



February—March 2024

Priest in Charge

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Dear Friends at St. Stephen's
Lent is about to begin.

We will kick things off with Ashes to Go from 12 to 1:30 at the Freidel parking lot as in the last couple of years. If you would like to participate - let me know.

We will have a regular Ash Wednesday service at 5:30. So, Ash Wednesday is February 14. We begin this Lenten season with a moment of repentance where we turn back to God and change our mind, recognizing our own need for a new beginning. This is our “great do-over!” A time when we remember that we are humans. That we are dust and to dust we shall return.

For some of us this can be a wilderness time. And there's great value in wilderness. We learn the most when we fail. We learn the most when we take a time away to consider who God is in our lives.

But in this time of recognizing our humanity it is also a time to recognize others' humanity as well. I have been concerned in the last few months as this increasing trend of dehumanization of other people. “Those people” are looked at with denigration. People who have been wounded or hurt, their hurt is trivialized or looked at as somehow less than our own.

But we are God's people. We are people called to make use of the time we have to build up the kingdom of God. To offer a cup of cold water to those who are in need. To listen with ears attentive to the Holy Spirit and what God may be saying to us.

When was the last time you were able to hear God?
When was the last time you were able to speak about God's love and transformation in your own life?

I pray in this Ash Wednesday and Lenten time we will consider again who we are as God's people. And rather than listening ready to respond in a moment's notice with our own erudite responses, that we will listen with mercy. That we will listen with God's ears, hearing the brokenness and the need and the sorrow around us. And instead of offering rejection or dehumanization, we will offer love and redeeming and forgiveness.

This is our time to start over, to have the “great do-over.” So in this time of beginning again, I wish you mercy and peace. And most of all perhaps, hope and love.

Blessings be upon you in this holy season.
Faithfully, Mother Kathlyn +



Hello my St. Stephen's friends,

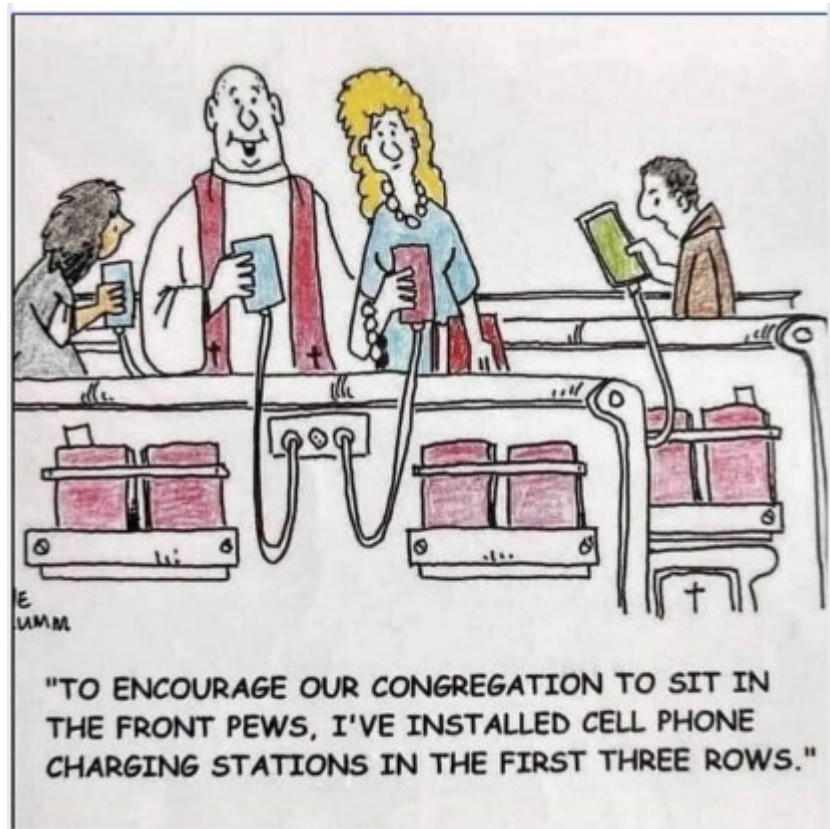
This is an edited version of my warden's report for the annual meeting. Thank you for your support during my tenure.

