



Newsletter April 2014

To Everything There Is a Season

Last week, I saw my first brave snow drops and crocuses. They grew on the sunny, south side of a building and stood with their blossoms tightly closed against the cold. Snow may come and end their lives but still, they were there announcing the return of life to the earth. We live in a climate that embodies life, death, and re-birth as it moves through spring, summer, fall, and winter. We affirm a faith that grounds itself in the life, death, and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ. And we know that our lives, as the words of Ecclesiastes (or the Byrds) express, experience seasons—*“To everything there is a season, and a time and purpose under heaven...”*

Recently, a friend sent me John Soos’s poem *The Deep Sleep of the Seed*, which speaks to the familiar rhythm of life and faith. *“To Be of the Earth is to know/ The restlessness of being a seed/ The darkness of being planted/ The struggle toward the light/ The pain of growth into the light/ The joy of bursting and bearing fruit/ The love of being food for someone/ The scattering of your seeds/ The decay of the seasons/ The mystery of death/ And the miracle of birth.”*

This April, as we move toward Holy Week and Easter as the days lengthen and the world comes back to life, I’m struck by the cycle of life, death, and resurrection going on around us. As our new Kids’ Choir debuted on March 30, many who remember generations of children learning to sing in the St. Stephen’s Junior Choir delight in seeing and hearing our eager young choristers. As ECCO’s work on youth jobs and raising the minimum wage gains traction on the statewide political agenda, a new, stronger ECCO emerges asking the question: *“how do we bring a moral voice to the 2014 Gubernatorial race?”* As our Middle School Youth Group enters its second month, grandmother Debbie Potter said, *“I’m wanting to call it Fleur de Lis.”* While its trial name is Tapestry, it surely resurrects memories of past programs for tweens and young teens. Wednesday evening Bible Study has new vitality and participation; Knitting Group on Tuesdays fills the Galahad Area with a growing group of people, ceaseless conversation, and lots of laughter; and cries, gurgles, and giggles of babies punctuate our Sunday morning worship. And, of course, as we elect a new bishop on April 5 and engage a “Season of Celebration” in gratitude for Bishop Tom Shaw’s 20 years of leadership among us, we know the cycle of loss and new life.

As I look to Holy Week, I’m struck by Maundy Thursday’s call to community characterized by love and service; Good Friday’s recognition of evil, oppression, betrayal, pain, loss, and death; Holy Saturday’s holding of Godly stillness as we wait for all things to be made new; and our Easter Alleluias proclaiming the rebirth of life and hope even in the midst of chaos, confusion, and fear.

Join us as we make our journey through all of life. Let us come together in community to celebrate and to serve; let us confess and carry our losses together; let us trust God’s power to make all things new; and let us shout our Alleluias as we transform our lives and our community through Christ’s Gospel of love, compassion, and justice.

Jane⁺

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS; A VIEW BEYOND THE PEW

Happy Spring!! Though technically the Earth's tilt is now facing the sun, we wonder if it will ever really feel like spring with threats of another Nor'easter and continuous below average temperatures. However if we look close enough, we know that spring is coming even if we do not feel like it is. The crocuses, daffodils, hyacinths and tulips are starting to break through the earth, the days are getting longer and the robins are preparing their nests. New life is happening all around us.

So too at St. Stephen's, new life is springing forth. Here is but a glimpse of what may be seen:

*A new youth choir has met, with our own Julianna Davis as the music leader. With about a dozen excited children at the first rehearsal, we are optimistic that more children will also join.

*Our middle school aged children have a new youth group, Tapestry, that will meet regularly on a monthly basis, to nurture and strengthen the bonds of friendship between the many middle schoolers in our parish. Their first official gathering was on March 28th.

*Our acolytes are showing excitement in gathering together for training and fellowship. Several new youth have stepped forward in becoming acolytes back in February. Their next meeting is coming up on Friday evening April 4th.

*Our Young Adult group continues to meet monthly over dinner and have recently reorganized and painted the Oasis room.

