∕<sup>∼</sup>The



Mother Susan's Musings



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 <u>that all of us are part</u> <u>of God's family.</u>

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

Advent Stories of Waiting

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

love Advent. It's so counter-cultural, if we only can tune out the secular proclamations: "Shop now! Holiday hours extended! Instant Credit! Sale – Sale - Sale!" The holy kind of Advent announces "Waiting is good for you. Waiting will be rewarded by God. But in God's own time." The "Christmas Gospel," St. Luke's, begins with a story of waiting, even before the angel Gabriel meets the virgin Mary.

Long ago there was a couple: Elizabeth and Zechariah. They were getting on in years, but they still had no children. This was a problem at the turn of the first century AD. There would be no one to carry on the family line – the priestly line, both of them. Perhaps they were pitied by their neighbors. Such righteous people, yet their prayers went unanswered by God!

Sometimes you and I are also bold enough to challenge God for his apparent deafness. What did we do to deserve such heartache? – a death or terrible illness, a level of financial need we tried to prevent, a loss of independence, a broken relationship with jagged edges... O Lord, hear my prayer!

The good priest Zechariah was finally called for duty in the Jerusalem Temple as an old man. It had been a long wait for his one year of Temple service, a responsibility that came from his ancestry: "the priestly order of Abijah." I can imagine the conversation between him and Elizabeth. "Now you will be right up close to the Holy of Holies! You can present our deepest wish to God."

What is the deepest wish you bring to God this holy season? Peace in the world – or in your dysfunctioning family? A miraculous healing? A nudge in a more prosperous direction? O Lord, hear my prayer!

December 2017

On duty beside the altar, Zechariah is left speechless, literally, when his prayer is directly answered by God's angel, appearing to him through the clouds of incense. "You will have a son. Be sure to name him John!" Sure enough, nine months later - and after a visit by her young cousin Mary – Elizabeth gives birth to the herald of Jesus' arrival, John the Baptist. Not exactly the role they had in mind for their child, when Elizabeth and Zechariah prayed for him in those first decades of their marriage. Their longawaited child would reject his priestly lineage and move out to the wilderness. There he would hear God's voice himself, and undertake a ministry of preaching and baptizing at the Jordan River.

We meet John in our Advent readings every winter, hollering boldly from the river, "You brood of vipers need to repent!" What would his parents say?? Unfortunately, Luke doesn't report on them any longer; God's focus and ours have moved to the younger generation - John and his cousin Jesus. But perhaps, when you hear John's story in mid-Advent, remember his parents' story too. The melding and transforming of a long wait and many prayers, into God's own plan of salvation.

O Lord, hear my prayer, and make it yours.





Sunan )



Around the Parish

The Joy of Christmas is Celebrated Here! All are Welcome!

Our 2017 Christmas Schedule of Special Services and Programs Why not invite a friend?

> **Special Music at 10 a.m. Services:** December 3 — VSO String Quartet December 10 — our Hand-bell Choir

**Children's Pageant, December 16** at 4:30 pm, Children's Pageant followed by Holy Communion and a party!

#### Advent 3, December 17

"Greening of the Church," help decorate after the 10 am. service! Afternoon: Youth Christmas Party for teens (RSVP for details)

#### Advent 4 and Christmas Eve, December 24

4:30 pm Saturday and <u>9:00</u> am Sunday: Eucharist for Advent 4 5:00 pm, Family Service beginning with Procession of the Crèche figures 10:30 pm Prelude Music and 11:00 pm "Midnight Mass" with choirs

> **Christmas Day, December 25** 10:00 am, Holy Communion with carols

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas Pay 4:30 pm Saturday (Dec. 30) and <u>9:00</u> am Sunday (Dec. 31)

Celebrate Epiphany with us on January 6 & 7 4:30 pm Saturday (Jan. 6) Communion service 6:00 pm Twelfth Night Party – tickets required! 8:00 & 10:00 am Sunday (Jan. 7) Communion, classes resume

(The church office will be closed Dec. 25-Jan. 2.)

Dec 3—Advent 1 Is 64: 1-9 Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18 1 Cor 1: 3-9 Mark 13: 24-37

ecember

ectionaru

Dec 10—Advent 2 Is 40: 1-11 Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13 2 Peter3: 8-15a Mark 1: 1-8

Dec 17—Advent 3 Is 61: 1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126 1 Thes 5: 16-24 John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Dec 24—Advent 4 2 Sam 7: 1-11, 16 Psalm 89-1-4, 19-26 Rom 16: 25-27 Luke 1: 26-38

Dec 31—Christmas 1 Is 61: 10-62:3 Psalm 147 Gal 3: 23-25; 4: 4-7 John 1: 1-18



December 2017: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 5500 N. Adams Rd., Troy, MI 48098

# Inside the Parish Walls

## Happy Advent Family!

A swe 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.

