



Senior Warden Message

Gratitude: the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

While searching ideas for this piece, I came across an article about the power of gratitude. Now you may not be aware of it but gratitude, of being thankful, is important for a happy, healthy and fulfilling life. This past year it's been so much easier to focus on the negative. What we are missing, the people we don't get to see, the places we don't get to travel to and all the things we don't get to do. Understanding the power of gratitude and expressing it - even when things are really tough - can actually make you feel better.

It is times like this when gratitude can play a powerful role in our lives. Every day we each have a choice to make, and this choice has the power to alter our experience. We can complain about the situation, focus on everything we lack, wallow in self-pity, feel victimized, and blame others for our misfortunes, or, we can be grateful for what is going right in our lives, appreciate the good that is ours, and look for the lessons we can learn. Feeling and expressing gratitude changes our perspective, our outlook and our feelings. It can even change how we express ourselves. As a result, gratitude changes our experiences.



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Message from the Pulpit

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today the sun is shining...the grass is green...the birds are chirping and the squirrels are running around. Is it spring already? No, unfortunately, no...it's January in Michigan!



We've been living under the dark shadow of the COVID pandemic that has enshrouded us for nearly a year, and perhaps God has given us this respite to raise our spirits for a few minutes or a few hours. 2020 was a remarkable year...a year that we will not forget soon. But let us not dwell on the devastating effects of the virus. Instead, let us look forward with optimism to a new year filled with God's many blessings.

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Thank You to everyone for contributing to a beautiful Christmas at St. Stephens. Our love shines through, even in our absence.



Senior Warden Message

Cont. from Page 1

But when things are really a mess, the way they have been this year, it may be difficult to feel grateful. You may wonder, how is it possible to feel the good feelings gratitude is meant to bring about? It's really pretty simple. Take a look around you and try to find just one thing that you are grateful for. If you can find just one thing, then there might be more. Keep looking, find something else for which you're grateful. It could be as simple as being grateful for a pet, or for a smile someone gave you, or a "thank you" from a stranger behind a mask.

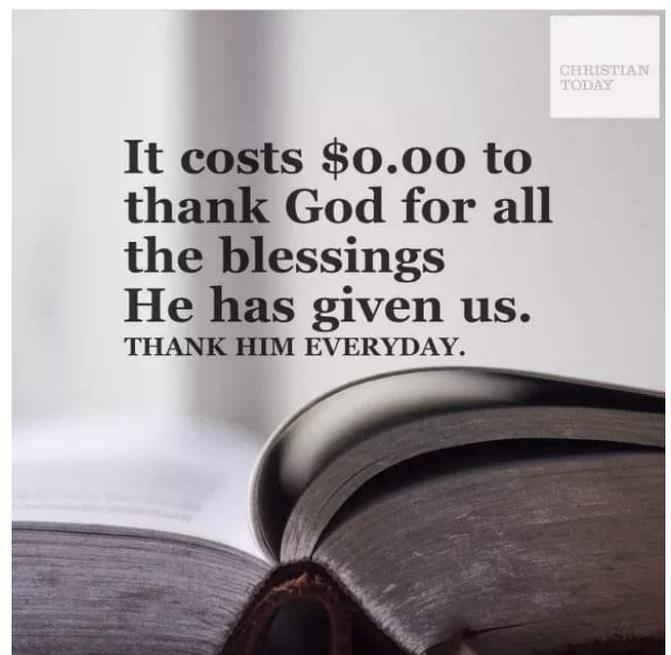


Giving thanks to God and counting our blessings is an important daily activity. Jesus taught us that God provides everything we need. If all of our needs are met, then there's no reason to complain, or as Jill's mom would say "sit on your pity pot". What does our gratitude bring into our lives? Mercy. Gratitude allows us to feel God's everlasting mercy. God's arms are always there to comfort us. I could tell you about physically feeling the warmth of an embrace when standing alone on the old bridge in Heidelberg talking to God about my cancer diagnosis – but that is perhaps another story.

Personally, once I start looking around and thinking carefully about my life, I find that there is so much that I am grateful for. When I focus on the things I love and am thankful for, I always feel pretty darn great. That is the power of gratitude. According to this article, some of the words used to describe how gratitude makes us feel include satisfied, confident, happy, positive and easy-going. There's also a greater sense of calmness and trust. Calmness and Trust – reminds me of having just gone to church. Maybe it is also the time to reflect on and to be grateful for everything God has given us.

