

St. Stephen's Herald

✦ *St. Stephen's Episcopal Church serves Christ as an inclusive, progressive community where peace, social justice and faith converge in our worship and urban ministries.* ✦

October 2017

Sunday Worship 10 AM – Communion with Music

Sunday October 22nd

Special Parish Meeting

On Sun Oct 22nd we will have a shorter service, followed by a special parish meeting.

Please read Pastor Matthew's column, page 3, and give it your serious consideration.

October 1st is the First Sunday

On the first Sunday each month, any loose cash in the offering plate goes into the priest's discretionary account to help those from the neighborhood who come to the church for help. Please be generous if you are able.

Also Sunday October 22nd

United Thank Offering Ingathering

Known worldwide as UTO, the United Thank Offering grants are awarded for projects that address human needs and help alleviate poverty, both domestically and internationally in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. United Thank Offering was founded to support innovative mission and ministry that the Episcopal Church budget has not yet expanded to fund and to promote thankfulness and mission in the whole Church. The funds are not permitted for the continuation of ongoing ministries.

There will be UTO envelopes on the Resource Table at the back of church.

Who's Up... in October

The Ministry Schedule is on the website, or refer to the copy that was in the mail.

Looking Ahead...

Thanksgiving Baskets

St. Stephen's will provide a Thanksgiving meal to 30 families in SW Rochester. We are collecting items for the baskets every Sunday. SWEM is providing chickens and some fresh produce from Foodlink for free.



The congregations will need to provide the rest of the food. Below is a list of needed items. Please be generous! Food donations can be placed in the box in the back of the church!

OR – Give Money! Pressed for time? Shopping for a complete basket costs about \$30.

The Thanksgiving Basket List –

*Clip N Shop! Bring any item any week.
Qty is per basket.*

Instant Mashed Potatoes (plain, not flavored)
two 6 oz or one 15 oz boxes

Boxed Stuffing two 6 oz or one 12 oz

Gravy – 2 cans/jars

Sweet Potatoes / Yams - 2 lg cans

Canned Fruit - 2 lg or 4 sm

Canned Vegetables - 6 per Basket peas, corn & carrots

Jellied Cranberry Sauce

Cake Mix & Frosting

Optional – Tea / Instant Coffee / Hot Chocolate mix

Treats – dinner mints, chocolates...



Sunday Supper

Looking ahead to the Holidays, we will be giving out personal care items for SSSS Christmas gifts this year. We are looking for donations of full size items: soap, body wash, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo and facial tissue.

We continue to need juice boxes for the kids bags (they haven't been available through Foodlink lately). And always -- Recycle your plastic shopping bags with us!

Remaining schedule for 2017 SSSS:

October	15th, 22nd and 29th
November	19th and 26th
December	17th (Christmas Party) and 24th**

** NOTE: Christmas Eve meal will be from 12-1PM
There will NOT be a meal on Dec.31st

REGULARLY SCHEDULED PARISH ACTIVITIES

Holy Eucharist: Sundays @ SS	10:00 AM
Mindful Meditation: Tuesdays @ SS	7:00 PM
Weekday Eucharist: Tues. & Thurs. @ TS	12:05 PM
The Sewing Work Shop: Saturdays @ SS	10 AM-2 PM
St. Stephen's Sunday Supper @ SS	1:00-2 PM
3 rd , 4 th , & 5 th Sunday	

Prayers for Our Parish Neighborhood and Community

Please keep these people in your daily prayers:

Elsie Glendenning, Rose, Jim Fallesen, Shelia Morse, Jim Ahearn and family Jason Mills, Joan Gardner, Lynne & Brian McNulty, Kathy Robinson, Doris Schrader, Dennis Price, Maelee Bowman, The Sullivan family, Tom Bohrer, Kathy Clarke, Karen Witkowicz, Debbie Bonomo, Rachael Bisson, Karen Prave, Elizabeth Robinson, Michelle Flowers; Amber Worthington, Beverly Kluge, Virginia Rockwell, Joe and Jessie & family, Mary Cleary, Jesse Alston, and Kristen Kinsella.

Those serving in our armed forces: Joseph Scheidt, Jason Brown, & Jeff Fallesen.

Those Celebrating Birthdays Georgia Carney (10/6), Chuck Dye Jr. (10/12) **and those celebrating Anniversaries,**—Steve & Debbie Burrows (10/5), Gloria Fish & Ken Cauthen (10/13).

