

The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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APRIL 2016

Reflections

“Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our course on earth...” ~ from the Book of Common Prayer, Burial, Rite II

ALLELUIA! Christ is Risen!

Death and Resurrection~ it is at the very center of who we are, as humans, as Christians, as a congregation. Even our earth beautifully illustrates this, as we move through the seasons. Leaves die and fall. We move through the darkest days of the year, and then new growth begins.

Congregations live through this same cycle. They are created, live, blossom, shine, age, wane, and pass away. And from that place, new life and new mission can be born. Just as it is with people we love, we grieve, but life goes on for some, and we have to choose: Life or Death?

In Deuteronomy, we hear God say:

I have set before you life and death...

Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”

Last month, at the diocesan Parish Leadership Day, our keynote speaker reminded us that you know things are changing, because you feel uncomfortable. Hmmm! Change that is only on the surface doesn't feel any different, but deep change upsets the apple cart.

What if, together, we could learn to remind ourselves that in order to have a bright future, we need to change. We need to become the church of 2030, to look ahead and not backward? (Pause: Does

that sentence feel uncomfortable? It ought to...!)

NOBODY likes big changes, not clergy, not laity, not leaders, not team members. It is so much easier to just maintain things as they are. But we also know that national demographics show us that church is no longer at the very center of people's lives. There are now young adults whose PARENTS never went to church~ a second generation of people who have no idea what joy and healing can be theirs in Christ, in this new iteration of What Church Is. Not judging, not damning, but welcoming and loving.

We need to ride this new wave, to invite without barriers, to welcome without conditions. I think St. Stephen's has been preparing for this leap of faith for decades. Are we ready, now, to step up to the plate?

love, Cricket

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New Musical Opportunity!

Drummers! Singers! Music folks!

Join Cricket on Sunday May 15th, at 11:30, to hear about some new ideas for leading sung versions of the Prayers of the People! Bring a drum, if you have one! Percussion will play a big role in this, but we will also have some hand drums and other instruments available, if you do not have your own. Or, bring a guitar or other instruments.

This group will work on some different refrains, and then starting in the summer we will begin to lead the Prayers of the People. Talk to Cricket for more info. Or just come for the fun!

We are SLOWLY Moving into the Digital Age!

Online Podcasts! Online scheduling and sign-up sheets! If you connect with us on Facebook, or on our Website <http://ststephenspittsfield.org> then you can easily listen to that sermon you missed, or listen again to one that moved you, or now easily share sermons with friends or family members!

We are also working to have signup opportunities online, in case you don't get to the easel in the foyer, and want to sign up for an upcoming class or potluck. Look for VolunteerSpot link, which will not only help you sign up, but will then send you a reminder beforehand!

Let us know what you think~ these and more opportunities will help us connect more, and throughout the week, instead of expecting everything to happen in 90 minutes on a Sunday! See you online!

(ps: Did you know, you can also request prayers, or make a donation, through our newly designed website? Check it out!)

April

Happy Birthday:

- 1 Noreen Reynolds
- 2 John Crane, Patricia Lake, Bailey Stokes (20)
- 3 Matthew Reynolds (18)
- 4 Kim Croce, Patricia Decker, Craig Smith
- 6 Michael Doyle
- 7 Bella Currie (16), Mark Trapani
- 8 Scott Haviland
- 9 Maribeth Barney (a milestone!)
- 10 Kaytlyn Samuels (14)
- 11 Jane Church, Elizabeth Leonard (a milestone!), Skylar Reynolds (17)
- 12 Susan Coles
- 13 Mary Adams (a milestone!), Rachel Digrigoli (21!), Christopher Sanders (9), Cathy Wheelock, Ruth Wood
- 14 Anna Black
- 15 Aiden Champagne (6), Ella Haas (11)
- 17 Steven Bannon, Elizabeth Trapani
- 19 Brandon Engle (21!)
- 20 Scott Ellis (a milestone!)
- 22 Mary Gillman
- 23 Kieran Coscia (12), Michael Lauren
- 25 Aaron Cassavant (13)
- 26 Abigail Fenton
- 27 Kathryn Beaudoin (16), Seth Digrigoli, Josie Ellis
- 29 Bill Carter
- 30 Lew Cuyler

Happy Anniversary:

- 8 Cathy and Dan Doyle (1989)
- 14 Claudia and Gary Curry (1984)
- 24 Betty and Brad Swanson (1954-62 years!)
- 28 Bette-Anne and Ken Eddy (1990)
- Osneyda and Mark Miller (2001-15 years)

Cathedral in the Night
in collaboration with
downtown churches will host:

2nd Annual Downtown Easter Celebration

Sunday, April 24 , 2016
@ 2:00pm;

Front Lawn of St. Joseph's
on North Street in Pittsfield

Worship + Live Music + Barbeque

We look forward to having you join us!



