

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Dear Friends,

I hope you find our newsletter to be a source of encouragement about our parish and the part we are privileged to play in making St. Stephen's a positive influence in people's lives. I know that the monthly compilation of past accomplishments and coming events helps me step back from the work and realize just how blessed we have been.



These "visible signs of progress" are an encouragement for at least three reasons. First, they validate the faith we have that God has a use for St. Stephen's and has called us to move forward toward the future God has prepared for us. St. Stephen's "best days" are the ones we are moving toward with God's help. Second, our parish is growing in strength precisely because we have touched hearts minds and spirits as a "community of worship and mission where all may become who they are in Christ and serve joyfully in Christ's name." We are blessed, and as we have seen in the sermon series on Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, and moving on through Joseph to Moses and the escape from slavery in Egypt to the glories of Mount Sinai, we are blessed to be a blessing. Finally, the "fingerprints of God" are all over everything we see and touch. God's fingerprints lead us to a deeper awareness of God's presence, of God's image in us, and of how God draws us into God's own heart in the hopes and hurts of all around us. Yes, we are blessed, and we are blessed to be a blessing.

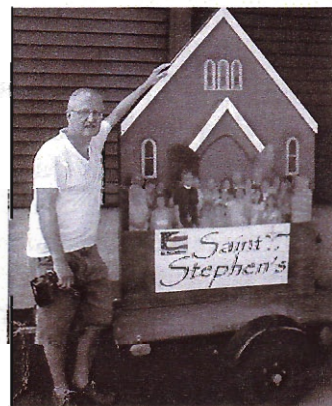
Many Blessings,

Michael



Parish marches in Norwood's July Fourth Parade. Float leads the way. Parade a Norwood Tradition

Parish members, Girl Scouts from our parish troops, and friends all braved the soggy weather to make the march from Interboro High School to Winona Park in celebration of Independence Day. The parade and festivities are a long standing part of Norwood's community identity, involving months of planning and organization.



Float leads the Way

St. Stephen's participation included a float that depicted our church facing Chester Pike with a 1/4 life size photo of an assembly of parishioners on the steps, waving at the crowd and holding little flags. Our float was built by a team of the Long family, Jim and Joan Geiger, Jan Myers, all led by Bud Myers. It would have stayed in the parking lot except for the use of Allen Gabroy's trailer pulled by Mark Corkery and his truck. Many thanks to the Float team.

There are some great pictures of young people with the float under construction, but you'll have to see them at church. (Internet child-safety stuff. You understand.)

Baby Blessing

Our Priest-in-Charge walked about three times as far as everyone else, moving from curb to curb to offer blessings to all the infants along the way. (A couple of the "infants" asking for blessings appeared to qualify for social security.)

Cross on top (missing from construction photo) is roof peak cross from St. Stephen's

Topping the float was a replica of the roof peak cross that is the source of our logo. The replica has been demounted and is now on display in the Parish hall.

Ben Knab jumps in as new Interim Musician. Irene takes leave of absence for Summer Opportunity

Our Sunday music began in a lower key on 13 July as Ben Knab introduced the entrance song. He will be filling in for Irene Althouse through the rest of the summer. Irene has been blessed with a dream-of-a-lifetime weekend gig singing down the shore. After several weekends of a long drive home at O-dark-thirty Sunday Morning, Irene asked to be off the rest of the summer. Of course we sent her with the parish's blessing: "Go, pursue your dream." Kind of sounds like "Go, 'become all you are in Christ....'"

Ben was able to step seamlessly into his new role. He had already been working with Irene to be her back-up on an occasional basis. Guess what, Ben: "Occasional" means the next eight Sundays. He brings a wealth of experience in music and dramatic performance. We are blessed to have him on the team.



School's Coming Blessing of Backpacks will be offered on 24 August

It's mid July at this writing and already backpacks are on sale at bargain prices for Fall's start of school. Already young people are running up the driveway shouting "Look what I've got!" showing off new backpacks with pictures of their latest TV or storybook hero or picking a book bag that is the latest definition of "cool."