*St. Stephen's was one of the host sites for the Bishop Walkabout. All of the candidates were appreciative of the hospitality shown by all the people at St. Stephen's. Guests from around the diocese were equally as impressed.

*On April 5th, our rector and convention delegates will participate in a Special Convention called by the Standing Committee of the Diocese for the purpose of electing our next Diocesan Bishop, who will succeed Bishop Shaw upon his retirement in September.

*We have several candidates for Confirmation this year and have been busy preparing for their Confirmation here at St. Stephen's with Bishop Gayle Harris. Once again, our parish has the honor of hosting the North Shore Deanery confirmation in May.

*Our Altar Guild is growing and is still working out a few kinks as it tries to fill the void left by Jane Snow's and Alice MacFarlane's retirement. Members are taking on pieces of the whole rather than the whole piece by participating in a way that they feel fits within their schedules and talents. Some prefer to care for the linens while others chose to care for the Communion vessels.

I invite you to look around and see the many exciting things happening around the parish and encourage you to participate in ways that you feel called.



Senior Warden

JOIN US FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK—APRIL 15

Blessings of Oils & Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows at cathedral

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK—APRIL 16

8:00pm Holy Eucharist in the Chapel

MAUNDY THURSDAY—APRIL 17

Noon Commemoration of the Last Supper

7:00pm Foot Washing and Commemoration of the Last Supper

GOOD FRIDAY—APRIL 18

Noon-3:00pm Ecumenical Last Words of Christ at Washington Street, Baptist

7:00pm Good Friday Liturgy with Veneration of the Cross

GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER—APRIL 19

8:00pm First Fire lit on Lynn Common, Story of Salvation, Baptism & Festive Eucharist

SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION—APRIL 20

8:00 and 10:00am Festival Eucharist with Choir

BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF RESOURCES

VESTRY UPDATE. During March, Vestry members attended Saturday workshops on engaging global mission, silence and solitude, or non-profit management.

ON APRIL 5 WE ELECT A BISHOP FOR MASSACHUSETTS. On Saturday, April 5, we will elect a new Diocesan Bishop for Massachusetts. Our candidates are Holly Antolini (St. James, Cambridge), Tim Crellin (St. Stephen's, Boston), Ron Culmer (St. Clare's, Pleasanton, CA), Alan Gates (St. Paul's, Cleveland Heights, OH—previously seminarian at St. Stephen's, Lynn), Ledlie Laughlin (St. Peter's, Philadelphia, PA), Mally Lloyd (Canon to the Ordinary, DioMass), and Sam Rodman (TogetherNow Implementation, DioMass). The Diocesan website contains extensive information, including a videotaped Walkabout, about the seven candidates. In March, St. Stephen's received high praise from our Bishop candidates as well as many in the Diocese for our warm hospitality in hosting one of the Walkabouts. Our youth made a great impression greeting visitors in the parking lots with big signs welcoming them to St. Stephen's; they also shook hands with each candidate as they got off the bus to enter the church. Many thanks to all who provided food as well as the dozens of folks who greeted and directed those who came. To be elected bishop, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes in both the clergy order and the lay order on the same ballot. Results of each ballot will be posted on the Diocesan website. Rev. Jane and Fr. Edward will vote as clergy canonically resident in the

Diocese; Irene Axelrod and Joyce Wallace will vote as our two delegates to Diocesan Convention; and Chris Trahan will vote as a member of Diocesan Council. Please keep the candidates as well as those who vote in your prayers.

NURTURING THE CONGREGATION

THERE'S STILL TIME TO TAKE ON LENT. Tuesdays at the **Monastery** continue through April 8, and **Wednesday evening TED Talks and the Bible** continue through April 16. Even if you have missed every Tuesday and Wednesday in March, finish Lent strong in April.

