

Life and Times

Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church
367 Route 9, Waretown, NJ



January, 2020

From the Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The following is drawn from my 2019 Rector's Report, in which I reflected on the nine years I have been among you as your priest. These reflections seem to me to be a fitting final word to you all.

It seems like just the other day that Joe Leddy called me to announce that I had been chosen as your Rector. How time flies when you're having fun! St. Stephen's marks a particular personal milestone for me. Nine years is the longest time I have ever held a job.

Of course there are many factors that have inclined me to stay among you. But let me mention just a few that may have not crossed your mind.

First, you are a diverse crowd. That is a compliment, by the way. In essentials, unity...in non-essentials, diversity...in all things, charity. We have such an unusual mix of folks that gather here. No matter what skill, information or knowledge we need, there's usually someone in our crowd who can provide it!

Second, you are a generous group. The Food Pantry, Good Sam House and Nursing Home Outreach are offered to the larger community, with no expectation of a return on our investment of time, energy and funds. Our Parish Hall is used by many groups throughout the week. We are the unofficial Waretown Community Center. The Thrift Outlet provides clothing and household items for those who could not otherwise afford such essentials. The outreach to those in need that we offer, which began long before I arrived, has been one of the most impressive attributes about this place that I have observed.

Third, you folks are so humble! Few churches with whom I have served have had the level of activity found around this place on any given day. Yet, when I mention how amazing it is that we share our resources so freely with the larger community, I am usually met with a shrug and a mutter to the effect of, "Well, we've always done it this way." And so we quietly continue to serve those in need, and leave the praise and accolades for other congregations. Such humility is a lesson we could all benefit from learning.

Fourth, you sincerely care for one another. Regardless of who you are, there are folks here who will support you when you are going through tough times, and rejoice with you during the good times. This strong sense of community; that we are the Household of God, is one of the most important blessings this parish offers. Sometimes we all struggle to express our care for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and perhaps sometimes we fall short of the mark. However, in my experience of being among you, the desire to care for one another is always there, even when we aren't sure exactly how to express it.

Fifth, you are Episcopalians. That may seem obvious, so let me explain. I served in one church that tried very hard to be Baptist, and failed miserably. In another place, they longed to be Roman Catholic. That didn't work so well, either. There is an appreciation of the Episcopal tradition of being the "Via Media," the middle way, within our parish that seems to steer us right through the troubled waters of the liturgical debates swirling all around us.

Sixth, you know that clergy are an unusual type of person. I don't think I've ever met a priest who was not somewhat eccentric! Some use the excuse, "I'm so heavenly minded, I'm no earthly good!" I consider that a bit extreme. The reality is that clergy are "generalists" in a world of "specialists." That means the clergy need to be able to step into a lot of different roles. Such a wide range of hats to wear causes most clergy to seem a bit peculiar. One of the gifts that this parish has given to me has been to recognize my peculiarities, and accept me as your priest anyway. Your respect for the role of the priest (even when you think I'm wrong!) has given me the freedom to take the risk of making mistakes, while also never hesitating to apologize when I discover I was in error.

Seventh, you appoint good leadership. Your Vestry has been a good representation of the diverse, generous, humble, caring Episcopalians that make up this parish. Last year's Vestry was an exceptionally good group. Some of the best discussions we had last year were about the Strategic Planning Initiative.

Let me say just a bit more about the Strategic Planning Initiative. I realized some years ago that we needed to

be more intentional about Congregational Development. One of the steps that we need to take was developing a Strategic Plan. Luckily for us, Jim Joeriman was familiar with the strategic planning process, and was willing to do the work needed to develop such a process for our parish. We are a couple of years into the process now, and I think it is going quite well, thanks to Jim. My concern is that the enthusiasm for this process is waning. Folks, in my opinion, developing our Strategic Plan is the most important work your Vestry is doing right now.

As one example of the fruit of this process, we have a new mission statement that is short, easy to remember, yet can function as a filter when establishing mission priorities:

Welcoming everyone.

Connecting with God.

Building Community.

Transforming lives.

Everything we do here at St. Stephen's is now run through that filter. If it doesn't fit, perhaps we need to pass on that project or activity.

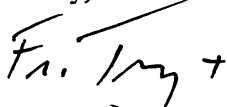
Returning to my list of why I love this place; Eighth, you have such wonderful staff! I want to thank Carlos Staszkeski for his excellent direction of our Music Program. Many thanks to Bob Terentz for making repairs and keeping our facilities looking good. A special thank you to Pat Terentz, who keeps our records, office and Food Pantry under control, even when that phone never stops ringing!

Ninth, you have so many talented and willing volunteers! I want to thank all of our volunteers who help with the Thrift Outlet and Food Pantry. Just between these two programs, our volunteers give us over 10,000 hours of service every year. Many thanks to all of our other volunteers as well. Without your help, we could not continue to offer so many needed ministries to the larger community.

