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Newsletter February 2014

Bishops and the Episcopal Church

Sometimes people new to the Episcopal Church wonder why we make such a fuss about bishops. The answer is that theologically, historically, and organizationally, bishops are central to who we are as Episcopalians. The Diocese, not the parish, is the organizational unit of the Episcopal Church. The Diocese controls our property; ordains, licenses, supports, and disciplines our clergy; and approves the by-laws by which we live.

During the 18th century, the British refused to consecrate a bishop for the American colonies because they knew that retaining control of the church through the choosing, training, and ordaining of clergy allowed them to maintain authority over the church and then, perhaps, the people. I suspect that few history teachers today speak of the “struggle for an American episcopate” as a reason for the American Revolution but, for many Church of England colonists, it was high on the list. In fact, our name comes from the Greek word for bishops—episcopoi.

Since we are a democratic church, we elect our bishops, which we will do in a Special Diocesan Convention on April 5, 2014. Our Bishop is the head and symbol of the Episcopal Church. It is why the bishop’s miter (hat) and crosier (shepherd’s staff) are at the center of our Diocesan seal. While our democratic polity keeps Bishops from speaking for the church, our Bishop is expected to both care for the clergy of the Diocese and represent the church in the world.

For the last twenty years, the ministry of the Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw SSJE as our Bishop has blessed us. St. Stephen’s in particular has experienced abundant material and spiritual blessings thanks to the leadership and vision of Bishop Tom.

As a preacher, teacher, and person of prayer, Bishop Tom has guided and inspired us. His example of grounding life and leadership in prayer has had a profound influence throughout the Diocese. When he wrote Conversations with Scripture, he offered a workshop on scripture and leadership at St. Stephen’s.

Programmatically, the Diocese has partnered with St. Stephen’s throughout the Shaw years. When I arrived at St. Stephen’s, I knew the parish because it was one of five parishes chosen for Diocesan mission investment, and I was mentoring James Liberge and Leveille McClain in the first Youth Leadership Academy (YLA). Since then, we have sent more than a dozen teens through the YLA and scores of young people to BCH Camp. During my St. Stephen’s years, we have flourished thanks to Urban Assistants like Cliff Brown, Matt Stewart, Courtney Davis Shoemaker, and Dorothea Littlepage. We have enjoyed working with Diocesan interns such as Adam Shoemaker, Christopher Karware, Charlie Knuth, Andrew Phillips, Paul Daniels, and Dan Bell. We have redesigned our logo, produced a welcome brochure, strengthened our programs with young people, improved our signage, experimented with liturgy through Congregational Development Grants, and improved our lighting and windows through Green Grants. Further, Bishop Tom’s idea that we host Diocesan Convention raised our profile in the Diocese and provided funds for our Handicapped bathroom. Finally, his vision for TogetherNow Collaborative Campaigns means that we don’t have to worry whether it will be raining inside when the Deanery gathers for Confirmation on May 3.

**As we welcome Bishop Tom Shaw to St. Stephen’s on February 2, it is our turn to say THANK YOU!
Join us as we bid Bishop Tom farewell and Godspeed.**

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION: A VIEW BEYOND THE PEWS

YOU ARE NEEDED.

The resignation of our Urban Assistant has left St. Stephen's with one full time clergy. I cannot remember any time when we had only one clergy. St Stephens is a flourishing, busy, active, engaged church needing two clergy. The responsibility of moving St. Stephen's forward does not belong to the clergy and staff only. There is not enough staff to do all the work.

YOU ARE NEEDED.

St. Stephen's is our church, our parish, our community, and our spiritual home. It is time for all to step up and carry on the ministry of the parish. You, the people of this parish, have indispensable talents and skills. Become a part of the lay leadership team.

YOU ARE NEEDED

February 9th is the Annual Meeting. The officers and members of the vestry will be elected at this meeting. The vestry is the governing body of St. Stephens's church. There are four open vestry positions as well as the officers. Put your name on the ballot for the vestry. Become a part of that governance team. Speak to the nominating committee, Steve Switzer, Sally Gosselin, Keyana Brown and Patrick La Fortune to put your name on the ballot.

