

The Messenger

September, 2014
Internet version

Celebration

St. Stephen's is proud to be celebrating Father James McDonald's 25th year as Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

On September 28, 2014, we are privileged to have Bishop Herzog conducting service at the church. Church services will begin at 10:15, followed by brunch in the parish hall. All are welcome to join in the festivities.



Letter from Fr. James

Dear Friends:

The Early Church author, Tertullian, said, "Christians are made, not born" - if we were born Christians, there would be no need for formation. Thus an active, informed Christian may be considered to:

- Be able to interpret scripture in the context of his/her life and have a solid knowledge of the content, history and theological perspectives of the Bible.
- Participate fully and regularly in Christian worship and be able to interpret it and welcome newcomers into it.
- Be able to take responsibility for his/her life of prayer and spiritual development and be willing to keep learning and growing in prayer.
- Be active in addressing the structural causes of suffering in the world and help those who are suffering.

A question to ponder upon as we head into a new program year is: how well am I equipped as a Christian? Beginning again this fall Saint Stephen's will offer you abundant resources for Christian formation - but only you can choose to take advantage of them. If you already are well-equipped, it is your responsibility to help equip others - children, youth and adults inside and beyond the church. You don't have to be an expert, just a well-informed, prayerful and committed disciple of Jesus active in a community of fellow-disciples.

Consider making time in your life for being a participant in one or more of the educational opportunities this fall. It could change your life!

Peace,
James+

Home Communion

If you or someone you know is unable to attend church on either a long, or shortterm basis, please call the parish office if you would like to have communion brought to you.

Note from the EditorRose

For those of you that have not yet met me, my name is Rose Walker. I will be at the front desk Mon., Wed. and Fri. from 9:00am until 12:00pm, and as you can see by now I am going to be responsible for the Messenger.

Feel free to stop by the office at anytime should you have any questions or suggestions regarding the messenger. Your input will be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Rose



St. Stephen's Garage Sale

Is stuff piling up around your house, piles here, piles there, piles everywhere?

Do not despair ... the St. Stephen's Garage Sale will be held at the end of September and we need all your old stuff. If you are saying to yourself, that's fine, but what do I do with it until then? There is a solution for that, too. The church basement closest to the boiler room has storage space. (Please no adult clothes, textbooks or electronics). If you need help moving larger items, please call the parish office and leave a message.

We not only need your rummage, we will also need your help organizing, pricing, sorting and selling the week of the sale. Sign up sheets and more information to follow in September's Messenger and at the Parish Faire.

The proceeds from the sale will support Schenectady Inner City Ministry. So don't throw it, stow it in the basement of the church.

Becoming a Member of St. Stephen's

Inquirers' classes are a basic four week course which is held in an informal atmosphere and taught by the rector. For those who are new to the Episcopal Church, or looking for a new spiritual home, this course will provide an introduction to the Church -- its history, beliefs, worship, and work in the world. Or, if you were confirmed earlier in life, and wish to renew your commitment at an adult level, consider this course as a part of your continuing Christian education. The course is required for all who wish to be confirmed or received into the church.

These classes will be held on Sunday afternoons at noon in the rector's office beginning October 5th.

A word about toys in church

Quiet toys, coloring books, etc. are quite in order for the younger set, especially during the sermon or while people are receiving Communion. Kids fade in and out during worship (so do adults!). That's O.K. It's amazing how much children pick up and use from worship, even when it doesn't seem that way.

Youth Education

9:00 Sunday Friends (Grades 4-5-6)

In the first hallway, the classroom is adjacent to the choir room. Through scripture, crafts, games and discussion, we focus on social justice issues, comparing Jesus' issues with those of contemporary society.

10:30 Godly Play (4yrs through 3rd Grade)

Classroom is adjacent to the Nursery. Time honored bible stories from the Old and New Testaments told in the oral tradition with simple props. Games, crafts and other activities support the story. A light snack is served toward the end of the session. We start in the sanctuary and come out after the rector's time with the children. We return in time for families to participate in the Eucharist together.

Alternating Sundays 9:00am or 10:30am Youth (Grades 7-12)

Class meets in the teen lounge adjacent to the door facing the walkway to Gamer Avenue. Contemporary issues are brought under the microscope for discussion and enhanced with material downloaded from the New Yorker, the New York Times and other leading journalistic literature. Make sure George Woodzell has your email address - that's the way he communicated, and that's how you find out what's going on. Some youth members also serve as acolytes during the 10:15 Eucharist.

