



# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

Ph 413.448.8276 // Fx 413.442.5374 // mail@ststephenspittsfield.org // www.ststephenspittsfield.org

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## Worshipping with Zion Lutheran: Making All Things New!

Two months into our joined worship and fellowship, I would like to take a moment to check in about the gift and blessing that this time is for us. Being hosts and hostesses means seeing our own worship and habits and building in new ways. Having new eyes is a real gift!

As we are now alternating our Episcopal liturgy with Lutheran prayers and order of service, what are you noticing? What does it mean *theologically* to have the confession right at the very beginning? Why do you think ours is placed where it is? What does each of these teach us? When the liturgy is not familiar, we have to pay attention in different ways as well.

Have you heard their prayers in a fresh way? Has a prayer of ours suddenly leapt out at you? And what about music? What new tunes, voices, groupings have you heard? Most interestingly, what are you feeling? Change can be discombobulating, but it is also refreshing. The attendance numbers and high energy level especially at the 10am service have been delightful, and makes every Sunday feel special.

This month, how might you "lean in" to some new friendships? Have you learned a few new names? Are you wearing your nametag on Sundays to make it easier? Have you attended some of the joint fellowship activities, or Zion's jazz vespers?

Really, the biggest topic that has come up since our first Sunday together is: However will we separate when the time

comes? While happy for Zion that their newly configured building will bring them new opportunities and joy, still we will want to find some creative ways to keep our relationship growing, I hope, long after these shared worship months have passed.

**Stay tuned for this year's Lent Program~  
Lutherans and Episcopalians: Leaning into  
Our Traditions, Together**

love,  
Cricket+

Reflections

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# One More Reason to Bring Your Kids to Church and Sunday School...

Craig Reynolds, Church School Director

*"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." — James Baldwin*

*"Children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them makes an impression." — Haim Ginott*

A recent study concluded that for every 1 percent increase in the adult-to-youth ratio in a given community, there was a decrease of 1 percent in the rate of young people dropping out of high school.

In other words, simply having more grownups around helped kids stay on track.

Now the study didn't measure this relationship at a personal level. But it makes sense to me that the results would apply to individual children too: the more responsible adults a child knows, the likelier that youngster is to thrive.

I can think of few places with better role models than St. Stephen's.

Consider our Sunday School volunteers. In our classrooms we have 19 adults with more than 125 years of collective experience teaching at St. Stephen's. Wow!

But wait, there's more!

There are our acolytes, Altar Guild members, coffee hour hosts, choir members and musicians, Eucharistic ministers, Eucharistic

visitors, greeters, lectors, pastoral care visitors, ushers, volunteers at St. Stephen's Table, writers and designers, and...

People who simply show up, humbly worshipping God.

(Not to mention, clergy!)

There are dozens and dozens of people at St. Stephen's who offer their time and talent each week to serve something larger than themselves.

That's a pretty remarkable set of role models.

So even before church school, before the sermon, Eucharist, or – most importantly – coffee hour, our children spend Sunday mornings immersed in a sea of wisdom and faith.

Even better news?

Kids don't have to show up every Sunday to be nourished by the depths of this support. They just have to feel a connection to St. Stephen's. To feel as if they *belong*. Because they do.

See you some Sunday!

## Annual Meeting – *An Activity for Kids*

This year's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 12 after the 10:00 AM service. While the adults conduct the business portion of the meeting, **kids ages 4 through 12 are invited to participate in an activity of their own** – supervised by adult volunteers. (Any adults looking to ~~skip the meeting~~ have some fun, contact me to volunteer!)



## from Joseph

This is one long post-Epiphany season! Lent doesn't start until March 1 this year, so we have time to actually prepare ourselves for Lent without feeling that rush of leaping from a short Epiphany season to Lent. In fact, in previous generations the Epiphany season felt very, very short – the weeks just before Lent were even called “Pre-Lent” and started a more obvious transition between the joyous Christmas / Epiphany readings to the tone of self-reflection and penitence of Lent (much like how the readings of the season after Pentecost start to change as we get closer to Advent... take note!)

Anyway, that liturgical nerdiness aside, it was great to see so many community organizations (and many people from St Stephen's!) take part in the “Four Freedoms Rally” back in the early part of January. It was a cold day, but it was so wonderful to see so, so many people standing for something very positive. We often don't spend a lot of time thinking about what we stand for or what our own values are, and to take a moment to celebrate the values that hold us together was a real gift.

What values are closest to your heart, and how do your values and your faith intersect?

We might answer those questions differently depending on the church season. Advent calls our attention to peace and justice, and Christmas calls us to joy and communion with others. Epiphany's image of light going out into the world undergirds our values of making Christ known to others in thought, word, and deed and through our own lives. Lent brings us to the humble admission that we do not live the command to love God and neighbor to the fullest, and invites us to value the gifts of penitence and forgiveness. Holy Week values perseverance and hope even in the face of darkness, and Easter lifts up the unconquerable power of God that confirms our hope.

The diversity of the Church seasons reminds us that all these different values are important and that they are not in competition; we may be drawn to some more than others, and we may spend some time focusing on certain ones, but they all blend together to proclaim the Gospel.

# February

## Happy Birthday:

- 1 Joy Davis (9)
- 2 Alyssa Montgomery, Sarah Moon
- 4 Derek Bodestab, Jayce Bert (5)
- 5 Hugh Edwards
- 6 Angelina Pierce
- 7 Hannah Smith
- 8 Kevin Coakley, Anna Hassan
- 11 Jane Hand
- 12 David Ekstrom
- 13 Judith Culver, Anne Marcure
- 14 Landon Wilson
- 16 Clara-Ann Cazavelan
- 17 Henry Biegel
- 18 Carmine Duchaine, Mackenzie Ellis,  
Roy Stillman
- 19 Sophia Wilson
- 21 Madeline Harrington, Lane Schroder, Tucker  
Schroder
- 22 Robert Reynolds
- 23 Maureen Corcoran, Peter Croce, Diane For-  
syth
- 25 Nichole Colon, Douglas Demary
- 27 Veronica Fenton, Dawn Mathes
- 28 Colin Connors, Lois Symonds

## Happy Anniversary:

- 3 Danielle & Patrick Shaw
- 5 Constance & Henry Biegel
- 21 Lyla-Jean & Thomas Clapper

St. Stephen's Parish  
67 East Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201

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## Eclectic Book Club

Book Club traditionally skips January, so these are gentle reminders of selections for the coming months: February: *Red Wine and War* by Kladstrup brothers; Linda and Don will host; March: *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis; Connie and Susan will be our co-hosts. If you get caught up, please share your other reading for future choices.

Happy Valentine's Day!



The noonday meditation group is now meeting at the Berkshire Bank Community Room, corner of North and Depot Streets, at 12:15 each Tuesday. Everyone is welcome!