

Life and Times

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

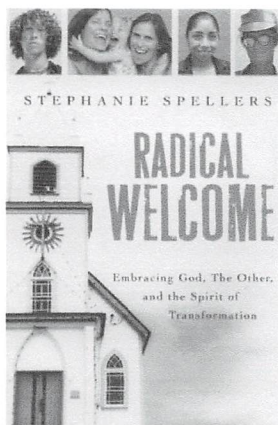


July, 2019

From the Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to recommend a book to you: *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* by the Rev. Stephanie Spellers. Here is how Stephanie defines the term "Radical Welcome":



They understand that radical welcome is not merely about diversity, evangelism, multiculturalism, inclusion or getting it "right." It is simply, profoundly about being faithful disciples of the Christ who welcomed and still welcomes all...

"Radical welcome" goes beyond being an "inviting", or even "inclusive" Church. For instance, compare the message of those three approaches:

The message of the Inviting Church - "Come, join our community and share our cultural values and heritage."

The message of the Inclusive Church - "Help us to be diverse."

The message of the Radically Welcoming Church - "Bring your culture, your voice, your whole self—we want to engage in truly mutual relationship."

Do you see the difference? Instead of a transaction, in which we assume The Other wants something we have, a radical welcome is an invitation to enter into a mutual relationship.

Is there some risk involved? Of course. And lots of fear. One of the greatest fears of the Church in general, and many of our members specifically, is the fear of change. And if we welcome in The Other, the outcasts, those who are somehow "different," things are definitely going to change. And maybe we won't like it.

But, the more I think about it, the more I come to the conclusion that there is no other way to be faithful to the message of the Gospel.

There's something more that I want to touch on here. I think that offering a "radical welcome" is not of value just because it is the embodiment of the message of the Gospel. When we look at the stranger in our midst as if he or she were Christ, we discover something else; we need to be in relationship with that person. It is critical to our own salvation that we be in relationship with The Other.

Somewhere along the way, Christianity got sidetracked by a focus on "personal salvation." I blame Descartes, but the source of our self-identification as "individuals" is a debate that we can have another time. I believe that one of our biggest cultural problems is this dissection of humanity down to its smallest element.

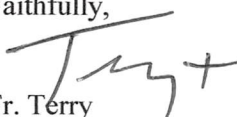
Another perspective would be to consider the concept of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, derived from the Zulu phrase, *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which means "a person is a person through other persons". We affirm our humanity when we affirm the humanity of others.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has described it this way:
...Ubuntu is a concept that we have in our Bantu languages at home. Ubuntu is the essence of being a person. It means that we are people through other people. We cannot be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence, we are made for family. When you have ubuntu, you embrace others. You are generous, compassionate. If the world had more ubuntu, we would not have war. We would not have this huge gap between the rich and the poor. You are rich so that you can make up what is lacking for others. You are powerful so that you can help the weak, just as a mother or father helps their children. This is God's dream.

I welcome you not simply because to do so is a Gospel imperative, and not just because I think I have something that you need, but because my humanity is bound up in yours, as is my salvation yoked to your salvation.

May we offer all those we encounter at St. Stephen's a radical welcome, and embrace them with the spirit of Ubuntu, not just for their sake, and not just for our own sake, but for the sake of the world!

Faithfully,


Fr. Terry

Sunday Seminar

Our Sunday Seminar continues at 11:30am in the Parish Hall. Fr. Terry is continuing "Dwelling in the Word," a program encouraged by the Diocese of New Jersey.

Episcopal Church Women News

Lunch and Matinee – July 30th

Surflight Theater – "Mama Mia"

A few tickets are left! See Dolores DeWitt.

Food Pantry

Our Food Pantry is in need of canned vegetables and tuna.

Thank you for your donations, and much thanks to our faithful Food Pantry volunteers!

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.

Strategic Planning Initiative

Our new **Mission Statement** for our parish:

Welcoming Everyone
Connecting with God
Building Community
Transforming Lives

Our Core Values Statement

Worship - We are called into the world to give ourselves in response to God's grace. We share that grace with the support and example of the Church past and present.

Fellowship - Fellowship provides a Christian home for fostering meaningful, loving relationships with God and our fellow human beings.

Community - We are called by Christ to love our neighbors. We support being in community within our Parish, our Diocese and local townships.

Ministry - We recognize that outreach for the care of the one is the ministry of the many.

Stewardship - Stewardship teaches us to become faithful stewards of our time, talent and

treasure to the glory of God, for the growth of God's kingdom, for the care of God's creation and as an inspiration and example to others.

