



# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

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MAY 2016

Reflections

Dear St. Stephen's,

I have to be honest with you, saying good-bye is not something I am very good at. Maybe, because like most of us, it means we are letting go of one period of our lives to enter into a new one. With that, come all the joy and sadness of what has been, as we prepare the way for what will be.

It's so hard to believe that this marks my final month with you. Nine years has gone by quickly and I am grateful for every moment that has been held within those nine years. Words cannot express my great gratitude to God for leading me here after my graduation from seminary. Derek and I became a family here. You became intimately part of it, sharing in our joys and our sorrows along the way.

Together, we have walked through the transitions of three other clergy. We have traveled to Biloxi, MS; Chester, PA, and as close as North Street to start Laundry of Love. We have said good-bye to beloved members, tried new ways of doing things and let other things go.

Through all the shifts and changes that have come over nine years, God's love has remained the same. It has remained constant as I have watched you care for each other and this community in meaningful and powerful ways. You have such profound gifts to offer Pittsfield. Trust what God has given you, the power to form

transformative relationships, one meal, one load of laundry, one conversation at a time. It is how I have seen you embody what it means to be the heart and hands of Christ at your best. And it is your presence, found in these very basics, that will serve as the building blocks for God's transforming love to take deeper root as you move into the future.

Know that wherever my ministry takes me in future years, I will carry you in my heart, giving thanks for you always and forever.

With much love,  
Jenny

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# United Thank Offering Ingathering May 21-22

Included with this copy of *The First Order* is an envelope for the Spring U.T.O. ingathering on the weekend of May 21-22. The UTO is a personal and family devotional program of the Episcopal Church, founded by women in 1889. It serves to expand the mission and ministry of the church to meet compelling human needs – for men, women and children throughout the world – by gathering small amounts deposited in your “blue box” each time you have something, large or small, for which you are thankful, i.e. a new baby, a promotion, a passing grade, a victory for your favorite team, getting through another day without pain, a phone call from a long-lost friend, a cheery word from a stranger on the street, healing, completion of a task you set for yourself, etc.

*“GRACIOUS GOD, source of all creation, all love, all true joy: accept, we pray, these outward signs of our profound and continuing thankfulness for all of life. Keep each of us ever thankful for all the blessing of joy and challenge that come our way. Bless those who will benefit from these gifts through the outreach of The United Thank Offering. This we ask through Him who is the greatest gift and blessing of all, Jesus Christ. AMEN”*

## Eclectic Book Club

We had a good meeting, good discussion and delicious food in April – spring flowers graced the table, with the promise of things to come! Our next gathering is Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, when Dot Lambert and Charlene DiCicco, will co-host the usual wine and goodies followed by our potluck supper. We will then discuss the book, *Elephant Company* by Vicki Constantine Croke.

Looking ahead to June, we will read and discuss *Fifth Business* by Robertson Davies. All are welcome – we do have a lot of fun!

## Did You Know?

- That **Tessa Langsdale** made High Honors at BART for the second trimester and **Nathaniel Gillman** made the Honor Roll for the same period.
- That St. Stephen’s celebrated one year of Laundry Love – it all started in March of 2015!
- That it would be most helpful to the group who counts money on Mondays if you would put your name on the outside of your envelope. Thank you!

# May

## Happy Birthday:

- 1 Kareen Billetter
- 2 Leila Drury, Michele Rousseau (a milestone!)
- 4 Caden Monterosso (12)
- 5 Doris Allen (93 years young!), Lynn Holcomb
- 7 Ann Vincent (98 years young!)
- 8 Meagan Ellis (15), Johnyce Lanphear-Dyer (15)
- 9 Naoma Sammons (91 years young!), Marjorie Van Dyke (92 years young!), Maureen Wilker
- 10 Joe Corcoran, Evellyn Croce (6), Darlene DelSoldato, Marie Sutton (a milestone!)
- 11 Dot Lambert (a milestone!), Judith Lussier, Craig Reynolds (a milestone!)
- 12 Kristine Rogers
- 14 Larry Keefner
- 15 Andrew Gillman (14), Ella La Malfa (10)
- 16 Alexander Gillman, Cole Harrington (15)
- 17 Bill Chandler, Thom Smith (a milestone!)
- 18 John Lindsay
- 20 Hunter Stanton (21!)
- 23 Ann Phipps
- 24 Alana Ramos (4), Bill Travis
- 26 Jack Haviland (5)
- 27 Marilyn Barnaby
- 28 Gavyn Carter (13), Lyla-Jean Clapper, Sara Garinther, Tessa Langsdale (17)
- 30 Connie Bullard, Melissa Keefner (a milestone!)
- 31 Andrew Macfarlane (20)

