to take her boyfriend on a tour of St. Stephen's with such joy and reminiscing about her time at church and I was dumbfounded and overjoyed at the same time. Now, despite many years at Sunday School with incredible teachers, my children cannot recite scripture, tell you what Pentecost is, or probably even the role John the Baptist played in Jesus' life. But what they do have is a comfort of being at St. Stephen's, a foundation of spiritual knowledge of God and Jesus plus, (and one could argue maybe most important of all) loving, generous spirits grounded in our Christian values.

This was my own a-ha moment! What better gift to give our current children than knowing St. Stephen's inside and out! This is their church too and we want them to have knowledge, reverence and ownership.

This year our curriculum is more about a lack of curriculum. We'll have loose themes for each meeting and follow the seasons; learning about Creation, gratitude, Christmas, the library, Easter, Veggie Tales, the labyrinth and maybe even explore the undercroft.

Our first week together in September with 4 children, we explored Creation. While Suzanne White and I read different parts of Genesis, the children drew pictures and created ocean, land, birds, trees, the Sun, the moon and the stars. Then we listened to Grace Garinther deliver the homily about her work with the Berkshire Humane Society. What better way to reinforce accessibility to church than seeing someone other than the priest deliver the "sermon"? Lastly, we went for a walk outside and saw creation up close. We saw bugs, trees, clouds, grass, and felt the wind (I loved that one of the children put this together!!) and pointed out the things made by man versus made by God. Such joy in being together in God's creation!

CHRISTIAN FORMATION CONTINUED

SUNDAY FUNDAY CONT.

October 22nd exploration of the Sacristy:



I am so thankful to our teachers this year. Please thank Suzanne White, Angie Moon, Craig Reynolds and Chris Plankey for being willing to give of themselves and their time to the children of St. Stephen's.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP

YPF kicked off the 2023-2024 year with an overnight that included serving with the St. Stephen's Table Friday crew, pumpkin carving, bowling and more.

November holds two events: a trip to New York City and visit to St. John the Divine (Nov 3/4) and a day of service delivering meals for the Thanksgiving Angels program (Nov. 18)

Sunday, December 17 the group will be caroling.

CONFIRMATION

In October, 12 members participated in a confirmation class. Through virtual and in person meetings, history and theology of the Episcopal church were shared by Rev. Nina. There was thoughtful discussion, perceptive questioning, and delicious snacks!

Look for an announcement about the Bishop Fisher's spring visit and the confirmation service in the next issue.

ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH

MISSION & OUTREACH

PROGRAM/SERVICE	NOTES
St. Stephen's Table	Community meals to go
Cathedral of the Beloved	Office and food prep space
Berkshire Immigrant Center	Office space
Jewish Family Service	Office space
Berkshire Community College	Educational space
Shakespeare & Company	Educational space
Better Life Partners	Client support space
Alcoholics Anonymous	Meeting space
Narcotics Anonymous	Meeting space
Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., Arts Walk	Space, financial, and volunteer support
Laundry Love	Financial support
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing	Financial and volunteer support
Habitat for Humanity	Financial and volunteer support

HOLIDAY MUSIC EVENT



NEW ENGLAND HANDBELL RINGERS TO PERFORM AT ST. STEPHEN'S SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH AT 3:00 PM

Music at the concert will range from holiday classics and favorites to newer pieces that feature up-and-coming composers. It will also include carol singing with organ and handbell accompaniment.

New England Ringers is an auditioned community handbell ensemble of highly energetic musicians playing advanced levels of handbell literature. Members travel from their homes in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont to rehearse and perform. Offering exciting performances, NER amazes listeners and receives enthusiastic reviews from audience members of all ages. NER performances are a blend of lively and diverse musical moods and styles with repertoire. The outstanding music is matched by touches of entertaining humor and the artful visual presentation of the ensemble playing this unique instrument. One of the major goals of the ensemble is to introduce audiences to the incredible music that can be made on this impressive instrument.

Making her debut this season is Cheryl Townsend, Music Director of the New England Ringers. In 2006, she was introduced to handbells, which prompted her to start a handbell choir, the Faith Ringers, at The Union Congregational Church in Groton, MA where she has directed for the past 17 years.

The concert is open to the public. A freewill offering will be collected to benefit the music program at St. Stephen's.