As my term as Warden is m reflecting on my time as vestry member as well. It has certainly been a rough few years, but I am proud and relieved at how nicely we have landed on our feet. We worked through financial struggles not of our own doing. We have survived as a parish through not being able to worship in person for months. We have said goodbye to members, some of whom have moved away and some of whom have gone to heaven. We have welcomed members from other parishes and areas. We have celebrated with our own Mother Kathlyn's daughter are she became bishop in Maryland. And we are looking ahead to celebrating our 200th anniversary soon.

I gratefully thank Mother Kathlyn's and Deacon Lynne's guidance. I acknowledge the hard work of our jr Warden Lynn Herne and our very hard working vestry: treasurer Gail Williamson, clerk Sarah Hinman, Jim High, Denise Falcone, Claudine Millar, and Barb Marianni. We would be nothing without our hard working secretary and sexton, Nancy Tibbitts. Our worship would be incomplete without the music provided by Linda Mondrick and Jim High, as well as our communion music pianists Mary Ann Sheldon and Molly Kilian. Our altar guild, spearheaded by Joan and Nancy Tibbitts, does an amazing job. Our lay readers and Eucharistic ministers as well as coffee hour providers are appreciated. Not to be forgotten is the amazing fundraiser committee, led by Jim and Dora Beyel as well as Denise, Joan, Claudine, Barb, Rose, and Molly. Whether it's coming up with ideas, or cooking all day (or creating signs, dressing up in a chicken suit, sorting rummage sale items, etc.), everyone pitches in.

In short, St Stephen's is a special place, and know that whatever part you play, we wouldn't be the same without you.

Fondly yours,
Sarah Kilian,
Outgoing Senior Warden





*An Invitation to a Holy Lent**

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. (BCP)

Lenten Poem

by Ann Weems

Lent is a time to take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to let the events get up
and walk around in us,
a time to intensify our living unto Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of
Jerusalem or to walk along the sea and
listen to his Word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder....
Lent is a time to allow
a fresh new taste of God!
Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think,
for thoughts come unbidden.
Perhaps we're afraid to face our future
knowing our past.
Give us courage, O God,
to hear your Word
and to read our living into it.
Give us the trust to know we're forgiven
and give us the faith
to take up our lives and walk.

A Year with a Focus on JOY

At the Diocesan Gathering “Celebrate DIO CNY” last December, the bishop invited us to embark on an International Year of Joy. She encourages us to seek out joy, even in the midst of a broken world, as part of our vision of a world healed by love and our mission of learning to love God, one another, and all of God’s creation.

As a part of this, I hope to include in each newsletter some materials from an organization that I have long been a member of : The Fellowship of Merry Christians. For almost 40 years, they have published a newsletter The Joyful Noiseletter. As they describe their mission, this “ is a voice laughing in the wilderness. (Their) modest aim is to recapture the spirit of joy, humor, unity and healing power of the early Christians.” They allow members to reprint cartoons, jokes, articles, and other editorial items in our church newsletters, flyers, bulletins, signs, and church website. You will be seeing some from now on. They do ask that we include the following below any section “ from JoyfulNoiseletter.com Reprinted with permission.”

A good way to start things is always to start with prayer. I offer the following “Clown’s Prayer” as my start. Want to join me?

“Lord, as I stumble through this life, help me to create more laughter than tears, dispense more happiness than gloom, spread more cheer than despair. Never let me become so indifferent that I will fail to see the wonder in the eyes of a child or the twinkle in the eyes of the aged.

Never let me forget that my total effort is to cheer people, make them happy and forget at least for a moment all the unpleasant things in their lives. And Lord, in my final moment, may I hear You whisper :’When you made My people smile, you made Me smile.”

My prayer also includes “ May St. Stephen’s be a place of joy, of love, of healing, of growth, and of GOD!”

Lynn Herne
Warden

Our Advent Candle



Bishop Curry

Here is a note from Bishop Curry for all of you who are praying for him...