## Happy Anniversary:

- 3 Jean and Myron Gray (1969)
- 7 Janice and Peter Furcinite (1960)
- 22 Joan and Michael Evans (1976)
- 23 Linda and William Engle (1981)
- 24 Andrea and Peter Stasiowski (2003)



## from Joseph

John 21:25: "But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

This is how John's Gospel ends. No story of the Ascension, no "Great Commission," no disciples fleeing the empty tomb in amazed fear to be greeted by fellow disciples who were skeptical. John chooses to speak to the reader directly and points out that there is more to the Word (Jesus Christ) than all the words in the world can describe.

There is a fullness to Christ that even in a long life of discipleship we only begin to see. It takes forty days of meeting the resurrected Jesus for the disciples to begin to understand what happened, then ten days after that is the fiftieth day, Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples to help guide them into truth.

I can imagine the writer of John's Gospel looking back on the spiritual life and the words written down on the scroll. That moment right there, that moment of reflection and looking backward becomes a moment of looking forward, looking forward to a fulfillment of joy and love that Christ brings.

As the Easter season continues, we look back at the early disciples as they begin to understand just what wonderful thing happened at the cross and the empty tomb. We should turn our gaze forward in time, too, and see the wonderfully renewed and restored life Christ brings the world now and at its completion on the Last Day.

The Collect for Saturday in Easter Week:

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have delivered us from the dominion of sin and death and brought us into the kingdom of your Son; and we pray that, as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his love he may raise us to eternal joys; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Peace,  
Joseph

## Church School

I am delighted to report that our Presentation of the Stations of the Cross was a huge success. Students in grades 4/5/6 practiced the week prior to the presentation and were asked to meditate about the person they represented, as each one had a very special part in Jesus' procession to Calvary. The students took this challenge very seriously and dressed in appropriate costumes; they led us reverently through the trial with Pilate, carrying the Cross, falling and being made to go on by the soldiers; the making of Simon to help, and the importance of the Women in Jesus' life: meeting his mother, so filled with sorrow; seeing Veronica, courageously stepping in front of the soldiers to wipe His face; and the women of Jerusalem, weeping and filled with compassion. We saw His beloved disciple John at the Cross and the kind man, Joseph of Arimathea, offering the tomb. We can now rejoice with Mary Magdalene that HE HAS RISEN and offers each of us eternal life. About 50 adults, along with teachers, were very moved by this experience, which the students will remember for a long time.

Our Sunday School year ended on April 10<sup>th</sup> with our closing program prior to school vacation. Upon entering the church, students presented the "Footprints" poem to the congregation and sang "This Little Light of Mine." How many of you remember this song from your own childhood? Apparently many did, as parishioners were invited to join students in the repeat of the song.

During class time, students made small picture frames to place their picture of Jesus to go along with the theme that Jesus is always with them – at all times and in all ways. After our worship service concluded, students returned to the Dining Room for a make-your-own-sundae celebration.

We can never thank our teachers enough for their dedication in preparing classes and coming with their hearts full of love of God and His children. It is truly my great pleasure to work with each one.

Sunday is, indeed, the Lord's Day within St. Stephen's community!!

Mamie Collins  
Director of Church School

# St. Stephen's Parish

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## Warm Heads, Warm Hearts Wraps up Another Successful Season

As we wind down our ninth year for Warm Heads, Warm Hearts, I want to thank everyone who has donated items and kept the supplies coming. Spring may be here, but we all know the Berkshires keep the chilly temperatures for a bit longer than most, especially this year. This current season brought amazing support for the Warm Heads, Warm Hearts program and I can't thank you enough. Feel free to keep knitting over the warmer months so that we are prepared to provide warm accessories for our Table guests in the next fall and winter season. The donation boxes are located to the far right of the office door within the coat rack.

Thank you again for your support. If you are interested in joining the effort, please contact Connie Bullard at [cgbooks30@verizon.net](mailto:cgbooks30@verizon.net), #413-443-9243. Supplies and instruction are available.

