

The Witness

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Troy, MI 48098



December 2019

A Message from the Pulpit

Dear St. Stephen's Family,

It has started already!!! Christmas music is playing on the radio and Black Friday ads are taking over our normally annoying TV commercials. And by the time the Witness is published, we will be well into the "holiday" shopping ads, not only on TV but also stuffed into our mailboxes and newspapers. Isn't it just a wee bit early for all of this? This exuberance is our call that something great and wonderful (Christmas) is on the horizon and we need to get ready!



The church, too, is getting ready. Advent, our season of preparation and anticipation, begins on December 1. Advent is a quiet time...in contrast to our secular season of "pre-Christmas"...a time for contemplating the birth of our savior and discovering what that personally means for each of us. During Advent we focus on faith, love, joy, and peace and we pray that these themes will find a place in our hearts so that we may graciously enjoy the blessings of Christmas.

And, of course, following our celebration of the birth of our savior, the church welcomes the season of Epiphany...a season of a new beginning...the earthly life of Jesus. It's a season filled with hope for the future.

There is no question that this is a busy time of the year. Shopping, wrapping gifts, cooking

Cont. on Page 6

Senior Warden Message

Happy Advent Family!! CHRISTmas Time is Here -

As we enter into this most hallowed season, I cannot help but consider how blessed we are to have each other! I look around the church from my pew on Sunday mornings and see each of you in "your" pew just as family sits around the dining room table at home and I find comfort, I see our youth so comfortably engaging in their various Sunday routines and I find joy! I come to Jesus's table with you and find renewal.



Recently I received a Verse of the Day that made me think of our parish family, "So then, let us aim for HARMONY in the church and try to build each other up" Romans 14:19. Is this not the crux of who we are? Why we come here? Why God has put us together? You see, St. Stephen's is more than just a place of worship – more than just an obligation – St. Stephen's is our home. The place we gather as a family to comfort, encourage, laugh, cry, celebrate, eat, drink, learn, teach, and most important LOVE one and another – Romans 14:19.

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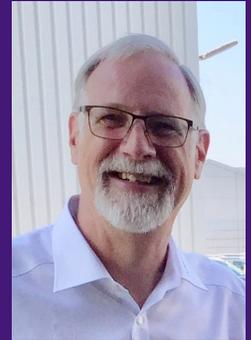
Christmas Walk: Dec. 7th
Advent By Candlelight: Dec. 9th
Twelfth Night Dinner: Jan. 4th



The Anticipation

When I was a kid my family made a much bigger deal out of Advent than we do today. We had an Advent wreath in the center of the dining room table – and not a single sign of a Christmas decoration till after the fourth Sunday of Advent. Each Sunday we would light one more candle while my father said a special prayer for that Sunday. Of course for us kids, we saw each additional candle lit as one week closer to Christmas. Believe me, the feelings of anticipation and longing were not lost on us!

I grew up in the middle of a family of ten and we could stir each other up into a frenzy of anticipation! Besides the Advent wreath, there were other signs that the big day was getting closer. My parents would be talking about when to get a tree, Mom would start digging out the Christmas decorations and then the weekly shopping trip would bring “exotic” and wonderful treats into the house to be shared in our Christmas Feast – talk about anticipation! We didn’t see our Grandparents very often and a visit from them was always a special time, especially at Christmas. When my Dad would announce at the dinner table that he had spoken to my grandparents that day and they were going to be with us on Christmas, the reaction around the room was something like Bob Cratchit’s wife bringing the Christmas pudding to the table.



We had a nativity set that was one of the first signs of Christmas to be displayed in a place of honor in our living room. When I got old enough to be trusted with the figurines, I was given the task to put the scene together. I always felt honored to be entrusted with this task. I would form hills from crumpled shopping bags, blue construction paper made the midnight sky and a strategically placed Christmas bulb, the light from the Star. The result was a diorama of the first Christmas – almost. The baby Jesus was not put in the manger. I still love to set up our Nativity set in much the same way.