YOU ARE NEEDED.

Stewardship Ministry Team, Choir, church school, Oasis, middle school youth, lay readers, altar guild, ushers, and pastoral care team -- come- sing, be a teacher, youth mentor, read the lessons, help with the altar guild, be an usher, visit the home bound.

Continue moving the ministry of St. Stephen's forward.

Remember we are St. Stephen's.

Think and pray about your skills, talents and match them to one of these ministries.

It is rewarding, and a joy to be with others in the church family growing these ministries

Rev. Jane and the wardens will answer questions, give you more information and take your name for a ministry team.

YOU ARE NEEDED AND APPRECIATED

Respectfully Submitted,

Virginia A. Fuller

VOICES OF ST. STEPHEN'S

This is Voices #2! The questions for February were what got you here and what keeps you here. The idea is that we can get to know each other better. So here are the voices of three strong women. Let's start with CAROLYN HOY. It's impossible not to smile back her because she's always smiling. She has a gentle, cheerful way, but can be firm when she needs to. She started work in high school, staying with one firm for 25 years until it closed. That led her to St. Stephen's and the job of Office Manager. She says "I took the job at Saint Stephen's because it was really flexible, giving me crucial time with my son. After school, he would often come into the office. I'd been raised Catholic but wasn't really happy there. I went to a Catholic school until it closed when I was in the fifth grade. My folks were active, but when it came time for me to be confirmed, I just said I wasn't going to do it."

I needed to make more money, so I moved to a new job...and came back to St. Stephen's as a parishioner. I'd missed it, especially Tuesday afternoons when the kids were there. Today I come every Sunday. I love the service, I love being here, being useful. (Carolyn's on the Vestry now, serving as clerk, another job she carries out beautifully.)

"I think the kids are the best part of the church. Each Sunday, when I come home, I'm always glad I was there."

Now let's meet two other friends. When you talk to JOANNE DROPPER, it's like talking to springtime. A student at Gordon, she's got a year to go and hopes to become a teacher. We hope so, too, because she has a very special way with children. She came to St. Stephen's not long after moving to Lynn. "I had heard St. Stephen's was very active in the community, and that's just what I was looking for. I'd been in a non-denominational church in California. Here at St. Stephen's, I got swept up into things. I gardened last summer and now I'm teaching Sunday School now, first and third grades. We have so much fun! I do crafts with the kids, storytelling...It's a privilege to be with them. They have endless questions about God and heaven, wondering who they'll see there, what it will be like. From week to week, they remember everything. I am excited to be here, to find a true church home. I feel I can bring my whole self to church here! There are so many good things happening!"

JOANNA is a bright, quick, funny person. Not long ago she was a widow in North Dakota, with children in Washington, New York City and Boston. "I wanted to be closer to them and I chose Boston. But I didn't think I could afford Boston so I tried Maine. I was referred to an agency, A Place for Mom. That led to a place that led to St. Stephen's Towers. Here I am."

"St. Stephen's has been quite an experience. It is very involved in social activities, in the surrounding neighborhood. I think it is a lot more welcoming than many other churches. I like the clergy. What I like most is that on Thursday, we have a Healing Service, followed by Tea and Talk. I'd always gone to a weekday service as well as a Sunday service so I feel very much at home."

