



Newsletter January 2015

Let Your Light Shine

The season of Epiphany is all about letting our lights shine. At first glance, this sounds like the Gospel of self-actualization—live large, make your mark. On the surface, it seems as though God wants us all to become superstars. But the idea that “letting our lights shine” has anything to do with earthly success doesn’t fit with the Biblical record.

Jesus called his disciples to leave behind family, friends, possessions, and position, and follow him. He was clear that the first would be last and the last first. He encouraged secrecy about the wonders he worked, and he tended to leave cities and towns just when his movement began gaining momentum. Eight of Jesus’ original twelve disciples died as martyrs for their faith. By the time Paul was writing the early Christian community in Corinth, he reminded them, “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.”

Yet, Epiphany really is all about letting our lights shine. It’s just that Epiphany is about letting our Christ light shine, which often puts us at odds with the bright lights of our culture and community.

We begin Epiphany on January 6th by worshipping with the monks of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. The Brothers have given up the ways of the world taking on poverty, obedience, and celibacy as they devote their lives to loving and serving God. The following Saturday, we join the Diocesan community at Trinity Church, Boston, to participate in Rev. Sarah’s ordination to the priesthood. When Bishop Alan Gates and the priests present lay hands on Sarah and call forth God’s Spirit, she, we, and God will unite in saying yes to God’s call. And then, on Sunday the 11th, Rev. Sarah will celebrate her first Eucharist at 8:00am and at 10:00am she will welcome new members of the body Christ through baptism as she takes on her new sacramental ministry of gathering God’s people.

In addition to our new priest, we will have our new Bishop Alan Gates with us on the 11th. Bishop Alan wants to listen to our stories of how God is moving in our midst, and where and how we hear God calling us. He also wants to share with us his emerging vision for our Diocese, and invite us into God’s work with him and the Diocese.

We let our Christ lights shine when we open ourselves to God’s will and way with us. As the New Year begins, commit to coming to church every Sunday. Join Wednesday evening Bible Study or Thursday afternoon Tea & Talk. Attend “The Holiness of Time” on January 17 at the SSJE Monastery in Cambridge. Become part of our LDI-Hub Team exploring how we engage a transformative conversation about racism in our culture and community. Offer yourself for leadership in the parish or Diocese. Devote time each day to looking and listening for God in the ordinary stuff of life as well as in prayer.

May we let our Christ lights shine!

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.’” (Ruth 1:16)

Dear Friends,

For the season of Epiphany our weekly Bible Study group will read and study the book of Ruth. Found in the Old Testament, Ruth is an under-appreciated and short book sandwiched between the books of Judges and First Samuel. It tells the story of two women, Ruth and Naomi, who upon becoming widowed are left destitute and alone. In order to survive Naomi urges Ruth (her daughter-in-law) to remain in Moab and find a new husband. As we read in the quoted passage Ruth refuses this idea and pledges not only to accompany Naomi to a foreign land, but to become one with her: “your people shall be my people.” This is radical accompaniment! Yet what does this look like when put into action? For Ruth this means leaving behind her homeland and culture in order to be with Naomi where ever she may go both physically and spiritually.

“Your people shall be my people”—how do WE put this into action? How do WE accompany one another through all the trials and tribulations of human life? During the month of January St. Stephen’s will offer several opportunities for you to discover how you might answer this question.

One option is to attend the Leadership Development Initiative’s workshop, *Foundations of Collaborative Leadership on Saturday, January 24. The Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) is a group of ordained and lay people committed to empowering us all to be the leaders God so desperately needs us to be. The daylong workshop will provide training and coaching as we imagine possible projects/ministries of radical accompaniment.*

*There are also two options for joining the ongoing conversations on racism in our country. On Sunday, January 18 at 6:30 pm our Contemporary Worship Service will observe Martin Luther King Jr through story-telling, prayer and music. Our speaker, Ed Battle, will share his experiences of working with Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. Earlier in the day Trinity Church in Copley Square will host a symposium on combatting racism with Marian Wright Edelman as keynote speaker. The program will also include a panel discussion with Debby Irving (*Waking up White*), Randy Testa of Walden Media, the Rev. Liz Walker of Roxbury Presbyterian Church and moderator Barbara Dortch-Okara.*

I pray that one or all of these events will speak to the yearnings of your heart for a more peaceful world. While this work is overwhelming, radically accompanying one another makes it easier and more joyful. Please see Rev. Jane or Rev. Sarah if you would like to attend all or one of this events or if you would like more information.