The anticipation peaked about 6:00 am on Christmas morning. Someone would awake with an urgent need to use the bathroom. Our only bathroom was downstairs just off the living room where the wonders of a child’s Christmas awaited us. The bathroom goer returned upstairs to report their findings. Soon all were awake. Now the rule in our house was the no one was allowed downstairs till we all came downstairs together. So when my parents would hear us, they would prepare the room. The tree was lit and we were called to come down. The look on my parents faces, as they watched our reaction to the revealed bounty before us was something I’ll never forget. Amid the “oohs” and “aahs,” we were reminded to look at the nativity and see that the baby Jesus had arrived.



I think this has been a year of anticipation and even a little anxiety at St. Stephen’s. We wait with eager anticipation the calling of our next spiritual leader. But I think we are also a bit anxious about our future. What will the next chapter of our faith together at St. Stephen’s look like? What are we being called to do as missionaries of Christ? How will we ...? And so on.

Grasp onto that childhood anticipation and leave the adult anxiety aside. Jesus’ birthday is coming! Embrace that same feeling of awe we experienced as a child as the bounty of Christ’s love is revealed to us. Feel it again as we await the miracle of the birth of Jesus our Savior in a stable in Bethlehem – and believe that HE came to show us the way. HE understands our feelings of anticipation but not our anxiety. Merry Christmas to all!

Peace,
Dave Stein
Jr. Warden

Buildings & Grounds Update

As usual, buildings and ground had another successful year for completing church projects and getting our building back up to snuff. The Clydesdales were busy as usual. After a productive spring cleanup, we removed the abandoned lawn mower behind the shed (took 3 weeks getting it into the dumpster).

After the backflow testing was completed, two new water valves were installed for the outside water system; summer preventative maintenance were performed on all the furnaces. We installed a new heat vent for the Narthex. Two new sprinkler control boxes were installed, which made Jackie Ingersoll happy to keep her flowers watered. We also installed four vents in the shed to improve ventilation.

We installed a secure mail box to prevent future mail theft. The dead tree in front of the school was cut down and headed off to never-never land. The City of Troy Fire Marshall inspected and reported on our building. The proper amount of people for the parish hall is now posted on the wall (mainly for rentals). We repaired the faucet in the handicap bathroom. The outside sprinkler system was properly winterized for the season. (Another price bargain). We replaced the rooftop furnace motor for the Gathering Area. We painted the church sign out front and the shield on the building. And I must say, it turned out extremely well.

Our two large summer jobs involved the parking lot and Memorial Garden. The vendor we hired to sealcoat, crack fill, and stripe the parking lot did a magnificent job. We watched and observed the job to make sure there was no skimping on material used. Our faith in humanity was briefly restored for a day or two.

We replaced the Memorial Garden furnace and A/C unit. Another deal by the Clydesdales. The water heater was moved and brought up to city code. We cleaned out the furnace room and expect it to stay cleaned since it will no longer be used for storage.

And finally, the roof leaks will be fixed as soon as



the weather cooperates and melts the snow off the roof. The roofer has done an excellent job so far, as we are watching his every move. We have made excellent progress this year on getting our building back in shape.

Our list is finally getting smaller and under control for next season. Until then.

Dave Eldon & Pat Wojas—The Clydesdales
Justin Wojas—Chairman of the Board.



Judy Lazzaro

Judy Lazzaro and her family joined St. Stephens in 1994. Judy was Catholic, her husband Jim was Presbyterian, and St. Stephens was a compromise for both of them. Judy called the church and heard Jonathan Sams' recording. He was warm, open and welcoming. Later, they found out that Phil and Linda Pierce, their next door neighbors, were members at the church.

Judy has been a Sunday school teacher, served on the Communication and Welcome committees and the Vestry, and on Outreach. She has organized the Red Cross blood drives at the church, worked at SOS, and collected Kroger donations for years.



She is involved with Samaritas, a refugee organization, which provides many opportunities that fit her schedule. Judy's grandparents were immigrants and she wanted to work with refugees. She has worked with refugees from Syria and Iraq, driving them to English as a Second Language classes. With the number of refugees decreasing, Judy's work decreased.

Earlier this year, Judy has been involved, with several other volunteers through Samaritas, with a family from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Judy drives family members, only one of whom speaks English. This is outside her comfort zone, but she is honored to do the work. Judy's work demonstrates her Christian beliefs in action.

A priest dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy who's dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans.

Saint Peter addresses this cool guy, 'Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?'