Three lights in our church, among many others. Together, you really light a fire! I'd love to hear from you, too! Call or write me below. Until April, stay as nice as you are!--**Con Squires, 781-599-8963,**
csquires978@gmail.com

PARISH & DIOCESAN GOVERNANCE

BISHOP SHAW VISITS ST. STEPHEN'S ON FEBRUARY 2. On February 2, as we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation, Bishop Tom Shaw SSJE will make his last visit to St. Stephen's. Bishop Tom chose to include St. Stephen's on his farewell tour of parishes because of our partnership with the Diocese during his Episcopate. From urban mission grants during the Hardy years to YLA, Urban Assistants, Diocesan Interns, BCH Camp, various grant programs, and the TogetherNow Campaign, St. Stephen's has been richly blessed by Bishop Tom's leadership and vision. It has been an abundant two decades of ministry and Sunday, February 2 at 10:00 we gather for worship and a time to express our gratitude. Please join us on the 2nd. Also, let us know what food you will contribute to the reception and whether you can help with set up or clean up. **And bring your cash and food contributions so that we can demonstrate an abundant Souper Bowl of Caring in celebration of Bishop Tom!**

REV. D MOVES ON TO BOSTON. On January 19 following an inspiring MLK service, we bid the Rev. Dorothea Littlepage farewell as she heads to Boston to complete her Urban Assistant time with the collaborative of St. Stephen's in the South End and St. Augustine & St. Martin's.

COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2014 AT NOON

Why should you come?

To enjoy food and fellowship with our church community (it's Potluck!)

To hear about the year past and the year to come

To review the parish finances

To elect leaders for the Parish, Deanery and Diocese

To fulfill your responsibility as a member

2013 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORTS AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2. Our Annual Report tells the story of an amazing year in the life of St. Stephen's. Many thanks to all who did the ministry and all who pulled together the reports included in our summary of 2013. Pick up the Annual Report at the church and check out the ministry reports, 2013 financials, and 2014 budget. The Report of the Rector, which will be the sermon on Sunday, February 9, 2014, will be included in the final draft of the 2013 Annual Report, which will be available by the end of February. If you would like a copy mailed to you, send a check for \$5.00 and your name and address, and we would be happy to mail one to you.

VESTRY UPDATE – JANUARY 19, 2014. The Vestry reviewed and approved Mission Goals for 2014-2020. The Vestry approved a close-to-balanced budget for 2014; the budget puts pressure on the Vestry and congregation as it raises fundraising and grant expectations; a credit with the Church Pension Fund also helped bring the budget into line. The Vestry accepted bids for new outside doors for the Community Room and kitchen, and asked for more investigation about handicapped access in the proposed rebuilding of the dining room outside door. Plans for future clergy coverage with the departure of Urban Assistant the Rev. Dorothea Littlepage were discussed as well as the Bishop's visit, Annual Meeting and elections, and the draft 2014. The Vestry thanked outgoing members Paul Stonkus, Keyana Brown, Sally Gosselin, and Patrick Lafortune.

NOTES FROM THE TREASURER'S OFFICE. While we did not reach the Vestry's ambitious pledge goal of \$142,500, we have over \$125,000 pledged with promises of more on the way. In these challenging economic times, we are particularly grateful to the 13 new and 35 increased pledges. If you have not yet pledged for 2014, blue pledge cards are available and we need your help erasing our budget deficit. 2013 donation statements for tax purposes were mailed to all pledgers the week of January 19; if our records do not match yours, please leave a message for the Treasurer's Office and someone will get back to you. If you have not yet fulfilled your 2013 pledge, we still will gratefully receive all 2013 pledge payments. **Pledge thank you gifts and offering envelopes have been available in the Galahad Area since December; if you need yours mailed to you, please call the office.**

BISHOP BARBARA CELEBRATES HER SILVER ANNIVERSARY. Sunday, February 16 at 4:00 everyone is invited to Gospel Vespers at the Cathedral in celebration of 25 years of the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris as our Bishop. Consecrated February 11, 1989, Bishop Barbara was the first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion. Bishop Tom will offer reflections on their friendship and work together, and the Rev. Canon Ed Rodman will preach. Call the office or sign up in the Galahad Area if you would like to attend.

NURTURING & FORMING CONGREGATION

DIOCESAN MINISTRY DISCERNMENT DAY. February 1 is our annual Diocesan ministry discernment conference. This is a time to reflect on how God might be calling each of us and particularly whether God might be calling one among us to ordained ministry. Please keep Dan Bell and Hazel Johnson and various members of their Discernment Committees in your prayers as they explore God's movement in their lives.