We serve several school districts and at least two parochial schools. Opening Day varies from district to district, so backpacks will be blessed at both services on Sunday, 24 August. Have your child, grandchild niece/nephew or neighbor's



child bring their backpack for a special blessing and a beginning of school gift.

One of our goals is to help children maintain that enthusiasm for learning they are born with into adulthood. Curiosity is a gift of God. In curiosity, human beings express the reality that we are created in God's image as curiosity and creativity fold intertwine together as one thing.

Parish fills need at Seaman's Church Institute Entertainment items, especially VCR tapes restock increasingly bare shelves.

John Tinley and Sue Grosso transported the huge collection of VCRs, games, puzzles, books and a racecar game to Seaman's Church Institute in support of their mission of hospitality for seafarers. Your contributions make it possible for seafarers to find a touch of home in the Delaware River Port and to take something with them to while away their off-duty hours at sea. Ronnie Barlow, SCI's development person was especially grateful for the VCR tapes and books as they tend to run away to sea and never be heard from again.

It turns out that most seafarers coming to Philadelphia want a picture of themselves standing next to the Rocky statue. In this time of high fuel costs, St. Stephen's is providing a near life-size photo of Rocky and the Museum for use as a photo backdrop at the SCI site.



Spam and Peanut Butter Contest Continues; Not over until 14 Aug. Weekly Deliveries to Loaves and Fishes support hunger ministry through the Summer.

We are continuing to collect and deliver Peanut Butter and Spam for distribution through Loaves and Fishes through the summer. Reports from the competing churches have been slow coming in, so it's hard to say how St. Stephen's is doing in the standings.

Movie Night 15 August

Parish Fellowship Event. Save the Date.

We're following July's Ice Cream Social with an August Movie Night sponsored by the Transformation Team. The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (Narnia Chronicles) will be showing. Watch for announcements at Church and an Email blast by ConstantContact™

Deanless in Delaware....

Dean Wagner-Pizza resigns to take new call.

The Very Reverend Ken Wagner-Pizza has accepted a call to a new parish in Central Pennsylvania. He will be leaving St. John the Evangelist Church in August, but his resignation as Dean is effective immediately. The Diocesan Standing Committee will appoint an interim Dean until we elect his replacement. We'll miss Fr. Ken and wish him Godspeed.

As a side note, Fr. Ken's resignation leaves none of the clergy in place who started with our class in the Transformational Congregation Ministry project, and Fr. Michael is now the longest tenured and only permanent clergy leader in the cluster.

Average Sunday Attendance continues to Grow!

One-Year Average Sunday Attendance for July 07-Jun 08 increased to 54.3 up 19% over the same 12 months in 2006-2007. This improves on our report from the end of first quarter in March where our One-Year Average Sunday Attendance was up by 15% over the previous year.

We can be encouraged that the trend is not only positive, but accelerating!

Ambitious 2008 Parish Budget still on track

This is by no means a full financial report, but a quick overview of parish finances is encouraging.

Income: \$64,522 Operating Income is \$6,836 (12%) ahead of budget projection of \$57,686.

Expenses: We've spent \$71,111, under spending our Red Zone budget of \$74,094 by \$2,983 (4%).

Capital Drawdown: We had expected to draw down on the Capital Fund for Ministry by at least \$16,458 by 30 June. We have only had to use \$6,589. There are some growth areas where we frankly do need to invest more money over the rest of the year.

A couple of areas that have been challenging in the past bear special mention.

Diocese: Our Assessments to the Diocese were paid in advance of the May deadline. Our current rate of payment on our Diocesan Pledge will complete that obligation in November, freeing cash for the required advance payment on 2009 assessments due in December.

Pension Fund: Quarterly Pension Assessments are paid through September.

Utilities: We finished the utility budget season in June with a zero balance.

We're building something special here. Now is the time to pour on the coal and full speed ahead.