2015 Downtown Easter Celebration



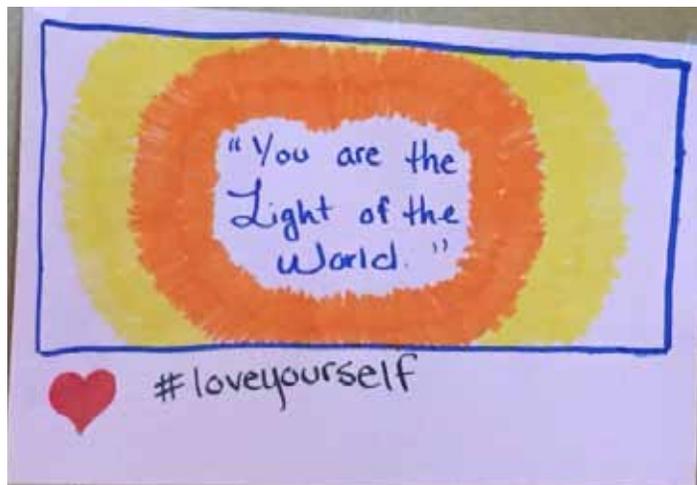
“The Journeys”: A Youth Retreat

In March, seven youth from St. Stephen’s traveled to Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center in Greenfield, NH, for the first joint youth retreat between the Diocese of Western MA and the Diocese of New Hampshire. Over 50 youth from the two dioceses joined together to explore the theme “journeys.”

On Friday night, youth were invited to consider where they currently found themselves on their spiritual journey. They took time to express this through an illustrated Instagram image. The following morning they continued the theme by considering where they find spiritual guidance, sustenance, protection and energy as they move through daily life. Along the way, youth were invited to consider what burdens or anxieties they wanted to leave behind, and what gifts from the overall retreat experience they wanted to take home. The weekend was a balance between spiritual reflection and time for play providing a space for rejuvenation and refreshment.

Did You Know?

- That **Andrew Macfarlane** earned a spot on the Dean’s List at RIT for the fall semester –continuing his winning ways!
- That **Mackenzie Corcoran** and **Michela Laurin** earned Honor Roll status at Miss Hall’s School for the first semester.
- That **Nicholas Trapani** made the High Honor Roll at Reid Middle School for the second quarter.





from Joseph

The season of Easter (a whole entire season of FIFTY DAYS!) is probably the most forgotten discipline of the church year. You see, Easter is one, long feast, and feasting is just as much a discipline as fasting. It's easy to remember Lent with its ethos of spiritual discipline, but it is tied to Easter. Just as Advent and Christmas are two sides of the same coin, so, too, are Easter and Lent.

Imagine being a disciple of Jesus, following him to his death on the cross. Three days later, people are reporting that his tomb is empty and that they have seen him very much alive.

Now you as a disciple are faced with this question: who is Jesus? He wasn't a king conquering by force, he wasn't a prophet asking people to give up on the world, he wasn't a priest who reformed the worship in the Temple. Jesus is a different kind of Messiah, one who was crucified and then raised from death in a glorious, new body. Who would you say the Messiah is? If you were a disciple tasked with writing a Gospel, what would you say?

I close with a favorite song of praise from Scripture. It is the "Pascha Nostrum" which is read at Morning Prayer only during the season of Easter, and is a collection of pieces of Paul's letters that sings the praises of Christ's work of redemption:

Christ our Passover *Pascha nostrum*
1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Romans 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

Alleluia.
Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; *
therefore let us keep the feast,
Not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, *
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
Alleluia.

Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; *
death no longer has dominion over him.
The death that he died, he died to sin, once for all; *
but the life he lives, he lives to God.
So also consider yourselves dead to sin, *
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia.

Christ has been raised from the dead, *
the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
For since by a man came death, *
by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, *
so in Christ shall all be made alive. Alleluia.
(Book of Common Prayer, pg 83)

News from Mamie Collins

Thank you, one and all – teachers, students, parents, and Parish Congregation.

Our recent activities in Sunday school have been very successful because of the cooperation that is the trademark of St. Stephen's Parish.

As a follow-up to the "Soup for Super Bowl," I am pleased to report it resulted in a collection of \$477.77. This is amazing since for the first time we joined churches throughout all 50 states. I hope next year we can involve more of the local parishes. Our collection went to St. Stephen's Table to be used at the wise discretion of Dan Moon, who does a phenomenal job of feeding the poor and homeless of Pittsfield. A total throughout our great country was 9.6 million dollars to be used for local food pantries and regional Food Banks. That sounds like a huge amount and it is, but it was also estimated that while people enjoyed Super Bowl festivities, there were 50 million hungry Americans suffering and worrying about what their next meal would be. We rallied together to reach out to those who were literally without a bowl of soup.

Another new challenge, this year, will be to have students in grades 4/5/6 dress in costumes and enact the Stations of the Cross for the younger students, parents and any members of the congregation who wish to participate. I hope our next Newsletter will have a favorable report on that endeavor as well. Parents seem very enthused that we are engaged in the core activities of Parish Community.

Wishing EVERYONE a happy, blessed and joyous Easter – from the students and staff of our growing Sunday School.

St. Stephen's Parish

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The Eclectic Book Club

This group will meet next on Friday, April 1 (no fooling!), with co-hostesses Lois Neumann and Susan Wojtasik treating one and all to some nibbles and wine at 6:00 p.m. We will then enjoy a delicious potluck supper, followed by a discussion of the book, *Far from the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy.

Looking ahead to May 6th, we have changed our choice of books, at the suggestion of Lois and with the approval of others: *Elephant Company* by Vicki Constantine Croke. This book deals with essentially the same historical period and venue, but is the remarkable story of a British man who develops a special bond with the working elephants, who, in turn, played a unique role in the campaign against the Japanese.

On June 3rd, we shall gather to discuss the book *Fifth Business* by Robertson Davies. Lots to look forward to – please join us!

