

Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Volume 4

September/October 2009

Number 8

Dear Friends,

Summer is over, though we may yet be paying the price for a mild summer in ferociously hot autumn weather. (Perhaps while the Phillies are hosting the World Series?) We have been blessed with our first summer of air-conditioned worship in the church. The AC will remain available as needed through the autumn and cheaper heat in the winter for many subsequent years to come. Our joint VBS with the Lutherans was a huge success. Thanks to our team members who made the program possible.



We have been the site of an "archaeological dig" all summer. Parish and preschool teams have been finding walls and floors not seen since dinosaurs roamed the earth. Thank God for dumpsters!

Our July and August newsletters have laid the groundwork for the September-October event schedule.

Sunday School began on 13 September, the same Sunday we blessed the backpacks for our students and teachers returning to school. Our annual celebration of Outreach ministries will have been a potluck dinner on Saturday, 19 Sept. September will close with the unveiling and dedication of the Father Michael Tuck memorial plaque on the 27th.

October begins with the Saint Francis Day Pet blessing on 4 October at 1:00 PM. On Saturday of Columbus Day weekend (10 October), we will be taking a team of acolytes and adults to Washington DC for the National Acolyte Festival. (Deadline for sign-ups is 17 September.) October will end with the annual pre-Halloween party and lead is into All Saints Day on 1 November. The Sunday School is preparing our first-ever All Saints festival/pageant for worship on All Saints Sunday. You won't want to miss being part of it.

Preschool is gearing up for another fantastic year, even after sending a huge graduating class on to kinder-

garten. I've just been told that we already have two advance registrations for the 2010-2011 school year!

Next month in this space, I plan to have an update on the "Now would be Good" sign project, the HVAC return duct enclosures, and an upgrade to our parish management software Jan has been working on implementing since July.

Now, on to a new subject.

We have been blessed with air conditioning and it will continue to bless us with far more energy-efficient heat. However, that campaign happened so quickly that I have had many people express their disappointment at not having a chance to be part of it. Your turn has now come.

Our next step is to upgrade our awful windows in the church hall. There are eighteen windows to be replaced at roughly \$500 each and another \$1,000 to deal with the drafty windows in the west wall of the Church proper.

We are looking for 18 people to each take responsibility for funding a window. One or two may want to take on two windows. Russell has already received informal pledges for the first 4 windows. If \$500 spread out over up to two years is just not in your budget, smaller amounts from several people will lead to that combined total of \$1,000 for covering those drafty church windows. We want everyone to have the opportunity to look at the progress we've made for HVAC and windows and say "I got to be part of making this happen!" Enclosed in this Newsletter is a pledge form and envelope for the HVAC-Window Fund. Think about it. Pray about it. Then let us know how you want to participate.

Many Blessings,

Back to School September, 2009

Lucy Bregman

Yes, it's that time of year, and I've probably been going back to a new school year for longer than anyone else at St. Stephen's (since at least the Ice Age, it sometimes feels like). The new academic year is for many of us more "new year" than January 1st.

Although by the time you read this, the school year may have begun, here are a few hints and bits of advice for those starting (or their parents). Some of it sounds ridiculous, but please believe me, it is not.

1. Memorize your class schedule before classes start. Know both when and where your classes will meet. Take time to find the rooms before the first class, rather than wander around lost and late. If there are any quirky problems (elevators that do not work, for example) plan around these.
2. In the same way, get your transportation arrangements settled beforehand. Know the train schedule, bus routes etc. If you drive, make sure you have parking permits or tokens so you do not get held up worrying about this stuff the first week.
3. Learn where the bathrooms are.
4. Bring a pen and a pencil and some blank paper. That way, you won't have to ask your teacher "May I borrow your pen?"
5. Try to eat some sort of breakfast before classes.
6. Read any handouts distributed by the instructor on the first day. You may find you've signed up for the wrong class, or do not have the proper prerequisites. This assumes you know what the graduation requirements are, and how far along you are in meeting them.
7. Unless there is assigned seating, it is up to you where to sit. Do not gravitate to the very back of the classroom. You won't be able to hear what's going on, and it gives an automatic impression that you don't want to be involved in the course.