Peace,

Sarah

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION: A VIEW BEYOND THE PEWS

The first weekend in December I went to the Holy Cross Monastery in West Park New York to attend a retreat. The theme for the Advent retreat was “A Manger for His Birth: Christ’s Coming, Our Becoming”. Advent is a waiting time, waiting for Christ to be born in us. Christ’s birth is more than an event in history. Christ’s birth happens again and again in our hearts and lives.

During the retreat, time was spent in meditation, prayer, learning, discussion and silence. Silence for Christ to be born again in us.

*If in your heart you make a manger for his birth
Then God will once again become a child on earth.
Angelus Silesius*

In Advent we anxiously wait for Christ to be born again in our hearts - and next-

Epiphany

The wise men brought gifts to the child and went forth to serve Christ.

Epiphany is being called to serve and to become active and loving in God’s world. Active and loving in God’s world sounds like a tall order but is it? We see people every day at St Stephens who serve, caring for the building, the youth, food pantry, fund raising, stuffing envelopes, working on committees, healing, pastoral care, altar, vestry and more.

The things I do at St. Stephens I do to serve God and the people of this parish as many others do. I ask you to pray and think about serving God and the people of this parish in some way.

Virginia Fuller

COME CELEBRATE WITH US JANUARY 11

8:00am Join Rev. Sarah’s first Eucharist

10:00am Welcome Bishop Alan Gates to St. Stephen’s

Rejoice in the Baptism of new members

11:30am Greet & Eat Time with the Bishop

12:30pm Vestry & other leaders meet with the Bishop

STEWARDS OF RESOURCES

VESTRY SUMMARY: DECEMBER 14. The Vestry reviewed financials, discussed Pledge Pay Up Sunday, discussed ways to increase income through fundraisers, rentals, and grants, received a report from the Stewardship Ministry Team, and discussed recruiting candidates for Vestry, Deanery, and Diocesan Convention.

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY TEAM PLANS PLEDGE FOLLOW UP. As we reach toward our pledge goal of \$125,000, the Stewardship Ministry Team and Vestry thank all those who have pledged for 2015. Already 75 households have pledged \$117,503. Pledge envelopes and thank you Episcopal Church calendars are available in the Galahad Area; please call the office if you would like your envelopes mailed to you. Even as we approach our pledge goal, the Vestry conversation about income made clear that we actually need to surpass our goal if we hope to fund the ministry envisioned when leaders discussed the expense side of the 2015 budget. Please say, "Here I am, Lord!" as we support the people of St. Stephen's doing God's work in the world.

ARE YOU CALLED TO SERVE? Our Parish, Deanery, and Diocese need leaders and the good news is that the leaders we need are sitting in our pews. Please think, pray, and talk to **Nominating Committee members Irene Axelrod, Joanne Droppers, Jeffrey McAvoy, and Chris Trahan**, as you reflect on whether God might be calling you to serve. Although nominations can be made at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 8, the Nominating Committee hopes to publish in the Annual Report a full slate of candidates for Junior & Senior Warden, Treasurer, Clerk, and Vestry (three 3-year & one 1-year) as well as Deanery (5 delegates) and Diocesan Convention (2 delegates & 2 alternates). **The deadline for nominations is Sunday, January 25.**

ANNUAL MEETING AND POTLUCK LUNCH FEBRUARY 8, 2015 AT NOON. Mark your calendars now for the Annual Meeting and Potluck on Sunday, February 8 at noon. Episcopal governance requires the participation of our members in our Annual Meeting. The Episcopal Church defines members as communicants who contribute financially to the parish. We hope to have Annual Reports available by Sunday, February 1. Of course, timely completion of the Annual Report depends on **all ministry team leaders submitting Annual Reports by Thursday, January 15.** Please sign up in the Galahad Area to let us know what you will contribute to the potluck.

