



Newsletter May 2014

## Let Christ Dwell in You Richly

During Eastertide, our Sunday readings dive into the Acts of the Apostles. We hear stirring stories of thousands coming to faith and being baptized in a single day. We listen to harrowing tales of arrests, persecutions and deaths of those faithful to Jesus including our patron saint Stephen. And Luke reports, *“Those who had been baptized devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.”* Acts 2.42-47

Do you ever wonder what it would have been like to be a Christian in those days when following Jesus required that we give up everything and put our lives on the line? It was risky to be a Christian. Yet, the words used to describe the earliest followers of Jesus are joyful, glad, generous... not fearful, burdened, or struggling. Their love of the Lord shaped who they were and how they lived. Sometimes I long for the excitement of faith and passionate commitment of those people giving their lives fully and completely to Christ.

And yet, the Bible also gives us stories of struggle in the early church. Obviously, we have the disciples' betrayal, denial, and abandonment at the time of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. And, Acts lets us know of the contest for leadership of the church between Peter and Paul. Further, Paul's letters give us windows into communities of faith that were confused, competitive, and unclear about how they were to live until Christ's coming again. While Jesus challenges us to put God at the center of who we are and all we do, the followers of Jesus have always struggled with what it means to live faithfully.

On Easter and Pentecost, we welcome people into the Body of Christ through baptism. On May 3, we host Confirmation with seven from St. Stephen's claiming their membership in the Episcopal Church. And, during May we prepare children for First Communion, which we will celebrate on Sunday, June 1st. Through our sacraments, we weave new members into the community of the church and commit ourselves to being their companions on the way.

Our church calendar overflows with opportunities to continue in *“the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers,”* to care for all *“as any have need,”* and to be good stewards of the physical, financial, and human resources entrusted to us. All of it matters and all can draw us closer to one another and to God. But the simple challenge of the Gospel is to put Christ at the center of who we are and what we do. This Eastertide consider the programs and possibilities of the church, and let Christ dwell in you richly.

Jane<sup>+</sup>

## Building Projects Continue

We are blessed to have such a beautiful large building that enables us to gather together for worship and to carry out the work that the Gospels tell us to do. However, projects continue to unfold one after another. Between keeping up with an old building, making necessary repairs and staying current with building code regulations require some constant monitoring. So here is but a glimpse of what has been happening around our physical plant.

Many noticed that during the Nor'easter storm of March 29-30<sup>th</sup>, the Apse wall, over the communion rail, leaked. Granted it was but a fraction of what would have come in pre-restoration work with a nearly three inches of rainfall, but the fact remains, it still leaked. The architect and contractors were immediately called to visit the site and to assess the cause. From the ground, it appeared that all contracted work was still buttoned up tight. They then called in a lift, which was parked in the parking lot on Easter Day, and looked over all areas that were repaired. Again, everything is intact...no loose slates, missing flashing or broken mortar joints. It appears that the water is entering the cupola over the Apse through the ventilator. To be sure of this, scaffolding will be assembled in the nave of the church in order to gain access inside the cupola to see what may be done to ameliorate this problem.

New steel doors were recently installed on the lower level of the building. The basement entry, the food pantry entry and the kitchen entry all have new steel doors and a fresh coat of "Episcopal Red" paint. They will greatly improve security, climate control and be a deterrent to rodents looking for shelter (and food). In addition, you may have noticed several new replacement windows in the Sunday School wing. Back in September, through the generosity of a Green Grant and parish funds, we were able to replace about half of the windows. The kitchen and dining room are complete, as well as the entire first floor facing the Common. Just submitted, we are hoping that another Green Grant will fund the completion of this project that will include the entire top floor and the three classrooms on the first floor facing the parking lot. These windows have greatly improved the comfort levels in the rooms, reduced noise from the traffic on South Common Street and are saving the parish money and reducing our carbon footprint by consuming less energy.

Currently, we are in the process of obtaining bids to undergo asbestos abatement in the kitchen and dining room. Though the asbestos is intact, it is no longer code to have asbestos-covered heating pipes in a food preparation area.

