

# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

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SEPTEMBER 2016

Reflections

Life: There's No "Do Over", and That's a Good Thing

This summer, I've been trying to start my days with a little quiet time, playing with watercolors. I'm not super-gifted in the graphic arts, but my whole life I have loved colors. As a knitter, my favorite technique is Fair Isle, watching various colors mingle against a solid background. When it comes to painting, I love to watch watercolors flow on paper.

A friend of mine once remarked, when I waxed eloquent about watercolors, "But oils are so much easier and if you mess up, you can just paint over your mistakes!" Well... yes, perhaps. This came back to me as I recently read an article about how watercolor painting teaches us that we are, in fact, not in control. Which of these is (for me) a more useful life-skill: eradicating past mistakes, or learning to literally "go with the flow"? Well, I don't know about you, but changing the past is not something I am capable of, nor interested in. It was what it was, and now it's over. But we always are given opportunities to learn, again and again, to let go of control and let things happen as they will.

So, I can touch some blue paint to the paper, and then I can touch some red paint near it. If the paper is dry, and the paint is thick, perhaps those colors will stay where I put them. But oh! The joy of taking watery mixes and

then moving one into the other! Shades of purple beyond my control form and swirl and create something that is more than the sum of the parts. I am delighted both by my original intention to mingle the two, and by the surprise of allowing them to "do their own thing" once I've introduced them.

So too, in life, we can put our energy, our kindness and forgiveness, our gentleness and faith, out into the community around us. We may never know the ripples of those gifts, we may never see the new colors that form beyond the horizon of our limited view, but we can trust they are there. We can't control what happens to the things we say and do, but by offering our sweetest and our best, we can release healing and love into the hungry spaces between us and other people. As the autumn begins to spin with an energy of its own, how do we continue to stay sweet in the midst of negative energy, fear, and reactivity? Remember your deep, inner goodness. Let your life be more a watercolor than an oil painting~ don't see each moment as Correct vs Mistake. Imagine that you are letting your goodness swirl and pool and flow in ways that will connect you to the inner goodness of others, creating between us all webs of intricate beauty, beyond our imaginings and our control.

love,  
Cricket +

# NEW!! Church School Family Coffee/Visiting Space

Sunday mornings are such a WHOOSH, we know. Getting yourself up, dressed, fed, and out of the door to church on time can feel like your own Olympic event...and the, oh! There are the kids to get ready, too!

Once you have delivered your child or children to the Auditorium for their pre-class gathering, step into the Children's Library right there on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, where we have created a new family coffee space for you to enjoy. Grab a quick cup to go, or sit and visit and catch your breath – it's your choice.

But know this: the coffee's on, and waiting for you, when you come.

## Line up of Events for Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>

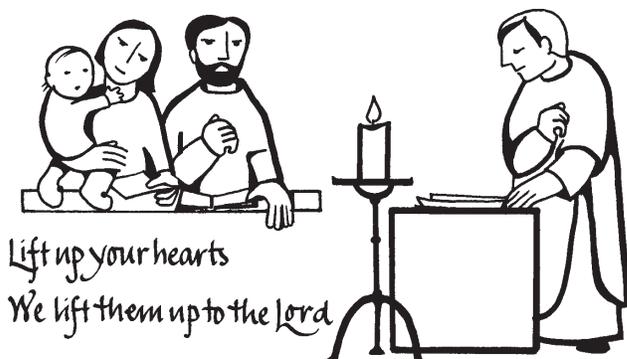
- 9:00 a.m.: Confirmands meet with the Bishop, in the Sears Room
- 9:30 a.m.: multi-parish rally on Park Square! Come join us!
- 10:00 a.m.: Bishop Doug Fisher will preach and celebrate – you don't want to miss it! Vestry will have time with the Bishop after he greets people at coffee hour.

## TWO "Rally Day" Sundays this year

One for Pittsfield area churches and one for the parish!

- On **September 11<sup>th</sup>** several downtown churches will Rally at 9:30 a.m. on Park Square, encouraging one another as we blast into another church program year! The Bishop will join us, before we all head into church for our festive service that day.
- On **September 18<sup>th</sup>**, we will hold our Annual Parish Rally Day, a time to register for church school and join together after a summer of travel and adventures.

Mark your calendar and Rally with us!