NURTURING THE CONGREGATION

BAPTISMS ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 11; PREPARATION CLASS JANUARY 6. Our Book of Common Prayer defines Baptism as "*the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.*" (pg. 858) This sacrament, when we affirm that we belong to God, requires thoughtful preparation for both the candidate and their family. **The next baptism service will be on The Feast of the Baptism of Christ on January 11 at 10:00am;** attendance at the preparation class on Tuesday, January 6 at 6:30 is mandatory. Please complete registration forms by Sunday, January 4 if you are interested and speak with the clergy if you have any questions.

TUESDAY JANUARY 6 AT THE MONASTERY. Celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with the monks in Cambridge. On Tuesday, January 6, we will join the SSJE Brothers for worship and supper at the Monastery. Sign up is required but everyone is encouraged to join us. Cars leave St. Stephen's at 4:15 and return about 8:00.

BIBLE STUDY RESUMES JANUARY 7. During the season of Epiphany our bible study will read and study the Book of Ruth. This short book in the Old Testament tells the story of two women and their journey from destitute widowhood to joy in a new land. The themes of accompaniment and belonging are still very pertinent to our modern day experiences. We meet every Wednesday, 6:30-8:00pm. Join us and bring your questions!

HEALING PRAYER AND PASTORAL CARE TEAM MEET JANUARY 8. The Healing Prayer and Pastoral Care Teams will meet at 10:30 on Thursday, January 8th. Our discussion will focus on chapters 7-12 of The Shack.

SAVORY & SWEET FINGER FOOD NEEDED FOR JANUARY 11 RECEPTION. Please sign up in the Galahad Area or call the office to let us know what you want to contribute for our reception celebrating Rev. Sarah's ordination and Bishop Alan's visit to St. Stephen's. We need fruit, veggies, tea sandwiches, cookies, brownies, and all manner of other easily eaten food! Also, please talk with the Wardens if you can help with set up on Saturday afternoon.

JOIN THE MONKS ON JANUARY 17 "THE HOLINESS OF TIME." Please sign up as soon as possible for Superior Geoffrey Tristram's workshop on "The Holiness of Time" at the Monastery on Saturday, January 17. Cars will leave the church at 7:45am and return by 1:30.

LDI-HUB INVITATION TO LEADERSHIP. The North Shore Hub-LDI group will host a training at St. Stephen's on Thursday, January 15 at 6:00 to prepare participants for **Foundations of Collaborative Leadership on Saturday, January 24 from 9:00am to 5:00pm.** The Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) is a group of ordained and lay people committed to empowering us all to be the leaders God so desperately needs us to be. LDI will launch its training program on Saturday, January 24 during which teams are trained in five key leadership practices and kick off their missional projects. We are all called to be leaders through our baptismal covenant so please sign up for this great opportunity! Some of our leaders hope to use the training to engage a transformative conversation about racism but the training is open to anyone who is interested in developing leadership skills, deepening faith, and building relationships.

WORDS OF THANKS. St. Stephen's depends on a world of volunteers who go above and beyond reasonable expectations getting the work of the parish done. Our busy December, calls forth many thank yous. **Thank you to our Wardens who have served tirelessly through an incredibly busy year;** in visible and invisible ways our Wardens are stewards of our common life carrying the formal responsibilities of leading the Board of a half million dollar non-profit blessed with a historic buildings and the less formal work of nurturing our life as a community of Christians. **Thank you to the Treasurer's Office Team and the Finance Committee;** the work of managing St. Stephen's finances is complicated and demanding but somehow we manage to squeeze pennies hard enough and track money closely enough that we have enough to do the work God has given us to do and the capacity to report on finances in transparent ways. **Thank you to our office helpers;** without office volunteers, we would not have newsletters, bulletins, reminder calls, and a host of other pieces of communication. **Thank you to all the teens and adults who contributed to making CPPK a success this year;** logistically, financially, and physically it takes an army to raise money, collect wish lists, shop, organize bags, and distribute Christmas presents to 200 children but we pulled it off again this year. **Thank you to our Pantry Team for providing scores of holiday meals as well as weekly grocery bags for more than 100 individuals and families.** We depend on all who donate food as well as those who organize, bag, distribute, and show hospitality to all who come. **Thank you to everyone who contributed to our glorious Christmas celebrations;** from the most unruly sheep in the Pageant to Eucharistic ministers, healing prayer team members, choristers, readers, ushers, decorators, cleaners, office helpers, altar guild, flower deliverers, photographers, and everyone who joined us to sing, pray and give thanks for the birth of Christ. **And thank you to the staff during this busy time of year!**