Vacation Bible School Rainforest Adventure is Coming fast Sign-up today

VBS runs 9:00-12:00, Monday through Friday, 18-22 August with closing exercises Friday Night from 6:30 to 8:00-ish. Signups are on the Bulletin Board in the Parish Hall.

Magnetic Church Conference Save the Date, Register Now.

Andrew Weeks, national authority and consultant to churches on the practicalities of parish growth and development will be in Philadelphia on Fri Evening through Saturday afternoon, 3-4 Oct. He will be presenting a boatload of ideas as well as inviting us to bring our materials and processes for advice and upgrading. Parish teams of four or more are expected. Why would we want to limit our learning to only 4? See Fr. Michael.

"Santo, santo, santo": Singing in Spanish?

by Lucy Bregman

Today's Christian music is international. The short song we now use for the "Holy, holy, holy" was collected and published by the Iona Community (Scotland). The composer is unknown, but the arrangement was taught originally by Pablo D. Sosa, of Argentina. What's the point of singing in a foreign language? What are the benefits for worship of doing so, at least occasionally?

Many traditional hymns, such as those of John and Charles Wesley, were written expressly to teach particular doctrines, and they promote specific ideas about salvation, grace, sanctification and so on. Most of us now sing these hymns and carols without thinking about their origins as teaching devices. (For instance, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" includes the lines "Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be," which contains Wesley's teaching on complete "Christian perfection"). By contrast, the current style of Christian "praise song" de-emphasizes doctrinal content. It is expressive music, aiming for an immediate sense of the love and holiness of the Lord. Awe and beauty and yearning can be evoked and expressed through this kind of music, along with a sense of the mystery of God's immediate presence. This singing is worship at its most evocative and emotional rather than cognitive. Given this purpose, the very "unknown-ness" of a foreign language can aid in the sense of mystery. There is certainly a place for both kinds of song but in our order of worship, as we move into the initial phase of the Eucharist, the second, more evocative and less "intellectual" seems more appropriate.

And why Spanish? Because Spanish is a beautiful language to sing in! As a one-time member of a bilingual English-Spanish congregation, I remember how easy it was to swing back and forth between languages for us English speakers when it came to singing. Spanish, like Italian, has proportionately more words that rhyme than does English and it just seems to flow. OK, maybe my pronunciation isn't very good, and a real Spanish-speaker would wince at

what I do with "corazon" and "decir," but it really is easier for singing than many other languages (or than English is for Spanish speakers). So, although not many of us at St. Stephen's se hablo Espaniol, let's ultreya (move forward) into a new worship experience.

Something Funny

by Jan Myers

I, once again, had one of those moments. You know, a moment where you want to stand up and yell, "Hey, this has another meaning!!" Now, truth be told, it happened during the 8 A.M. service and it was during one of Fr. Michael's stirring sermons (seriously), and my mind hooked onto something he said. I can't remember the specifics, I can't even remember the rest of the sermon (sorry, boss) but I do remember it was about forgiveness. And shortly after that he mentioned the Lord's Prayer. I almost jumped up and yelled, "Hey, I got it." I thought better of that since

- I like Fr. Michael, and
- I haven't had this great a boss in a long time and I didn't want to be responsible for his having a heart attack!

What I got (and I'm sure many of you have already gotten this message, but I really needed to share this) is that line in the Lord's Prayer "as we forgive those who trespass against us." It never struck me before that God was not only speaking about forgiving others, but as importantly, OURSELVES. Now many of you have done something and haven't forgiven yourself for the event, situation, words said. You all know what I mean. It was quite like that V8 commercial where someone gets bopped in the head. "Hey you, I can't forgive until you forgive. Isn't it time you forgive yourself?!" (Mark 11:25)

You may never forget what happened, but you can forgive yourself for it. You may be able to forgive yourself once and it's over or (like me) you may have to forgive yourself daily, but it's so important to your relationships, with God, with others and with yourself!!