Meanwhile, we continue working towards being good stewards of the gifts God has given us.

Peace,



Christopher M. Iahan

## **GRACE NOTES: Issue One**

This bonus page should reach you every other month. It was called “Voices of St. Stephens,” but we have renamed it “Grace Notes.” In a way, it is an extension of the Lenten meditations known to many readers as “God blogs,” that parishioners wrote and submitted—I edited a few, read them all, and learned a lot of fine things about many of you.

I came away from the experience thrilled with the whole thing and honored to have had even a small role in its production. There is a lot of faith going around, here at St. Stephen’s! So—what do I mean by “extension?”

I’ll be wandering around talking to people of the St. Stephen’s community, hoping to keep my general focus on grace, in the context of special occasions like the swiftly approaching Mothers’ and Fathers’ Days. I’d like to continue getting to know you better, especially your thoughts on God’s Kingdom.

One more bit of business—an apology. When I spoke with Joanne Benjamin and Joanne Droppers and reported their comments in the last issue, I cleverly mixed up their names!

Feeling foolish about the mixup, I apologized profusely to the two Joannes and they both made me feel perhaps it wasn’t quite the end of their worlds. Thank you, both Joannes!

To business (at last). This month we talked with Lucinda McClain, for many years the leader of the Confirmation Class. She remains one of the most beloved members of the St. Stephen’s family, a truly remarkable woman. I asked about her Liberian childhood and the part her parents had played in her own upbringing. Almost the first thing she said was a correction of my opening question, in which I said, “I know that your father was a bishop there. What was that like?”

“He did not become a bishop, but he came close,” she said. “I loved and admired my father, always. He loved music, especially classical. He played the organ in our church, and at home too, since we had a small organ.”

He was a patient, kind, gentle man. He had to be patient...I was the only girl of six children. My mother said, “You are just like your father!”

“More than anything, I learned how to pray from him. We spent a great deal of time together, just the two of us. He would say ‘Go ahead and pray,’ and I would say, ‘Me? I don’t know what to say at all!’ But then he would show me how to begin and how to speak to God. So I gradually got more comfortable.”

Another thing I learned to love from him was music. At Christmas, he and I would always sing “Away in a Manager,” just the two of us.”

Did you know that he came here to St. Stephen’s to preach? While he was here I was doing the Confirmation class, and he helped me develop an outline for the things that were appropriate for children to learn and understand at that age. I used the outline afterwards for just as long as I did the Confirmations—many years.”

I know that he shaped me in many ways. To this day, for instance, if I am faced with a situation that I do not understand, I will walk away from it and go off somewhere quiet and pray over it. I won’t rush into anything. Also I am careful about what I say to people and just how I say it I still pray all the time. He was very tender toward everyone, and toward me.”

Con Squires

## BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR RESOURCES

**ST. STEPHEN'S HOSTS REGIONAL CONFIRMATION ON MAY 3.** On Saturday, May 3 Bishop Gayle Harris will be with us to confirm and receive new Episcopalians. We anticipate about 75 confirmands plus family and friends. Please keep our Confirmands—Kyra Kayondo, Patrice Lafortune, Nikki Lule, Nicole Marange, Kayla McCellon, Becca Phelps, and Paul Stonkus—in your prayers. Of course, hosting Confirmation provides us with yet another opportunity to offer hospitality to the Diocesan community. Our Kids' Choir and Kiswahili Choir will both be singing. We need ushers, greeters, readers, and Eucharistic ministers. We also need goodies for the reception after the service and to offer hospitality throughout the morning. Please sign up in the Galahad Area.

**ALAN GATES ELECTED BISHOP OF MASSACHUSETTS.** Despite a long day on April 5 resulting from counting errors, delegates cheered loudly upon the election of Alan Gates as our new Bishop. Alan currently serves as the Rector of St. Paul's, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. For those with long memories, St. Stephen's helped form Alan for ministry when he was a Seminarian with us in 1986-87 during his EDS years. Alan will be consecrated and assume leadership of the Diocese on Saturday, September 13.