“I continue to be so thankful for all your prayers, which have been working in tandem with my medical team’s excellent care. I count it a blessing to be in an area with good research hospitals and in a loving church with such faithful, prayerful support.”

Please join me in prayer for Presiding Bishop Michael Curry who is dealing with the ongoing challenges of his injury.

O God, the strength of the weak and the comfort of sufferers: Mercifully accept our prayers and grant to your servant Michael the help of your power that his injury may be turned into health, and our sorrow into joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“Listen with God’s ears:”

Bishop DeDe’s message for Ash Wednesday and Lent

By Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe

Posted February 13, 2018 In Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe, Featured

We are God’s people. We are people called to make use of the time we have to build up the kingdom of God. To offer a cup of cold water to those who are in need. To listen with ears attentive to the Holy Spirit and what God may be saying to us.

Transcript:

Ash Wednesday: here we are. We begin this Lenten season with a moment of repentance where we turn back to God and change our mind, recognizing our own need for a new beginning. This is our “great do-over!” A time when we remember that we are humans. That we are dust and to dust we shall return. For some of us this can be a wilderness time. And there’s great value in wilderness. We learn the most when we fail.

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Caroling & Christmas Party





Mother's Musings

- Thank you all for your Christmas greetings and gifts. So heart warming.
- Our Annual Meeting was quite meaty this year. Lots of shared ideas and enthusiasm. As I announced we are moving into a time of transition. I will be retiring in June. So we have a lot of conversation ahead. Our goal is to have you ready for when I leave. Last time you changed Priests you did not have time to prepare. We are already more ready for transition tasks and we will be focusing on this in the months to come. I hope you all will join in discussions and decisions.
- Our Bicentennial celebration will be in June. 200 years of ministry in this place. Any ideas for what you want that to look like - see me or Lynn Herne.
- Vestry election was this past Sunday - your leadership team will be Lynne Herne, Jim High, Barbara Mariani, Claudine Millar, Denise Falcone, Sarah Hinman, and our new member Shelby Manuels Smith. A great team. Thanks to all of them for their enthusiasm and loyalty!
- On Feb. 4, we had a lovely visit with Bishop DeDe and Canon Meghan Castalan who is our Transition partner. It is a real blessing to have their support.
- Our book study has begun. We are using Joan Chittister's book, *The Gift of Years - Growing Older Gracefully*. We are all eligible for this discussion because we have all been growing older since the day we were born. You who are caring for your parents may find this especially helpful. It's not too late to join us. Let me know!
- We need volunteers for Altar Guild - a special ministry of caring for the vessels and linens we use in worship. Altar Guild members set up the altar and make sure the worship environment is clean, and ready to support our worship every week.

Don't forget March 9 will be the night to change our clocks - spring forward for daylight savings time.



800 years!

We have something in our homes that is 800 years old!

By Annette Mikat, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

This year, when festive lights twinkle in homes worldwide, we will find ourselves at a significant milestone. It is the 800th anniversary of a tradition that has, for centuries, symbolized the true essence of Christmas — the crèche.

The word “crèche” originates from the Old French term for a crib or manger. This iconic scene, which reenacts the birth of Jesus Christ, finds its roots in the 13th century with St. Francis of Assisi. But who would have thought that a simple representation in a cave in Greccio, Italy, would leave such a lasting legacy?

In 1223, desiring to make the experience of the Christmas story more tangible and accessible, St. Francis sought permission from Pope Honorius III to set up a live nativity. His intention? To eschew the rising materialism of the time and bring focus back to the simple and divine nature of the Christmas story. By using real animals and a manger in a cave setting, he created a physical representation of the events of that holy night.



From its Italian origins, the crèche rapidly gained traction across Europe. Artisans in different countries began to depict the nativity using materials and styles that reflected their own cultures. The Polish “szopka,” Spanish “Belénes” and French “santons” are just a few regional iterations.

In Latin America, entire towns partake in live reenactments. In the Philippines, the “Panunuluyan” pageant is performed: actors go from house to house, seeking shelter, culminating in a display of the manger scene.