Miranda Rand, Christian Education

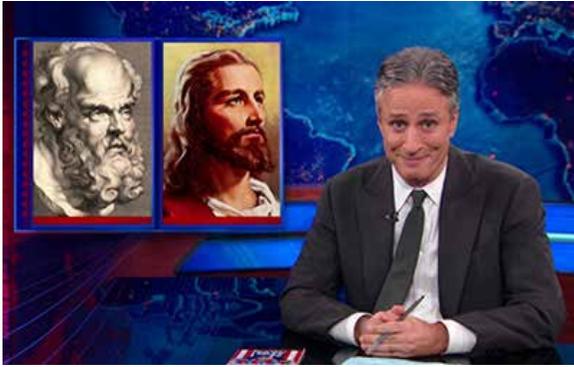
Website: www.buildingfaithwithfun.org

Adult Education

Education for Ministry

The Education Ministry (EFM) Program is the theological education extension program of the School of Theology of the University of South in Sewanee, Tennessee designed for the laity. The course requires a one-year commitment and can be taken for four years, during which participants study the old and New Testaments, church history and twentieth century theology. The purpose is to provide lay members of the church with a comprehensive foundation for understanding and experiencing Christian faith. A special emphasis is on doing theological reflection on daily life issues. Students meet weekly in seminars led by trained mentors. We need at least six (6) participants to begin this course. More information is available from the rector (james.ross.mcd@gmail.com). Classes could begin this fall and a sign-up philosophy sheet will be available at the Parish Faire.

Philosophy and religion in the West: Are they compatible?



Whether you're a believer, a seeker, or both, you'll find much to spark your deepest ponderings in this year-long course on the long and rich interplay between faith and reason.

Philosophy and religion ask many of the same questions:

What is the ultimate reality?

What can we know about it-or what should we believe about it?

How do our questions and thoughts, our hopes and fears, relate us to it?

Is this ultimate reality a person whom we meet, or an object that we contemplate?

These are questions no thoughtful person can evade.

They are enduring and perennial. And they are possessed of a history whose twists and turns have left their mark on almost every person on earth.

Classes meet on Tuesday mornings from 10:30 to noon. We begin by viewing a talk by Dr. Phillip Cary, Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University. Afterward, we will engage in discussions on ideas introduced by Dr. Cary. While always informative, many conversations will be provocative.

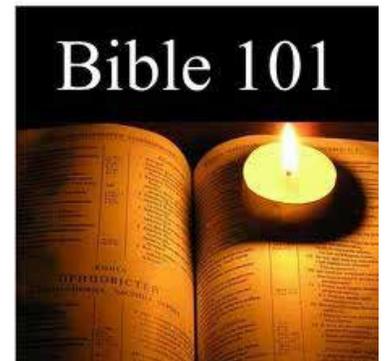
This course meets from September 23 to May 26.

Syllabus is available from the rector (james.ross.mcd@gmail.com). A sign-up sheet will be available at the Parish Faire.

Bible 101

September 14 - Getting Acquainted

It's the all-time best-seller since the beginning of printing. It has produced passionate controversy for centuries. What is the book that is like none other in the history of the world? Where did it come from? What does it consist of? Does it still speak to us today?



September 21 - The Old Testament

An ancient book? Yes, but far more! It's a kind of love letter and a still-living legacy that shaped the identity of a unique people. What about the Dead Sea Scrolls? The accurate preservation of the contents over millennia underscores the marvel of these writings.

September 28 - The New Testament

It's a book that centers on Jesus. But how do we know we have the actual words of Jesus? How were the books of the New Testament gathered and selected? What's it all about? How does the New Testament build upon but differ from the Old Testament?

October 5 - Survival, Spread, and Influence

Despite attempts of tyrants to destroy it, the Bible has endured and become the most translated and circulated book ever. It was translated into various art forms and given to us in English through heroic efforts. It's the book that influenced the lives that influenced the world.

Classes are held on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 in the Conference room. A sign-up sheet will be available at the Parish Faire.

This year, consider stretching your mind

Saving Jesus

Ever feel like Jesus has been kidnapped by the Christian Right and discarded by the Secular Left?

These classes seeks to expose participants to observations and ideas about Jesus that have been long held by theologians and lay-people alike. Many of the ideas have simply failed to "trickle down" into our churches or small-group conversations.

Discussing these themes is critical to the task of reclaiming Jesus for the 21 st Century. Saving Jesus will prime participants to be part of the fabric of a vital Christianity already being woven by both "church alumni" and those still in the church who are working to reclaim an ancient and authentic understanding of what it means to be a "Jesus follower."

9:00am - 10:00am in Conference Room



Blessing of the Animals and St. Francis of Assisi

On October 4th we celebrate the life and work of St. Francis. He is probably better known for preaching to birds than for the poverty he embraced in his passion to be like Christ. Yet, Francis' love of God's creation has given his statue a place in many church and home gardens. No mere nature lover, Francis saw in nature's paradoxes and mysteries a revelation of the presence of God. He marveled at the simplicity and obedience of the birds, fishes, rabbits, doves, the falcon who wakened him for Matins, the famous wolf of Gubbio who gave his pledge of peace to Francis and kept it.