**SEASON OF CELEBRATION & SERVICE CONTINUES FOR BISHOP SHAW.** On May 11, Episcopalians are invited to join Bishop Shaw in the Boston Mothers' Day Walk for Peace. And, sign up now for the June 10 Episcopal City Mission Annual Meeting at which Bishop Shaw will be honored. Saturday, June 21 the Diocese will host an All-Ages Picnic to celebrate Bishop Tom's ministry among us. **Throughout May and June, we encourage all members to sign our Bishop Tom Memory Book.** Each parish has been given a book to fill with words and images of gratitude. Photos can be pasted in the book; words can be written. We have lots of pages to fill so get creative!

**NORTH SHORE DEANERY BUSY IN MAY.** On May 5 at 6:30 there will be a planning meeting at Grace Church, Salem, for folks interested in being part of the North Shore Mission Hub. We on the North Shore envision weaving a web that connects parishes and communities in mission. And, on May 6 at 6:30 our Deanery Assembly will gather at St. Andrew's in Marblehead. Please attend!

**1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER PLEDGE STATEMENTS COMING.** All people who have pledged financial support for 2013 will be receiving their pledge statements shortly. If you should notice a discrepancy please call the parish office so that the treasurer's office may look into it.

## NURTURING THE CONGREGATION

### **MOTHERS' DAY BRUNCH MAY 11 8:45-9:45**

**IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE MOTHERS!**

**At St. Stephen's we know,**

**It takes a village—and a whole lot of mothers—to raise a child**

**BRING YOUR MOM, YOUR NANA, OR SOMEONE WHO MOTHERS YOU**

**There's no charge but please sign up so that we have enough food!**

**Teens and friends just want a chance to show their gratitude!**

**ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!** Many thanks to everyone who contributed visible and invisible hands and hearts to our observance of Holy Week and celebration of Easter. While life and liturgies did not always happen exactly as we planned, God surely was in the midst of all we did. So to those who cleaned and decorated, sang, read, and acolyted, prepared and printed bulletins and inserts, provided a place of welcome, and gathered for worship—THANK YOU!

**BIBLE STUDY GETS TO KNOW THE APOSTLE PAUL DURING EASTERTIDE.** After a few weeks studying the story of the Apostle Paul reported in the Book of Acts, we will turn to Paul's epistles (letters) to gain an understanding of the emergence of Christian theology, Paul's teaching on faithful Christian living, and the persistent challenges of being the community of the church. Join us every Wednesday at 6:30 or as often as your schedule permits.

**HEALING PRAYER AND PASTORAL CARE TEAMS MEET MAY 1 AT 10:30.** We'll be discussing section 2 "*Promises*" of Barbara Brown Taylor's *Gospel Medicine*. We'll be getting ourselves organized for renewed altar flower delivery now that Lent has passed.

**LUNCH AND LEARN ON THE ECONOMY ON MAY 18.** Thanks to the presence of economist and priest Rev. Edward Kienzle, the Stewardship Ministry Team will present a two-part teaching on Economics and Christianity this Eastertide. Sunday, May 18 at 11:45 the program will be "Economics & Christianity: Faith Seeking Understanding, Part I." On June 1, Rev. Edward will continue with "Faith Seeking Understanding: Part II. All are welcome; a light lunch will be served.

**MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE MAY 25.** May 25 we'll remember those service men and women who died while serving in the armed forces. Our 10:00am worship will conclude in the Garth with a special tribute to Lt. Col. Charles Redington Mudge who died at the Battle of Gettysburg. Please check the list posted in the Galahad Area to make sure it includes all those who died while serving in the military. On Sunday, November 9, we will remember and give thanks for all veterans.