Buildings and Grounds Update

By Russell Long

AAAHHH AIR!!!!

It has been two months since St. Stephen's has had AC in the church. It is great to not have our Parish Hall double for our Sunday Worship area. It is nice to know that we can come to church and not have to worry about being hot in church or crammed in the Parish Hall. Scheduling events in the church is no longer a shot in the dark during these hot days of summer. In the month of August, Fr. Michael celebrated both the sacraments of Matrimony and Baptism. Not only were both these events held in church, but no one felt the effects of heat exhaustion.

Within the next few months the bare return vents will also be framed out and covered. Doug Leake has offered the services of his Boy Scout Troop to undertake this work as part of a service project. It will be great to have this huge project on the "Completed" side of the St. Stephen's "To-Do List".

A Pain in the Grass is Gone

By the time this newsletter is read, summer will be over and hopefully the grass will no longer need to be cut. I would like to this opportunity to thank everyone who helped keep our property well kept. I would also like to thank Bob Grosso (remember him?) for leaving us with his self propelled mower and weed whacker. This was the first year that I did not need to volunteer someone to help with this chore. As a matter of fact, I think that our grounds, this year, were the best kept in years. Thank you again!!!

My Magnetic Church Experience – by Tony Mitchell

Earlier this summer I had the opportunity to attend the Magnetic Church conference on behalf of St. Stephen's. At the time, I did not know anything about the conference, but a couple of the people that went last year raved about it and talked me into going. Not knowing what to expect, I read through the brochure and website, which both talked about evangelism. I can't help it, but whenever I hear the word "evangelism", my mind immediately thinks of the people I see on the television in a large auditorium yelling to the crowd. I began to wonder what I had gotten myself into, so I went back and read the brochure again. This time I came across the question "I'm private and quite reserved; how can I 'do' evangelism in my church?". Being somewhat quiet and introverted myself, I wanted to find the answer to that question. OK, game on!

The conference began with a discussion about what evangelism is and is not. This was a great place to start as it dispelled a lot of the thoughts I had about evangelism coming into the conference. What I learned about evangelism is that it is not about confrontation or making demands of people. Rather it is more about an open dialog with people where they can be exposed to what our faith has to offer through our own words and deeds. It also allows the people of our parish to grow spiritually and reach beyond our own comfort zones so we can become disciples ourselves.

I often hear Fr. Michael talk about our becoming disciples and always thought it was a path I wanted to take, but I was never sure how to start. The big "ah-ha" moment for me at the conference was when the speaker, Andy Weeks, talked about his own journey. He described that God did not show him the entire path for his journey, but rather He continually cleared the next step for Andy to take as Andy went on his journey. This was a moment of clarity for me as I stopped wondering "how do I get there" and began to focus on the next step itself. That next step was the conference, where there was a great cross-section of people from several churches who were all there to learn how to "do evangelism" when they returned. This allowed for us to all share ideas and experiences and work together on a common goal.

Now the next step in my journey is taking everything I learned and bringing it back to St. Stephen's to help take us to the next level. I am excited to be working with the other people that attended: Michelle, Carrie, Jim, John T., Ben and Fr. Michael. We are currently discussing what we each took away from the conference and how we can apply it here. Some of our early discussions have focused on understanding how we are perceived from the community and what can we offer as a church to the parish and surrounding communities. This was definitely a great experience for me, as it has given me a different perspective and provided me with a way to grow spiritually. I would strongly encourage everyone to attend a Magnetic Church conference if you are able. It is very inspiring!

Something Funny

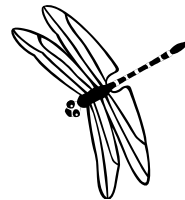
by Jan Myers

I truly consider myself a fairly independent person (maybe I'm kidding myself, but I LIKE to think I'm fairly independent). I can usually kill bugs, etc... on my own. However, having said that, I had an experience the other day that taught me that I may NOT be so independent!!!