GOD BLOG SHARES POWERFUL STORIES OF GOD. Daily during Lent, members of St. Stephen's have offered "God Moments" on our website in our God Blog. You all plus our tech team of Dan Collis Puro, Carolyn Hoy, Dan Bell, and Linda Midland have made this powerful expression of life and faith possible. Sunday mornings, we distribute the daily readings at church but the entire series can be found on our website (ststephenslynn.org). The blog entries can also be received as a daily email by emailing ststephens@ststephenslynn.org. **Given that we have a few more weeks of Lent, we still want your "God Moments."** Please email the Office with a brief story of a moment in your life when you felt God's presence.

RITE OF RECONCILIATION OFFERED BY APPOINTMENT. If you would like to prepare for Easter by making your confession, please call or email Rev. Jane to schedule a time. This sacramental act is about getting right with God, yourself, and the world. For the penitent, the end of result of confession should be freedom not guilt or regret. Rev. Jane has copies of Curtis Almquist's booklet *Reconciliation* as well as Martin Smith's book *Reconciliation* for those who would like to learn more. All of Lent and especially Good Friday and Holy Saturday are traditional times for undertaking the Rite of Reconciliation.

HELP GET THE CHURCH READY FOR EASTER. On Saturday, April 19th starting at 8:30 am, the Altar Guild invites you to help clean and decorate the church for our Easter services. Coffee, tea and breakfast goodies will be available. We will work through the day until we are done. Come for a couple of hours or stay for the whole time, but know that any amount of time volunteered is very much appreciated. "Many hands make for light work."

EASTER COMMUNIONS. Please call the office if you would like to receive Communion at home this Eastertide. The clergy will begin visiting homebound parishioners for Easter Communions beginning the week of April 20.

12th ANNUAL SOUL CELEBRATION APRIL 27. "Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. **Therefore let us keep the Feast! Alleluia!**" What better way to launch Easter season than to gather with our St. Stephen's family for the 12th Annual Soul Celebration on Sunday, April 27. Our guest speaker and preacher will be the Rev. Angela Ifill, Missioner for Black Ministries for the Episcopal Church. Her talk will focus on "*Pipelines to Possibility not Prison.*" Musical entertainment at the lunch will include our Kids' Choir, Hip Hop stars Fame & Juliet, and Chubby Booth. Last year's Soul Celebration raised over \$12,000 and Debbie Potter and her team hope to be even more successful this year. To reach our fundraising goal, we all need to buy and sell ads for the Soul Celebration Ad Book. **Covers start at \$500; full-page ads cost \$150, half page \$75, and quarter page/ business card \$50; and supporter listing only costs \$20.** While good preaching and an inspiring keynote address will feed our minds and spirits, the Soul Food Dinner promises to feed your body in

decidedly non-Lenten ways! Come enjoy fried and baked chicken, mac and cheese, collard greens, corn bread, chocolate and coconut cakes, and a host of other soulful treats. If you would like to help with cooking or serving, Debbie Potter can put you to work. But most of all, **Buy and sell tickets for St. Stephen's 12th Soul Food Dinner: \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12.**

BIBLE STUDY RESUMES ON APRIL 30 AS WE TAKE ON PAUL. In the months ahead, we will read and discuss Paul. We'll start on the 30th with some passages from Acts to understand Paul's conversion and commitment to the Gospel. On May 7, we will read Romans Chapter 1 and so on through all the Pauline Epistles. While people are free to step in and out of our study, community and learning are both stronger when we journey together week by week.

MONTHLY FAMILY DINNERS CONTINUE ON APRIL 27. Parish families are invited to join families from Kids In Community for a Community Dinner on Sunday, April 27, from 5:30-7:00 pm. Families will help prepare the meal together (ingredients will be provided), and after dinner, we'll play some games that are fun for kids and adults alike. Adults will also have some "kids-free" time to converse. Please note that everyone is welcome, but all children are expected to attend with an adult. For more information, talk to Carly McClain or KIC Coordinator Audrey Gutfreund (617-435-3325).

