



THE WITNESS

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRIEST



Advent

A Season to Make Preparation

In the season of Advent, we begin a new liturgical year with a change in liturgical color from Green to Purple. In this season of the church year, we are preparing our hearts and our minds for the celebration of the nativity of our Lord. Advent is a very Janus-faced season where we are looking backward and forward all at once for the purpose of beginning the journey of the Christian year all over again. Firstly, Advent looks backward to the advent of Christ's birth and the inauguration of his public ministry. Secondly, Advent looks forward to the risen and ascended Christ who promises to come again in glory and in power. With only four weeks in the season, Advent prepares us for the celebration of Christmas and the fulfillment of Christian hope.

Prominent themes in Advent include penitence, waiting, and expectation. John the Baptist appears twice in the Gospel readings to point to Christ and to call us to prepare our hearts. Once more, themes of waiting and expectation are prominent not only in readings from Isaiah and Mark, but also from Luke. In the narrative of the Annunciation, the archangel Gabriel comes to Mary to tell her that she shall give birth to a child by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here, in the story of the Annunciation, the sentimentality and consumerism of the holiday season is offset by the holy and catholic doctrine of the incarnation. The answer to the often heard question: Mary, did you know? is yes, she knew!

Continued on page 4



ST. STEPHEN'S MISSION

Together we will... Sing Out, in worship to God, Reach Out, in service to others, Cry Out, with others in time of need, Find Out, about our faith, and Laugh Out Loud, together...All in the name of Jesus Christ.

ST. STEPHEN'S CORE PILLARS

- DOING CHRIST'S WORK IN THE COMMUNITY
- A NUTURING AND ACCEPTING FAMILY
- A GOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
- TRADITION WITH A DIFFERENCE
- MULTIGENERATIONAL AND DIVERSE

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THE SENIOR WARDEN'S THOUGHTS



AROUND THE DIOCESE OF MICHIGAN

Eucharistic Visitor Training, Saturday, Dec. 2nd 10am-12n St. George's Episcopal Church, Milford. Registration \$10 sign up online through EDOMI

Advent Book Study The Poetry of Pauli Murray Dec. 6th and Dec. 13th at 7pm (Zoom) Book is available for \$12 go to EDOMI website to order and pay via PayPal. Questions contact sistervee@edomi.org

Bishop's Christmas Open House Friday, Dec. 15th @ St. Paul's Lansing 5:30pm-7:30pm No RSVP required. Contact Susan Mason smason@edomi.org

OR Bishop's Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 16th 3pm to 5pm Cathedral of St. Paul, Detroit followed by Lessons and Carols at 5pm

Save the Date: Presiding Bishop Michael Curry will visit the diocese Feb. 2nd thru 4th, 2024.

Holiday Jam: Festive Fundraiser (Jazz Concert/Silent Auction) Friday, Dec. 8th 6pm (doors open) St. John's, Royal Oak featuring Paul King Quintet (7pm) \$25 general admission

What has been going on? We have had a busy fall. Thanksgiving is the time we reflect and are thankful for the many blessings in our lives. (I am thankful for getting to know more of you).

Vestry has been working on our website. Stay tuned for more information as work continues on our site.

Finance has been working on over drive. We have completed our in-house audit. Vestry appreciates all the time everyone has put into helping to keep us going and make our missions possible.

Building and grounds has been hard at work providing a safe place to worship and connect with others. Thank you to everyone who helped in a successful fall clean up inside and out. We are looking to certify our kitchen, to be able to rent the space and possibly make meals for outreach programs.

I find it hard to believe that the Christmas season is coming up fast. No, I don't find it hard to BELIEVE in Christmas. It is a most wonderful time at St. Stephen's. Beginning with Advent by Candlelight. The Ladies gather for a prayerful evening of Hope, Faith, Joy & Love. In time honored tradition there is Song, Fellowship, and Food! We all participate in many different holiday ministries, Gift giving for Bound together, collecting bags & bags of food for Lighthouse, Crafting Kindness donates many handknit hats and scarves. The Christmas services are beautifully decorated with flowers, trees, lights, and a giving tree. We end with a fabulous 12th Night Banquet.

As the year comes to an end, we look toward 2024. We at Vestry need you to join us in continuing to make St. Stephen's a caring, giving community.

This stewardship season we are focusing on Gratitude for our many blessings. Sharing generously to help fulfill our mission of loving and helping others.

