



# The WITNESS

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

January 2017

Mother Susan's  
Musings

## Skipping Christmas



Life is all about change and growth. People come and people go. Life changes, our jobs change, our families change, our children grow, but what always remains the same is that all of us are part of God's family.

Here is where we journey together and know one another. Here is where we laugh and cry together. Here is where we celebrate and mourn together. *Here is where we are known by the One who "created us and through whom we have our being."* Here is where we are always welcome.



Chinese symbol for love

It is the title of a comic novel by John Grisham (yes, that John Grisham); it's the basis of the movie "Christmas with the Kranks" starring Birmingham's own Tim Allen. "Skipping Christmas" is also what I effectively did when a large gallstone blocked my bile duct and put me into the hospital on Dec. 22! I have never missed spending Christmas Eve in a church *somewhere*, until this one – and it puts a new "weird" into my 2016.

The rootedness of Christmas in going-to-church is not unusual, especially among you who are reading this article. About 250 of you made it here without me. I'm so glad that Fr. Juan Perez was one of those! He did a fantastic last-minute job, with much help from our lay ministers. I will be forever grateful. And for you who may have missed Christmas church because of infirmity, illness, travel, work, military service or non-observing relatives, I have new appreciation of the spiritual disjointedness that results!

In old-fashioned church lingo, Christmas is called "The Feast of the Incarnation." Incarnation means "enfleshment." As the Christmas morning collect phrases it: "Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him..." My Christmas hospitalization brought home just what a risky move that was.

Human flesh is easily injured. Internal organs are delicately balanced, and tremendous pain and inconvenience result when they stop working properly. What was God thinking, sending his own, divine self into the world as a human being? "God so loved the world..."

John 3:16 famously begins. If Love entails journeying as close to your beloved as possible, the best (only?) method for God was Incarnation.

So the next time you are tempted to curse that infirmity of our flesh, remember that God held it so dear as to risk taking it on: arriving as a tiny infant in a hostile age; to a poor couple in a strange town; before hospitals, antibiotics or surgeons.

Christmas festivities can be skipped, Christmas church can be missed, but the miraculous love of God still reigns. Incarnation blesses the excitement of wrapping (and unwrapping) packages, baking (and eating) cookies, smelling the pine sap of the tree as you decorate – and if you're like me, getting those itchy, allergic bumps from touching it. Enfleshment. God loved it all, and loves it still.

Wherever you spent Christmas and find yourself now, may the joy of Jesus' Incarnation lift your mood and spirit into the new year ahead. I look forward to sharing it all with you.

Faithfully yours,





# Around the Parish

## January Lectionary

### Jan 1 — Holy Name

Numb 6: 22-27  
Psalm 8  
Gal 4: 4-7  
Luke 2: 15-21

### Jan 8—Epiphany 1

Isa 42: 1-9  
Psalm 29  
Acts 10: 34-43  
Matt 3: 13-17

### Jan 15—Epiphany 2

Isa 49:1-7  
Psalm 40: 1-12  
1 Cor 1: 1-9  
John 11: 29-42

### Jan 22: Epiphany 3

Isaiah 9: 1-4  
Psalm 27: 1, 5-13  
1 Cor 1: 10-18  
Matt: 4: 12-23

### Jan 29—Epiphany 4

Micah 6: 1-8  
Psalm 15  
1 Cor 1: 18-31  
Matt 5: 1-12



## Seeking the Sacred

**P**lan on a Lenten experience at the Detroit Institute of Arts on **Saturday, March 11.**

The complimentary docent-guided tour of sacred art appropriate for the Lenten season begins at 10:30 a.m. Enjoy lunch at the Cafe DIA at your own expense following the tour.

Join your fellow parishioners in a car pool from St. Stephen's at 9:45 a.m. Note that there is a \$7.00 charge per car at the parking lot located behind the museum. Sign up in the gathering area for a time of appreciation and wonder during our Lenten journey.

Contact Kathryn Hassel or Norma Ross for more information.