CALL TODAY TO SIGN UP FOR TUESDAY FEBRUARY 4 AT THE MONASTERY. The first Tuesday of every month, we join the monks for worship and supper. Cars leave St. Stephen's at 4:15 and return about 8:00. Sign up is requested so that we have enough cars.

PASTORAL CARE & HEALING PRAYER TEAMS MEET FEBRUARY 6 AT 10:30. HPT and PCT members meet for support and training on February 6 at 10:30. We will be discussing Part VI of Anne LaMott's *Traveling Mercies*.

WEEKLY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMATION AND FELLOWSHIP. The winter is off to a cold, snowy start but there's no reason to hibernate. Join us Tuesdays at 6:30 for Knitting Club, or Wednesdays at 6:30 for Bible Study; right now we are studying the psalms. Thursdays at noon we offer a Eucharist with Prayers for Healing followed by Tea and Talk about Faith. Your spirit will rejoice if you venture out for a bit of faith formation and fellowship.

COMMUNION AT ST. STEPHEN'S TOWER. During the cold months, we offer monthly communion at St. Stephen's Tower, our elder housing building at 25 Pleasant Street in Lynn. Please join us at the Tower on Tuesday, February 18 at 2:00. It's a great excuse to check out one of St. Stephen's most impressive mission outposts and a great community in which to age in place.

HOMEBOUND AND LONGING FOR CONNECTION? Winter limits mobility and energy for many. If you miss your St. Stephen's family in the winter, call the office to arrange a visit by the clergy or a member of the Pastoral Care Team. Also, if you are in the hospital for any reason, please notify the church. The hospital will not call unless you ask.

LENT BEGINS WITH ASH WEDNESDAY ON MARCH 5. Fear not, we did not forget Ash Wednesday and Lent this February. It's just that Easter is not until April 20, which means that Lent is late. Ash Wednesday is March 5, which means that our annual Mardi Gras celebration complete with gumbo and pancakes will be Tuesday, March 4. Please plan now to be part of our Wednesday evening Lenten program—*Ted Talks and the Gospel*. Each week we will consider a different theme and Bible story in relationship to a Ted Talk. And of course, we will head to the Monastery on Tuesdays beginning March 11 and you can sign up now for the March 15 prayer workshop on Silence and Solitude, which the Brothers will offer.

WALKING WITH GOD & THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH BEGINS IN LENT. Adults interested in being confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church on Saturday, May 3 when Bishop Gayle Harris comes to St. Stephen's should talk with Rev. Jane as soon as possible. Our plan is to create a class structure and time that works for those committed to learning more about the Episcopal Church and going deeper in their faith. Everyone is welcome to join this journey of faith formation.

CHRIST-LIKE HOSPITALITY TO CHILDREN, YOUTH & YAs

CHURCH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS. Sunday mornings returned to their usual liveliness at St. Stephen's as classes resumed on January 5. Our teachers Kendra, Beatrice, Keri, Joanna, Patrick, and Neil continue to do a great job sharing God's love with our young people through Bible lessons and other fun activities. As we move into February, we are looking to recruit some additional teachers to ensure two teachers for every class and to make certain that all grades are covered. If you have been looking for an opportunity to get more deeply involved in the mission of St. Stephen's and to make a difference in the lives of young people, this might be your opportunity. If you want more information about Church School opportunities for your child or yourself, please talk with Rev. Jane or Dan Bell.

CONFIRMATION CLASS FOR GRADES 8-12 BEGINS FEBRUARY 2 AT 10:00. Irene Axelrod invites teens to join her for a Confirmation Adventure. A calendar for our Teen Confirmation Adventure, that includes expectations beyond weekly Sunday morning participation, is available. Our core text for Sunday mornings will be an informative and engaging resource called *My Faith, My Life*. Please contact Irene or Dan Bell if you know a youth who is interested in joining the class. Confirmation will take place on May 3rd at St. Stephen's with Bishop Gayle Harris.

