

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

December 2009 Newsletter

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A Note From the Editor

You will find lots of information in this newsletter to help you keep up with the comings and goings at St. Stephen's as we prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child. Many thanks to all of you who contribute so much to the life of our church. I wish you all a most blessed Advent and Christmas. Ruth Clausen, Editor

From the Rector

Though it has been three months, it seems so long ago that Sarah and I moved into the rectory. Since then the leaves have changed and fallen off the trees, I have formed a routine around the office, I have gotten to know the area and the town of Armonk a little better, and the house has begun to be our home (especially since we were blessed with Casey, the dog we adopted a month and a half ago). But the thing that has made the biggest difference in making me feel at home is getting to know you and worship with you more and more each week.

I say this not just because everyone has been so welcoming, but because we have been discerning together God's presence in our midst. The more I am with you the more clearly I hear God speaking to us in the prayers, readings, music, sermon, and in the Holy Eucharist. The more I experience the calm of God's presence with you, the more I understand our outreach efforts, our meetings, our discussions, our shared meals, and beyond. This common life we lead is one of continual oscillation between Advent and Christmas. We are ever preparing to know God in all that we do, and we are always experiencing God's incarnational presence in our lives together. This seems like an appropriate time in the life of St. Stephen's and new shared ministry to celebrate the already but not yet nature of Advent and Christmas.

I wish you many Blessings, much Peace, and great Joys in these holy seasons of Advent and Christmas we share in this month.

- Fr. Josh

Christmas Service Schedule

Christmas Pageant

Dec. 20th at the 10:00 am service

Christmas Eve

Family Service at 5:00 pm

Lessons and Carols at 9:00 pm

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist Celebration at 10:00 am

Other Reminder dates

- Dec. 6 Close of Stewardship Campaign – Please return *Pledge Cards* by this date
- Dec. 6 Drop off of gifts, food, and gift cards for Holiday Sharing Drive in Church
- Dec. 6 Vestry Retreat Afternoon
- Dec. 7 Volunteers meet at 1pm at the church to help deliver gifts.
- Dec. 7 Vestry meeting at 7:30
- Dec. 11 Friendship supper at the Davies: 7pm RSVP - ljohnson6@metlife.com
- Dec. 12 Cookie Bake at Weisners (42 Whippowill Rd.) 11am - 4.30pm
- Dec. 13 Confirmation Class
- Dec. 16 St. Stephen's Feeds at the Mt. Kisco Food Pantry
- Dec. 19 Decorating the Church, Dress Rehearsal for the Pageant
- Dec. 20-25 See above Christmas Service Schedule

Stewardship Statistics

Number of Pledges Received so far for 2010:	16
Number of Pledges Received for 2009:	27
Amount of Pledges Received so far for 2010	\$57,157
Amount of Pledges for 2009	\$99,367

Please return pledges by Dec. 6 to assist the Vestry in Budget Preparations at the Dec 7th Vestry meeting.

Property

Many churches hire “sextons” to do the work required to keep their churches welcoming and in good repair. We have chosen not to spend your money on that, instead to rely on members of the parish to help with those efforts.

As part of our Church at Work effort, kicked off last Spring as our THANK-YOU to Carol Mortell, much was accomplished. I want to thank everyone who contributed their time, money and elbow-grease. There is a list of all the projects completed on the bulletin board and I will give a full report at the annual meeting in January.

There are still projects, small and large, to be done - consider giving some of your time and talents to help. Let me know – call me at 273-2611 or email me at afmilan@aol.com.

Sunday School

Before the Sunday School hiatus for Christmas Pageant rehearsals, Kathie Ramsey and Dawn Carroll's younger group finished their unit on Creation. The children then learned about Jesus and his family, and the wise men who recognized that Jesus was special.

Charity Lunder's intermediate group continued learning lessons from the Pentateuch, lessons we've noticed have a strong sibling rivalry theme. After Jacob and Esau, they learned the story of Joseph's coat, and Joseph's life in Egypt before he finally encountered his brothers again and forgave them.

The confirmation class, led by Fr. Josh and Annlee Milani, is progressing toward a March 7 Confirmation service with the Bishop.

Interfaith Food Pantry

November's Thanksgiving food distribution was quite a sight. Special bags of food for the holiday were put together from the contributions of the 10 participating congregations. The generosity of St. Stephen's parishioners was once again demonstrated by our supplying more cans of sweet potatoes than the 180 cans we were asked for. One holiday bag of food, a \$25 gift certificate to a grocery store, and the regular food choices were given to each family. They were most grateful.

The Pantry was also extremely fortunate to receive two, \$5,000 donations this month from a foundation and family in our community. This money will be used to buy food from the Food Bank at more favorable prices than one would pay at a grocery store. Our pantry serves families that reside in towns where no Food Bank exists. The number of families we serve has been increasing steadily, now averaging 125 a week. In order to make sure that we have enough food to distribute to all that come through the Pantry, the Board just voted to increase the amount we spend each month to supplement our orders.