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 other.

I recently attended one of our Holy Conversation gatherings and as the Holy Spirit flowed to create engaging conversation, I looked around the room and realized over the past 15 years I have watched some grow from childhood, worked with others through various ministries, have mentored, been mentored, comforted, argued, agreed, supported, and loved each of them. Is this not the definition of family?

As we all work to discern the future direction our family will take, I take comfort in the knowledge God brought us together and as any family we are far stronger together than apart!!



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. 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 comforted.

> With much love, Scott

Sunday School & Youth Schedule

D uring the Advent and Christmas seasons there are several changes to the usual Sunday School routine that are part of the excitement of the holidays. On Saturday, December 16 we will enjoy the Christmas Pageant presented by the children and directed by Peter and Greyson. Since the children will be involved that evening, there will be no Sunday School at 10am the next day.

There will be Sunday School for youth on December 17 and later that day the youth Christmas Party will be held at Mr. Armstrong's house from 3pm to 6pm. This includes all youth in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and older. Everyone is asked to bring a fun, inexpensive gift for the white elephant exchange. Also, 5<sup>TH</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders bring a desert and high schoolers bring a snack to share. Pizza and drinks will be provided.

There will be no Sunday School on Christmas Eve and New Year's. Regular classes will resume on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Kentuch



The ever-popular Twelfth Night Party returns with Fragnoli's Fabulous Feasts at the helm; on Saturday January 6 at 6. Music, processions and plenty of food will close out the Christmas season, as a medieval theme transforms the hall into a place worthy of its wassail. Huzzah! Tune up the sackbut and stock up the spices. Contact Mother Susan if you'd like to help with the entertainment.

Twelfth Night tickets will be on sale at church soon, so don't miss out on the fun. By long tradition, new members of St. Stephen's are invited to come free of charge.



# Church Notes

#### Preparations & Celebrations

his year (as in every sixth year) we have the congruence of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve; Sunday, Dec. 24. This causes havoc for worship-planners everywhere. How much do we try to do in the morning, when everyone really just wants to come in the evening?

Having read the cover, you already know that I love Advent. I can't just ignore the wonderful lessons and themes of the final Sunday in the series! "In the sixth month [of Elizabeth and Zechariah's pregnancy], the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman whose name was Mary..."

So here's the plan: We will celebrate 4 Advent twice, on Saturday Dec. 23 at 4:30 pm and Sunday Dec. 24 at 9:00 am. It only seemed fair to combine, rather than eliminate. 8 & 10.

And we will celebrate Christmas Eve twice: Sunday Dec. 24 at 5:00 pm (the family service, with procession of the crèche animals, a children's story, and music led by our band); and at 10:30 / 11:00 pm (that means, prelude music at 10:30, liturgy starting at 11:00 pm). I'm delaying the "midnight mass" by half an hour this year, so we can be singing "Silent Night" at midnight instead of 11:30!

I'm also thrilled that Dave Stein will be back with his guitar on Christmas Day, that's Monday Dec. 25, for the lovely 10 am service with carols (followed by coffee and stollen) that has become a dear tradition.

The pattern of two services (Saturday at 4:30 pm, Sunday at 9:00 am) will be repeated the following weekend, Dec. 30 and 31, when guest clergy will take good care of you in my absence. (For a good reason this year, family vacation, not emergency surgery!)

I'd like to thank in advance the many hands

that go into preparing for these special celebrations: the Altar Guild, Eucharistic Ministers, Ushers, Acolytes, Youth Lectors, and their faithful leaders Kathy Sebrowski, Roy Waters, Jim Carnagie and Ken Fuhr. And last but certainly not least, my deep appreciation for our musicians: choir led by Sue Gore, bellringers led by Connie Jose, band led by Ken Fuhr, and special guests the VSO Quartet on December 3 led by Geoff Benes.

O come, let us adore Him – Christ the Lord!

Joyfully, man

Off to a Great Start

ver 50 individuals participate in the Holy Conversations. They represented a good cross section of the congregation in terms of gender, age, status, service regularly attended, country of origin, and cradle Episcopalians vs. those who started out worshiping in another denomination.