Readings for Sunday, October 1

Pentecost 17 / Proper 21

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 | Psalm 25:1-8 |
| 2: Philippians 2:1-13 | G: Matthew 21:23-32 |

Readings for Sunday, October 8

Pentecost 18 / Proper 22

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1: Isaiah 5:1-7 | Psalm 80:7-14 |
| 2: Philippians 3:4b-14 | G: Matthew 21:33-46 |

Readings for Sunday, October 15

Pentecost 19 / Proper 23

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1: Isaiah 25:1-9 | Psalm 23 |
| 2: Philippians 4:1-9 | G: Matthew 22:1-14 |

Readings for Sunday, October 22

Pentecost 20 / Proper 24

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1: Isaiah 45:1-7 | Psalm 96:1-9 (10-13) |
| 2: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 | G: Matthew 22:15-22 |

Readings for Sunday, October 29

Pentecost 21 / Proper 25

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1: Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 | Psalm 1 |
| 2: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 | G: Matthew 22:34-46 |

From The Pastor ---

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

It might be that we all relate to JRR Tolkien's famous Hobbit from his masterwork The Lord of the Rings.

I wish I had the same way with words that his guide, the grey wizard Gandalf, had for him. But just as Frodo found strength from his friends to

complete his impossible quest, so too, I pray, that we will draw together as a community, and a family, as we face the times given us at St. Stephens.

Above all else, I hope we can believe this: the situation we are in - trying to decide how best to go forward given dwindling finances and dwindling energies - is not the result of failure. It is not because we have not worked hard enough. It is not because we aren't "relevant" enough. It is simply that the world has changed around us, and the times that once brought full pews and teeming Sunday School rooms have passed. These times may have

felt like a dream. We can remember them with gratitude. But they are gone.

We live in times that more accurately reflect the majority of church history: a small parish in the midst of a village/community. In many ways, this alone puts St. Stephens in a position to thrive in its mission of loving people well as God loves us. And yet, we have also inherited structures from that previous era that no longer fit the reality. Certainly, they no longer fit our pocket books.

In many ways, just as human beings age, so too has our parish. And just as human beings must make difficult decisions as they grow older, we also must make these decisions as a community. I've heard from those who've gone before me to face hard realities that it's better to do so wide awake, with courage, and with honesty. Aging is not a punishment or a failure. It's natural. That doesn't make it less challenging.

So, here we are. On October 22nd, we will hold a shortened liturgy, followed by a community conversation in which we will discuss our present reality: that, given our finances, we are likely unable to afford both an adequate staff (including even a half-time priest) and also a building. We will follow up this community conversation with many more intimate conversations between four and six members and vestry officers, in order to hear concerns and ideas and ensure all voices are heard.

These conversations will not be easy. Which is why it's important, almost a month in advance, for each of us to be preparing our hearts in prayer, fasting if possible, and with some honest self-examination. We need to come to these conversations, not just with nostalgia for the past or pipe dreams for the future, but with hearts that have listened for God's call, and are able to be real about where we are at personally, and as a community.

There are great cases to be made for all sides of this situation, and it is my prayer that through conversation and prayerful discernment, we may find the Spirit leading us into some completely unexpected pathways. But in order to hear what the

Spirit is saying to the church, we need to be in discernment. Every day. Every night. As if our lives depended on it. Because in many ways, the life of St. Stephens does depend on it.

To help prepare us for our meeting, and to face these times, I might suggest the following as questions to ponder:

- What is your "why" for continuing to call St. Stephens your spiritual home?
- Would you still want to be part of St. Stephens if we no longer had a building?
- What is the mission of St. Stephens, and does it depend on the building? the staff?
- Do you have more energy to invest in St. Stephens, especially if we had fewer staff?
- What about St. Stephens is draining for you? that you wish could be over?
- what about your life would be different if there was no St. Stephens in it?
- What is God calling us to do next?

Feel free to add your own.

As Frodo laments to Gandalf, this won't be easy. We are facing a very difficult discernment. It will not feel good to honestly examine where we're at. But we must. We will face difficulties no matter which way we turn. I believe it's better to face them together, with each other, and with God. If nothing else, St. Stephens is a family, and if we commit to honesty, openness, and faithfulness in this time, then I do believe God will show us the next steps.

Thank you for your courage and your faithfulness. No pastor wants to see these times any more than his or her people. But I am grateful and honored to be a part of these times with such an incredible community in Christ, and together, we will grow deeper in those bonds, no matter what form they may take in the days and years to come. You are all in my prayers, and as the Bible commands us more than any other admonition, "fear not." God is with us. And we are with each other.

- Matthew