I have always believed that faithfully giving to St. Stephen's is being part of something bigger than oneself; the wonderful feeling of doing something good to make a difference in someone's life, if only for a minute. It builds, snowballs, and passes on to the next person.

I am forever grateful by the faith many have shown in St. Stephen's. We truly cannot continue without everyone's support. It is with my heartfelt thanks for your generosity that we can share our love of God and each other.

Sincerely,

Alice Moss

Senior Warden

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings and Salutations!

I don't know about you, but for some reason this year seems to have flown by. I am not ready for Christmas at all, and the stores seem to have forgotten that we have Thanksgiving in between Halloween and Christmas. Ugh! The older I get the more cynical I am of commercialism. This year, I am trying to scale down the gift-giving. I'm into making memories.

In Richard Rohr's book, *Falling Upward*, he speaks of people in the second half of life being not preoccupied with collecting more goods and services. Rohr points out that those in the second half have a desire to give back to the world a bit of what they received, to live more simply so that others can simply live. As our chaotic world seems to be spinning out of control, that desire to live more simply and connect more with each other is to me more important than any gift to be given. It is the grace of God, the truest gift of all, that reaches out to each and every one of us this Advent season. As you move forward in the coming months, my wish for you is to find that which can give you peace of mind, body, and soul. May you have a blessed Advent, a Joyous Christmas, and a Peaceful New Year.

Kris Fuhr, editor

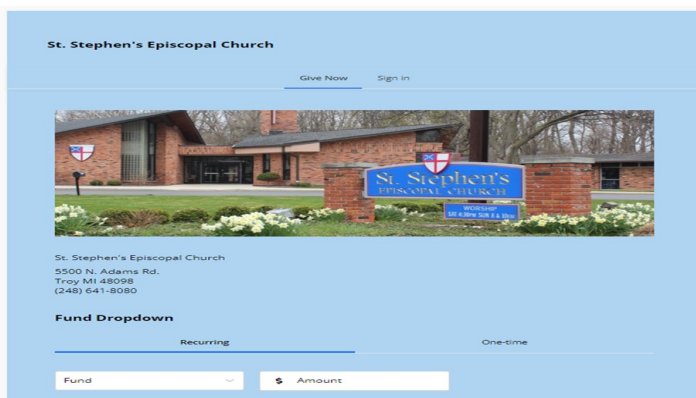
Rohr, Richard, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011, 2024. pp 77, 78-79.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR BOOKKEEPER, PAM BONKOWSKI

Thank you for your faithful giving. Every dollar helps St. Stephen's flourish and grow in our parish and our community. Your support of St. Stephen's and its missions is worthy of praise and gratitude.

Did you know that there are different platforms available to donate to St. Stephen's? Have you ever been to a service and forgotten your cash or check book? Are you out of town or unable to make it to a service? Would you like to donate using your debit card, credit card or banking information? St. Stephen's has e-giving available to make donating simple and quick using your cell phone, tablet, or computer.

On the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church website www.ststephenstroy.org click the "Online Giving" box in the top right corner. This will take you to our e-giving page.



A QR code is available that links directly to our e-giving portal. If a committee chairperson or event coordinator would like to use the QR code for fundraising, I will be happy to help them set it up.



On the site, you will be able to choose the fund that you would like to support, such as Parish Giving, Altar Guild, Outreach or Endowment. If you choose any fund besides Parish Giving, a box will pop up where you can add a notation such as "in memory of a loved one" or "for altar flowers on this date". You can choose to make your gift a recurring gift at the frequency of your choice or a one-time donation. The prompts are easy to follow, and the entire process should only take a few minutes.

If you have any questions, please contact me at bookkeeper@ststephenstroy.org. No matter how you choose to give today, we are so grateful for your generosity and faithfulness.

Luke says as much in the opening chapter of his Gospel. The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

The catholic doctrine of the incarnation presents to us the divine and human natures of Christ. The doctrine of the incarnation also venerates Mary, acknowledging her exalted status in the economy of salvation. Certainly, we underscore Christ's humanity, that he was born of a woman, that he is like us in every way except perhaps for one: as the Son of God, he is without blame and without fault. By assuming our humanity, Christ redeemed that humanity and now shares his life with us. And so, to prepare ourselves to again receive the life of Christ in the new year, Advent places us in a penitential posture. And yet a posture ready to receive good things.