A NEW YEAR FOR OASIS & THE SPOT. Teens kicked off 2014 with several fun and lively gatherings. During their first meeting of the New Year, members of THE SPOT got together over hot cocoa and cookies to catch up and find out how the holidays went. Subsequent Tuesdays, they managed to complete and mail CPPK thank you cards. At OASIS' first January meeting, teens and visiting alumni had a great time sharing dinner and conversation (and playing a hysterical card game called "Speakeasy"). In late January calzone making—and using calzones as metaphors for life—kept the teens busy. THE SPOT continues to meet every Tuesday afternoon and OASIS happens every second and fourth Friday of the month. New members are always welcome! **Last call for Senior High Retreat (February 7-9 at BCH Camp) registrations!**

YOUNG ADULTS GAIN FOCUS & NUMBERS. Young adults met for dinner on the second Tuesday of January and reflected on their involvement in various service projects and trips through St. Stephen's and other organizations. Their reflections served as a springboard to brainstorming ways they can make a difference in our local community. This conversation inspired a number of them to gather a few days later to begin cleaning up the OASIS room at St. Stephen's. In the near future, this room will serve as a welcoming space for young adults who want to stop in during the week to study or just hang out. **YA dinner in February will be February 11 at 6:30 and all 18-25ish folks are welcome.**

YAs & TEENS GATHERING FOR FILM SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 AT 7:00. "For the past 40 years, the war on drugs has resulted in more than 45 million arrests, \$1 trillion dollars in government spending, and America's role as the world's largest jailer. Yet for all that, drugs are cheaper, purer, and more available than ever. Filmed in more than twenty states, *The House I Live In* captures heart-wrenching stories of those on the front lines — from the dealer to the grieving mother, the narcotics officer to the senator, the inmate to the federal judge — and offers a penetrating look at the profound human rights implications of America's longest war." (excerpt from PBS.org) A **free screening** of this major documentary, sponsored by the New Lynn Coalition, will take place on **Saturday, February 8th at 7:00** (Black Box Theater, 25 Exchange Street in Lynn). **Teens and young adults from St. Stephen's are invited to attend and join Dan Bell for a brief discussion.**

DEEPENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING FEBRUARY 2. Honor Bishop Shaw and support our Food Pantry by bringing donations of cash and non-perishable food as part of the North Shore Deanery's commitment to the Souper Bowl of Caring in celebration of our Bishop!

ECM MISSION DAY COMES TO ST. STEPHEN'S FEBRUARY 8. Saturday, February 8 from 9:00 to 1:00 Episcopal City Mission will hold a regional mission day at St. Stephen's. Please sign up to help us show hospitality and to tell the story of St. Stephen's engagement with urban ministry.

MCAN STATEWIDE STRATEGY SESSION FEBRUARY 8. As we organize with ECCO to improve opportunity on the North Shore, we understand that most issues we want to influence connect us with allies across the state. From 10:00 to 3:00 on the 8th, the Massachusetts Communities Action Network is gathering local leaders for a conversation about how we work together to increase economic opportunity, address immigration reform, and work to dismantle the pipeline to prison in our community. Speak with Rev. Jane if you would like to attend.

NORTH SHORE VOICES TO END HOMELESSNESS EDUCATION FORUM. For anyone interested in advocacy and in joining together to learn, listen, and ACT on behalf of families and individuals experiencing homelessness, there will be a training on March 2 from 2:00 to 4:00 at First Church, Congregational, 40 Monument Ave., Swampscott. North Shore Voices to End Homelessness and Salem State University are also co-sponsoring a Community Breakfast and Legislative Forum on Thursday, April 3 from 8:00 to 9:00 (doors open at 7:30am) at Ellison Campus Center, Veterans Hall. Meet your senators and representatives. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and Episcopal City Mission are among dozens of endorsers. Our Rector will be the Moderator. Both events are free and open to the Public. For more information, talk with Sally Gosselin.