So, there you have it; nine years and nine reasons why I love St. Stephens.

Thank you all for being such a blessing to the larger community of Waretown, as well as being a personal blessing to me. As a new year begins, may we continue to allow the new light of Christ, enkindled within our hearts, to shine forth in our lives.

Faithfully,



The Rev. Terry Martin

Leaving Well Guidelines: Clergy Leave-Taking *The following is an excerpt from the guidelines provided to the clergy by the Diocese of New Jersey:*

Saying goodbye and letting go are difficult. To do both well helps insure a healthy transition to the interim period and later to the leadership of the newly called priest. The following guidelines, though often difficult for both priest and parish, provide a context for healthy disengagement and closure.

The priest must:

- Remove all personal belongings from the church including books and vestments.
- Give all parish keys and other parish belongings in his or her control to the wardens.
- Give the discretionary fund and any other funds in his or her control to the wardens.

The priest will inform the wardens, vestry and congregation that he or she agrees:

- Not to serve members of the congregation pastorally, and he/she will be clear with all parish members that his/her pastoral relationship with them has ended.
- Not to be available to officiate at weddings, baptisms, funerals or other services at the former parish except by specific invitation of the interim priest or the newly called priest, and then only for a weighty cause. Participation in such services is at the discretion of the interim priest or newly called priest. This does not preclude attendance at such services.
- Not to attend any social activities at the former parish unless invited by the interim priest or the newly called priest. Expect that any invitation may be after the new rector has been in place for a full year and not before.
- Not to have discussions of concerns about the parish with members of the parish. Refer such to the interim or new rector.
- Not attend regular worship for the interim period and a period of a year after the new rector arrives. Should the priest wish to attend his or her former parish after that time, the priest should contact the Bishop.
- Disengage from all parish-based social media platforms.

The guidelines recognize that, during the tenure of a pastoral relationship, genuine and often lifelong relationships are formed and that there remains a

need on the part of the priest and some former parishioners to maintain these long-standing, meaningful friendships. However, it should be noted that clear distinctions between the pastoral identity and the identity as personal friend must be clarified and appropriate boundaries concerning the former must be established. It should also be recognized that continued participation in the life of the parish at any level may be a cause for pain rather than encouragement toward the new reality and development of new boundaries.

The Feast of the Epiphany Monday, January 6 at 7:00 pm

St. Stephen's will host a celebration of the Epiphany on Monday, January 6. There will be three other Episcopal Churches joining us; St. Peter's at the Light, Barnegat Light, Holy Innocents, Beach Haven and Holy Spirit, Tuckerton.

Fr. Don Muller will preach and Fr. Terry will preside. Come join us for this festive evening!

Annual Meeting Sunday, January 19 at 10:30 am

Plan now to be present for this important event in the life of our Parish. We will hear reports from various groups, have our 2020 budget presented, elect members to the Vestry, and say farewell to our Rector.

On this special day, we will have one Eucharist at 9:00 am, followed by our Annual Meeting at 10:30 am.

Sunday Seminar

Our Sunday Seminar will continue on January 26. Debbie Kirk and Marcel Tabone will facilitate this group.

This is St. Stephen's offering of Adult Christian Education on Sunday mornings. It is an important part of the educational opportunities we offer our members.

Please join us on Sundays at 11:30 in the Parish Hall.

Wednesday Night Bible Study

The Wednesday Night Bible Study meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 in Classroom One. We will be continuing our study of First Samuel.

Maureen O'Keefe will facilitate this group beginning January 22.

The Good Samaritan House

The Good Sam House currently has three residents. One of the men is already employed, and the other two are actively seeking employment.

The Executive Committee for the Good Samaritan House consists of the following volunteers:

Ash Aziz
Dennis Micai
Willie O'Keefe
John Will

To contact a member of the Executive Committee, please call the Parish Office.

Weekday Services

Beginning January 20, we will be temporarily suspending our offerings of the Holy Eucharist on Wednesday nights and Friday mornings.

Watch for future announcements regarding Morning Prayer and/or Evening Prayer being offered during the week.

Shop Rite Gift Card Fundraiser

Our Shop Rite Gift Card Fundraiser continues. With the purchase of a gift card, 5% of the value will benefit the Building Maintenance Fund. To purchase please see Gloria Davis between the 8 & 10 am services!

From the Presiding Bishop

The following is an excerpt from Bp. Curry's Christmas sermon:

...It's not an accident that long ago, followers of Jesus began to commemorate his birth, his coming into the world. When the world seemed darkest. When hope seemed to be dashed on the altar of reality. It is not an accident that we too, commemorate his coming, when things do not always look right in this world.

But there is a God. And there is Jesus. And even in the darkest night. That light once shined and will shine still. His way of love is the way of life. It is the light of the world. And the light of that love shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, cannot, and will not overcome it.

God love you. God bless you and may you have a Merry Christmas and may this world be blessed. Amen.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church**

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Waretown, NJ 08758



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