LOOKING TOWARD LENT. Again this year, we hope to offer by email, on our website, and on paper daily Lenten Reflections written by members of the parish. The clergy and other eager editors will encourage, collect, edit, scribe... whatever it takes to encourage you to offer a 100 word reflection that describes an experience or a moment of transformation when you saw yourself or someone else or an event in a whole new light.

HOSPITALITY TO CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

FAMILY DINNERS CONTINUE ON JANUARY 18! The first Family Dinner of 2015 kicks off on Sunday, January 18th, from 4:30-6:30 pm. We'll have fun with an old classic: family game night! Come enjoy fellowship while we eat, talk, and play together. All ages are welcome. Contemporary Worship service will follow at 6:30 for those who wish to attend. Contact Audrey Gutfreund, KIC Director, at 617-435-3325 for more information.

AFTER SCHOOL KIC STARTS IN FEBRUARY! Beginning February 2nd and running until June, Kids In Community will offer a program after school most Mondays from 2:00-6:00 pm. Kids will play *djembes* and other drums in a percussion ensemble, sing in a choir, and do homework and other activities with KIC mentors. Children in grades 2-5 are eligible to participate. Registration for After School KIC is now open and is first come, first serve. Forms are available in the office and the Galahad area. A registration fee of \$10 is required. We look forward to this new chapter of KIC programming! Please contact Audrey Gutfreund, KIC Director, in the church office or at 617-435-3325 for more information.

KIDS' CHOIR SINGS AGAIN. Kids' Choir will sing on Sunday, January 18 as we focus our worship on the Christian witness of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For music education and for performance preparation, young people need to attend Choir Practice Saturdays, January 3 and 17, 1:00-3:00. All 2nd-12th graders are encouraged to join the Choir. We also need parent helpers. Please call the parish office or talk to Juliana Davis for more information.

OASIS: Fridays, January 9th and 23rd, 6:30-9:00. Our OASIS community youth group is open to all youth grades 9-12. As we begin a new year we'll continue building the group through activities, community work, and games. A special project is planned for January 9 and many hands are needed; please bring your friends!

STUMP THE BISHOP SUNDAY, JANUARY 11. Bishop Alan Gates will conduct his first visit to St. Stephen's on January 11. There will be time specifically for Bishop Gates to meet with our children and youth after the parish reception. Young people should bring questions and see if we can stump the Bishop!

REGIONAL YOUTH EVENT SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 3:00-7:00 IN CHELSEA. Young people will meet in a cross-cultural exchange to showcase youth-led justice-seeking efforts in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, César Chávez, Rigoberta Menchú, Jesus Christ, and other freedom-fighters. St. Stephen's youth will share their experiences working on the Christmas Presents Project for Kids. Cars will leave the church at 2:30 and return by 7:30.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH RETREAT AT BCH CAMP FEBRUARY 6-8. Join young people (grades 9-12) and adults from across the diocese for a weekend of games, song, discovery, and inspiration. Organized and led by the Diocesan Youth Council, the retreat is designed to give high school students a chance to get off the treadmill and get in touch with themselves, their peers, and their Loving Creator. The retreat fills up quickly so please see Rev. Sarah or Dan before January 10 to sign up! The retreat cost \$120; we ask a family contribution of at least \$40 but cost should not be a reason to skip the retreat. Just talk to the clergy!

CPPK TOY DRIVE WRAPS UP ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR. Thanks to the efforts of the OASIS youth group, young adults, and our dedicated adult volunteers at St. Stephen's, we had another awesome year for CPPK ("Christmas Presents Project for Kids")! This year we gave out gifts to nearly two hundred underserved children in the Lynn community. For at least fifteen years now, CPPK has been providing opportunities for St. Stephen's youth to learn the importance of sharing their time and talents in service of families in our community who could use some help during the holidays. They did so this year not only by collecting names, shopping, and giving out presents, but also by creating "Piece of the Solution" puzzle pieces designed by Jason Cruz. Youth decorated them with inspirational words cut out of recycled magazines and added some finishing touches to make them stand out. The art pieces gave our middle school and high school students a chance to express themselves creatively, and all for a good cause (they collected well over \$1,000 in puzzle piece sales this year!). A huge "thank you" to Susan Rosevear, Bonnie Bishop, Paulina Villarroel Cruz, Joyce Wallace, Irene Axelrod, youth's parents and families, our young adults, and everyone who donated and bought art to make CPPK 2014 a success! (Also, a "shout out" to Joe Brown for bringing holiday cheer on distribution day by dressing as Santa!).

YOUNG ADULTS REFLECT AND TAKE ACTION IN WAKE OF NON-INDICTMENTS. On Tuesday, December 9th, young adults gathered at St. Stephen's for a supper conversation about their responses to the non-indictments of police officers in the respective slayings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. Folks discussed the complex topic of racism in our country and community, which has been highlighted recently by these cases of police brutality and the just outrage by thousands in reaction to grand juries' decisions not to indict. As part of their conversation, young adults brainstormed words and phrases that could be used for a sign that OASIS created the following Friday night. They decided to post the words "ONE RACE: HUMAN!" on the fence facing the Common by using dozens of plastic cups. It's a statement that expresses the conviction of our teens and young adults that all people are equally deserving of the same love and respect, regardless of race, class, and so on. Amid the seemingly endless cold winter nights we face right now, literally and figuratively, this sign is a testament to the hope that our young people bring to Lynn, the nation, and the world. **The next YA Dinner is Tuesday, January 13 at 6:30. All 18 to 30 year olds are welcome.**

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP JANUARY 18 AT 6:30—WALKING WITH MLK. In the midst of MLK Weekend, take time for our moving and motivating Contemporary Worship. The music of Juliana Davis and her Berklee Band will get you singing, dancing, and praying in the Spirit. Ed Battle will offer reflections on his time as a bodyguard for MLK. His message will challenge young people to think and pray about how they are working for a better world. Any and all ages are welcome as we "come into God's presence with a song." (*Psalms 100*)

DEEPENING COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

ECCO UPDATE. With the New Year upon us we are called to re-commit ourselves to embodying God's kingdom for the world! Last month St. Stephen's received the ECCO award for Perseverance for our long-term dedication and work for the minimum wage and earned sick time campaigns. We now need to keep this momentum going as we and ECCO discern our next steps. One possibility may crystallize around the inter-connected issues of race and violence in our world. On the Monday before Christmas 70 individuals from 15 different faith communities gathered to lament the inherent broken relationships that lead to racism. If you are interested in further conversation or have questions please see Rev. Sarah.

HONOR DR. KING MLK WEEKEND. Teens honor MLK at the Regional Youth Event in Chelsea on January 17. Our parish MLK celebration with special music will be on January 18 at 10:00.

The Lynn MLK observance at Danversport Yacht Club will feature Zion Baptist pastor Rev. Kirk Jones. Sign up soon to sit at the St. Stephen's table at the Lynn MLK lunch on January 19.

SERVE AT THE TABLE JANUARY 25. Our team serves at My Brother's Table on Sunday, January 25, 1:00-4:00. If you can't help on Sunday, please donate a dessert, or help our clothes drive for winter coats and gloves, and new socks.

KEEP OUR PANTRY SHELVES FULL. In recent weeks the lines have been long at our Pantry. All contributions are welcome but canned tuna and chicken, beef stew, and spaghetti sauce are always good choices. Also, we could always use extra volunteers at the Pantry. Talk to Sally Gosselin, Harry Jackson, or Neil O'Donnell if you want to volunteer on Friday afternoons.