**KISWAHILI DESK.** The winter is over and the busiest season is here. The Kiswahili congregation is overwhelmed with joy for the achievements we have made during the first four months of this year. We are now enjoying the new set of seats that were donated by some of our members. The new set of drums have improved our singing during the worship. We cannot forget our mothers who donated the TV screen for the Sunday school. God is working in a mighty way. On Easter, the Kiswahili congregation was honored by our Kenyan community holding its annual Kenyan pastors' conference in our church. The Kenyan Embassy used the occasion to provide IDs for all Kenyan citizens in the diaspora. This is an effort to fight terrorism, which is slowly affecting Kenya. We are very grateful to our rector Rev. Jane and the vestry for the continued effort they are making to strength our unity as Saint Stephen family. God bless our family. Rev. Fr. Joseph. Kiswahili congregation

**SOUL CELEBRATION SUCCESS.** While we don't have a final count for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Soul Celebration, we know it was a fabulous success and raised more than \$13,000! The ad book keeps expanding, thanks to the dedicated leadership of Debbie Potter and Carolyn Hoy. Rev. Angela Ifill from the Office of Black Ministry of the Episcopal Church inspired and challenged us as she preached and talked about creating "Pipelines to Possibility not Prison." And the music provided by our own Kids' Choir, Juliana Davis and her Berklee Band, and Hip Hop Anti-Violence artists Fame or Juliet took the event to a whole new level. Last but not least, a standing ovation for Debbie and the whole team of chefs, for a fabulous Soul Food Dinner! Alleluia! Let us keep the Feast! Alleluia!

**7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BIG MONEY RAFFLE BASH COMING JULY 20!** Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup> we'll kick-off sales of our \$100 BMR tickets. Whether you spread your luck around by buying \$10 shares on a few tickets or you trust in the luck of a couple \$100 winners, everybody can play. If you have a share on a BMR ticket, you're invited to our Dinner Dance and Drawing Party at the Porthole Pub on July 20. This is a great opportunity to have fun while supporting our church.

## **HOSPITALITY TO CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS**

**CHURCH SCHOOL CONTINUES.** As we continue to celebrate the joy of Easter, it's a great time to re-engage or engage church school. **Church School Teachers will meet on May 4 at noon to plan for the remainder of the year.** Kendra Zimiroski offers loving care to our youngest members on Sunday mornings. Keri Whitcomb and Beatrice Griffiths continue to teach our Pre-K-K class. 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders will meet with Charlotte Breckenridge for Communion instruction through First Communion on Sunday, June 1. 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders will enjoy the leadership of Joanna Gallagher and Patrick Lafortune. The Confirmation Class will continue with Irene Axelrod as they discuss what it means to live as "an adult member of the church." And Neil O'Donnell will engage deep questions of faith and life with our high schoolers. Church School Graduation Sunday will be June 15.

**FIRST COMMUNION JUNE 1; PARENTS & CANDIDATES MEET MAY 4 AT 10AM.** First Communion preparation will be led by Charlotte Breckenridge starting May 4 at 10am. Classes will meet each Sunday in May at 10am and on Saturday, May 31 from 9:30 to noon. Registration forms are available. While the Episcopal Church welcomes all at the Lord's Table, First Communion celebrates the inclusion of children in the sacrament and provides them with Communion instruction.

**CAMP REGISTRATION SUNDAY IS MAY 4!** BCH Camp Director Alessia Doss will be with us on Sunday, May 4 to collect all Camp registration forms. Forms are available at church and online. Camp for 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> graders costs \$575 per week; and there are some new 2-week sessions this year. The Camp asks each family to pay what you can BUT scholarships are available. 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 the \$192, a letter explaining why needs to accompany the clergy signed camp scholarship form. Camp transforms the lives of young people and St. Stephen's and the BCH leadership remain committed to making Camp accessible to all children. If you have questions, speak with Rev. Jane. Please give Alessia your completed registration forms on May 4 and let us know when you will be going to Camp!

