



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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November 2017

"For what shall we give thanks?"

It is an interesting phenomenon that frequently, when there are pauses for us to add prayers in a public litany, we find many things to pray for that we need or want, but then fall silent when the pause is for our thanksgivings.

This makes some biological sense~ we are hard-wired to notice trouble and danger, because staying safe is a primary drive of being alive. Gratitude, though....well, it isn't that we don't feel grateful, or don't have things to be grateful for....it's just that our nervous systems don't go into alert in the same way. Think of what you feel inside if you imagine someone yelling, "Fire!" You can feel your body react even when it's just an exercise! Someone yelling, "Wow, what beautiful weather!" or "What a perfect apple!"... they don't immediately send our body into a full alert mode, because we are not threatened by things that are good.

I suppose thinking of Thanksgiving started me down this path. We all know that the media like to keep us on the hook with lots of dangerous, shocking, horrible news. I am not saying that there isn't a lot of tragedy in the world that desperately needs our prayers, our love, our work to remedy. But keeping our systems in constant panic mode is making us sick. Physical and mental illnesses are directly tied to our inability to regulate the extreme amount of sadness that comes our way.

Thanksgiving reminds us first how very blessed we are. Loving family, friends, community, and this beautiful place to live are constant reminders in our day that we are very fortunate. As we finish gathering items to send to the Texas Diaper Bank, as we make our own pledges for the upcoming church year, as we turn to our homes and holidays, we can feel our hearts blooming with generosity. Fear shuts us down and turns us inward. Our vocation as Christians is always to turn outward, extend an open hand and kind heart.

Lean in, this holiday season. Lean in to all that is good in your own life. Steep yourself in joy, in fellowship, in things that bring you delight. These good things will heal us, and fuel us for future generosity, future opportunities to pray and pay it forward.

Cricket +

**FALL BACK,
on Sunday, Nov. 5th :
See you in church after
your extra hour of sleep!**

Reflections

Stewardship 2017: How You Can Help!

Why is our theme this year *Pray and Pay it Forward*?

How else can we respond in a year when so many people have lost so much in a series of hurricanes, wild fires, storms and disasters?

As we support our own church here in town, we also want to extend our prayers as well as real aid to others further away. HERE is how you can help:

1 Please, Please consider even a small increase in your pledge this year. Your increase, coupled with many others, will keep the church running~ it's that simple. We know that there are countless other requests for your generosity~ please make St. Stephen's a priority in your giving this year. And do please keep your parish in your prayers.

2 Help us help the Texas Diaper Bank in their work. Bring donations to church between now and Nov. 19th!

We are assembling "Hygiene Kits"* that they distribute. You can donate individual items from the following lists, or even assemble kits on your own and bring them in. Thank you in advance for this help, for those who lost everything to Hurricane Harvey.

(They ask that if you wish to donate diapers, please focus on the larger sizes for children and also for adults. Disposable diapers in sizes 4, 5, and 6, and toddler "pull-ups" and the largest sizes (L and XL) of "Depends" or similar products. New, unopened packages, please.)

3 Lastly, you *may* wish to give a **one-time donation** to St. Stephen's in Houston. The rector's discretionary fund there is being used to quickly administer desperately needed funds directly to those hardest hit by the storms there. Note St. Stephen's Houston on the memo line of your check, made out to St. Stephen's, Pittsfield. We'll send one check when all gifts are in.

***Here are the Kits**, and items we need to assemble them.

- Baby Hygiene Kit – Baby wash, baby shampoo, baby lotion, wash cloth, diaper rash cream, bottle, burp cloth, bib, pacifier, etc.
- Toddler Hygiene Kit – Baby wash, baby shampoo, baby lotion, wash cloth, diaper rash cream, sippy cup, burp cloth, bib, pacifier, etc.
- Adult Hygiene Kits – Shampoo, Conditioner, Soap, toothbrush, tooth paste, etc.