By contemplating the mysteries of our faith in the promised return of the risen and ascended Christ, in the call to penitence by John, and in the annunciation of the incarnation by the angel Gabriel to Mary, we prepare our hearts and our minds for Christmas. These narratives focus our attention upon the sacred mysteries of our faith and upon the beauty of a world redeemed. They fill us with wonder and expectation, and they invite us to wait for a Spirit of joy, grace, love, and peace.

REMINDERS TO ALL...

Please remember to wear your name tag at church and events. It helps those who are new to the parish get to know you, and also helps those of us who have senior moments. There is a basket in the fellowship hall for you to leave your nametag if you exit via the back door and prefer not to take it home with you. You will find your tag back in its place on the name tag racks the next Sunday. Be sure to thank Don Ingersoll for the assistance on name tags!

ARE YOU MISSING A COLUMN YOU LIKE IN THIS ISSUE?

The columns that were featured the past two years are missing...A View from the Pew, Interesting Stops Along the Way, and From the Kitchen of...did not have any contributors this issue. These columns are designed to help connect our parishioners to each other, especially those who don't get to church due to being more home-bound. Please consider taking a moment, look at past issues, and see if maybe you'd like to be a contributing writer. Also, missing is Blast from the Past, due to lack of interest in identifying pictures. This editor will revisit that next issue. If you have any questions, see me after the 10am service, email me at kfuhr08@gmail.com or call or text 248-613-1402. I'd love to see these personal columns continue, however this is a newsletter designed to highlight St. Stephen's, without input from you, it won't do it nearly as well.

OUR PARISH CELEBRATES....

BIRTHDAYS

NOVEMBER

Shannon Weigant	11/19
Lani Nolan	11/21
Gio Perod	11/22
Anthony Johnson	11/22
Paula Somerville	11/24
Joan Thunder	11/25
Joanne Gondert	11/25
Claire Grutta	11/28
Kate Pincura	11/29

DECEMBER

Kris Fuhr	12/3
Steve Brandon	12/6
Joan Morgan	12/7
Miranda Spates	12/11
Indira Samuel	12/12
Linda Pierce	12/23
Rick Spina	12/23
Michael Szott	12/25
Sharon Miller	12/26

JANUARY

Molly Albertson	1/2
Marilyn Borowski	1/3
Gordon McMullen	1/3
Sharon Voelker	1/3
Alice Moss	1/5
Winifred Lowery	1/8
David Stein	1/12
Rod Johnson	1/14
Donna Johnson	1/21
Angiya Satyanathan	1/21
Diane Kenefic	1/22
Susan Russell	1/22
Jill Stein	1/23

JANUARY

Molly Grubb	1/24
Cynthia Vida	1/24
Inge Wojas	1/26
Christine Herfurth	1/28

FEBRUARY

Stephen Fragnoli	2/1
Megan Vida	2/3
Bill Waun	2/4
Katelyn Gerard	2/4
Evan Vida	2/9
Amy Church	2/10
Tristan Thiel	2/11
Janet Eldon	2/13
Meghan Brokenshire	2/16
Kassidy O'Neill	2/16
Sheryl Schmidt	2/17
Colin Davis	2/19
Thomas Vida	2/20
Patricia Loree	2/22
Mackenzie Hardy	2/23
Katherine Sobolewski	2/24
John Spates	2/25
Andrew Gerard	2/28



ANNIVERSARIES

NOVEMBER

Donna & Richard Bronsteen	11/10
Martha & Michael Szott	11/11

DECEMBER

Inge & Pat Wojas	12/15
Jane & Mike Wellman	12/26
Mary & Dennis Bishop	12/27

JANUARY

Gretchen & Roy Waters	1/7
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FEBRUARY

Miranda & John Spates	2/3
Jackie & Don Ingersoll	2/3
Judy & Paul McClendon	2/21



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Minutes of the Vestry meetings are posted on the bulletin board in the hallway by the kitchen on your way to fellowship monthly. If you would like a copy please contact the office or the clerk, John Morley.

Important

Vestry Nominating Committee is Alice Moss, Scott Armstrong, Sandy Jose, and Karol Sprague. If you would like to join the 2024 Vestry or have a suggestion for a nominee please see a member of the committee. The committee would like all possible candidates by the end of December.

An acolyte leader is still needed to replace our beloved Jim Carnegie. Please see Fr. Brian if you are interested. It only takes a few hours of your time each year and is important to this ministry of service.