**OASIS AND THE SPOT UPDATE.** On Annual Good Friday Teen Brunch welcomed several hundred young people grieving the death of Amoy Blake. St. Stephen's teens and the Youth Ministry Team adjusted to the shift in program and purpose, and met the need. At the end of the morning, teens attached brightly colored zip-ties to our fence as reminders of the brightness of Amoy's spirit and the need for each person to shine brightly. The teens closed out April with a "Feast of Cultures" Potluck and kick-off of *PROJECT 135* with a screening of "No Place Like Home," a documentary about youth homelessness in Massachusetts. *PROJECT 135* is focused on helping homeless teens in Lynn, which has the highest homeless youth rate in the Commonwealth. Its mission is to support the passage of House Bill 135, An Act Providing Housing and Support Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. Through art and advocacy, our teens will engage *PROJECT 135*.

**MONTHLY FAMILY DINNERS CONTINUE ON MAY 18.** Parish families are invited to join families from KIC for a Community Dinner on Sunday, May 18, from 5:30-7:00 pm. Families will prepare the meal together (ingredients will be provided), and after dinner, we'll play multi-generational games. Adults will also have some "kid-free" time to converse. Everyone is welcome, but all children are expected to attend with an adult. For information, call Audrey (617-435-3325).

**YOUNGER TEENS LOOKING FOR COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE.** Teens and parents interested in planning for the Middle School Youth Group, please speak with Rev. Jane. In May, we'll continue our monthly food and fun gatherings. We also hope to organize a young teens community service event. And, of course, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders should be thinking about signing up for the Youth Leadership Academy, which launches in July for 2014-15.

**KIC IS COMING!** Audrey Gutfreund returns as KIC Director this summer. From July 7 until August 1, KIC provides 4 weeks of free, weekday summer camp for elementary-age children. KIC also provides employment for teens and young adults. Interviews are underway for 2 young adult Program Assistants and 18 Teen Mentors. We also need adults to help serve 2 meals a day, lead small or large group activities, work with our garden, or participate in our literacy program. If you're interested in volunteering, applying for a job, or registering a child, please contact Audrey by phone, text, or email at 617-435-3325 or [audrey.gutfreund@gmail.com](mailto:audrey.gutfreund@gmail.com).

**APPLY TO BE A TEEN MENTOR FOR KIDS IN COMMUNITY.** KIC hopes to employ 18 teens this summer as mentors for our 4-week summer camp. All applicants must complete our application form (available from the office and on-line) and register with the Youth Career Center. Some, but not all positions, are reserved for teens with very limited household income. Successful applicants will have energy, patience, joy, creativity, an ability to work as part of a team, and a love of children. All high school students who have finished 9<sup>th</sup> grade are encouraged to apply.

**ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 1.** Thanks to the generosity of past and present parishioners, each year St. Stephen's awards about \$3,000 in scholarships for higher education. 2014 applications are now available from the church and on-line. Students may receive St. Stephen's scholarships up to four times but must apply each year. Recipients are expected to be present on Church School Graduation Sunday on June 15 when scholarship awards will be made.

## **DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

**LOTS OF WAYS TO HELP FIGHT HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY.** Project Bread's Walk for Hunger is Sunday, May 4—write a check to support the Walk. Tuesday, May 6 at 5:30 is My Brother's Table Annual Dinner at the Knights of Columbus to celebrate volunteers. The Mail Carriers' Food Drive is Saturday, May 10—put out non-perishables for your mail carrier and let Harry Jackson or Neil O'Donnell know if you can help pick up food at Lynn Ladder. On May 25, we serve lunch at 1pm at My Brother's Table. And don't forget our Friday Food Pantry!

**ECCO'S ON THE MOVE.** The next meeting of the St. Stephen's ECCO Team is Tuesday, May 13 at 6:00. As ECCO launches Voter Registration and final Signature Gathering for the Minimum Wage and Earned Sick Time Initiatives, we'll be telling our stories of economic inequality, the prison system, and immigration. The place where our own stories meet God's call to do justice will determine our St. Stephen's ECCO strategy. On May 17, lots of ECCO folks from across the North Shore will collect signatures and register voters from 10-12 and then enjoy a celebratory picnic.