I was sitting at my computer when I looked up and saw a large black 'something' fly through my line of sight. Now this self-imagined independent woman let out a scream like a little girl. The dogs in the neighborhood began to howl at the sound of it. Milk curdled... you get the picture. Poor Fr. Michael jumped up and within seconds was on the hunt for the UFO. He couldn't find anything, so he accused me of having a floater. NOT THAT BIG!!! He sat down and I calmed down and began typing. I hear a noise like the sound of a small plane, that got louder and louder and then I heard a light tapping along with the buzzing. I looked up and there it is. NO FLOATER!! A HUGE flying something!!! I screamed again (Fr. Michael's heart is apparently really good!). And SuperMichael jumped into action. While I'm screaming, "kill it, kill it, kill it," he was patiently looking around in the small hallway for the UFO. He begins to say he can't find anything, when the Jumbo Jet of all bugs tries to fly up the wall!!! Even Fr. Michael is impressed with the size of this bug. It was really, really big and loud and EWWW!!

Now if you're delicate you may want to stop here, chuckle and turn the page. For you who want details. Fr. Michael took a manila folder and had to beat this thing repeatedly!! It finally died!!!

The UFO ended up being the biggest dragonfly I've ever encountered!! Once referred to as "darning needles", they're usually smaller. But this was a giganotosaurus dragonfly!! To see an example of this thing, stop in the office and see the replica Fr. Michael made from pipe cleaners. :o)



Vacation Bible School 2009 by Joshua Leake

“Discovery Canyon...is here and there, explore the wonders of the word...” was our theme song for Vacation Bible School at the Immanuel Lutheran Church and at Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church. All the grade levels that were there would sing this song every day before we started, and we would sing it again at the end of the day. At Discovery Canyon VBS there was a science class, games, music, arts and crafts, snack and a cinema. We would have an animal each day: Liz Lizard, Max Mantis, Olivia Owl, Blossom Burro and Felix Fox. Each animal had its own Bible verse and everything that we did in all the classes that day followed the Bible verse. God is all around us, and all we need to do is explore the world to find his word. I thought that it was pretty neat, when I learned that. The best part of the whole Vacation Bible School was when Father Michael came in one morning and said:

“Gooo Morning, VBS!” I thought he was going to lose his voice but he didn’t. I am now looking forward to what next year’s Vacation Bible School is going to be about.

Joshua Leake will be ten in October. He is in 4th grade at Edgewood Elementary, Ridley Township.



Fall 2009 Outreach Report

The summer ended with a flood of spam and peanut butter. According to John Tinley, Chair of Outreach, St. Stephen’s collected 170 lbs. of these needed groceries.

John is also planning for one or two work sessions down in Chester for the fall.

In preparation for Christmas at Loaves and Fishes, we will once again collect crayons and coloring books.

Meanwhile, the second annual Outreach Dinner was held on Sept. 19th.

Thanks to John for his continuing efforts to reach out to those in need.

Baptism, anyone?

By Lucy Bregman

During the past year, it seems as if St. Stephen's has had a lot of baptisms. Whether of babies, older children or adults, these are joyous events. We generally baptize in the middle of the worship service, in the midst of the entire congregation. This reinforces our vision of baptism as incorporation into the entire body of Christ, rather than just a family celebration or an individual's declaration of faith. The congregation are there as witnesses, cheerleaders and active supporters of the baptized. It is a very public and communal event.

While there have been several long-standing issues and controversies surrounding baptism, and a range of positions about these among Christians, there are some norms and general policies which guide Episcopal Church practice. For instance, it is not considered necessary for the person being baptized to fully immerse in water, even though the word "baptism" means "immersion." Going completely down into water, and coming back up again, is dramatic and symbolically appropriate for a new life in Christ, but it is optional, not required in our branch of Christianity.