Deep Spiritual Resonance

The crèche, in all its forms, is more than just an ornamental display. It stands as a visual sermon reflecting the core of Christian belief that God became man to walk among us. This simple scene — one of a child born in humble circumstances surrounded by adoring shepherds and wise men — speaks to the universal themes of love, humility and hope.

It serves as a poignant reminder of a god who chose a simple manger in which to make entrance into the world. To many, this underscores the idea that divinity can be found in simplicity and that every individual holds intrinsic value, no matter their circumstances.

Celebrating the 800th anniversary of the crèche is about recognizing the enduring appeal and significance of a tradition that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. The crèche’s ability to continue inspiring and uniting people across generations is truly remarkable.

The octocentenary is a testament to the enduring power of the story it represents. Despite rapidly changing times, the story of a child in a manger continues to captivate and inspire. It presents an opportunity to reflect on the shared human experience. In a world that sometimes feels more divided than united, the crèche remains a symbol of universal compassion and faith. Whether displayed in a cathedral in Europe or a home in Africa, its essence remains unchanged. It is a call back to simplicity, love and hope.

Giving for Lent



Please join the St Stephen's vestry in our campaign of "giving for Lent." We will be collecting funds and goods for several organizations. You may bring in a check (made out to st Stephen's with the group name on the memo) at any time this Lent.

Heifer Project gives farm animals to needy villagers in 3rd world countries. \$20 buys a flock of chickens.

Hope House in Utica feeds the needy in our community.

We will also be collecting food for St Margaret's food pantry at Grace Church. They are especially looking for peanut butter, mac and cheese, canned soup, chili, canned fish, canned chicken, canned vegetable, canned fruit, pasta and stew, cereal, crackers, granola bars, instant mashed potatoes, nuts, pasta, rice, shelf stable and powdered milk.

We will have jars and boxes in church for the collections.

Thank you.
Sarah Kilian

Did you know?

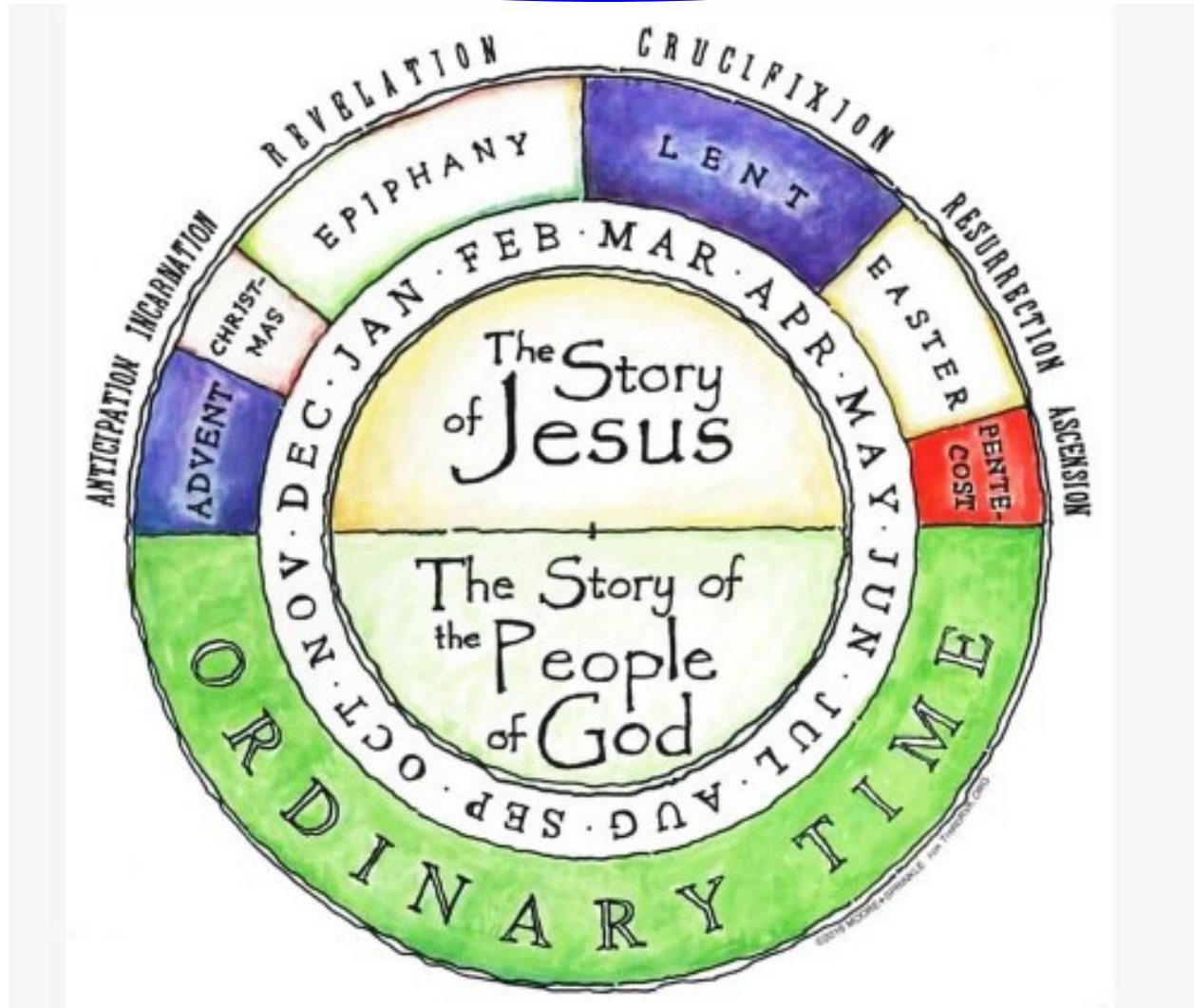
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church: This land on 25 Oxford Road was purchased for \$150 in the early 1820s. With the generous financial support of Jedediah Sanger, a member of the founding Vestry of St. Stephen's, a building fund was established of \$2,000. Exterior and interior changes have taken place throughout the years. In memory of Jedediah Sanger, who died in 1829 at the age of 78, there is a marble plaque inserted in an interior church wall. The inscription includes, "He, being dead, yet speaketh." In 1997 the U. S. Department of the Interior recognized St. Stephen's as a National Sacred Historic Site.