Vestry meets the 4th Tuesday of the month

Important

Important



YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND A 12TH NIGHT PARTY

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Come to celebrate our new members of 2023 at a 12th Night celebration Saturday, January 6th. Partake in an evening of fellowship, fine dining and festivities. Starting at 5:30 with a social hour, then a fabulous 5 dinner prepared by the Fragnoli's & Wellman's with assistance from the Hospitality Committee.*

In order to plan properly, please reserve your seating soon if you are planning to attend. We are requesting a donation of \$25 for each, (checks or cash are accepted) If you have questions please see Alice Moss, Stephen or Corinne Fragnoli.

If you would like to reserve your spot, you may email or call the office or sign up in the gathering area by Dec. 22nd.

the WINTER ROSE

by Joseph M. Martin
with Narration by Pamela Martin



The St. Stephen's Choir directed by Sue Gore will be presenting *The Winter Rose* for the Christmas season on Friday, December 15th at 7PM in the sanctuary. At the conclusion we will be singing the *Hallelujah Chorus* from "The Messiah" by Handel. Anyone who would like to join this uplifting finish will be encouraged to join us.

We will have an after glow of cookies, treats, and beverages for all to enjoy and socialize. Hope to see all of you for this holiday festivity.

**HELP MAKE OUR SANCTUARY
BEAUTIFUL FOR CHRIST-
MAS...DONATE CHRISTMAS FLOW-
ER MONEY TO THE ALTAR GUILD
IN MEMORY OF SOMEONE OR IN
THANKSGIVING FOR OR JUST
BECAUSE. THANKS!**





ADVENT BY CANDLELIGHT

The ladies of St. Stephen's and their friends are invited to attend an evening of fellowship, prayer, song and inspiration exploring the themes of Faith, Love, Hope and Joy. Sign up in the gathering area. Hosts are needed for tables. Come together on December 4th, at 6pm in your festive holiday wear. Questions see Alice Moss or Ami O'Neill.

CANTATA ACADEMY CHORALE TO PERFORM

The Cantata Academy Chorale has entertained audiences since the fall of 1961. This dedicated group of approximately 40 singers perform several times a year throughout Southeast Michigan. St. Stephen's is one of their very favorite venues to perform. Susan Cantanese, the director, gushes when she talks about singing in our sanctuary. We also have several of our own parishioners who sing with this talented group. **Tony Johnson** (28 years of dedication), **Ken Fuhr**, and **John Morley** are performing. While **Chris Herfurth** has retired from Cantata after having sung with them since the 80s, having also been the board president and treasurer, says that she will never forget the experiences of singing in foreign countries, and as backup for Peter, Paul and Mary. The highlight of that experience for Chris being in an elevator with Paul and sitting across from Mary at a luncheon. Chris still supports CAC by being a Friend of Cantata and attending many concerts both winter and spring.

The Cantata invites you to come celebrate the season of Christmas with them on **Sunday, December 10th at 3pm**. Tickets are only \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors and students, and children under 10 are free. This is a major fundraiser for the group to help with their expenses throughout the year. You may purchase tickets online at cantataacademy.org or at the door. Come hear *All is Bright* and start the season with a song in your heart!



A MEDITATION TO PONDER FROM ST. AUGUSTINE

KEEP ON MOVING

On earth, we are wayfarers, always on the go. This means that we have to keep on moving forward. Therefore be always unhappy about what you are if you want to reach what you are not.

If you are pleased with what you are, you have stopped already. If you say; "It is enough," you are lost. Keep on walking, moving forward, trying for the goal. Don't try to stop on the way, or to go back, or to deviate from it.—**Sermon 169,18**

Prayer: Lord, guard us from all danger and carry us to Yourself. And You will be our strong support from childhood to old age; for when our strength is Yours, we are strong.—Confessions 4,16

Augustine Day by Day pg 17



A BIT OF HUMOR TO LIGHTEN THE DAY

The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C. This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin. Jay Leno

I wrapped my Christmas presents early this year, but I used the wrong paper. See, the paper I used said 'Happy Birthday' on it. I didn't want to waste it so I just wrote 'Jesus' on it. Demetri Martin

OVERHEARD AT THE MAGI CLUB



ONE SUNDAY IN ADVENT



ONE MONDAY IN ADVENT

UPDATE ON OUR YOUTH ACTIVITIES BY JACKIE INGERSOLL

Some enhancements have been made to our Youth Group [middle and high schoolers] this year. Instead of bi-monthly classroom meetings, we are planning a monthly outreach project or a social outing involving both internal and external activities.