A more familiar debate is over the appropriate age for baptism. Is it really helpful to baptize a baby on the grounds of his/her parents' faith, or is it better to wait until the child is old enough to make a decision about Christian commitment? The New Testament really doesn't tell us very much about this, although it is clear that the norm was adults until the time when Christianity became the "official" state religion of the Roman Empire. Then, it became important to make sure everyone within the Empire was also Christian, and therefore baptized. Meanwhile, the most powerful theological argument on behalf of infant baptism was that it cleansed from original –i.e. inborn- sin. This was proposed by Augustine (c.400) who himself waited until his 30s to be baptized! The mainstream tradition of Christians, including both Protestants and Roman Catholics during the Reformation, accepted this. It was a small group of sectarians, called Anabaptists (or "Re-baptizers") who broke with this, and linked baptism to an adult, conscious commitment to live a distinctive, committed Christian life. Groups such as contemporary Mennonites continue this approach, as do all the Christians who call themselves Baptists.

However, the terms of this historic debate have changed in recent decades. Roman Catholics now de-emphasize Augustine, and want a more communal, less individualistic understanding of the rite. Meanwhile, even a group that used to insist on "adults only," such as Southern Baptists, now has an average age of nine for its candidates. Moreover, as many families want to reconnect with the church when their children are born, the ceremony itself becomes less about one person and more about the family's commitment as a unit, to become participants in the body of Christ. Additionally, it is always possible for adults to formally re-affirm their baptismal vows, and re-dedicate to what was once promised on their behalf. This should probably be an issue on which a range of views and practices is acceptable, and a mix of actual examples available.



Pets to Receive Saint Francis Day Sunday Blessing Sunday Afternoon, 4 October



Stuffed Animals will receive an advance blessing at both regular Sunday Morning Services

Children are encouraged to bring their favorite stuffed animal or (quiet) toy to be blessed during the regular 8 or 10 AM services. Children will be instructed when to bring their stuffed animals forward.

Live Pets will be blessed at a short outdoor service of blessing 1:00 PM

Blessings of live pets (and any left-over stuffed animals) will begin at 1:00 PM. will allow time to go home and pick up pets and return 10 minutes early. We will gather on the lawn on the Chester Pike side of the Church and into the lawn in front of the Parish hall/Sunday School wing. Ushers will show you where to stand so we can keep dogs, cats, birds, large animals and exotics from making each other's lives miserable. (See Special Instructions)



out-
This
your

Animals, especially our pets are one of the little gifts that God uses to bless our lives.

Pets become part of our lives and the loss of a beloved pet is like a death in the family. They are definitely a blessing to us and it's certainly appropriate to ask God's blessing on them, especially on St. Francis' day weekend. They teach us about love and loving both in what they bring into our lives and in the daily serving it takes for us to keep our animals healthy. We will offer God our thanks for the gift of life and love our pets bring us and pray God's blessing on them for their health and happiness in the coming year.



We expect the service to be complete in 15 minutes or less.

Saint Francis of Assisi is associated with both love of animals and church transformation. How appropriate for us to celebrate in his name.

Special Instructions for Pet Blessing

For the safety of all pets and participants:

Dogs: Must be leashed or in a carrier. Leash holder must be strong enough to remove dog against its will from any unpleasant confrontations.

Cats: Must be in a carrier, or if leash-trained, on a leash.

Birds: Must be in a secure cage. May be covered for wind protection or nervousness.

Reptiles: Must be caged. Please be sensitive to others who do not share your love for reptiles.

Fish: Bring a small container of your own aquarium water. It will be blessed so you can return it to the aquarium as Holy Water.

Large Animals (goats and larger): Must be on halter and lead or remain in trailer. (Please call ahead by 1 Oct if you are trailering for parking instructions.)

Stuffed Animals: Must be held by their owners.

Multiple Animals/Types: We will separate pets by category, so bring someone to manage your pets in each category. If you have multiple animals of one kind bring extra hands to help manage your pet.

Pet Waste: Owners are responsible for picking up their pets waste. Extra Baggies will be available.

Preschool Playground: Please do not allow pets to walk around inside the preschool playground.