One of the many things for which I am grateful is the opportunity to serve as your Senior Warden. You all teach me so much about love, faith and friendship. This past year has been, paradoxically enough, a year that I feel truly and humbly grateful for having shared it with you. Thank you.

With much gratitude,
Dave Stein
Sr. Warden



Outreach Endeavors @ Christmas

St. Stephen's has always impressed me with how generous we are when there is a need and this past Christmas was no different. Since we were not able to meet in person, a Giving Tree was set up online using Signup Genius. Our first recipients were a family of five, a single mother with four children, through Orchards Children's Services. All items in need were accounted for within a week and not wanting anyone to feel left out another family was chosen. This family was through Oakland County, in Pontiac, a Hispanic family also in great need. Again, St. Stephen's came through. So, thank you! We helped two families have a wonderful Christmas.

Amy Redmer

Thoughts from Behind Closed Doors

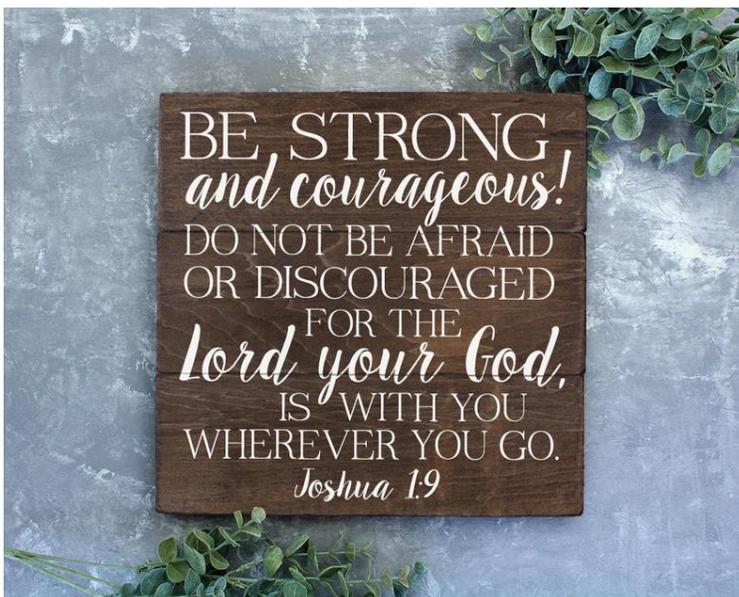
Pandemic and political turmoil have removed comforting props from daily life, leaving us consumed by solitary thoughts. When our days were filled with mindless activity, such thoughts were relegated to the back burners of our brains. Now, the very real prospect of extinction - whether by virus, economic ruin or societal mayhem - has caused us once again to ask hard questions about the meaning of existence. When most other distractions (i.e. travel, entertainment, in-person schooling, visits with friends and family, etc.) are temporarily suspended, what is our default position?

One predictable human response is to fall back on religion in order to explain, justify or reassure ourselves that life will be restored to our version of normal. Recently, as a dumbfounded witness to the insurrection in Washington, I couldn't help noticing, among numerous colorful artifacts on display, a couple of banners proclaiming JESUS. While I believe that God has a central role in the midst of all human affairs, this seemed to implicate Jesus in a movement that flies in the face of his message.

Here was Jesus, in bold letters, juxtaposed with white supremacist, anti-Semitic and racist paraphernalia, displayed by rioters who seemed to have not a clue about what that name actually represents. Putting aside devotion to one political cause or another (Jesus cared little for the politics of his day), any basic exposure to the ethics of Jesus should convince us that the antics on display were profoundly un-Christian.

In this dark season of discontent, it is fitting to challenge the ways in which religion has been co-opted by those whose agenda veers far afield from the tenets of any true faith. Instead of waving or flaunting the Bible, we need to read it for a change.