We will be interviewing the older Sunday school kids shortly. Others express interest in participating in a conversation. We are looking into options, so keep your eyes and ears open. If you can't fit one in, please don't feel slighted. There will be other opportunities for input as the committee digs deeper to build on the insights gained so far and moves ahead to find ways to better serve God, each other and our neighbors [the community].

Thanks to all who have helped get this initiative off to a great start, including those who hosted and attended them.

Don Ingersoll

Book Study

The book study of "An Altar in the World" starts November 5th at 9 am and continues through December, between the Sunday services, one chapter at a time. Contact Kris Fuhr for

more information

Carol Sing

Come to an indoor Carol Sing! "Sing we now of Christmas" Sunday, December 10 from 4:00 - 5:15 pm at Pilgrim Congregational Church, just a few miles south of us 3061 N. Adams Rd, north of Big Beaver

Sponsored by the Troy-area Ecumenical Churches

# Parish News

#### E-Giving News

E-giving is now even easier! Just go to: <u>http://giving.ncsservices.org/ststephenstroy</u> OR follow the link at the bottom of the St. Stephen's home page. Log in if you have an account. Your email address is your login ID. If you don't have an account or don't want to login, just click on "Quick Give". We now accept donations by credit card or bank account. To donate from your bank account, click on the small check image in the upper right. You can make a regular contribution to Parish Giving or donate to any one of several funds.

Once you have an account, you can also establish a schedule of repeating donations if you desire.

For assistance or more information, please contact our Treasurer, Jim Trask at 248-729-1215, or treasurer@ststephenstroy.org

elcome James Trask		
Give Now • One Time Donations	My Donation	
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Please check the website for the most up-to-date calendar of events www.ststephenstroy.org

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#### Thank you, Alice!

O n behalf of the Altar Guild and office staff, I want to thank Alice Brandon for her years as co-chairwoman of St Stephen's Altar Guild. Alice quietly tendered her resignation from that role in November, though she does continue to help with service bulletins as a beloved Thursday Morning Volunteer.

Alice cannot be replaced, only emulated. We currently have openings in both of those ministries – Altar Guild and "TMV" – so please let Kathy Sebrowski, Jacki Mudrich or Mo. Susan know if you're interested. And please thank Alice when you next see her, at a Saturday 4:30 service or a Thursday morning in the office.

yoan?

One Family

Bible Study

#### Back to the Bible!

Our popular Wednesday Morning Bible Study resumes at 10 a.m. on Sept. 6, after our summer hiatus. All are welcome, always. Our tagline is, "No experience neces-

sary!" Coffee, tea, treats and great conversation flow from our time with the Scriptures. Currently we're about halfway through Matthew's Gospel. Join us in the Emrich Library each Wednesday morning from 10:00-11:30.



December 2017: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 5500 N. Adams Rd., Troy, MI 48098

## Parish Notes

#### Endowment Committee

A s we look to conclude 2017, we have a few updates on the Endowment Commit-tee.

First, we are seeking to help fund refurbishment of the Hand Bells (work has already been done on this) and a contribution to refurbishment of the pews in 2018 (estimates still be received to evaluate feasibility). This is in addition to funding pins for the Ushers and crosses for the Lay Readers this year.

We are pleased to be able to use grant funds from those who have contributed to the Endowment Fund toward these good causes and programs at St. Stephens. As we look to the end of the year, a reminder that funds can be donated to the fund in a number of ways.

Some suggestions include providing a contribution earmarked for the fund at any time (end of year donations can be an appropriate time), a donation in memory or honor of a loved one or friend or by including a provision for St. Stephens in your will.

In addition, as the bylaws for the committee call for, we will have an opening for a person interested in being on the committee starting in 2018. If you are interested, please talk to one of the committee members to learn more. Current members are Richard Kenefic, Joan Knapp, Don Ingersoll, Jan Hopper and Helen Giles (will be rotating off at the beginning of 2018 after serving a five year term).

Helen Giles

"The greatest thing this generation can do is lay a few stepping stones for the next generation." -Charles F. Kettering

#### Spring Confirmation Class

**S** tarting this March our younger high school youth (J2A) will be preparing for Confirmation in May by The Rt. Rev. Wendell N. Gibbs, Jr. Although the date and location has not yet been announced, each May the Bishop does a confirmation service that all Confirmands in the diocese are invited to attend. The Bishop visits our parish once every three years and the time of year varies, so it has become our tradition at St. Stephen's to participate in this diocesan Confirmation service. In the past this has been at St. John's, Royal Oak or Christ Church Cranbrook.

The Book of Common Prayer indicates that "... those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of the faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop." It goes on to say that those Baptized as adults "...unless baptized with laying on of hands by a bishop, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith...and to receive the laying on of hands (by the bishop.)"

This connection to our bishop is rich with tradition. After all, "Episcopal" means bishops and the "Apostolic Succession" that links our own bishop all the way back to St. Peter through the successive laying on of hands is made available for us to share in this moving experience of Confirmation.

If you or someone you know who is not in our current youth group would like to attend the classes or consider doing so, please contact Mo. Susan or me. Everyone is welcome to join in. The classes will include 7 classroom sessions in the Bishop Emrich Library on Sundays at 11:00am(after communion) beginning March 4<sup>th</sup>. We will also have a one-day retreat on Saturday, April 21.

Kentuche



## Greening of the Church

Due to the abbreviated transition from Advent into Christmas, we will decorate the church with wreaths, trees and more, on Sunday Dec. 17 after the 10:00 service. Join the fun! The more hands (and ladder-climbers) we have, the faster we'll finish - and then we'll enjoy Brunch together in the parish hall. Sign up in the Gathering Area please.



#### December Birthdays

Kris Fuhr 3
Steve Brandon 6
Jerred Rich6
Joan Morgan7
Miranda Spates 11
Sudhaker Samuel 11
Indira Samuel 12
Kristin Giles13
Mardi Maxwell 14
Penelope Baker 19
Austin Terlecky22
Anna Dorsey22
Linda Pierce23
Rick Spina23
Catherine Balettie.24
Michael Szott25
Anne Hiemstra25
Sharon Miller26
Linda Hotton27
Agnes Carpenter 30

# Reaching Out Now is the Perfect Time

t is the best time of year to help reconnect friends and family to God and church. The Christmas season spurs fond memories of past Christmases. Some families regroup during the Holidays and attend church even if they don't regularly do so. Some of this is nostalgia, some inertia.

But inertia can work both ways. While it may bring some folks to church on Christmas, inertia keeps many others away. Perhaps it started years ago when they first left home to be on their own. Perhaps when the moved away from their hometown. Perhaps when life got hectically complicated and "urgent" demands on their time crowed out the idea of attending church. Perhaps inertia was aided by past bad experiences at church: mandatory attendance as a kid, seemingly arbitrary rules; GUILT AND JUDGMENT - "YOU ARE NEVER GOOD ENOUGH," or "YOU'RE NOT GIVING US ENOUGH MONEY."

Once negative inertia has taken hold, its grip can grow tighter by added concerns: "What church would I go to? Will I be judged or swooped upon to join a committee? Will I look foolish if I don't know the service? Will I be quizzed on the Bible?

We are still analyzing the input from the Holy Conversations; but some early observations are that folks came to St. Stephen's for many reasons—often at the invitation of a parishioner.

Rather than wait for the final analysis of this information from parishioners, I want to share some thoughts about this, because the Christmas spirit can lower the negative side of inertia. If we give it a boost, perhaps we can get someone to church that wouldn't otherwise go.

This is the best time of year to invite some-

one to join you at church. Such an invitation was the step that led some of us to be members St. Stephen's. What's the downside? If folks come and don't overcome their inertia, they just don't come again. But if they feel welcomed and enjoy it like most of us did, it can open up an enriched spiritual and personal future.

Who might be receptive to your invitation? Anyone! But judging from those who shared their experiences during the Holy Conversations prime candidates include: people new to the area, those suffering from the loss or incapacitation of a loved one, and those who have few caring relationships, feel overwhelmed or depressed. Also, parents or grandparents of young kids whom they wish to see get a Christian education and Christian values.

What would I say? That depends on the circumstances and your relationship with the person, but is could be as simple and unobtrusive as:

- My church has a great Christmas Eve service that really puts me into the spirit. How about joining me?
- My child/grandchild is in the Christmas pageant. How about joining us for it? It's fun and they would really appreciate you being there.
- We're having a Twelfth Night dinner and social evening. It's lots of fun and the people are very friendly and interesting.

How hard is that? If it works out and the folks reconnect with God and church they will be eternally grateful. If it doesn't fully overcome their inertia, they will likely be grateful knowing that you care about them. Give it a try! I can't wait to meet them!

Merry Christmas,

Don Ingersoll

More Reaching Out

# One Hope

#### Crafting Kindness

This year Crafting Kindness knitters, Crocheters, sewers, quilters and cutters have created over 500 items which have donated throughout 2017. In early December we will be adding card making to our crafting agenda. The Girl Scout group at Bennett School will be learning how to make cards with help from a few of our Crafting Kindness ladies. Hopefully this will continue through the next year.

People benefiting from our endeavors range from preemie babies to nursing home residents. These donations were delivered locally, nationally, and internationally.

From time to time we have received donations that cannot use. Those donations have been "redonated" to Heartline, Mariner's Inn, and a local high school drama group

Your support of this mission by your prayers, donations, and handiwork has given Crafting Kindness, through St. Stephen's, the opportunity

• *To* dress those who need clothing - with pillowcase dresses and angel dresses;

• To warm those who shiver in the cold - with winter scarves and hats;



• To feed the hungry – not necessarily food but needs thru hurricane bags filled with toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, and other personal items when all is gone;

• To feel that someone cares – with a prayer shawl, a lap quilt, preemie hats, baby blankets, SOS totes, walker totes;

• *To* support our youth – J2A auction quilts

• To cover the cost of all shipping all mailings from your Coffee Hour donations

I am in awe of what this church has done through your handiwork, prayers, donations and support. Without you there would be no Crafting Kindness.

#### THANK YOU EVERYONE

**Barb Whitaker** 

Clothes & Toys

**S** omebody dropped off about 5 bags of clothes and toys in the Church Narthex right before Thanksgiving.

We don't know who dropped them off or if they are designated for some group? If someone knows about these can bags can they please contact Jacki at 248-641-8080.

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions.

Jackie



## We Ask Your Prayers for...

Pamela Waleke

Janet Satyanathan

Molly Neumann

Jim Whitaker

#### **Prayer Concerns**

Linda Lou Jarvis Jeralyn Burrell Nancy Johnston Pilloried **Betty Sage** Judy Ford Laura Hayden Zoey Rose Edith Richardson Jim Sherman Ron Gural **Betty Feighner** Katie Yant **Tristyn Yant** Michelle L'Hommedieu Kelly Damphousse **Diane Clary Charles Saylor** Charmel Maki Joe Simler **Greg Thompson** Kyle Merian Sally Granger Jane Young Michelle Baricivic J.R. Polson Paul Quigley Suzanne Ross

#### Those in the Armed Services

Nathan Cremeans—grandson of Barb Whitaker 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

Brendon Church Kyle Church Grandsons of Ed and Elaine Church & Nephew of Amy Church Benjamin Church Great Nephew of Ed and Elaine Church & Cousin of Amy Church

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

- 12/3 Richard & Barb Spina
  David & Jill Stein
  12/10 Dan & Sue Stewart
  Alistair & Sara Sundareson
- 12/17 Michael & Martha Szott Jeremy Taylor
- 12/24 Stanley, Laura, Gillian, Austin & Brian Terlecky Robert & Katheryn Thatcher
- 12/31 Brian, Elizabeth, Tristan & Emmitt Thiel Violet Thompson

## The Departed

Beth LeClair Wife of the Rev. Paul LeClair



#### These Parish Families

Dennis & Mary Bishop27 Mike & Kathleen Herderich29

December

Anniversaries

Wojas.....15

Satyanathan ......17

Roberts 18

Hammond ......20

Okeagu.....21

Jones ......23

Wellman......26

Pat & Inge

Sathi & Janet

Patrick & Elizabeth

John & Katherine

Royden Jr.& Valerie

Ben & Chibuzo

Mike & Jane

December 2017: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 5500 N. Adams Rd., Troy, MI 48098

#### How to Contact (Is

Church Office: (Open 9:30-1:30 weekdays) Tel: 248-641-8080 Fax: 248-641-8067 Jacki Mudrich, Parish Administrator office@ststephenstroy.org The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams—Rector Cell: 716-397-0997 (voice or text) Home: 248-732-7955 rector@ststephenstroy.org Ken Fuhr—Director of Christian Formation formation@ststephenstroy.org

musicdirector@ststsphenstroy.org Jim Trask, Treasurer Pam Bonkowski—Assistant to the Treasurer treasurer@ststephenstroy.org Church Website: Ken Fuhr, Webmaster www.ststephenstroy.org (password: coffeehour) The Witness, Liz Sinkovich, Editor witness@ststephenstroy.org E-mail, bring to church or fax: 248-641-8067

## Weekly Services:

<u>Sat. 4:30 p.m.</u> Informal Service

<u>Sun., 8 a.m.</u> Early Eucharist

<u>Sun, 10 a.m.</u> 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. Thank you in advance for helping us with our continued effort to.....THINK GREEN!

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

5500 North Adams Road Troy, MI 48098 Please remember St. Stephen's in your will