# September

## Happy Birthday:

- 2 Marie Zuckerman, Aiden Colon, Nicholas Trapani
- 3 Jennifer Doane, Susan Cahill
- 5 Rob Langsdale, Richard Colon (8)
- 6 Jean Gray (a milestone!), Alex Demary (5)
- 7 Janice Furcinite, Barbara Brouker
- 8 Beth-Anne Hamling
- 9 Pru Dyer (97 years young!), Ev Heiss (90 years young!)
- 10 Virginia Donovan (a milestone!)
- 11 Louis Senecal, Matthew Fenton
- 13 Donna Chandler, Mary Wheelock (a milestone!), Audrey Harrington
- 14 Dan Doyle (a milestone!)
- 15 Andrew Haas
- 17 Nicole Haas, William Plumb (5), Magdalena Plumb (5)
- 18 Steven Wheelock
- 19 Jezzmyne Dowling-Black
- 20 Charles Rockwood
- 22 James Behnke (10), Kasey Turner
- 24 Aloha Winchester (a milestone!)
- 25 George Church III
- 26 Jamie Bannon, Christopher Fenton
- 29 David Adams (a milestone!), Helene Robillard, Sue Smith (a milestone!)
- 30 Katie Haviland

## Happy Anniversary:

- 1 Sarah and Glenn Novak (1980)
- 3 Leila and Tom Drury (1972)
- 7 Marjorie and Ed Van Dyke (1945)
- 12 Jayne and George Church (1980)
- 14 Amanda and Joel Brunelle (2013)
- 15 Suzanne and Joe White (1984)
- 19 Virginia and Craig Smith (1987)
- 23 Lois and Al Symonds (1967)
- 25 Diana and Bill Macfarlane (1993)



## from Joseph

Zoom! We are gearing up already for the program year! Did your summer breeze by quietly or did it zoom past while jam-packed with activities? I hope that you had some fun this summer and got to deepen your spiritual roots. In the Church we are now moving from the gentle rhythm of the summer season to fall with its many opportunities to learn, worship, share fellowship, and serve.

Youth group will start up again formally on Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup> after the 10:00 am service, with lunch and time to talk about upcoming events for the youth of the parish. As we plan for the next few months ahead, we will also talk about what kinds of activities and service projects we would like to do!

Adult education will ramp up again this fall, too. We're blessed again to have Louise Penney leading Sunday morning's forum with presentations on Meister Eckhart, a 13<sup>th</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> Century Dominican theologian who rattled the thinkers of his day with his mystical theology. Those will be held in the Sears Room at 9:00 on Sunday mornings!

We are also planning some Wednesday night opportunities for October, but it would be helpful to hear what topics or areas of interest you have! Please email me at [jfarnes@ststephenspittsfield.org](mailto:jfarnes@ststephenspittsfield.org) and suggest things! One idea I had was around Mormonism / the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (since I grew up Mormon in a very Mormon part of the country). Another option would be to gather to talk about the spiritual journey to reflect on the ways we live out the Gospel. Many options!

Also, the Islamic chaplain at Williams College and I are talking about re-scheduling his presentation that we'd planned for earlier in the spring and trying to bring in some voices from students and/or faculty as well! Keep your eyes peeled for an announcement this fall!

Peace,  
Joseph

## Youth Group

Youth Group will start up again formally on Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup> after the 10:00 a.m. service, with lunch and time to talk about upcoming events for the youth of the parish. As we plan for the next few months ahead, we will also talk about what kinds of activities and service projects we would like to do. Contact Joseph at [jfarnes@ststephenspittsfield.org](mailto:jfarnes@ststephenspittsfield.org) for more information!

## Did You Know?

- That **Jake Corcoran** made Honorable Mention in the All-Berkshire Spring Baseball Team.
- That **Paige Gray** (Jean's Granddaughter) was named Field MVP on the all-Berkshire Spring girls Track and Field Team.
- That **Megan Pedersen**, majoring in kinesiology at James Madison University, was named to the President's List for the Spring Term.



# Hello, Church School Families!

**I am delighted**, humbled, and honored to be your Church School Director for the coming year.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a life-long Episcopalian. My family (wife, Christine, adult sons Josh and Matt) has been worshipping at St. Stephen's for almost twenty years now. During that time I have taught Sunday School (10+ years), served two separate terms on Vestry, volunteered at St. Stephen's Table (15+ years), and sat on two different Rector search committees.

I truly love St. Stephen's! It's the liturgy. It's the diversity. It's the willingness to meet *everyone* where they are. But mostly, it's the people. And I have a special place in my heart for the children, families, and teachers at St. Stephen's. That's the first reason why I accepted this position – you, your kids, and their teachers. What a wonderful group!

The second reason why I accepted this position is that I believe deeply in the power of what psychologist Lisa Miller calls, "a robust spiritual life." In her book *The Spiritual Child*, Miller writes about research that shows:

"...children who are raised with a robust spiritual life are happier, more optimistic, more flexible, and better equipped to deal with life's ordinary (and even extraordinary) traumas than those who are not."

