

The Messenger

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

October 2014 Issue

25th Silver Celebration



Bishop Herzog
Father James McDonald
Deacon Pat Jones

Celebration Pictures by Chris Jones

Words from Father James

Dear Friends,

Let me thank you all for the generous gifts which you gave to me for my 25th anniversary as your rector. Rarely have I been so surprised! Your outpouring was heartfelt.

About six weeks after I had come to St. Stephen's Bishop Ball took me out to lunch and after some 'small talk' he got right to the point: "So, you've been at St. Stephen's for over a month now. Is it a fit?" In other words the bishop was asking if my expectations and your (the congregation's) expectations were in sync. My answer was simply, "Yes." That was almost 25 years ago and if the Bishop were to ask the same question, my answer now would be, "Absolutely." But the Bishop doesn't ask me because he knows already what a good relationship we enjoy.

Now this might not seem such an important thing, until you start talking to members of other churches and other pastors. No matter how well a Search Committee does its work, no matter how honest the priest is in the process, often the relationship between a rector and congregation does not quite "fit". I suppose what I am trying to say is that we are so fortunate here at St. Stephen's. True, we have a long way to go to be the kind of church for which we dream, but we seem to be working toward that dream **together**, and that is so rare for any group of people in this age. And that is basically why I think we are growing in numbers and in faith.

Thank you again for your wonderful show of support for me and our ministry.

James+

Photos from Silver Anniversary Celebration



October Events

Emergency Food Pantry Fund Raiser

Thanks to all who are keeping the Food Pantry supplied, especially with formula. There is also a need for paper towels, toilet paper and napkins; these items are not covered by food stamps. A new request from the pantry is for empty bottles, such as 20 oz soda bottles. The bottles are used to “breakdown” large bottles of detergent so detergent can be given to more families. If you bring them we will deliver them to the pantry.

Please SAVE THE DATE Sunday, November 9, 2014 from 4 to 7 at 1st Reformed Church of Scotia.

That will be the Harvest For the Pantry celebration dinner. Again there will be a homemade chicken dinner, or if you prefer a vegetarian option. It’s a wonderful opportunity to join your friends who attend other churches, share a meal, and there will be a “Pick a Prize” Eunice Chouffi and Marti Spang will have tickets.

Communion Classes

Communion classes will be held for children kindergarten and older on two **Saturdays** at the end of this month. Families will come to Begley Hall on Saturday, Oct. 25th from 10am – 11:30am and also on November 1st from 10am to 11am. A very brief parent meeting (11:30am to noon) will be held after church on October 19th in the Library.

For children in first grade or older who took part in this program last year, we hope that a second look leads to a deeper understanding. Through the years that a child spends in Church School, s/he will study the Eucharist again and again as part of the curriculum. Communion classes are meant to supplement your child’s education.

If you would like to enroll your child in these classes (even if s/he is already receiving Communion) please sign up on the sheet in the Nave Extension or email Fr. James james.ross.mcd@gmail.com.



Blessing of the Animals

October 4th at 9:00am the congregation and any animals (on leashes!) will gather on front Lawn of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, located at 1935 The Plaza, Schenectady, NY for service and blessing of each animal. All are welcome

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.



Parish Fair Thank you!

Thanks to everyone who supported both the Parish Faire and the Parish Picnic. By all accounts, each event was a success.

Without YOU these events could not have happened. So whether you shopped for picnic food, helped to set up tables, assisted with clean up, brought information to share at the Ministry Faire, baked a cake, or were simply present, we thank you.

Know that every day, prayers are offered for every member of this congregation. Your presence is key to the health of our church, no matter your level of involvement, no matter your age or length of time here at St. Stephen's. You count! Thank you!

Youth Education



Contact Information:

Miranda Rand, Education Director

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Christian Education

October will start and end with guest speakers for both classes.

On October 5, Zipporah Harris, well-known Hebrew and Judaics instructor in local synagogues will visit both Sunday Friends and Godly Play classrooms to share the food and traditions of the Jewish High Holy Days. Zipporah often comes in costume and never fails to excite with her lively presentations. We look forward to welcoming Zipporah once again to our education space.