Faith - The Christian faith as affirmed by the Book of Common Prayer, our Anglican heritage, value of scripture, tradition and reason are the cornerstones of our faith. We trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making and continued spiritual growth.

ShopRite Gift Cards

Our ShopRite 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 8:00 and 10:00 services.

Garden Chapel is Open

Holy Eucharist at 5:00 pm on Saturdays

Flowers are blooming, birds are chirping and the wind chimes gently serenade us. This quiet, simple service is consider a "Sunday" Eucharist, meaning you can sleep in on Sunday morning! The Garden Chapel, located next to the Memorial Garden, is also a wonderful place for prayer and reflection throughout the week.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 8 – Welcome Home Sunday
Church Picnic and Ministry Fair

September 15 – Bishop's Visitation
Confirmation, Reception and Festive Coffee Hour

Mark your calendars now for these special events!

From Bishop Stokes

Dear People of the Diocese of New Jersey,

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

'Tis the season! On June 27, I drove to The Church of the Holy Innocents in Beach Haven and had the honor

and privilege of ordaining Caroline Carson as a priest in Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Caroline has been called as the new Rector at Holy Innocents and comes to us from the Diocese of Louisiana.

This evening, Friday, June 28, at St. Andrew's, Lambertville, God willing and with the people's consent, I will ordain Dan Somers as a priest. Tomorrow, Saturday, June 29, I will be at St. Peter's, Spotswood. God willing and with the people's consent, I will ordain Allison Burns-LaGreca as a priest. On Tuesday, July 2, I will be at St. George's-by-the-River, Rumson. God willing and with the consent of the people, I will ordain Kije Rwamasirabo a priest.

These are four very different persons who share a similar call - to be priests in the Church of God. The "Outline of the Faith" in The Book of Common Prayer gives a succinct description of this call stating, "The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God." (BCP, p. 856)

I celebrate these persons and their call to the priesthood. They are a great gift to us all and to God's Church. We should be clear, however, that they are not the only "ministers" of the Church. All baptized persons are called to ministry.

The Book of Common Prayer makes this clear. The "Outline of the Faith," states, "The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons." Concerning the Ministry of the Laity it states "the ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church." (BCP, p. 855)

Interestingly, all four ministries of the Church are called to "represent Christ and his Church." There is, however, something important and unique about the implication of this for the laity.

In a book first published in 1986 titled, *The Liberation of the Laity*, author Anne Rowthorn asserted that the laity are "the prime ministers of the Church."¹ She writes:

They constitute up to 99 percent of church membership. They are the most typical, the most usual, the most ordinary Christians. They are normative Christians.

Clergy, in contrast, are neither average nor ordinary Christians. They are not usual. They are not, in general, the means through which the Church is presented to the world. Through its laity the Church is present in every area of human activity. It is in offices, in schools and universities, in hospitals, in stores, in factories and hotels. The Church is present where political decisions are made: in courts, in state legislatures, in Congress. Through the laity the Church is present in conference rooms and executive suites: it is there when corporate questions are deliberated. On docks, in the streets, in bars and restaurants, on farms, in cities, towns and suburbs, the Church is present in every human undertaking. Without the laity, the Church has no place in the world.

She is right, of course. Rowthorn then makes a critically important point:

But whether or not Christ is represented in human activity is dependent on whether or not the laity genuinely represent him.

To represent Christ and his Church, we, all of us, need to know Christ. We come to know Christ by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit through regular prayer; by regularly reading, marking, inwardly digesting, meditating upon the New Testament, especially the Gospels; by gathering in worship together week by week with faithful others and especially in our celebrations of Holy Eucharist; by serving others, particularly the poor, the sick and infirm in our communities and our world.

Those who are ordained in the Church have an important task that is well stated in the Letter to the Ephesians - to equip the saints for the work of ministry. It is to build up the body of Christ.

I am thankful God continues to provide us with gifted people for ordination. I am also thankful that God provides us with saints to equip - the laity - the prime ministers of the Church. Together we have all we need to transform the world in love.

May God bless you all as you represent Christ wherever you may be.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



¹ Rowthorn, Anne, *The Liberation of the Laity* - Originally published 1986 by Morehouse Publishing, New York - Republished by Wipf and Company, Eugene, Oregon, 2000, p. 5.

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Garden Chapel Eucharist

Saturdays at 5:00 pm

*(located behind the Parish Hall,
next to the Memorial Garden)*