All Saints' Photographs

The All Saints' Day altar will be in the chapel on Nov. 5th ~ please bring in photos of your loved ones who have passed away~ especially those from this past year~ and we will display them before the chapel altar.

There will also be a table for your pet photos this year, as we recall old friends who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge.

All pictures should be in to the office by November 1st.

Please put your name on the back so they can be returned!

Celtic Heritage Sunday: November 19th!!!

Yes, it's Pledge Ingathering on the Same Day!

Don't miss the fun, as we celebrate our parish, our heritage, and the annual dance of the pledge cards!

Thanksgiving Day Service

10:00 a.m. on Thanksgiving Morning

Let's take time out of the day to give thanks for our blessings!

St. Stephen's/Zion Pulpit Swap, November 26th!

Cricket and Tim will change places this weekend, as we commemorate the one-year anniversary of Zion's joining us for worship. On this holiday weekend, we give thanks for the friendship we share with Zion.





from Joseph

How do you feel about the word “Theology”? Does it bring to mind a dusty, old book full of obscure Latin phrases about God? A list of rules that brings up the scary word, “heresy”?

In the medieval ages, universities followed what we might call a “liberal arts” curriculum: rhetoric, grammar, logic, mathematics, astronomy, and music. One did not focus just on one discipline and leave the rest off. Students would study all these subjects, seeing the rules and principles behind each one. To the medieval mind, studying these was a gateway to learning about God: by paying attention to the logic of creation, you could learn about the Logic that created it. Yes, the medieval mind would have felt right at home with Spock from Star Trek and his emphasis on logic because they saw God being perfectly logical and creating a world that follows logic, too.

The logic of God (what we might call theology: Theo = God, -logy = logic) was never the stopping point for scholars writing dusty, dry, boring books, though. It was always meant to deepen our relationship with God. When we spend time with someone, we start to learn how they think and we learn more about who they are. It is always about relationship.

When I read theology, I am drawn into a relationship with the writer and with God. “Tell me about Jesus!” is the unspoken request when I crack open a book. I get to see someone else’s relationship with God. I see the fruit of their prayer life, their own struggles. Sometimes I agree, sometimes I disagree, but I always go away with a deeper relationship with God.

Theology is everywhere. Sermons are deeply theological. The Eucharist and the prayer book are loaded with theology. Even this newsletter article is theological!

So when I say the word, “Theology”, think about relationships with God. Your relationship, my relationship, the relationships that Christians

throughout the ages have had with God. Whose relationship with God do you want to spend time learning about?

(PS: The word “heresy” has gotten such a bad rap through the ages, and I couldn’t resist a moment to bring it up. “Heresy” is a word for teaching that goes so far in one direction that it distorts the whole truth. There’s room for mystery in the Gospel, and “heresy” is an attempt to flatten out mystery to where one cannot see the forest OR the trees.)

November Series

Introduction to Theology: Joseph Assures You That It Will Be Fun!

Theology is a lot more fun to think about and read than you think! For a November short series, come learn about theology and take some time to think about your own theology! It will be the first three Wednesdays in November at 6:00 pm in the Sears Room.

November 1:

“What is Theology?”

November 8:

“Who are some theologians I should know?”

November 15:

“What would my own theology look like?”

Peace,
Joseph+

November

Happy Birthday:

- 2 Taryn Bannon (11), Amanda Delisle
- 4 Jason Hassan (11), Sarah Novak
- 5 Natalie Devitt (13), Don Phipps
- 6 Barbara Nightingale, Christopher Plankey
- 8 Jake Corcoran (18), Mackenzie Corcoran
- 9 Matthew Billetter (a milestone!)
- 11 Rajiv Hanger (18), Linda Somerville
- 13 Glenn Novak, Roy Sutton
- 14 Justin Devitt (9), Keil Hassan (9), Al Symonds
- 16 Lois Neumann
- 17 Charlotte Luczynski (3)
- 18 Addison DiGrigoli (11), Charlie Sawyer, Peter Zuber
- 19 Martha Fickling
- 21 Michelle McNeil
- 22 Elizabeth Contenta (a milestone!), Lily Stasiowski (12), Nicholas Viola
- 23 Gail Miller (a milestone!)
- 24 Kristi LaMalfa, Sophia La Malfa (10)
- 25 Brady Wesley (9)
- 26 Bette-Anne Eddy
- 27 Jim Cawse
- 29 Kaivian Duchaine (13), Evelyn Pieloch
- 30 Madyson Wesley (15)