On October 26, Kent Busman, ordained Reformed Church pastor and director of the year-round facility, Fowler Camp and Conference Center, in Speculator, NY, will visit us for the second time to lead a discussion on caring for creation (Sunday Friends), and tell creation-based stories (Godly Play).

Sunday Friends classes start at 9:00am in the classroom adjacent to the Choir Room, Godly Play students should report directly to the classroom both days at 10:15, rather than go into worship with their parents.

Thank You!

I'd like to express my sincere appreciation for all your love and care; the cards, the flowers, the expressions of sympathy and offers of help. I am amazed and truly gratified.

I have long held the opinion that God truly has a sense of humor – beyond all things, Alan loved his time at Piseco Lake, and in the end the lake he loved is conjectured to have been how he contracted the deadly bacterial infection that claimed his life. The irony of this would not have been lost on Alan – in fact, I think he would have thought it appropriate. We will scatter his ashes at Piseco in the summer.

There will be a Celebration of Life for Alan on October 26 at 3:00pm in Begley Hall. The celebration is open to all who would like to attend. This is not a formal service of worship, but rather a simple ritual to honor who he was in this life, and commit him joyfully to the next.

Miranda Rand

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Adult Education

Father James,

Rector
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SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION: *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 21st 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.”

Classes are held on Sunday mornings from 9 to 10 in the Conference room. Don’t worry if you have missed previous classes, each class stands on its own.

DISCOVERING THE BIBLE: Hebrew Scriptures Overview

This course is a survey of the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), while discussing some of the scholarly issues surrounding each part of the Old Testament (such as the JEDP theory). The videos take account of new research in the field of biblica studies.

These classes are presented as a survey, not a theology. So don't expect it to stand up for any particular theological perspective (you will be given the tools to do that on your own). It is a useful introductory-level course for students starting out in biblical study.

October 8 – From *Abraham* through *Conquest of Canan*

October 15 - From *David* through *The Exile*

October 22 – From the *Return from Exile* through *Alexander & Hellenism*

October 29 - From *The Apocrypha* through *Maccabees*

Classes are held on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 in the Conference room. If you would like to attend these classes please email Fr. James james.ross.mcd@gmail.com.



A Halloween Prayer

Lord of Light and Darkness, the days grow short and our spirits flag, and in the gathering gloom all fears of mortal humans rear their ugly heads. We even celebrate Halloween to try to laugh in the face of our fears. But only trust in you can deliver us from all that frightens us.

From the ghosts of failures that continue to haunt us,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the goblins of people who hurt our pride and our feelings,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the skeletons of secrets we are ashamed of,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the monsters of guilt for jobs left undone or unattempted,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the witches that tempt us to brew cauldrons of hate,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the scarecrows of worldly good that offer empty promises,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the webs of lies we weave to keep from facing ourselves,
deliver us, O Lord.

From the masks we wear to hid our pain,
deliver us, O Lord.

Lord of Light and Darkness, we are confident that you will light our way on All Hallow's Eve and every night. Count us among the saints who follow your way. We ask this through your Son who conquered evil, and who lives and reigns with you and our Protecting Spirit, One God, eternal. Amen.



ASK THE RECTOR

The other day in church I received “looks” from a late-comer who sat in the pew directly across from me. It was as if I had sat in her pew. Why do we have pews in church, anyway? I can think of no other institution which makes the audience sit on such uncomfortable seats. And why would anyone think that they can ‘claim’ a certain one?

...Sore Back.

Dear Sore Back,

Like most things we grow up with, pews are a recent innovation (400 or 500 years ago). I have a print of a Breugl painting called "Lent and Carnival" in which the church-goers can be seen leaving church, carrying their portable stools and hassocks. The mediaeval church was very free-flowing, a lot of standing around (and wandering in and out, what with the prayers being in Latin). When the Protestants got serious about listening to the Scriptures and Sermon, they turned the nave into a lecture hall, with more permanent sort of benches. These replaced the portable stools, but were still privately owned or rented. Hence, churches got "pewed up" with private pews, leaving no room for the poor.