The Holiday distribution on *December 16th* promises to be festive as we will be working with Toys for Tots to secure toys that will be handed out as well as food. Fr. Josh and Sarah will be participating that day and thank you to those who have signed up to volunteer as well – we are all set! We appreciate all the efforts of those who have contributed food and their time to help the hungry in our community.

Trina Fontaine & Sheila Varughese

Cookie Bake

Distributing cookies after the Christmas Pageant has become a regular happening here at St. Stephen's. It is a wonderful way to connect the youngest and oldest members of our parish as well as a way to teach the children the art of giving. Originally the cookies were meant for the older congregants and for those who did not have the time or inclination to bake. This has since become a church-wide activity but I have not lost the original idea of empowering the youngest of our congregation with making something themselves and then giving it away! That is why it is the youngest kids who distribute the cookies after the Pageant. We make roughly 2000 cookies in all!

You can support this effort in numerous ways:

1. Bake cookies yourselves and donate them to the cause. Please make cookies that the kids can handle.
2. Donate \$\$ to defray the cost of baking.
3. Come join us on December 12 (42 Whipporwill) to bake cookies with the children
4. Come join us on Saturday, December 19th as we arrange the cookie plates in the Parish Hall while the Christmas Pageant rehearsal is happening
4. You may help the kids place the plates all around the Church. We like to make sure the plates are positioned, "right side up!" Help the littlest of children sign their names
5. Save your Christmas cards this year. We recycle old cards to use as the tags.

HELP PLEASE! I NEED FREEZER SPACE. I will be doing most of the baking from Dec 7 - Dec 18. You'll have your freezer back on the 19th. MaryBeth Weisner, weisner5@aol.com 914-273-1530

Holiday Sharing Drive

Those of you who pulled a card and agreed to contribute to this worthy cause should deliver your gifts to the church by **December 6th**. They will be **delivered on Monday, December 7th**. **I could use some help with the delivery. If you can spare an hour of so, please meet me at the church at 1pm and we can drive over together.** **We are short of gift cards from Shoprite.** Donations of \$25- \$50 gift cards for food are needed. We have promised to raise approximately \$600 in grocery store cards. MaryBeth

Membership

With Fr. Josh now in place as our permanent Rector, St. Stephen's will resume our seasonal postcard mailings to current and former congregants, and to residents in select zip codes in the immediate surrounding areas.

The next mailing will be sent in mid-December, announcing our holiday service schedule and inviting all to celebrate the Christmas season at St. Stephen's. Please call the office if you know of anyone not currently on our parish list. Rich Fontaine

Bishop's Visit and Confirmation Class

We have officially received the Bishop's Visit Date for confirmation so please mark you calendar:

The Rt. Rev. Mark S. Sisk will be joining us on March 7, 2010.

Our youth Confirmation Class has already begun and we are moving right along in our preparations. We are considering how we can offer a way for adults to prepare as well as some may also like to be confirmed, reaffirm their confirmations, or be received into the Episcopal Church. If you would like to discuss any of these possibilities don't hesitate to contact Fr. Josh at any of the numbers below.

Youth Group on the Horizon

MaryBeth Weisner and Fr. Josh have been meeting to dream, plan, discuss and hope to start Youth Group gatherings in the new year. Our hope is that we will be getting together to have fun, explore some of the many church youth activities available in New York, explore ourselves and who we are, and reach out to those in need in our community. We are very excited and looking forward to letting you know more details in the near future.

Appointment to Chair Methodist-Episcopal Dialogue Committee

Bishop Sisk has appointed Fr. Josh to Chair the Episcopal Methodist Dialogue Committee for the Diocese of New York. The purpose of this work is to develop shared understanding of the similarities and differences in the two denominations. The relationship is intended to deepen mutual respect and relationship. The committee is a sub-group of the Ecumenical Counsel of the Diocese of New York.

Staying in Touch

In this age of numerous and instantaneous communications we are making an effort to integrate all of the facets of a current and functional community. To this end St. Stephen's has a Facebook Page. If you are on Facebook, please join us online for pictures, updates, communication and pertinent information.

Also, as you probably noticed yesterday, we are going to be emailing our announcements from the Sunday bulletin on a weekly basis. Hopefully this will be an easy way for you to access information about our common life together.

As always, anyone can come by the church office to get a hard copy of the announcements, newsletter, or anything else. If there is any other means of communication which may serve you and our shared life, please let Fr. Josh know.

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**If you have any questions, needs, or any pastoral emergencies,
don't hesitate to contact Fr. Josh Condon at the rectory:
914-273-4570, on his cell phone: 917-753-1997, or by email:
jcondon.ststephens@gmail.com**