CONFIRMATION WITH BISHOP GAYLE HARRIS AT ST. STEPHEN'S ON MAY 3. Saturday, May 3 at 10:30 Bishop Harris will join us at St. Stephen's to confirm and receive teens and adults into the Episcopal Church. Irene Axelrod and Danielle Pappas have been working with our teen Confirmation crew. Adults interested in Confirmation or reception should talk with Rev. Jane as soon as possible about preparing for the commitment.

FORMING CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS

ACOLYTE PIZZA AND TRAINING APRIL 4. Friday April 4th from 5:30-8:00, experienced and new acolytes will gather in the Graham Suite for Pizza and then plan for our Holy Week and Easter services. All 6th-12th graders are encouraged to join the acolyte corps.

KIDS' CHOIR PREPPING FOR SOUL CELEBRATION. Our new Kids' Choir, under the direction of Juliana Davis, debuted on Sunday, March 30. The Choir will rehearse on Saturdays April 12 and 26, 1:00-3:00, in preparation for Soul Celebration Sunday (April 27). All 1st-12th graders are encouraged to join the Choir Community. For more information, email Juliana at julianadavismusic@gmail.com or call her at 617-834-5367.

CHURCH SCHOOL CONTINUES TO TEACH STORIES OF FAITH. Our committed band of teachers welcome students into conversations about faith and life every Sunday morning at 10:00am. We offer classes for babies through grade 12. Making up for lost time, our teen Confirmation Class is meeting on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, checking out Walkabouts, taking field trips, and engaging in community service projects under the guidance of Irene Axelrod and Danielle Pappas. Young people who have not tried Church School recently should check out their class; and we ask parents to fill out registration forms.

YOUNG ADULTS GOING STRONG-- YA! On Tuesday, March 11th, young adults (YAs) gathered for dinner and conversation. We went deep asking, "What's a part of your life that needs a new coat [of paint]?" The question was inspired by the group's efforts to renovate the former OASIS room. **On Tuesday, April 8 at 6:30 YAs (ages 18-25) are invited to a taco/burrito-making night! Getting ready for Holy Week, we'll explore the theme, "Letting it go: what's stopping you from moving forward?"**

OASIS DIVES DEEP WITH 12 YEARS A SLAVE. In March a dozen teenagers & YAs gathered to eat pizza and watch the Oscar-winning film *12 Years A Slave*. The movie is about a free black man from upstate New York named Solomon Northup who is abducted and sold as a slave in the South. Based on a true story, *12 Years* is filled with hard-to-watch scenes that portray the horrors of slavery and the severe toll it took on its victims. During discussion following the film, one teen noted a powerful scene in which Northup says to his fellow slaves, "I don't wanna survive. I wanna live." This quote resonated with many of those present that night. Many of them know what it is like to try to overcome personal and societal obstacles that get in the way of them thriving and not just surviving. In addition, a number of teens brought up the fact that oppressive systems and ideologies still exist today (e.g., racism, sexism, and heterosexism) and often are driven, like 19th-century slavery, by misguided religious teachings. Even more distressing is the fact that there are nearly 30 million people today who are still enslaved around the world due to forced labor and human trafficking (often in the form of sexual exploitation). Yet, despite many challenges, our teens remain committed to being the change they want to see in the world. **In April, the Spot meets every Tuesday from 3:00-6:00 and Oasis gathers on April 11 and 25 from 6:30-9:00 for support, formation, and conversation about issues that matter.**

GOOD FRIDAY BRUNCH FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS. On Good Friday (April 18th), teens and young adults are invited to brunch at 10:00am. We will discuss what the Cross means for each of us and how we carry our own crosses in life. Afterwards, we'll spend time writing down things in our lives that we want to give over to God. We'll then nail these things to a cross as we remember Jesus' death and His promise of new life.

MIDDLE SCHOOL "TAPESTRY" OFF TO A STRONG START. Debbie Potter and granddaughter Miayah got the Middle School Youth Group "Tapestry" off to a good start in March. In April the group will gather on Friday, April 25 from 5:30 to 7:30 to celebrate School Vacation Week and Easter.

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE NOW FOR KIC TEEN MENTORS. High School and College teens hoping to work for KIC this summer should register at the NS Career Center on Union Street and complete a KIC Application (available from the St. Stephen's Parish Office) as soon as possible. We plan to begin interviews during school vacation week. For more information, call KIC Coordinator Audrey Gutfreund (617-435-3325).

BCH CAMP FORMS ARE AVAILABLE NOW! Registration forms for Barbara C. Harris Summer Camp (for grades 4-12) are available and spaces fill up fast! **Camp Registration Sunday (when all registration forms need to be in) will be Sunday, May 4.** Camp costs \$575 per week. The Camp asks each family to pay what you can BUT scholarships are available and no child will be deprived a week at Camp because of inability to pay. Diocesan scholarships look to the family, the church and the Diocese each paying 1/3 of the cost. This means that the requested minimum family share is \$192. If a family cannot pay \$192, a letter explaining why you can't pay needs to accompany the regular Camp Scholarship Form, which St. Stephen's clergy must sign unless you pay the full \$575. The Health Form must be signed by your child's physician. Camp transforms the lives of young people and St. Stephen's and the BCH leadership remain committed to making Camp accessible

to all children who want to go. If you have questions about Camp, please speak with Rev. Jane or Dan Bell, BCH Camp Chaplain!

REGISTER FOR FIRST COMMUNION IN APRIL. Communion Classes will be offered in May in preparation for First Communion on June 1 at 10:00am. Although all are welcome to receive communion at any age at St. Stephen's, communion instruction for children is important so that they understand the sacrament better. Registration forms are available from the office and on Sunday mornings.

DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

NORTH SHORE VOICES TO END HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST. On Thursday, April 3 at 7:30, North Shore Voices will host breakfast with our elected officials. The event is free and will be held at Salem State University (Ellison Campus Center, Veterans Hall). Please help us fill the St. Stephen's table.

ECM LOBBY DAY IN CELEBRATION OF BISHOP SHAW. ECM's Lobby Day on April 9 will kick-off our Diocesan "Season of Service and Celebration" Honoring Bishop Tom Shaw. Cars will leave St. Stephen's at 8:00am and return after we have visited our legislative delegation to lobby them about raising the minimum wage, providing workers with earned sick time, supporting the safe driving bill, funding pre-apprentice training programs in the Transportation Bond Bill, and funding programs to end family homelessness.

ST. STEPHEN'S ECCO LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETS APRIL 23 AT 6:30. As ECCO gains visibility and power on the North Shore, we are rebuilding our St. Stephen's Leadership Team. Now is the time to get involved to make a transformative difference in our community. The Raise Up Massachusetts Campaign made elected officials take notice of faith communities voicing a prophetic agenda. Our faith calls us to stand with the least and the lost. ECCO is working on Economic Dignity (minimum wage, earned sick time, job creation), Immigration (pathways to citizenship, safe driving bill), and Criminal Justice Reform (Jobs not Jails). All of these issues speak to our congregation, community, and families. As we look to the election of a new governor in November, now is the time for St. Stephen's folks to live into our baptismal covenant as we craft a Prophetic Platform that advances peace and justice and respects the dignity of every human being.

THERE'S NO KEEPING A GOOD DONKEY DOWN! Word has it that Esmeralda plans to join us for Soul Celebration Sunday on April 27. She thinks there will be lots of good-hearted, justice-minded people in church who will fill her wagon with Lenten Offering Boxes, Lenten quarter cards, loose change, and large bills and checks to support the work of Episcopal Relief and Development. So bring the money you didn't spend on whatever you gave up for Lent and bring it on April 27 when Esmeralda makes her annual visit to St. Stephen's.

JOIN US AT THE TABLE. On Sunday, April 27 from 1:00 to 4:00 we serve lunch at My Brother's Table. Please let Judie Jones know if you are be able to help. Of course, special desserts would be especially nice since it is Eastertide when we FEAST! And, you can eat your Soul Food before you head to the Table.