Penny Piantedosi



We Ask Your Prayers for the Following People

Jenny Dolan
 Mary Koske
 Harold Ford
 Mary Bandsuch
 Greg Thompson
 Zoey Rose
 Mayme Oliver
 Rick Lowery
 Robin Cameron
 Deputy David Hack
 Amy Ambrey
 Kenny Nelson
 Emily Thompson
 Michelle Walter
 Meghann Armstrong
 Ron Goetzke
 Joyce Vance
 Jerome Wojas

Mike Montgomery
 Helen Livitzky
 Warren Smith
 Inge Wojas
 Ed Yates
 Betty Feighner
 Sophie Wasik
 Kim Morrow
 Dylan Moose
 Adrian Gross
 Kathy Davis
 Jim Whitaker
 Tyler Braidwood
 Sue Metz,
 Jerry Swain
 MaryLou Bryson
 Julie Gutierrez

These Parish Families

1/3	Margie Armstrong Scott Armstrong
1/10	Georgiana Badalow Bob & Alicia Baker
1/17	Lee & Ginny Bennett Dennis & Mary Bishop
1/24	Tom & Marilyn Borowski Nikki Braidwook & Bill Perod
1/31	Alice Brandon Steve & Margaret Brandon
2/7	Mike & Erin Brokenshire Robert & Donna Brokenshire
2/14	Donna & Richard Bronsteen Claire Brumfield
2/21	MaryLou Bryson Patricia Buller
2/28	Tony & Kim Burean Jon Burrell

Those in the Armed Services

Nathan Cremeans—grandson of Barb Whitaker
Ian L’Hommedieu— godson of Linda Pierce
Stephen L’Hommedieu—godson of Linda Pierce
Kyle Rogowski—nephew of Ken & Kris Fuhr
Jim Sands—grandson of Sharon Sands
Gordon Bagley - friend of Vida family
Capt. John Zimmer - friend of Vida family

Advent by Candlelight

This year we had an Advent by Candlelight 2020 version. All the women of the church were mailed a tea bag and a letter suggesting we all take 20 minutes to ourselves and sip tea, get comfortable and pray.

Rev. Sharon preselected three times when she was on Facebook and one could join in spirit with others and find ways to connect and to give thanks.

Give thanks we did - the women of St. Stephens donated over five hundred dollars worth of diapers and baby items! The items were donated to Haven in Pontiac. Haven gives women and children seeking shelter from domestic violence. I can't help but think of how Mary and Joseph sought shelter on that Holy Night when Jesus the babe was born.

Karol Sprague and Jill Stein



Hi! My name is Gracie Anne. I'm the new parish pooch!

I came to live with Mother Sharon on November 1 when I was just 6 weeks old and I've already visited the church office a few times. In fact, Ami has given me some toys and a nice bed for my nap time; my bed is in Mother Sharon's office where I can keep an eye on everyone in the office.

My favorite things to do are meeting new people, chewing, unrolling toilet paper, watching the squirrels in the yard, and going for walks. Mom says the thing I do best is taking a nap!

Mom says that you people have to stay away from each other until the virus ends, but when it's over, I hope you will come by the office and say "Hi!" to me.

Barkfully yours,

Gracie



REMEMBERING BETTY BEALL

I love real life stories. I especially love Betty Beall's story – a story shared with me slowly over the years here at St. Stephen's.

I always said some screenwriter should make a movie about Betty's life – hers was so interesting with such joy and such sorrow . . . too much sorrow really . . .and yet she was the happiest and strongest among us.

I spent a few hours with Betty the night before she died. . . and when I got home that night and went to bed – I dreamed about her. I'm sure I was recalling a book or speech from somewhere but in that dream. . front and center was Betty.

In it, Betty was asked to give an account of her life to God. . . .”So, empty your pockets and purse, Betty. Do you have anything left? Any unused talents I gave you? Any dreams unfulfilled? Any love you forgot to spread around? Any unsaid compliments or good wishes? Any part of yourself you failed to give away?”

Betty thought about these things and finally answered. . . . “I've nothing left to return. I spent everything you gave me, Lord. I played all my cards and sang my song.”