*Norma Ross*  
rossmail@comcast.net



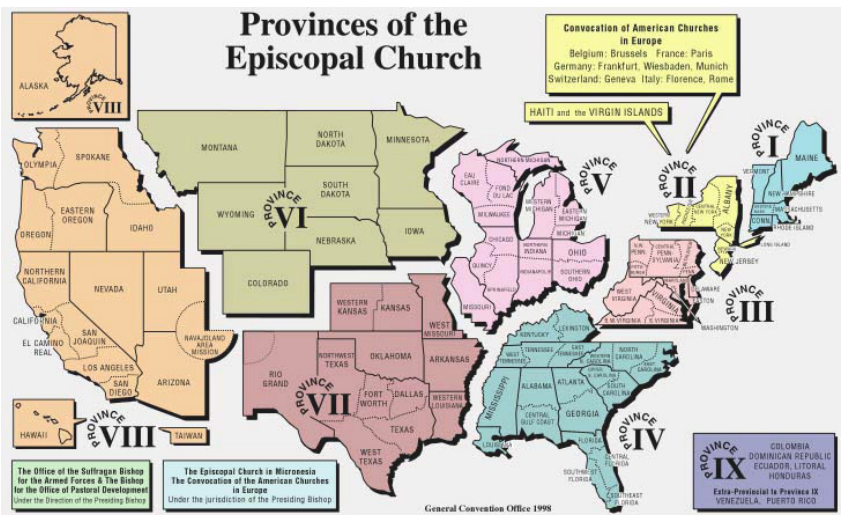
## Seeking the Sacred

**A**re you new to St. Stephen's, realizing there are mysterious terms Episcopalians all seem to know, but you don't? Have you been with us for a while but never asked? Hey, what does the word "Episcopal" mean anyway? And why do some people bow or make the sign of the cross during worship? Why do we pray for churches in the Dominican Republic and an Archbishop in England? How do I get confirmed into the big family called Anglicans?

These and many other questions will be answered for you during an "Inquirers Class" coming in February. Join our Rector at 11:30 am in the Bishop Emrich Library, Sundays, February 12th and 19th. We'll provide food and additional childcare if you need it and be done at 12:30.

The series concludes with our parish Mardi Gras Pancake Brunch on February 25th, when we will celebrate all thing St. Stephen's enjoys most - fellowship, good food and opportunities for service.

RSVP in the gathering area or to Mother Susan.



Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.  
Dalai Lama

# Church Notes

## New Photo Directory

This spring we will be updating our photo directory. The last time we did this was 2013 so we are definitely due for the update. As in the past, there is no cost for the photography session or for the directories and you will have the option of purchasing photos for your personal use if you wish.

The dates set for photography appointments are:

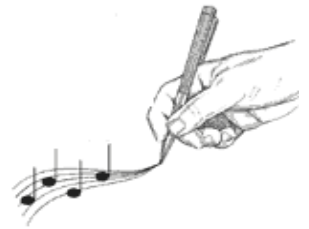
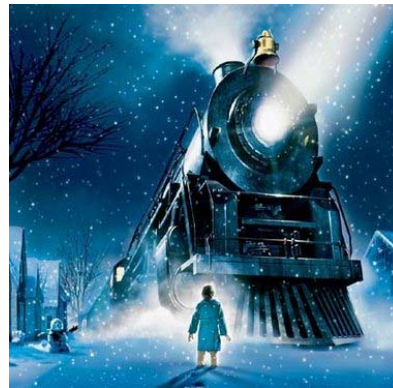
- Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 11:30am to 5:00pm
- Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup> from 2:00pm to 8:30pm
- Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 2:00pm to 8:30pm

Much more information will be coming your way in the spring as those dates draw nearer.

## All Aboard the Polar Express

Saturday, February 4, join us for our first, "Family first Saturday" special event! After the 4:30 "come as you are" service, kid-friendly dinner fare will be served at 5:30 pm in the Parish Hall for movie-goers of all ages. Did you know that the train in "The Polar Express" movie is based on a real life steam engine locomotive right here in Michigan?


Our "Conductors", Bob and Kathy Thatcher will tell us about how the real train became the animated Polar Express. The Thatcher's volunteer with the Steam Railroading Institute, the train's caretakers. Enjoy popcorn and a hot cocoa break during the movie. Nursery Care is available. Sign up in the gathering area!



## One Voice


Please join a remarkable group—the St. Stephen's Choir.

As we look for a permanent replacement for our choir director, come on Thursdays and join the singing!




### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

January 16, 2017



Presented by

- Troy School District
- The City of Troy
- TSD Superintendent Student Advisory Board




**Come Join Us**  
as we honor the life and legacy of  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Following in his mission to make our world a better place, we will spend the morning giving back by:

- **Assembling CARE PACKAGES** for local members of the military now serving in the Middle East.
- **Packing FOOD BOXES** and bags for local families in need.
- **Making no-sew FLEECE BLANKETS** for children, veterans and cancer patients at Beaumont Hospital.
- **DONATING BLOOD** at a Red Cross Blood Drive (will be open until 3 pm)

*"Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness" -Dr. Martin Luther King*



**WHERE:**  
All projects will take place at  
Troy Athens High School  
4333 John R Road  
Troy, Michigan 48085

**WHEN:**  
Monday, January 16, 2017  
8:30 – 11 am  
Free breakfast is provided

**WHO:**  
ALL are welcome—projects suitable for children and adults!

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, there is no charge for this event. Students who bring forms to sign will receive service hours if needed for NHS, etc.



Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world  
Desmond Tutu

# From the Back Pew

It's January

Probably not my favorite month. The weather has a lot to do with it. Little sun, long nights, cold. And maybe the name has something to do with it too. January is named after the Roman god Janus who had two faces, one looking forward and the other back. That seems very apropos as we pass through the door from one year to the next.

My looking back face sees time flying by. Body parts changing in ways I didn't request; things don't stick in my brain or pop out of it like they used to; things I wanted to get done didn't. And doors keep closing: I'll never be an Olympic gymnast.

Things are never as good as they could have been. I can think of many things I should have done but didn't, and things I could have done better [almost everything]. One good thing about getting older, there were fewer things I did that I shouldn't have done, but still a few. We are human, so improvement has always been possible.

"Ay, there's the rub!" [said Hamlet]. Each new year brings talk of resolutions to do better. Things to fix and new paths to explore. Time is getting short: for everyone, not just the seniors.

Being retired, I have more time, but far less energy—"Ay, there's another rub!" [says me--often]. I often get down on myself, more so for things left undone. And in this mood, it is easy to focus on the imperfections in the world, the neighborhood, at home, and even at church.

But God works in mysterious ways. Today while procrastinating because I didn't know what to write about for this article, this story popped out of Facebook:



One Sunday morning in a small church, a senior Deacon led the opening prayer: "Lord, I hate buttermilk. Lord, I hate lard. Lord, I ain't crazy about plain flour either. But after you mix 'em all up and bake 'em in a hot oven, I just love bisquits.

"Lord, help us to realize when life gets hard, when things come up that we don't like, whenever we don't understand what You are doing, that we need to wait and see what you are making. After you are through mixing and baking, it will probably be even better than bisquits. Amen."

I found the sentiment in the prayer comforting, but I feel a bit more needs to be said. Yes, God's hands are busily at work in the world. I have felt them in my life, and seen them at work in others. We have been truly blessed as individuals and as a congregation, and there is no reason to think that will change now.

But, that doesn't mean we can just sit back and wait for the bisquits to come out of the oven. That isn't how God seems to work. I can't help thinking that God wants us to keep our faith in Him, in ourselves and in each other.

Don't let January or the past get you down. Focus on the future and the potential we have left in us individually and collectively. We are the ingredients God will be using no matter what the recipe. And although we are not perfect, let's resolve to give what we can of ourselves for God to work with.

*Don Ingersoll*

Senior Warden

one World



Christmas is the spirit of giving without a thought of getting. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing the true values.

Thomas S. Monson

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

Margaret Mead

# Inside the Parish Walls

## Looking Ahead

Kids, youth, young adults, adults, seniors, and families – if you fit into one or more of these groups then there are activities and events to take note of this winter. Sunday school revs up again, there are outings and lock-ins for youth, outreach events, adult Bible studies and crafting, a family movie night and trip to the DIA, all on the calendar for the winter. In addition, our various ministries are meeting to plan programs, not just for now but for the vital year ahead.

January is a time that many of us look ahead and plan for the new year. Along with dietary changes, exercise goals, financial considerations, and other important self-assessment stuff, as Christians we also look at how we are doing in our spiritual formation. The timing is good for this because we enjoyed such wonderfully uplifting worship, outreach, and fellowship throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Many years ago I was introduced to the idea that Christian formation is like a three-legged stool, supported by piety (worship, prayer, contemplation), study, and action (mission, outreach, evangelism.) Making all three of these a part of one's life fosters strong faith and a strong faith community. At St. Stephen's we have many opportunities to

help strengthen us in each of these areas and we also have a strong parish community that plans and presents programs and activities to help us on our faith journey.

This month, in addition to the activities and events indicated above, most of our committees meet and January concludes with the Parish Annual Meeting. It's the perfect time to prayerfully consider how we can be effective in better fostering our own Christian formation, that of our parish community, and that of our neighbors. So let's all check the parish calendar, pray about our particular calling to serve Christ and the community, and plan to participate in our various ministries' planning and programs. If we do that, good things will continue to happen at St. Stephen's in 2017 and beyond.



## There's Always Room for Thanks

On behalf of the Hospitality Committee, I wanted to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of our weekly fellowship coffee hours after the 10am service. Whether you are a baker that periodically slips cakes or cookies into the freezer, the sweet individual that regularly brings in a box of doughnut holes to share, a person that takes time out to help set up/clean up or an individual or family that signs up to host a specific fellowship hour, we certainly couldn't do it without each and every one of our Hospitality Helpers!

Please take a moment the next time you're in church to sign up on the host sheet - it's conveniently located on the kitchen door. Happy New Year!

Warmest regards,  
Kathy DeCiantis  
Hospitality Chair

January 2017						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Please check the website for the most up-to-date calendar of events  
[www.ststephenstroy.org](http://www.ststephenstroy.org)

# One Family

## Bible Study

For all who are interested in weekly Bible Study, the "no experience necessary" bible study is held in the Bishop Emrich lounge, each Wednesday at 10 am. Newcomers are always welcome! Join Mother Susan each week and explore!



Adam Raczkowski.....1  
 Joann Morelli..... 3  
 Marilyn Borowski..... 3  
 Jim Trask.....3  
 Alice Moss.....5  
 Dorothy Langridge...6  
 Larry Nunn.....7  
 Nancy Papet..... 8  
 Rhonda Allen..... 10  
 Gloria Christiansen.11  
 Dave Stein..... 12  
 Kristin Herderich... 12  
 Michael Giles..... 12  
 Kate Roberts..... 12  
 Charlotte Woodruff13  
 Rod Johnson..... 13  
 Jenny Miller..... 17  
 Kendall Spina..... 17  
 John Podsiadlik..... 18  
 Chikezie Okeagu..... 19  
 Ian Baron..... 19  
 Sathi Satyanathan. 21  
 Donna Johnson..... 21  
 Margaret Williams. 21  
 Michael Abitheira.. 21  
 Susan Russell.....22  
 Diane Kenefic.....22  
 Jill Stein.....23  
 Eric Williams.....24  
 Molly Grubb.....24  
 Jim Maxwell.....25  
 Valerie Wilson.....25  
 Inge Wojas.....26  
 Jocelyn Ingersoll...27  
 Chris Herfurth.....28  
 Jim Whitaker.....30  
 Will Trask.....30

# Outreach

## Declutter for the New Year

Popular magazines are full of ideas for reducing the amount of stuff that seems to acquire a life of its own and grows each year. Here are eight ideas on my list of things to “weed out my stuff”:

**Tackle the junk drawer first.** Sort like items into a drawer organizer. Box up seldom used items. Date the box. At end of 6 months, if you haven’t opened the box, dump it.

**Work on one room at a time.**

**Start in the garage, basement or attic.** Getting rid of stuff there offers available storage areas.

**Place lots of hooks in the garage. Keep equipment closest to where it is used.** Get stuff off of the floor.

**Do CPR on your closet.** If you don’t love or wear it – donate it.

**Reorganize your purse.** Life savers only last about a year in there.

**Clear the car** of anything that doesn’t belong there. Keep it that way.

**Triage the mail** every day. Use folders for Tax Documents, To Do, and Read. Recycle the rest. Shred items that include personal info.