Happy Anniversary:

- 9 Judy and Donald Lussier (1968)
- 14 Marcie and David Nevin (1993)
- 17 Elizabeth and Mark Trapani (2001)
- 21 Virginia and David Donovan (1992)
- 26 Sharon and Matt Billetter (2005)
- 27 Susan LeBourdais and David Baker (2004)
- 28 Nancy and Peter Zuber (1987)
- 30 Pam and David Aldrich (1973)

Eclectic Book Club

Our October Meeting was a small one and, for once, we had no main dishes. Our meal consisted of spinach salad, fruit salad and THREE delicious desserts. Wow, can you beat that?! We also munched away on candy corn, most addictive!

The book (*Hidden Figures*) was enjoyed by one and all and elicited a good discussion on race relations then and now. Connie has a copy of the movie and we hope that perhaps we can offer a showing of the film to the whole congregation.

Our November meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 3rd. Joan Kurber and Dot Lambert will be the co-hostesses. Our book for that gathering is *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. Please come eat and chat with us!

Reminder:

It is helpful to the money counters if you put your name on your envelope – and on any donations to the Rector's Fund. There is no mention of that on the Discretionary Fund envelopes. Thank you!

Advent Wreath Workshop

The Advent Wreath Workshop will take place Sunday, December 3rd from 11:00a.m – 12:00 noon in the Dining Room. Please let Bert Boos know if you plan to attend so we will have enough supplies. (bboos@ststephenspittsfield.org) (413-448-8276, ext. 17)



**Know Your
Fellow St. Stephen's
Parishioners**

Interview with Ann Phipps

By Joan Kurber

Our wonderful choir is reduced by one more: after 38 years in the choir, Ann Phipps retired in the fall of 2016. She will be missed.

Ann was born in Clinton, Maine, the only child of an elementary school teacher mother and an Osteopathic physician father. She graduated from Portland High School and studied nursing at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Ann subsequently earned an Associate's degree from BCC then a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Nursing from UMass. Her area of expertise was Gerontology. She confessed, with a smile, that were she to give a lecture on aging, as she used to do, she would entitle it for her former patients (now deceased, so she can't!) "The Lies I Told You."

Ann met her husband-to-be, Don, on a blind date when they went sailing on the Charles River. Don was a recent graduate of MIT at the time. They were married in 1964 at St. Luke's Cathedral in Portland. Their first home together was in Charlottesville, Virginia. Ann and Don have two children: Julie is married, has two children and lives in northern Virginia; David is married, has four children and lives in Newburyport, MA.

Ann infrequently attended the Congregational church with her mother while growing up. She became an Episcopalian after attending a service with a friend and deciding that this church appealed to her. She was confirmed in the Episcopal Church while still in High School.

She and Don first moved to Pittsfield in 1973 and were here for 6 months. After five years in Indiana, they returned to Pittsfield in 1978. Ann fondly remembers that on their return, Andy Wissemann recognized them from their earlier attendance at St. Stephen's and called them by name.

Ann joined the choir in 1978 and retired in the fall of 2016. In addition to her loyal service in the choir, Ann is a Lector, has served on the Vestry, was a member of the Worship Committee, and has been active in the Prayer Shawl Ministry for 12 years.

Although she enjoyed her years in the choir, Ann confesses that it is now pleasant to sit in the congregation and enjoy the service from a different perspective. Thank you for your years of service in this very important ministry. We're all pleased that this write-up does not signify a "Farewell"!

St. Stephen's Parish

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