Well done and well said, Faithful Friend,

Gretchen Waters

Birthdays

January

Name	Date
Marilyn Borowski	3
Gordon McMullen	3
Joann Morelli	3
Sharon Voelker	3
Alice Moss	5
Marilyn Gilbert	8
Winifred Lowery	8
Nancy Papet	8
Kate Roberts	12
Dave Stein	12
Rod Johnson	14
Donna Johnson	21
Sathi Satyanathan	21
Diane Kenefic	22
Sue Russell	22
Jill Stein	23
Jill West	23
Molly Grubb	24
Cindy Vida	24
Jim Maxwell	25
Inge Wojas	26
Greyson Ingersoll	27
Chris Herfurth	28
Jim Whitaker	30

February

Name	Date
Steve Fragnoli	1
Megan Vida	3
Katelyn Gerard	4
William Waun	4
Evan Vida	9
Amy Church	10
Tristan Thiel	11
Jan Eldon	13
Meghan Brokenshire	16
Kassidy O'Neill	16
Helen Slater	17
Sheryl Schmidt	17
Colin Davis	19
Tom Vida	20
Mackenzie Hardy	23
Katie Sobolewski	24
John Spates	25
Mary Lou Bryson	28
Andrew Gerard	28

Anniversaries

January

Name	Date
Gretchen & Roy Waters	7

February

Name	Date
Jackie & Don Ingersoll	3
Miranda & John Spates	3
Sharon & Vergil Robosan	5
Sue & Dan Stewart	14
Judy & Paul McClendon	21
Barb & Jim Whitaker	27

Grant them your blessing, O God, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep their promises and vows; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Bound Together Christmas Outreach

St. Stephen's has had a long-standing relationship with the Bound Together after school tutoring program in Pontiac. With the onset of the pandemic, tutoring services were suspended. Director Michele Wogoman, working in cooperation with other local charitable organizations, developed other ways to help their families whose needs were greater than ever. Food distribution to the families and getting them the tools needed for virtual learning became the main objectives.

St. Stephen's has traditionally supplied new board games and school supplies to each child in the program. This year, despite the absence of the Giving Tree and the cancellation of the in-person Bound Together Christmas party, we dovetailed with Bound Together family holiday meal delivery endeavor. There were 13 families on the roster, and we provided each family with a game they could play together and a \$25 gift card for Kroger or Walmart.

The response from the St. Stephen's community was immediate and generous, as always. All 13 wrapped games and gift cards were delivered to Michele by December 7th and were distributed to the families by Michele and her team on the 14th.

Michele expressed profound gratitude for St. Stephen's continued dedication to the Bound Together children and their families.

Thank you, one and all.

Linda Pierce

Bound Together



Our Vision

"St. Stephen's Episcopal Church seeks to be a vibrant, multigenerational Christian Community combining Tradition with Humanity and Humor as we worship God and serve the community and each other."

Our Mission

Together We Will...

Sing Out, in worship to God,

Reach Out, in service to others,

Cry Out, with others in times of need,

Find Out, about our faith, and

Laugh Out Loud Together...

Crafting Kindness

Crafting Kindness could not meet up for the last nine months of 2020. But, that did not stop the group of crafters from prayerfully sewing, knitting, and crocheting.

The group donated over 1,425 craft items in 2020. The bulk of the items made were face masks. Over 1,031 masks were sewed and donated to Baldwin Center, State of Michigan Faith Based Coalition and hospitals. We sent masks to doctor offices as well as individuals. The need was great and the group rose to the occasion.

Military Boxes were mailed with homemade quilts to all the servicemen and women on our roster. Christmas stockings packed with personal hygiene needs were delivered to St. Matthew and St. Joseph Episcopal church of Detroit. Many seniors in our own church received the same. Teddy Bears were sewed and delivered to doctor offices to help relieve the anxiety of some of their younger patients.

Over 65 Baby hats for preemie babies were taken to the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The list goes on and on with the ways this small group of mostly women(men are also welcome) who found ways to warm the hearts and heads of many, from premature babies to senior citizens. God Bless us everyone!

Jill Stein



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E-mail, bring to church or fax your articles			

Weekly Service Schedule (until further notice)

Weeknight Compline	7:30 pm
Eucharist with instrumental music	Sunday, 10 am
Livestream Video	Sunday, 10 am

If you have e-mail, you can receive our newsletter faster! Please send your e-mail address to office@ststephenstroy.org. Thank you in advance for helping us with our continued effort to.....THINK GREEN!

Who's Missing?

If someone you usually see in church hasn't been there in a while, please give them a call.



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

5500 North Adams Road
Troy, MI 48098

Please remember St. Stephen's in your will.