Happiness is not having less or more. Happiness is using what I have

Good Housekeeping, 2012

Norma Ross



## Beaumont Hospital Advice for Stroke Symptoms

### Think FASTER

**F—Face .** Uneven smile. One side of the face droops or is numb.

**A—Arms.** One arm drifts down when raising other or is weaker and more numb than the other.

**S—Stability.** Dizziness. Hard time keeping balance. Trouble walking. Loss of coordination.

**T—Talking.** Slurred words. Unable to speak. Hard time being understood or understanding speech.

**E—Eyes.** Difficulty seeing out of one or both eyes. Double vision.

**R—React.** Call 911 immediately! Call even if symptoms go away. Remember when symptoms first began.

Norma Ross

## Thanks from Mariners Inn

Dear Reverend Susan and the St. Stephen's Congregation,

THANK YOU for so generously hosting us and art these past few weeks. We have so enjoyed partnering with you, and I'm excited to let you know that we raised over \$600 for the art therapy program, thanks to your support and generosity! We appreciate you all. Happy New Year!

With Gratitude,  
 Stephanie  
 Mariners Inn

# We Ask Your Prayers for...

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## Prayer Concerns

Richard Bronsteen  
Jeralyn Burrell  
Ron Converse  
Thelma DePew  
Cathlyn Duncan  
Betty Feighner  
Betsy McLachlan  
Larry Nunn  
Zoey Rose  
Charles Saylor  
Joyce Vance  
Tom Vida  
Ken Williams  
Kyle L

## These Parish Families

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- 1/1 Olivia DeCiantis & Gabriel Valdez  
Donovan, Caroline, Brady & Deegan Dengler  
1/8 Melissa, Daniel, Madeleine, Conner &  
Emmett Dugga  
Sharon Eck  
1/15 David & Janet Eldon  
Marilyn & Jim Elwarner  
1/22 Alex Ezeugwa, Erinma Obioha, Dami & Kachi  
Margaret Fielder  
1/29 Nancy Fischer  
Stephen, Corinne, Brent & Garret Fragnoli

## January Anniversaries

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Roy & Gretchen  
Waters.....7

## Those in the Armed Services

Stephen Armstrong—Nephew of Linda Pierce  
Rachel Barton—Granddaughter of Jane Frank  
Nathan Cremeans—Grandson of Barb Whitaker  
Tom Fydrych— known to Rob Redmer  
Stephanie Herderich—member of St. Stephen's  
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  
Clayton Ulrich—Nephew of Jeralyn Burrell

We constantly review and renew the lists for prayers. Please call the church office, or e-mail us at [office@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:office@ststephenstroy.org), to ask that a relative or friend be added to those in need of our church's prayers.



## How to Contact Us

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**Church Office:** (Open 9:30-1:30 weekdays)

Tel: 248-641-8080 Fax: 248-641-8067

Cathy Hoffman, Parish Administrator/Accountant  
[office@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:office@ststephenstroy.org)

**The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams—Rector**

Cell: 716-397-0997 (voice or text)

Home: 248-732-7955

[rector@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:rector@ststephenstroy.org)

**The Rev. Jim Maxwell, Retired Priest in Residence**

[jimmardi@wowway.com](mailto:jimmardi@wowway.com)

**Connie Jose—Interim Music Director**

[musicdirector@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:musicdirector@ststephenstroy.org)

**Ken Fuhr—Director of Christian Formation**

[formation@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:formation@ststephenstroy.org)

**Jim Trask, Treasurer**

**Cathy Hoffman, Assistant to the Treasurer**

[treasurer@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:treasurer@ststephenstroy.org)

**Church Website: Ken Fuhr, Webmaster**

[www.ststephenstroy.org](http://www.ststephenstroy.org) (password: coffeeshour)

**The Witness, Liz Sinkovich, Editor**

[witness@ststephenstroy.org](mailto:witness@ststephenstroy.org)

E-mail, bring to church or fax: 248-641-8067

## Weekly Services:

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Sat. 4:30 p.m.

Informal Service

Sun., 8 a.m.

Early Eucharist

Sun, 10 a.m.

Eucharist with Music, Nursery and Sunday School

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

## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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5500 North Adams Road

Troy, MI 48098

Please remember St. Stephen's in your will

*Change Service Requested*

Dated Material

**JANUARY 2017**