

The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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JUNE 2017

Reflections

Driving into church on Mother's Day, I noticed cars that had come down from the hill towns near me were covered with more than an inch of snow. And now, three days later, I'm writing this on an 85 degree day that screams "mid-summer". It's halfway through May, and I got my snow tires off today. Nevertheless, I'm keeping the flannel sheets on the bed for a while, yet.

It is such a busy season, with graduations and weddings, and transitions of all sorts surrounding us. Our own transition this month at church will be saying goodbye to our friends from Zion Lutheran Church, as they rejoice and return to their newly renovated and reconfigured worship space. We are happy for them, but missing them already! I think we had only worshipped together for two or three weeks before we first started to ask, "What will we do without them?"

This shared time has given us many gifts. New friends and relationships, certainly, but so many more blessings. We played host, but then stepped back and let Zion host us at Jazz Vespers or the German Dinner. We shared Mardi Gras and the Chili Cook-off, but we also stood together around the altar on Christmas Eve and Easter morning, celebrating together the miracles of God with us, and He is Risen!

Through this 6-month cycle of fellowship and worship, we have enjoyed the gifts of strong Lutheran hymn singing, and the steadiness of Zion's weekly church attendance. We were stunned by an Easter morning reminiscent of the 1950s, in which almost every chair was filled, and people seated in the balcony as well. It has swelled

our hearts as well, to have Tim's preaching and friendship in our midst.

And so we will send them "home," but maybe we don't have to say goodbye. Maybe the energy of our two congregations together will call us to share more going forward? Maybe we will work intentionally on sharing clergy and classes, space and food? Maybe this experiment in bridging differences has made us stronger and ready now to bridge even more going forward?

Thank you, Zion Lutheran Church. You have been wise teachers, fun companions, and good friends. We look forward to continuing to walk with you, in faith, side by side.

love,

Cricket +

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United Thank Offering Ingathering

The weekend of June 10-11 will mark the Ingathering of the United Thank offering. Were you thankful for a good grade? For a pie that turned out just right? For a victory for your team? For recovery from an illness or surgery? For a note or phone call from a long lost friend? For an unexpected kindness? You name it! This ministry dates back to 1889!

Our blue boxes or envelopes are the perfect spot for dropping in a coin or a bill to mark the occasion. There are so many things to be thankful for in this day and age and what a wonderful way to recognize that fact – large or small, momentous or nearly insignificant. All gifts realized from the Ingathering go to help someone else – “to expand the mission and ministry of the church to meet compelling human needs.”

Remember to bring your gift to Church on Saturday the 10th or Sunday the 11th. There is an envelope included with this issue of *The First Order*.

“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 blessings 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”

Altar Flowers

We have lost, for one reason or another, several ‘regulars’ on the Altar Flower schedule. Would you like to honor a special remembrance for a loved one? Or a special occasion? Please call Joan Kurber (499-3799) or email her at joankurber@gmail.com if you wish to choose a Sunday – you may also choose your flowers or the color of the arrangement. Thanks a lot!



All-Parish Meeting about the Elevator

**The Feast of the Holy Spirit
Sunday, June 4th, 11:30-12:30**

Please try to join us following the 10 am service on Pentecost, as we talk about the future options we have to resurrect/fix/replace our non-functional elevator.

We hope by late May we will have mailed every member of the parish more details about the options, so you can come to church informed.

The Vestry wants to HEAR FROM YOU!

Some special events going on in June:

SATURDAY, JUNE 10: Parish Work Day! Come join the property committee in working on various small projects around the church – landscaping, minor maintenance, getting the church ready for summer.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24: Berkshire LGBT Pride! The current game plan (as of the writing of this article, which is early May) is to have a special pride event bringing together lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (and straight friends!) from throughout the Berkshires to build community and to celebrate being who we are. The event will take place starting at 2:00 pm at the Common Park in Pittsfield. If you want to take leadership on St Stephen's presence at this event, please let me know at jfarnes@ststephenspittsfield.org.

Summer Services

This is an early ALERT: Beginning on the weekend of July 1 – 2 and continuing through Labor Day, there will be a service at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday in the chapel and only ONE SERVICE on Sunday at 9:00 a.m. This change of schedule offers a perfect opportunity to see again or meet anew those people who regularly attend a different service. And it either gives you a little more sleep time or an earlier release time to go home and work in your garden or do any of those wonderful things you can do in a Berkshire summer.



from Joseph

For some of us, the Season after Pentecost feels a little less... exciting. The Church calendar lets us breathe – Christmas 2016 and Epiphany feel like ancient history, Lent has been long finished, and the lengthy Easter season (which is about one seventh of the year!) finally reaches its conclusion on Pentecost. We get so used to looking forward to the next big holiday that when we get a stretch of time where we can rest and let our roots deepen in Christ, we might feel a little TOO relaxed.

Might I commend to you the calendar of saints to help spice up your summer spiritual life? You can find the readings for Sundays and saints' days for the Episcopal Church's calendar right here: <http://lectionarypage.net/>

It's incredibly useful! You can look at the readings for the Sundays and keep up with them (You'll notice that there are two tracks of Old Testament readings for each Sunday after Pentecost – one track is a more continuous reading of the Old Testament, the other is more thematically tied to the other readings), and you can also find readings and prayers for each saint's day, too! If you want to find ways to celebrate saints' days, you might also check out the saints resources of "Grow Christians" at www.growchristians.org/category/saints/

Almighty God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses: Grant that we, encouraged by the good example of your servants, may persevere in running the race that is set before us, until at last we may with him attain to your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

June

Happy Birthday:

- 1 Stephanie Mansfield
- 2 Joseph Carchedi, Selah Ekstrom (19)
- 4 Michele Kysor, Emma Lyman (13)
- 5 Nathan White (25!)
- 6 Amanda Brunelle (a milestone!)
- 7 Cricket Cooper
- 8 Brad Swanson, John Wilker
- 9 Priscilla Zuber
- 10 John Garinther, Kristena Turner
- 11 Audrina Maloney (10),
David Winchester
- 12 Dan Moon
- 13 Meilani Hamilton (6)
- 14 Taylor Eddy (20), Linda Engle
- 16 Susan Bedard, Jim Day (a mile-
stone!), Elizabeth Smith (20)
- 17 David Turner
- 18 Avery Hartman-Caesar (14)
- 19 Peter Champagne (6), Courtney
Hamilton, Alyson Warman
- 20 Emilia Cobb (4)
- 21 Emanuel Brown (15)
- 22 Daniel Lavery (6)
- 23 Pam Aldrich
- 28 George Decker
- 29 Marietta Cawse
- 30 Jaylen Hamilton (8)

Happy Anniversary:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 5 Patricia and George Decker (2009) | 21 Paula and Bill Morey (1969) |
| 6 Katie and Scott Haviland (2009) | Maria and Nathan Zuckerman (1970) |
| Sue and Thom Smith (1971) | 24 Martie and David Ekstrom (1961) |
| 8 Mary and David Turner (1972) | 25 Josie and Scott Ellis (1994) |
| 11 Beth-Anne Hamling and Stephanie Mansfield (2011) | Nancy and Bill Travis (1972) |
| 14 Wavelyn and Jeffrey Hine (1969) | 27 Kristen and Jim Currie (1993) |
| Debbie and Roy Stillman (1980) | 28 Jodi and Jay Roberts (2003) |
| 17 Veronica and Christopher Fenton (1989) | 30 Mary and Steve Wheelock (1972) |
| 20 Ann and Don Phipps (1964!) | |



Congratulations to our Spring 2017 Communion Preparation Class!

Participants in this spring's Communion preparation program were recognized at the 10:00 a.m. service on Sunday, May 14 – Mother's Day! Congratulations to the five children who completed the program and were honored on the 14th:

- Amaya Alger
- Colin Behnke
- Maya Kee
- Sophia LaMalfa
- Janous Slonksi

We'll be offering another Communion preparation class in either the fall of 2017 or spring 2018. Generally, the program is tailored for children around the age of seven or eight, but is open to older youngsters as well.

At St. Stephen's, children of any age are welcome to receive Eucharist without the requirement of formal education or ceremony. At the same time, many families have found that Communion preparation is a valuable opportunity to nurture their children's blossoming faith.



Food for Thought

"We never know how high we are
Till we are called to rise;
And then, if we are true to plan,
Our statures touch the skies."

-Emily Dickinson

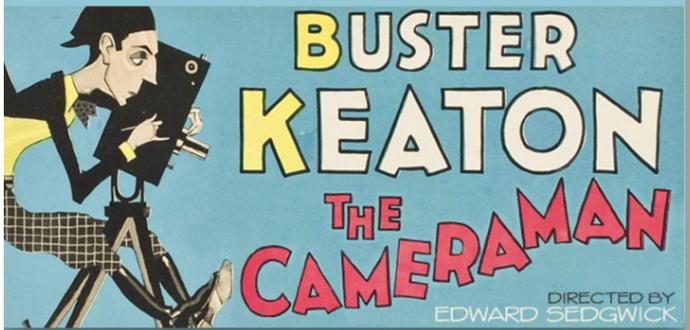
A Few Reminders

- Please write your name on the line provided on your offering envelopes (helpful to the counting crew)
- There is always a need for non-perishable goods in the basket by the Baptismal Font
- Summer is coming – please keep your pledge current, as the bills do not take the summer off
- Be generous in sharing personal items (shampoo, toothpaste, tooth brushes, etc.) in the basket provided

Alert

Please be sure to read the poster below: a silent film with organ accompaniment at St. Stephen's as part of Third Thursday. Should be great fun!

The Berkshire Chapter American Guild of Organists presents



BUSTER KEATON
THE CAMERAMAN
DIRECTED BY EDWARD SEDGWICK



Silent film with live organ accompaniment by world-renowned concert organist PETER KRASINSKI

THURSDAY JUNE 15TH, 2017
8:00PM

*This performance is presented free of charge thanks to our generous sponsors. A freewill donation will be gladly accepted at the door to support the programming of the Berkshire Chapter AGO.

Part of the 3rd Thursdays Celebration in Downtown Pittsfield.

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

For more information visit www.berkshireago.org
Email sabaileymusic@gmail.com or call (413)



Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn

Craig Reynolds, Church School Director

It is with decidedly mixed emotions that I pen my final article as Church School Director. The plan entering the school year was for 2016-2017 to be a bridge to something new. The contours of that “something new” continue to take shape.

But we know that next year, like this year (and in fact every year at St. Stephen’s) will be intently focused on the spiritual development of our children. And we also know that we’ll be working to make more effective use of our tremendous volunteers. Stay tuned for more details as they emerge.

One of the things I’m personally looking forward to next year is returning to teaching on Sunday mornings. It has been an honor and privilege to support a truly remarkable group of volunteers this past school year. But I also missed working directly with the kids in the classroom.

Without a doubt, the biggest reward of teaching is spending time with our children. They’re funny, smart, caring, thoughtful, imaginative, energetic, creative, and just all around delightful. But another surprising (at least to me) benefit of teaching Sunday school is how much I learn in the process. Every week the kids themselves teach me so many things. They ask great questions (How can God listen to everyone’s prayers at the same time?) and provide keen observations. Children also offer a fresh perspective. Being with kids reminds adults of what a gift it is to discover something truly new – or to look at something familiar with new eyes. And children often experience awe and wonder with such ease – could this be what Jesus had in mind when he talked about receiving the kingdom of God like a child?

But I don’t mean to over-sentimentalize childhood either. Kids have very real concerns, very real fears. Helping them name these issues within the context of a loving personal relationship with God reminds

me what a powerful antidote an active faith can be to anxiety, worry, and dread.

Here’s another thing that surprised me about teaching Sunday school: how much I would learn from simply preparing lessons. It’s not that the stories themselves are unfamiliar to me, or even the concepts underneath the stories. But trying to capture the essence of these lessons in ways that kids could understand pushed me to examine my beliefs at a surprisingly deep level.

Nobel winning physicist Richard Feynman created a formula for learning based on this same dynamic. Dubbed, appropriately enough, the Feynman Technique, it asserts that to teach something to an eight year old, you’ve got to understand the concept at its core. When teaching to kids at this age, you can’t rely on their past knowledge of a topic. You can’t hide behind fancy words. You have to identify the crux of an idea and then express it in simple but meaningful terms. In other words, preparing to teach is often a powerful exercise in learning. Fortunately, we have wonderful tools to help teachers with this process, including robust curricula, wonderful teaching supplements, supportive veteran colleagues, and open and encouraging clergy.

In the end, however, it’s my deep sense that teaching Sunday school is ultimately a ministry of presence, not knowledge. To quote Maya Angelou, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

I invite you to consider teaching or assisting in our church school program next year. Our aim is to limit your classroom commitment to just once a month. You’ll be working with a wonderful, dedicated, supportive, creative team. And then there are the kids! Join us.

St. Stephen's Parish

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Change Service Requested

Eclectic Book Club

We had a good gathering and scrumptious food at the May Meeting – and bid farewell to Linda and Don Walsh, as they are moving to Pennsylvania – but they have promised to plan any return trips for the first Friday of the month so that they may join the book club meeting! We wish them Godspeed!

Our book for this month is *Crossing to Safety* by Wallace Stegner. And this is our final meeting until the fall, when we gather again to discuss books we have read over the summer, good or bad! We will meet on Friday, June 2nd at 6:00 p.m. for our usual glass of wine or juice and delicious nibblies, followed by potluck and discussion. Our co-hostesses are Charlene and Joan. Please join us.