1:00 PM Sun 4 Oct 2009

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128 Chester Pike, Norwood, PA 19074

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www.sstephen.org

Father Michael Tuck's Memorial Plaque to be installed in Church. Unveiling, Blessing, and Dedication Sunday 27 Sept.

Father R. Michael Tuck will join Father David Holmes' and Father R. Bakewell-Green's silent witness from the walls of the church

On September 29th we will unveil and bless Fr. Tuck's memorial plaque at the 10:00 AM service. The proximity of the Feast of Saint Michael and all Angels seems particularly appropriate. Michael was named for not one, but two of the named Archangels from the Bible: Michael, of course, and that mysterious "R." for the name he so disliked. (In deference to Fr. Michael Tuck's preferences, we won't mention that "Ralph" is a form of the name "Raphael"....)

Father Tuck's legacy to the parish is rich and broad, but in can best be described as his... oh, well, wouldn't that more appropriately saved for the 27th?

Reception to follow in the parish hall.

Pre-Halloween Party Saturday, 24 Oct in Parish Hall

In what has now become a parish tradition, the annual pre-Halloween party will take place in the hall details to follow.

Christmas Eve Schedule announced.

Christmas Eve Services

Scheduled for 6 and 11 PM

Christmas is a time to Share the Light

Two services are scheduled for Christmas Eve. Both will feature singing the familiar carols, the telling of the Christmas story and candle-lit *Silent Night*. This early announcement is to help insure that you can make family plans and not miss Christmas Eve services.

Christmas Invitations will be available so you can give someone you care about the gift of a community of worship this Christmas.

Window Replacement Campaign Begins for Church Hall

HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) was Step One.

We can heat and cool the church and offices more cheaply. Now it's time to make our church hall and Preschool/Sunday School space more energy efficient.

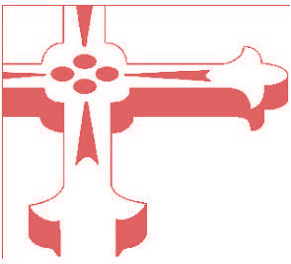
Leaky windows and broken latches waste precious energy. Heating and cooling saved is energy we don't have to buy.

Our Vestry expects the campaign to require \$10,000: 18 Windows at \$500 and \$1,000 for bits and pieces.

Our Goal is for a household or organization to each fund a window (or perhaps a pair of windows).

Where money is tight, a pledge of \$500 could be spread out over two years, or \$5/week. If that is too much to consider, we invite you to give what you can to the \$2,000 that will purchase the bits and pieces needed to seal and protect the stained glass on the church's Chester Pike face. No gift is too little and no gift is too much. As we go to press, we already have informal advance pledges for the





Saint Stephen's

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Norwood, PA 19074
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL

***The Prayer That
Shapes Our Community***

**For the Community we
Serve give us generous hearts,
O Lord...**

**Let us be that Community of
Worship and Mission where
all can become who they are
in Christ and serve joyfully in
Christ's Name. Amen**

PLEASE DELIVER ASAP
September 2009

Back to School time at St. Stephen's!

Our new Sunday School year began September 13th. We meet after church each Sunday at 11:15am in the Sunday school room.

We are going to have so much fun this year! Our Sunday school curriculum will focus on various **People, Places and Prayer** throughout the year. We will begin by learning about **Saints** and work together on our first festival of the year for All Saints Sunday - November 1st.

We look forward to the joy of learning from and being with your children as we prepare for upcoming 2009 events at St. Stephen's:

- 10-04-09 Pet Blessing
- 11-01-09 All Saints Festival
- 11-08-09 Veteran's Day Festival
- 12-20-09 Christmas Pageant

SIGN UP PLEASE: Signup sheets are available for children and adults interested in Festival participation, teaching or assisting in a Sunday School class, donating snacks or supplies, etc. are available during registration.

Get registered - Get involved -

Make Sunday School a part of your routine this fall!

Contact Michelle Brown with Sunday School questions or concerns at mdbrown-1@verizon.net

Good Tidings

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church