The Lorna Doone church in the Westcountry preserves an interesting arrangement from the 18th. C.: pews in pairs, facing one another, with shoulder-high partitions around them, like railway compartments; you can see the (very high) pulpit over the top of the partition, and keep a stern eye on the kids, while no one can see you reprimanding them when they get out of line! It was quite a revolution in the 19th. C., when some people started insisting on building churches with public pews, available to all people. Those people who glare at you when you sit in "their" pew have a considerable history! Yet, you will see no name plates on pews at Saint Stephen's.

The Rector

P.S. There is no reason why you cannot take a cushion with you on Sunday mornings. I hope your back is better.

New Arrivals for St. Stephen's Library added during the Summer of 2014

Some beautifully illustrated books for the Children's Section:

Four by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Adam & Eve's First Sunset: God's New Day

2003

Adam-Biblical figure-Juvenile literature, Eve-Biblical figure-Biblical figure, Sun-Folklore, Picture book

jP222 S

God Said Amen

2000

Peace - Fiction - Juvenile Literature, Pride & Vanity - Fiction - Juvenile Literature, Sharing - Fiction - Juvenile Literature

jPFic S

Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah

2002

Noah's wife (Biblical figure)-Juvenile fiction, Noah's ark - Fiction, Plants - Fiction, Bible Stories - O.T. - History of Biblical events - Fiction, Picture Book

jPFic S

In God's Name

2004

God - Juvenile Literature, Religion - Juvenile Literature, Picture book

jP291.2 S

Water Come Down (Day You Were Baptized) by Walter Wangerin, Jr.

1999

Baptism, Baptism-juvenile literature, Picture book

jP265.1 W

For the Reference Section:

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

Stanley - Editor Sadie

1980

Music encyclopedias, Music history, Music biography

REF 780.3 New

Twenty volumes of everything you want to know about music.

For the Adult books section:

Captial Region Theological Center

Equipping, connecting, inspiring

Oct 06, 2014

In a Changing World - 12th Annual Anniversary Dinner and Fall Celebration
Meet Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, our Keynote Speaker for the 12th Annual Anniversary dinner and fall celebration on October 6th, 2014.
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Oct 03, 2014

Oct 14, 21, 28, 2014

Resource Breakfasts for Champions-Leadership
Session 1: What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary
Session 2: The Care and Feeding of Volunteers
Session 3: Discovering the Gifts and Motivating the "Other 80%"
Leadership skills are vital to the health of a congregation, but it cannot be a "one size fits all" style to support and build up so many!
Register Now

Oct 25, 2014

It's All About the Stories How can we best advocate for those whose voices need to be heard?
INSTRUCTOR: Rev. Dan Hahn
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Oct 17, 2014

Oct 31, 2014

Close Encounters...Of the Science & Religion Kind
On Friday, the focus will be on the scientific study of religion, where religion becomes the object of sustained analysis from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
INSTRUCTOR: Wesley Wildman
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Oct 15, 2014

For more information: <http://www.crtc.org/events-and-courses-browse>

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Church Staff

The Rev. Dr. James R. McDonald, Rector,

The Rev. Patricia L. Jones, Deacon,

Miranda Rand, Christian Education Director,

Robert Acosta, Director of Music,

Lisa Zebrowski, Nursery Manager,

Rose Walker, Secretary,

The Vestry

Sr. Warden, Carole Merrill-Mazurek

Jr. Warden, Erin Cohen

Clerk, Susan Feyrer

Treasurer, Denise Crates

Class of 2014:

Joe Palko

Stan Jakubowski

Class of 2015:

Jack Feyrer

Bill Frank

Jim Syta

Class of 2016:

Brian Riordon

Travis Reedy

Richey Woodzell

The Church Office

Our office is located at 1229 Baker Avenue.

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If we are unable to answer your call, please leave a message.

We will call you back as soon as possible.

The Rector's email is: james.ross.mcd@gmail.com

Our website is <http://www.saintstephenschenelectady.org/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SaintStephensSchenectady>

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Please submit articles to our secretary at

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