We know that families are the true crucible of any child's spiritual formation. You are your children's first and most important spiritual examples and guides. But we also know that raising children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a tough, demanding calling. I believe that St. Stephen's is uniquely equipped to assist you with this sacred responsibility.

How? For decades, St. Stephen's church school

has nurtured the blossoming faith of its youngest members. We read bible stories. We play games. We pray together. We make stuff. We talk about the meaning and importance of Holy Eucharist. We draw pictures. We listen to one another. We laugh. We ask questions. We give thanks. And we pray some more. We talk about pets, God, Jesus, school, siblings, food, books, what scares us and what excites us – and a lot more. (But sometimes we get stuck on the food part. For some reason, everyone wants to talk about food.) 😊

But perhaps most important of all, in a world where obscene materialism, empty fame, and easy cynicism appear to be the dominant values, your children sit down on Sunday mornings with people who intentionally, consistently, and unapologetically choose to value compassion, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and joy. And these admittedly imperfect but deeply committed folks aren't just in the classrooms. They're in the pews, up on the altar, at coffee hour, singing (or ringing) in the Choir, serving at St. Stephen's Table or Laundry Love, and more. They are witnesses for your children that even as the culture bombards them with self-absorbed, often alarming messages, there is another way: God's way.

## What's new in Church School for 2016-2017?

As Cricket noted in her letter to you earlier this summer, there are some other new things on tap for the coming school year:

**A new curriculum** – *Feasting on the Word* – whose loving tone and warm approach is consistent with our parish values.

**A return to the 9:30 a.m. community gathering** in the Auditorium where we will take the time to reconnect with one another, then calm and center ourselves – via stories, songs, and prayer – before we move into classroom time.

**A return to the 3-classroom model:** Pre-K & Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, and 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grades.

**A longer church school year**, beginning after Rally Day and continuing until late May.

**A recommitment to clear and consistent communication**, including family meetings, regular correspondence about church school, and lots of ways to get in touch with me.

Speaking of communication, I can't wait to hear from you! **PLEASE** feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, suggestions, ideas, and offers to help. We can **ALWAYS** use more help!

Craig Reynolds

Mobile: 413.822.0248 (call or text)

Home: 413.243.3445

Email: cmreyn@gmail.com

Address: 60 Sharyn Drive, Lee, MA 01238

## **Rally Day is set for Sunday, September 18, with classes starting Sunday, September 25**

You can find a tentative schedule for the entire 2016-2017 school year and a registration form online at: <http://ststephenspittsfield.org/we-learn/childrens-formation/> (*scroll down for the links*)

Join us, and pass the word! It's going to be a great year!

In God's Love,

Craig Reynolds

Church School Director



*Sir, did you not sow  
good seed in your field?*

## **Musical Notes from Joy Mullen Sing and Ring**

As I write this, September is almost here and it is time to get back in the swing of singing and ringing. If you are interested in joining one of St. Stephen's musical ensembles, sign up on Rally Day or contact me personally.

The **Parish Choir** is comprised of adults and teenagers. We rehearse Tuesday evenings from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and sing for worship at the 10:00 a.m. service during the academic year. Reading music is not a requirement to participate in the choir, but all singers are expected to be able to match a pitch. The choir will begin singing for worship on Sunday, September 11th. Regular rehearsals will commence on Tuesday, September 13th.

We will try to restart the **Children's Choir** this fall. We are looking for kids in grades 2 and up, who want to develop their singing voices. Rehearsals will be Wednesday afternoons from 4:00 – 4:45 p.m. Our first practice will be Wednesday, September 21st. Choir members will learn to sing and become leaders during worship. We will work on learning to read music and to sing on pitch. One side benefit of participating in a church choir is that we will learn many interesting English vocabulary words. We will study the meaning of the hymn texts, which will help our overall theological understanding. The kids will be expected to behave during rehearsals and services.

The **Handbell Ringers** will practice every Monday evening from 6:30-8:00 p.m. St. Stephen's Bell Choir rings a 3-octave set of Whitechapel Handbells and a 3-octave set of Malmark Choir Chimes. Our first rehearsal will be Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. We will play in church about once a month. If you are interested, please speak with me.

St. Stephen's Parish  
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## Eclectic Book Club

It's fall and time to resume our monthly meetings. Because of the Labor Day weekend, our first meeting will be held on Friday, September 9th. At that time, we will share books we have read over the summer, good or bad. Co-hostesses have not yet been determined at the time of this writing. Give Joan Kurber a call if you would like to volunteer. See you soon!