***"Matthew, Mark and Luke, see me after class.
Your book reports are surprisingly similar."***

Food for Thought:

The difference between "Try" and "Triumph" is just a little "Umph"!



Do you have a favorite hymn?

What would you like it sung during one of our services?
Requests welcome!

Music has been added before and after the service.
Come and enjoy and make a request if you like.

Please email the name of the hymn/song or just the hymn number to
Jim High (carlyhi@aol.com) or just drop your request off at the office.
If it's not well known or not in our hymnal, a link would help.

Thanks!!



The Last Page

Food for Thought

“Community is much more than belonging to something; its about doing something together that makes belonging matter.”

“Never stop smiling even when you are sad because you never know who may fall in love with your smile.”

Plan ahead — Our next issue of our New Beginnings Newsletter will be **our April-May issue**. Please plan ahead and get your articles and pictures in early. Would you like to see something different in our newsletter? Make a suggestion or two. Pictures are always appreciated.

Deadline May 1, 2024
Really! No foolin'.

All submissions should be e-mailed to Jim High at: carlyhi@aol.com

Altar Flowers

If you would like to donate flowers for the altar in memory or thanksgiving of someone special or an event you want to celebrate, please sign up in the booklet at the back of the church, or email the information to ststephensepiscopalnhny@gmail.com



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

February Birthdays

Feb. 9: Ruth Schulz
Feb. 23: Nancy Tibbitts

March Birthdays

Mar. 9 Jean Skinner
Mar. 11 Anita High
Mar. 17 Thomas Hinman
Mar. 21 Gail Williamson
Mar. 24 Daniel Millar

April Birthdays

Apr. 3 Jim High
Apr. 11 Phil Romon
Apr. 14 John Gillmeister
Apr. 30 Jim Beyel

We encourage all our church members to submit their birth dates if they would like to receive a birthday greeting from the church. Nancy Tibbitts can take this information.