Dangerous Handrail Replaced

Another "Now Would Be Good" project is complete

The sun-damaged handrail on the ramp from the parking lot to the red door is now gone and replaced with fresh composite boards. Gone are those special souvenir slivers of splintery wood. Russ Bob and Kevin: Thanks guys.



Have you visited SSTEPHEN.ORG lately?

The internet has become an integral part of daily life, often disseminating knowledge faster than television, radio, and print. It is an invaluable tool that allows even the smallest marketing budget to reach the largest of audiences simply by sharing an address. More recently, websites have become social networks allowing like-minded individuals to join together and be agents of change in their personal lives, communities, and nations. Whether they are sharing recipes or organizing international relief efforts it is fundamentally changing the way we communicate as human beings in what is becoming a much smaller world. As a result, our website has increasingly become the first place potential members' visit prior to stepping through our doors on Sunday, a resource for those that cannot attend services on a regular basis or are home bound, and a collaboration tool for parish committees and outreach projects.

The St. Stephen's website began years ago as a marketing tool and has grown from a static brochure site to a dynamic resource for both parishioners and the community. It features a weekly message from

Father Michael Knight, a scrolling marquee announcing current news, and a calendar of events.

The events calendar may be viewed by week, month, or agenda – agenda being a list of scheduled events. All viewing options can be easily printed by clicking on the print button at the top right. If you click on the Google Calendar button on the bottom right you will be brought to a login screen. If you already have a Google account and calendar login - you will then be asked if you would like to add the St. Stephen's Calendar to your account. If you are new to Google you should click on the "Create an Account button." Once your account is created you can add events to you own calendar in one color while viewing St. Stephen's events in another. Once your account is set-up you also have the option to have reminders of calendar events sent to you via email.

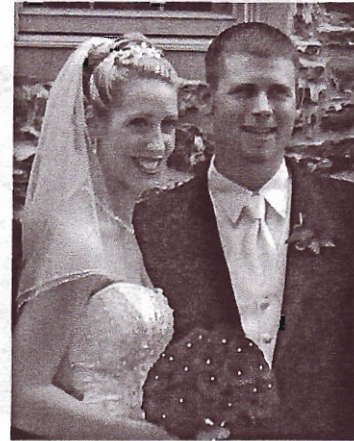
Parish newsletters, forms, and other documents are also available for download on the homepage. The preschool webpage features similar resources including announcements, reminders, registration forms, monthly calendars, and downloadable handouts previously only distributed in student folders.

In the last six months we have had nearly 700 visitors at sstephen.org each viewing an average of 3 pages – the most popular being the homepage, events calendar, and the preschool homepage. It is strongly encouraged that you all take advantage of the sstephen.org resources while also providing the ideas, content, and commentary needed to ensure its continued growth.

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Saint Stephen's "Wedding Summer" drawing to a close

June and July saw the marriage of four more couples from St. Stephen's.



Nicole Perecca and Keith Riess on 5 July.



Jillian Manley and R. J. Casey began the summer parade on 14 June, followed by



Carrie Stone and David Reed were married on 13 July at his family's ancestral church in York.



Kelly Rubillo and Jim Macauley on 28 June and

Betty Thompson and Allen Gabroy's spring wedding on 19 April was the beginning of this joyful parade. Later in July, Fr. Michael will take some vacation to offer the homily and assist at his niece's wedding in New Jersey.

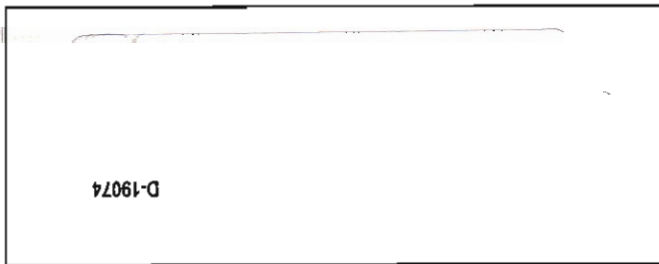


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St. Stephen's in Norwood July 4th Parade



August 2008



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O Lord...
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*The Prayer That
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