In September, several of our youth volunteered their time to help with the Rise Against Hunger Project. They found it both enjoyable [getting to work together with each other and parishioners of all ages] and rewarding [providing nourishing meals to extremely disadvantaged families around the world]. Being an integral part of St. Stephen's is especially important to the kids so working side-by-side with fellow parishioners for a great cause strengthened their bonds with the rest of their St. Stephen's family and reinforced their Christian values.

When polled at our first Fall meeting, participating in an "escape room adventure" was the overwhelming social activity/team building favorite. We made that our October outing. They did a fantastic job at solving the challenging clues, with adult leader Evan DeCiantis helping them without giving them any of the answers/solutions. The kids only missed the hour deadline by a couple of minutes, which was outstanding considering that only one of them had ever been in an escape room before.

Following their challenging teamwork adventure, the group stopped at Yates Cider Mill to laugh about their experience while enjoying candy apples and donuts.

November was movie night with the feature film *Coco*. Pizza and popcorn provided rounded out the evening. Everyone enjoyed the movie choice.



CRAFTING KINDNESS UPDATE

FROM JILL STEIN

Crafting Kindness met last month to make pillow covers for Beaumont Hospital. The hospital provides the pillow to patients after open heart surgery. Beaumont depends on charity and craft groups to make the covers. The covers bring a smile to a person on their long road to recovery, provide sternum protection when using a seat belt or coughing.

A few members are sewing small Christmas stockings to hold much needed toothbrushes and toothpaste to those in need this holiday season. We are also collecting knit or crocheted hats and scarves that our members make and donate to help warm many folks during the winter season. We try to help people in our community by sharing our carefully handmade items. If you are interested in joining in or sharing your talents please reach out to Jill Stein @ 248-376-0560.



OUTREACH UPDATE

FROM JOANNE GONDERT

Outreach continues to provide an on-going series of events at St. Stephen's. Thank you to all those who contributed to the Baldwin Holiday Gift Shop (**Nov. 12th**) and Lighthouse Thanksgiving Bags (**Nov. 19th**). Bound Together board games/gift cards are due **Nov. 26th** to Linda Pierce. The giving tree is set up starting **Nov. 26th**. There are many provided opportunities that benefit CCRT, Covenant House, and Adopt a Platoon with most due by **Dec. 10th**.

Volunteers are needed **Dec. 9th** for Forgotten Harvest from 9am to 12pm. On behalf of the parish a monetary donation of \$500 will be sent to each of these charities: Church at Crossroads, Detroit Rescue Mission, and Hope Shelters in Pontiac.

The Outreach committee works tirelessly to use our gifts, monetary and tangible, to benefit many in our surrounding communities. The need is great and the committee welcomes new members or suggestions on agencies to add to the their list.



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The St. Stephen's Novels & Nibbles Group met on November 13th to discuss the book *Eleanor: A Spiritual Biography* (2017) by Harold Ivan Smith. We all felt that we got to know and admire Eleanor Roosevelt, and were proud to be Episcopalians. It was a lively discussion with many personal insights and stories.

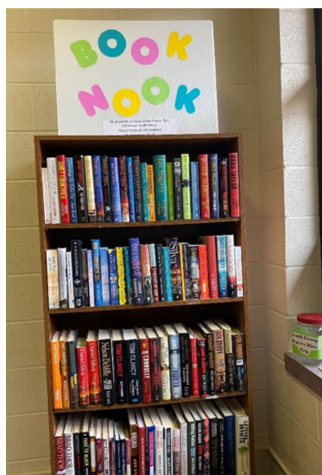
Our next book selection will be *The Faith Club* (2006) by Ranya Idliby. We will meet again to nibble and talk on Monday, January 22nd at 2pm.

We also celebrated our one year anniversary as a book group with wine, cheese and chocolate! Although the group is mainly women, we do have several men who read along with us. Anyone is welcome to join us even if you haven't read the entire book for fun discussions and good treats! To quote Jill Stein who recently joined the group, "I fell in love with *Ordinary Grace*, and now am in love with this group! Thank you."

Our design is a book every six weeks or so, meeting on Mondays from 2-4 pm. Tea, coffee and nibbles will be served. Everyone is welcome to come for discussion even if you have not read the book. For more information see Susan Russell (our group organizer) or any of those pictured below.