Because of St. Francis' connection to God's creation, and especially to animals, a tradition arose in England whereby the parish priest would bless the villagers' animals on St. Francis' Day.

Here's how it will work:

On October 4th at 9am the congregation and any animals (on leashes!) will gather on the front lawn of the church. WE WILL REMAIN OUTSIDE DURING THE ENTIRE SERVICE. The rector will begin a brief worship service and then will bless each animal saying: "O God, who has made all things for yourself, bless, we pray you, this animal; that it may be a source of love and joy to those with whom it dwells."

It's quite a sight! Join us on Oct. 4 at 9am on the front lawn of the church to continue an annual tradition.

Vestry Meetings

After the summer off, Vestry meetings resume September s-. They are open to all members of the congregation. Vestry meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30pm in the Conference Room.

Feel free to contact any member of Vestry at any time if you have questions about what goes on at Vestry meetings, or if you have something you would like to bring before the Vestry for discussion.

The Wardens are:

Sr. Warden, Carole Merrill-Mazurek
Jr. Warden, Erin Cohen

Our mission is to glorify God by reaching out to others, universally, with hands that serve, hearts and minds that welcome, and voices that carry the good news of God's redeeming love to all. We embrace diversity by celebrating the worth, dignity, and gifts of every person as a child of God. We seek to expand our Christian community and share God's love more widely.



Asking a blessing at the altar rail



The opening picnic



Saint stephen's Calendar - 2014-2015

Date	Church Activity
Sunday 9/10	Parish Faire no education classes
Sunday 9/17	Classes begin, Confirmation Covenant Signing, Homecoming Picnic
Tuesday 9/19	Confirmation Class
Sunday 9/24	
Tuesday 9/26	Confirmation Class
Sunday 10/1	
Sunday 10/8	Justice Sunday
Tuesday 10/3	Confirmation Class
Sunday 10/15	Wellness Sunday
Tuesday 10/17	Confirmation Class
Sunday 10/22	Stewardship Sunday Confirmation Field Trip
Tuesday 10/24	Confirmation Class
Sunday 10/29	All Saint's Sunday Teacher Commissioning
Sunday 11/5	
Tuesday 11/7	Confirmation Class
Sunday 11/12	Jazz Sunday
Sunday 11/19	Founders' Day Inter-faith Thanksgiving Service
Sunday 11/26	Thanksgiving break no education classes
Tuesday 11/28	Confirmation Class
Sunday 12/3	Advent 1
Tuesday 12/5	Confirmation Class
Sunday 12/10	Advent 2
Sunday 12/17	Advent 3 Blue Christmas

Sunday 12/24	Advent 4 Christmas Eve Family service 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Midnight service 10:45 pm	
Monday 12/25	Christmas Day	
Sunday 12/31		no education classes
Sunday 1/7	Epiphany Celebration	
Tuesday 1/9	Confirmation Class	
Sunday 1/14		
Sunday 1/21	Annual Meeting	
Tuesday 1/23	Confirmation Class	
Sunday 1/28		Confirmation Field Trip
Tuesday 1/30	Confirmation Class	
Sunday 2/4		
Sunday 2/11		
Sunday 2/18		
2/19 - 2/24	February school break	
Tuesday 2/20	Shrove Tuesday	
Tuesday 2/21	Ash Tuesday	
Sunday 2/25	1 st Lent	
Tuesday 2/27	Confirmation Class	
Sunday 3/4	2 nd Lent	
Saturday 3/3		Confirmation Field Trip
Tuesday 3/6	Confirmation Class	
Sunday 3/11	3 rd Lent	
Sunday 3/18	4 th Lent	
Tuesday 3/20	Confirmation Class	

Sunday 3/25	5 th Lent	
Sunday 4/1	Palm Sunday	
Tuesday 4/4	Seder Supper	
Thursday 4/5	Maundy Thursday	
Friday 4/6	Good Friday	
Saturday 4/7	Easter Vigil	
Sunday 4/8	Easter	No education classes
4/9 - 4/13	April school break	
Sunday 4/20 4/22		Confirmation Retreat
Sunday 4/22		
Sunday 4/29		
Sunday 5/6		
Sunday 5/13	Mother's Day	
Sunday 5/20	Jazz Sunday	
Thursday 5/24	Ascension Day	
Sunday 5/27	Pentecost	
Sunday 6/3	Trinity Sunday	
Sunday 6/10	Last class Volunteer Recognition Picni	

First Friends Nursery School at St. Stephen's Church

Calendar 2014-2015

October 13 Columbus Day
November 11 Veteran's Day
November 26-28 Thanksgiving
December 22- January 2 Holiday Recess
January 19 Martin Luther King Jr
February 16-20 Winter Recess
April 3-10 Spring Recess
May 22 -25 Memorial Day
June 12 4 Year Old Graduation (tentative)
June 15&16 Picnics (last day)