The guy replies, 'I'm Bruce, retired airline pilot from Toronto.'

Saint Peter consults his list. He smiles and says to the pilot, 'Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom.' The pilot goes into Heaven with his robe and

Senior Warden Message (cont)

God has given us many blessings this past year and as we all make preparations for Christ-mas and as the Holy Spirit flows around us let us remember to count our blessings and share the bounty God has given us not only with each other but with those around us in our daily walk in life and most importantly those less fortunate. St. Stephen's is a valued staple to the surrounding communities as we remarkably, unselfishly, joyfully, and thoughtfully care for those in need and I love you all for that!

As we all work to discern the future direction our parish family will take, let us remember who we are and what a difference we make not only in our own lives but in the lives of those in the local communities. I take comfort in the knowledge God brought us together and am constantly astounded with the generosity and love we share in this hallowed place.

This is the season for giving and as we carefully select gifts for our children or parents, or siblings, or even friends let us not forget to select the gift we can share with one and other and our parish home so we can continue to be a thriving staple to local communities and each other. God gave the world the greatest gift of all ... JESUS. As we prepare to celebrate his birth I am overwhelmed with the knowledge that God gave me you to celebrate this hallowed moment and I am truly thankful.

With much Love,

Scott

staff.

Next, it's the priest's turn. He stands erect and booms out, 'I am Father John, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last 43 years.'

Saint Peter consults his list. He says to the priest, 'Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom.'

'Just a minute,' says the good father. 'That man was a pilot and he gets a silken robe and golden staff and I get only cotton and wood. How can this be?'

'Up here - we go by results,' says Saint Peter. 'When you preached - people slept. When he flew, people prayed.'

We ask Your Prayers for the Following People

Jennifer Penokie	Emy Pheil
Jenny Dolan	Kenny Nelson
Linda Dolan	Bob Mayer
Linda Lou Vance	Emily Thompson
Shawna Collins	Ron Lee
Harold Ford	John Thunder
Mary Bandsuch	Marilyn Elwarner
Greg Thompson	Kay Smith
Zoey Rose	Michelle Walter
Kay Novak	Pattee Saylor
Mayme Oliver	Betty Feighner
Sue Sprague	Ken Krato
Rick Lowery	Terry Flynn
Theresa Martin	Meghann Armstrong
Bob White	Joe Havachek
Colin Davis	Michelle Tobin
Robin Cameron	Ron Goetzke
Deputy David Hack	Lynn Davidson
Amy Ambry	Orrin Nieberger
Carol Mikols	Joyce Vance
Dorothy Langridge	

These Parish Families

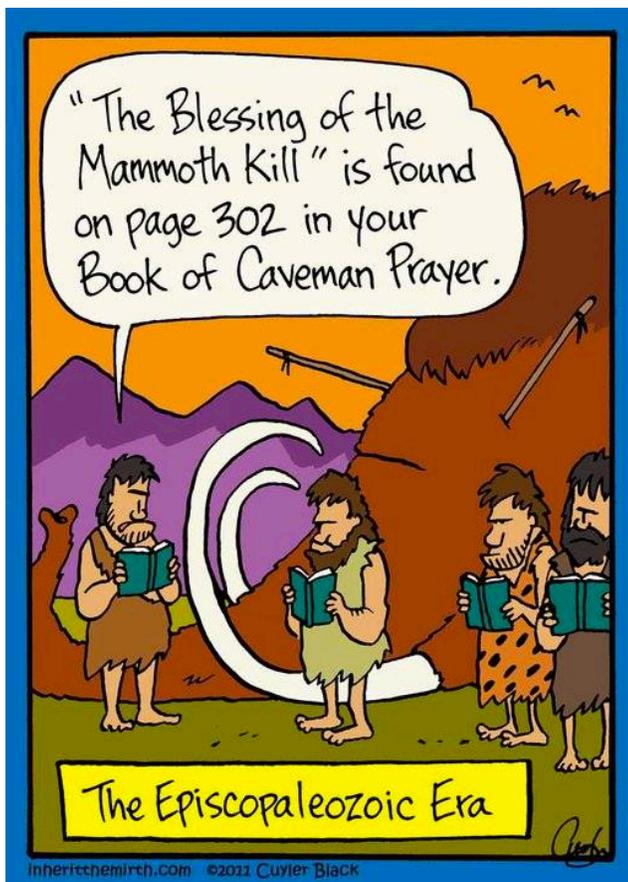
12/ 1 Sharon Eck
Dave & Jan Eldon

12/8 Marilyn Elwarner
Alexa & Erinma Ezeugwa, Kamsi & Kachi

12/15 Sarah & Brian Fanning
Margaret Fielder

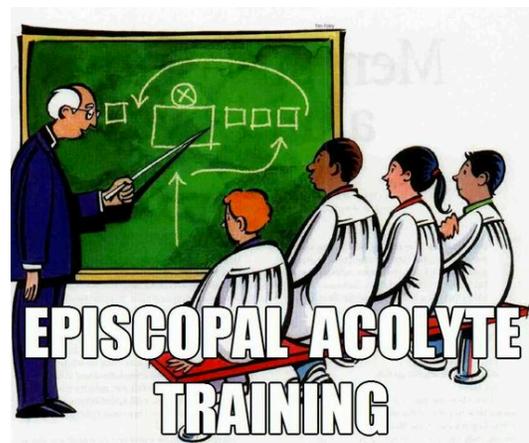
12/22 Nancy Fischer
Steve & Corinne Fragnoli, Brent & Garret

12/29 Jane Frank
Kendra Redmer, Alexia & Blake Frydrych



Those in the Armed Services

Nathan Cremeans—grandson of Barb Whitaker
Ian L’Hommedieu— godson of Linda Pierce
Stephen L’Hommedieu—godson of Linda Pierce
Kyle Rogowski—nephew of Ken & Kris Fuhr
Jim Sands—grandson of Sharon Sands
Brendon Church —Grandsons of Ed and Elaine Church, Nephew of Amy Church
Gordon Bagley - friend of Vida family
Capt. John Zimmer - friend of Vida family
Capt. Scott Wright - friend of Ann Williams



Birthdays

Anniversaries

Name	Date
Kris Fuhr	3
Steve Brandon	6
Jerred Rich	6
Joan Morgan	7
Sudhakar Samuel	11
Miranda Spates	11
Indira Samuel	12
Kristin Giles	13
Mardi Maxwell	14
Penelope Baker	19
Anna Dorsey	22
Linda Pierce	23
Rick Spina	23
Anna Hiemstra	25
Michael Szott	25
Sharon Miller	26
Cathryn Hardy	31

Name	Date
James & Ruth Luzod	4
Pat & Inge Wojas	15
Pat & Elizabeth Roberts	18
Mike & jane Wellman	26
Dennis & Mary Bishop	27



Grant them your blessing, O God, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep their promises and vows; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Cont. from Page 1

and baking, cleaning, traveling, entertaining... where will we find the time to get it all done? Amazingly, we do! And when it's all over, we sit exhausted and proclaim that next year will be different. But, usually, it isn't!

But we do need to understand that Christmas and its preparations are not necessarily a joyous time for everyone. There are many people around us who do not or cannot share the enthusiasm of the holiday and find it to be an emotionally difficult time. Whether it's someone who is alone, or who has had a significant change in life and can no longer celebrate the happy traditions, or who is separated by distance or family or illness... Christmas can be different for them. I urge you to take time out from your busy holiday preparations to seek out someone who may not be "in the spirit" and make them feel loved and special.

As we venture into the new year, let's keep in mind the themes of Advent as we explore the adventure that lies ahead for St. Stephens. We have a lot of work to do to make us strong again and "to do the work that God has given us to do." We work well together and, with God's leading hand, we can accomplish wondrous things!

May the blessings of the Miracle of Christmas and faith in a renewed spirit dwell within all of us!

Mother Sharon



St. Stephen's Youth Happenings

Christmas Pageant

Once again the Christmas pageant will be performed by our youth during the 5 o'clock Christmas Eve service. There will be two youth narrating the Christmas story and the other participants will enter the scene at the appropriate time. They will not need to learn any lines. We need lots of angels, shepherds, an innkeeper and of course Mary and Joseph. After we have determined the parts, we will have the kids try on costumes during fellowship hour and then we will have one practice closer to Christmas Eve. All youth are invited to participate. The more the merrier. There is a signup sheet in the gathering area. If your child is interested in participating, please sign him or her up. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Children's Choir

Recently the children's choir, under Sue Gore's direction, sang during the 10 o'clock service honoring our veterans. They did a wonderful job and it was evident that they really enjoy singing. Sue regularly rehearses with the kids during Sunday school/sermon every week. Their next performance will be at the 5 o'clock Christmas Eve service. Children from the elementary classes and the J2A class (pre-school through 9th grade) make up the choir. A big thank you to Sue Gore for this wonderful ministry.

Jackie Ingersoll

248-703-3476 jackie@doningersoll.com



YAC Fall Outing

On Saturday, November 16th, the YAC youth group went to the Xtreme Escape Room. Everyone had a lot of fun together solving puzzles and figuring out how to escape. The room itself was very cool and different from any other escape room I've ever done; from the hidden passageways to the secret tiny doors that hid clues on how to get out. The theme was Mardi-Gras so the room decorations were very cool. Working together, our group managed to figure out all of the puzzles and escaped with only seconds to spare. Everyone in the group agreed that the escape room was one of the most fun things we've done together. We would like to thank everyone in the parish for supporting us and allowing us to go on fun outings like this one.



Gillian Grubb

August / September St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 5500 N. Adams Rd., Troy, MI 48098

A View from the Pew

I've taught Sunday School for more years than I can count, and continue to do so. As a teacher, we always stressed how important it was for the parents to bring their children to church on a consistent basis.

As kids progressed through our Sunday school program to J2A and then YAC, an interesting trend occurred. After the children graduated from high school their parents would soon stop attending church. In reality it turns out the parents didn't bring their children to church, the children brought their parents. For many of these parents, once the children were off to college, they seemed to check out and no longer felt the need for a church community. I don't know the real reason for their departure, I'm sure each family has different reasons. This trend happened regardless of who the rector happened to be at the time.



We talk about Family a lot when we discuss the St. Stephens community. For me, St. Stephens has been very much like a family. And because of that connection I can't imagine attending any other church. Which brings me to a question I struggle to understand. The folks that leave St. Stephens after their children have graduated, or after a rector has departed. Did they not have the same "Family" connection with the St. Stephens community as my family has? I'm sure the reasons are different for everyone who has left. Maybe they didn't come for the "Family" connection, maybe they wanted their children to have a Christian education, and when that happened, the box was checked.

The irony for me, I started attending St. Stephens 25+ years ago. I was searching for a church where Kendra could attend a Sunday School. After visiting several Catholic churches, I tried St. Stephens after Kendra had attended a Vacation Bible School here with her friend. I just forgot to leave when she graduated. We were having too much fun worshipping and growing alongside our "Family".

Yours in Christ,
Rob Redmer

Crafting Kindness



Winter Challenge

We are bit short on scarves, hats, and gloves for older children and adults. Therefore, I am challenging knitters, Crocheters, sewers, and fleece cutters to create one item which will warm someone in need this winter.

I remember hearing about a woman who slept during the winter just outside a church door. Sunday morning she was able to attend church and eat a healthy breakfast. When given a warm scarf after her meal, she was awed by the gift given her by someone not even knowing her, who cared enough to create this gift of warmth.

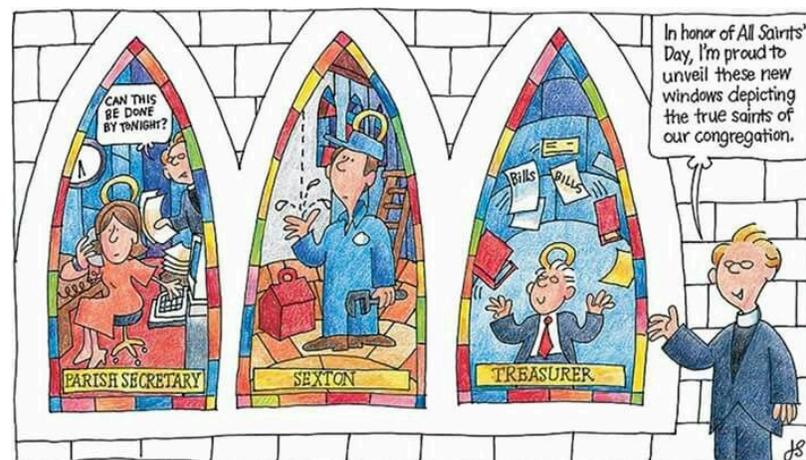
Please consider crafting a gift for someone in need of a crafter willing to care for someone unknown to you.



There is lots of yarn, fleece, and fabric along with patterns waiting for you. Lets make those in need keep warm this coming winter.

LET THE CHALLENGE BEGIN

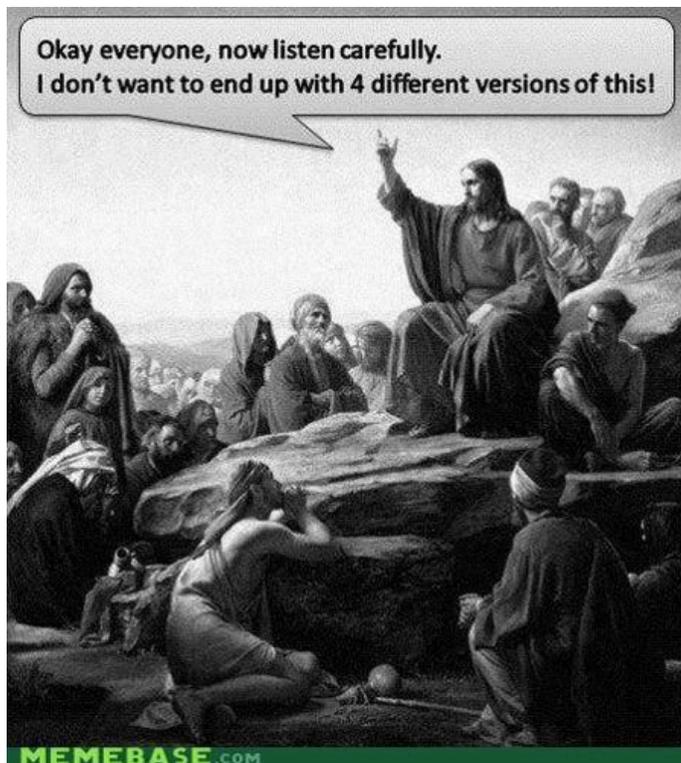
Questions – 248-373-9392, or
barbwhitaker137@gmail.com



Weekly Services

Sat. 4:30 p.m.	Informal Service
Sun., 8 a.m.	Early Eucharist
Sun, 10 a.m.	Eucharist with Music

If you have e-mail, you can receive our newsletter faster! Please send your e-mail address to office@ststephenstroy.org. Thank you in advance for helping us with our continued effort to....**THINK GREEN!**



Who's Missing?

If someone you usually see in church hasn't been there in a while, please give them a call.

How to Contact Us

Church Office Tel: 248-641-8080

Fax: 248-641-8067

Ami O'Neill, Parish Administrator
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Scott Armstrong, Senior Warden
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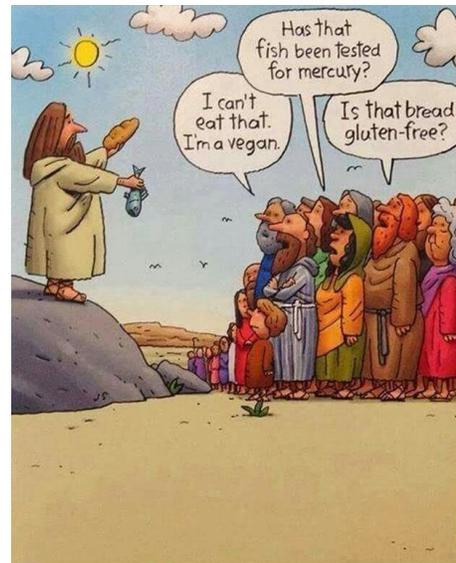
Sue Gore—Choir and Music Director
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Phil Pierce, Treasurer
treasurer@ststephenstroy.org

Pam Bonkowski—Assistant to the Treasurer
bookkeeper@ststephenstroy.org

The Witness: Rob Redmer and Ami O'Neill
witness@ststephenstroy.org
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E-mail, bring to church or fax your articles to
248-641-8067



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Troy, MI 48098

Please remember St. Stephen's in your will.