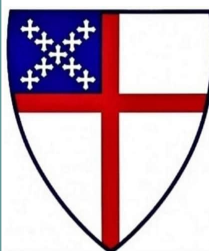
Speaking of books, don't forget to checkout the Book Nook that supports events for our youth at St. Stephen's. You can donate a book in good condition or buy a book for low, low prices.



Things to Ponder and Things to Quote

Recently Alice Moss quoted her mother, Mary Alice Heaton, regarding those "Special" Wafers handed out at the altar. When Alice was a child, Mary Alice gave her one saying, "You may not like it, but it isn't the taste that matters, It is a gift. That is what makes it special."

"Our power to change the course of our communities, our country, our world, is created with every decision and choice we make. Morning by morning, minute by minute we choose whether we live out God's hope for our world." Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry 6/27/23 submitted by Susan Russell.



**THE
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH
WELCOMES YOU**

**HELP MAKE LOVING YOUR
NEIGHBOR GREAT AGAIN**

Posted on Facebook by Episcopal Church Memes with the caption, "In the Episcopal Church, we don't hate and we don't judge. We just do our best to love and welcome everyone because that's what we think it means to follow Jesus."
11/15/2023

PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE PARISH



THANK YOU!!
We packed
15,552 meals!



I cannot THANK YOU enough for your generous gifts of time & your donations to our Rise Against Hunger event this year. Because of you the event was a HUGE success. We packaged 15,552 meals with 62 volunteers. And we did it in just over 2 hours! We not only raised enough money to fund the event, but we also have a small start for next year's event. We have already penciled in the third Saturday in September 2024 for the next event. We plan to package 15,000+ meals again.

One of our goals is to create an opportunity for greater community involvement in our Outreach efforts. We were successful in getting donations from the Rochester Hills, Royal Oak and Beverly Hills Lions Clubs and had volunteers from all three at the event. We also had several people from the community join us in packing who saw the event advertised in the Troy Patch online newsletter.

Everyone had a wonderful time and we enjoyed pizza, salad and soft drinks made possible by a grant from the Thrivent Company.

The world produces enough food to feed everyone, and yet 720 million people around the globe are facing hunger each day. We are working with Rise Against Hunger toward the day that is not true.

Thank you again for your generosity!

Peace,
Dave Stein
Rise Against Hunger Chair



DATES TO REMEMBER

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Weekly Opportunities

Eucharist Service Rite I on Sunday at 8 am

Choral Eucharist Service Rite II on Sunday at 10 am

Healing/Holy Unction 11am 1st Sunday of Month service

Live Stream of Sunday 10 am on St. Stephen's Private Facebook page and YouTube Channel

Wednesday Bible Study 10am BE

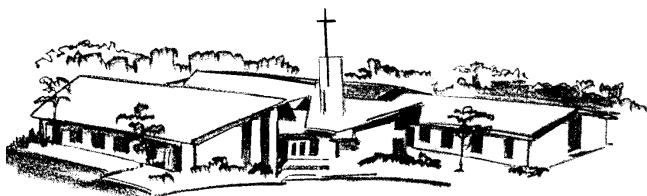
Choir Practice 7:30 pm-9:00pm

Laymen Discussion & Breakfast Thursday's 9 AM at Leo's Coney Island on Opdyke Rd

The QR Code (below) will take you to our Website, just take a picture of it with your phone or use a QR reader app. See Kris Fuhr if you need assistance doing this.



- * Nov. 19th Spotlight Sunday (Bound Together) Fellowship Hour
- * Nov. 26th Celtic Evensong
- * Dec. 3rd Advent Begins
- * Dec. 4th Advent by Candlelight 6pm
- * Dec. 10th Advent 2
- * Dec. 10th Cantata Academy Chorale Christmas Concert 3pm
- * Dec.. 15th St. Stephen's Choir "Winter Rose" Cantata 7pm
- * Dec. 17th Advent 3
- * Dec. 17th Celtic Service 6pm
- * Dec. 24th Advent 4 8am & 10am regular Sunday service
- * Dec. 24th Christmas Eve 5:30pm Family Service
- * Dec. 24th Christmas Eve 9:30 pm Choir Carols with service at 10pm
- * Dec. 25th Christmas Day 10am Service
- * Jan. 7th Epiphany
- * Jan. 6th 12 Night Party
- * Jan. 28th Annual Meeting after 10am service
- * For up to the minute current events at St. Stephen's see Key News and the website calendar



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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE