



THE WITNESS



ST. STEPHEN'S TROY

No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, we welcome you with open hearts and minds!

We believe that every individual is valuable and deserves to be welcomed, loved, and accepted for who they are.

We are a family of God that provides support, guidance, and encouragement to all who see it.

We know God has a purpose for us all, so we provide opportunities for everyone to find and fulfill theirs.

We believe that faith grows when it is joyful and shared with others!

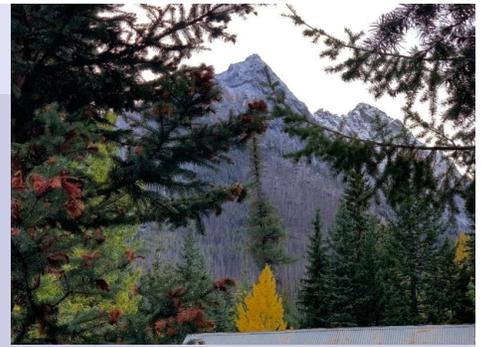
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A word from Pastor Gerardo

Beloved of St. Stephen's,

Before I came to St. Stephen's, I spent three weeks in the mountains of Washington State at an intentional Lutheran community called Holden Village. Every day, I'd step outside my lodge and gaze at the towering mountains; each day, they took my breath away. I often thought about one of my favorite Psalms, "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1,2), and how for centuries, people associated God's presence and protection with the mountains.



Holden Village, Chelan, WA, October 2025

I also thought of the many times Jesus went up the mountains to be close to God. One of the fascinating things about being high up the mountains is gaining perspective. You can see the big picture. Things that up close and personal look big and insurmountable, when viewed from high up the mountain, suddenly they're not as big or insurmountable. Things fit larger patterns. You can see how all things fit together better. From the mountaintops of the Cascades in Washington, I could gain perspective on my previous experiences, and gain prepare my heart and soul to meet you.

In this season of Lent, we are invited into a spiritual journey drawing closer to God so that we can gain perspective and clarity. We live in uncertain times. When the ground beneath our feet feels unsteady—in our personal lives, families, or nation—the ancient rhythms of Lent offer us a pathway through the wilderness, walked by countless faithful people before us.

Lent is a forty-day journey echoing Jesus' wilderness, Israel's wandering, and Noah's flood. Beginning as preparation for Easter baptisms in the early Church, it crystallized by the fourth century into a communal season of prayer, study, and fasting. What began as strict fasting—only bread and water until evening—evolved across cultures while keeping its essential spirit: simplifying life to make room for God.

Early Christians fasted for profound reasons: solidarity with Christ in his hunger and temptation; clarity of mind, helping distinguish needs from wants; justice, as Isaiah 58 demands—sharing bread with the hungry, not mere hunger; spiritual strength, learning to say no to destructive appetites by practicing with legitimate ones; and preparation, creating space for God to work, as Moses and Elijah did.

When so much feels beyond our control, Lent offers a gift: the chance to gain clarity and perspective by coming closer to God. Through fasting, we can reclaim agency over our inner lives. Traditional food fasting remains powerful, but consider also: fasting from media noise to find silence; from criticism to practice blessing; from busyness to create space for prayer; from comfort for solidarity with those who suffer; from avoidance to address what you've been putting off.

This isn't about earning God's favor—we already have it. It's about creating room for transformation. What might you lay down this Lent? What weight might you release? Start small. Choose one thing that challenges but doesn't overwhelm you. Share it with a friend. When you stumble, remember: Lent is about faithful return, not perfect performance.

May this Lent bring us deeper into the heart of God. May your fasting open you to grace. And may you discover, in the letting go, that you are held.

Gerardo+

THE SENIOR WARDEN'S THOUGHTS



I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling that life can sometimes get very busy, noisy, stressful, complicated and like you're being pulled in many different directions. Work, caring for aging parents, household chores, church commitments, exercise, etc., can all stack up and leave me feeling overwhelmed and unfocused. Usually, I don't stay in this place for very long and use music, prayer, a quick text to a friend or something like that to reset and move

on. Every so often though, I get razor focused on something negative, and can't let it go.

This happened several weekends ago after one of our big snows. I ruined my own weekend with anger at my neighbor who had not shoveled one snow flake all season and decided he'd park in front of my house because he could no longer pull into his own driveway. I live on a cul-de-sac and near the opening of a nature preserve, so the view out my front window is lovely, especially when there is a fresh blanket of snow covering the ground and trees. An old black car in the middle of my view was spoiling everything, and I let it do so for 2 1/2 days. My offer to lend a shovel and my concern about the snow plow coming were ignored, which only fueled my fury. I couldn't get out of my own head.

Slowly and surely, after I got home from church, I started thinking about things differently. My focus changed. Was I loving my neighbor as myself? Was there a reason (other than laziness) that my neighbor wasn't shoveling the snow? By the time I got my snowblower out on Monday, I was quite certain that Jesus was not well pleased with my attitude. I prayed as I cleared my driveway. I thought about my brother Bill who was a great helper during his life. I asked myself WWJD and then I plowed part of the neighbors driveway so he could pull in after work.

Philippians 4:6-7 is one of my favorite verses, but I forgot to remember this when I first got angry. *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

God's peace came to me outside in the snow. When we invite God into everything we do, we experience deep communion with him. Through him we are able to find complete rest despite the ups and downs of our lives.

May it be so for you in the days ahead.

Peace,
Cheri



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*Happy Feet,
Happy Heart!*



Your toes will be tapping and your hearts leaping if you join the St. Stephen's Leprechauns to celebrate St. Patrick's Day on **Saturday, March 14th @ 5:30p.m.**

Great food, great Irish music to sing out loud or in your head. Dancing is permitted. Bring your favorite dish for the potluck dinner if you are able. (signup sheets are in the Gathering area). Drinks will be provided.

Dinner will be followed by Irish singing provided by Dave Stein and his fellow band/singers. Wear your green and come ready for a really fun evening.

Be there and be part of the fun that helps bind us together. And multiply the fun by bringing family and friends. Also, good friends make good neighbors. Please encourage other parishioners to attend and perhaps arrange to pick up those who prefer not to drive at night.

Have questions? Alice Moss and Jackie Ingersoll have the answers.



Let G.E.M. Jumpstart the Gerardo Era!

Energy levels and optimism are high. New adventures are on our horizon. This is a perfect reason to enjoy the personal bond-building Greet, Eat & Meet program! GEM creates better bonds by combining great food & drink with storytelling, and laughter. And in the spirit of change and growth, we have ideas for making it even more flexible and accessible.

In general, GEM provides small group settings that enable us to make new friends and strengthen old bonds. Participating is "a piece of cake," an appetizer, salad and entrée!

GEM participants are assigned to groups of 6 or 8 people [pairs or singles]. Then each group schedules 3 or 4 events during the year. If the host has room and the inclination, they may invite others [Pastor Gerardo, parishioners, family or friends]. Everyone shares a meal and fellowship. Most have dinners, but breakfasts, brunches or lunches are fine too. Your group decides.

Have a meal at a restaurant or at other venues such as plays, concerts, sporting events, an Oktoberfest, etc. GEM groups may wish to use the same format all the time or mix it up.

Typically, when held at someone's home, the host provides the main course, and others bring an appetizer, salad or dessert. GEM is not a cooking contest. The food is the pretext for getting folks together in a friendly setting. The main course can be anything from hot dogs to your family's specialty. Not a cook? Buy 2 rotisserie chickens and call it good.

Life is about memories and connecting with people who care. St. Stephen's is full of caring people who come together to do God's work. GEM makes both easier.

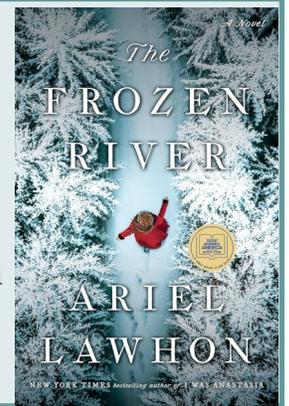
Sign up as a pair or an individual in the Gathering Area or contact Jackie or Don Ingersoll.

Jackie [248 703 3476] or Don [248 515 9646]
don@doningersoll.com

NOVELS AND NIBBLES MARCH 2, 2026 at 2:00pm

Join our Book Club: Novels and Nibbles on Monday, March 2 in the Bishop Emerich room for a discussion of *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon, a murder mystery based on the true story of 18th-century midwife Martha Ballar. This book provides the gripping story of a strong woman fighting for justice, so you won't want to miss it!

Our next 2 books will be chosen at this meeting. Please bring your suggestions!



Wednesdays in Lent starting at 5:30pm

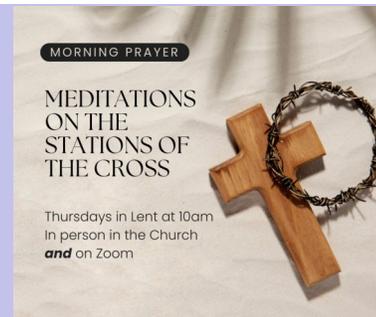
Let us break bread together and dip it in soup!

Lent invites us into a spiritual journey, drawing closer to God and one another. We will gather for food and fellowship followed by community conversations.

We'll gather in the Parish Hall at 5:30pm with program starting at 6pm.

We could really use volunteers!

Soup makers, set up folks, and clean up folks. If you're able to help, please reach out to Pastor Gerardo!



Thursdays in Lent at 10am

Join us on for a time of contemplative prayer with special meditations on the Stations of the Cross--the last few hours of Jesus' earthly life. This ancient Christian practice invites us to reflect on themes of suffering, grief, loss, betrayal, and the ways God walks these parts of our journeys in life.

To make the service more accessible, we will be gathering both **in person** and **on Zoom**. See Key News for link to Zoom.

If you have any trouble getting connected, please reach out to Pastor Gerardo at 202-431-9961.

EASTER CANTATA

The St. Stephen's Choir will be presenting the Easter Cantata, Amazing Love, A Celebration of Hope, by Tom Fettke on **Sunday April 19 at 3:00pm**. A fellowship time will follow.

This is a great opportunity to invite friends and family to experience our music at St. Stephen's as well as the wonderful fellowship this church has.



Hope to see our church and community at the Cantata to help celebrate our Easter Season.

Yours in God's Music, Sue Gore/Choir Director

Outreach Happenings – Spring 2026

WE HAVE A BUSY YEAR PLANNED!

We are working on expanding our Outreach ministries and opening up more opportunities for hands on participation by you. Some of the opportunities we are working on are:

- Hope Shelter in Pontiac** – serving dinners 4 times (last year we served twice)
- Crossroads in Detroit** – serving Sunday dinner twice + lunch at VBS
- Annual Baby Shower in July** – your donations of diaper and other baby supplies
- Celtic Isles Concert** – fund raiser for Rise Against Hunger
- Rise Against Hunger** – pack 15,000 meals for third world countries in need
- Crafting Kindness** – reaching out into the community for their involvement
- Thanksgiving Food Drive** - your donations of food for Lighthouse
- Christmas Giving Tree** – your donations to help local charities at Christmas

You will be hearing more about each of these activities in the coming weeks and months. Remember that Outreach isn't just about serving a meal, it's more about the connection made in the reaching. We can serve by mentoring, conversing, entertaining or simply listening. More on that to come....

Weekly Lighthouse food donations have been simply fantastic! Having a focus on specific needs seems to help the contributions. We post the requested needs for each month by the donation box. Please look at the sign posted to know the particular needs for each month. THANK YOU to everyone who has brought food in for this very important ministry.

Our Driveway Food Pantry has become very important to the local community. The good news is that the pantry is well used – but this also means we need to keep up with our donations! Again, a big THANK YOU to everyone who has brought food in for this very important ministry.

Mike Szott saw this in a local news app:

5 Health Benefits of Volunteering:

1. It may prolong your life
2. It may lower your risk of heart disease
3. It may improve your brain performance
4. It may improve your quality of life
5. It may reduce your levels of physical pain

Be healthy - start volunteering!



Peace,

Dave Stein, Outreach Chair

Lighthouse Testimonial

Recently, we were asked by Lighthouse to provide a short quote or statement(just a few sentences)that would capture why we support Lighthouse and what our work means to us and St. Stephen's. These comments would then be used in the Lighthouse Annual Report which will be published in the near future.

We were given 3 topics to reflect on:

What motivates your support of Lighthouse?

Why do you feel Lighthouse's work matters in our community?

What does this partnership mean to St. Stephen's of Troy?

The following is a copy of what we came up with for our response. Afterwards is a brief explanation of our comments.

Being longtime members of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Troy, MI, we became involved with Lighthouse because we wanted to carry on our Parish's longstanding tradition of support for Lighthouse. Personally, we feel that our involvement helps to provide essential items to the ever increasing number of people in need within our community.

Lighthouse's work matters in the community because not only does it provide a temporary safety net for people in need but also offers a means by which they can better their situation long term.

St. Stephen's has always "stepped up to the plate" to help others. In addition to the 13 Outreach Programs we currently participate in, for years we were in the annual S.O.S. rotation. We see our partnership as a means of living out our faith, the call of Jesus to serve all people in love.

Our contact at Lighthouse has promised us a copy of the Annual Report which we will definitely share with all.

Initially, we got involved to carry on the tradition at St. Stephen's. Just because Joan Morgan had moved we did not want our Parish's involvement to end. We also know how important helping people in need is to the people of this Parish. It is (to borrow a phrase) Job 1. We could never have that tenet fall by the wayside.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support for the Lighthouse Top 3 each month. I wish we could capture the reaction of the staff at Lighthouse when we pull up to unload the donation. It is not an exaggeration to say that as soon as they know it's St. Stephen's donation they rush to unload the car. Many times we have bought them products that they were completely out of and our donation goes directly to the pantry for immediate distribution to clients.

Mike & Martha Szott



A Thank-You Celebration From Lighthouse

Thursday January 29th Martha and Mike Szott attended the Lighthouse Congregational Celebration in Birmingham. This event was to thank all the Congregations that were involved in the Lighthouse and former South Oakland Shelter initiatives which were so successful in 2025. We attended the event, but our generous people at St. Stephen's helped Lighthouse serve its many clients over the past year. Martha and I wanted to be sure and share Lighthouse's gratitude with you.

I'd like to share a copy of the Thank You from Ali Mangiapane, our Lighthouse contact, along with some pictures of the event.

From Ali Mangiapane:

Thank you for being part of our Congregational Celebration this past Thursday. Whether you joined us in person or were with us in spirit, we are deeply grateful for your continued partnership, presence, and support. It was meaningful to come together to reconnect, reflect on the legacy of Lighthouse and South Oakland Shelter (SOS), and look ahead to the future of our work

Thank you again for your partnership and for the many ways you support Lighthouse and our neighbors. We look forward to many more conversations and collaborations ahead.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

CRAFTING KINDNESS

March 27, 2026 10:00am-1:00pm



Crafting Kindness will be meeting on March 27th. This meeting will focus on making small creative lap quilts that “ the Alzheimer’s Association “ will distribute to many clients to fidget with. These quilts have lots of key chains, buttons, zippers and other odds and ends. These quilts allow many clients to play with these items as a way to fidget and relieve some nervous energy.

All supplies will be provided and all are welcome to stop by and share coffee and conversation even if they don’t see.

We will meet on **Friday, March 27th from 10:00am until 1:00pm.**

Please see Jill Stein (248-376-0560) with any questions. I hope to see you here- we all can make a difference!

Jill Stein

PS- save old key chains , keys  and ribbons and pass on to me please.



CROSSROADS SOUP KITCHEN

May 24, 2026 8:00am-1:30pm



The members of St. Stephen’s are once again sponsoring and serving a meal at Crossroads Soup Kitchen on **Sunday, May 24**, and we would love for you to join us.

On that day, we will prepare and serve **400–500 meals** to our neighbors in Detroit who are experiencing food insecurity. It is a powerful and humbling opportunity to put our faith into action and make a tangible difference in the lives of others.

We are seeking **12–15 volunteers** to help prepare and serve the meal. Crossroads is located at **2424 West Grand Blvd. in Detroit.** The time commitment is approximately **8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**, but you are welcome to participate for any portion of the morning that fits your schedule.

As the date approaches, we will coordinate car-pooling from the St. Stephen’s parking lot for those who are interested.

Serving at Crossroads is a meaningful and hands-on ministry, and it is also a wonderful way to connect with fellow parishioners while giving back to our broader community.

If you feel called to be part of this worthwhile mission, please contact **Judy Lazzaro McQuiston.** We hope you will join us.



OUR PARISH CELEBRATES

★ HAPPY ★ BIRTHDAY!

MARCH

March 9 Judy McQuiston
March 9 Margaret Brandon
March 14 Patrick Wojas
March 18 Ed DeCiantis
March 19 Bob Wolf
March 20 Georgiana Badalow
March 20 Gillian Grubb
March 24 Jerry Nolan
March 27 Mary Bishop
March 28 Gabriel Valdez
March 29 Jackie Ingersoll
March 31 Martha Szott

APRIL

April 3 Michael Wellman
April 3 Tyler Braidwood
April 5 Mary Ann Kish
April 6 Margaret O'Neill
April 8 Ken Fuhr
April 14 Tammy Gerard
April 14 Cheri Salanty
April 15 Don Ingersoll
April 18 Paul Hardy
April 22 Robert Hoffman
April 26 Pam Bonkowski
April 27 Karen Mirzoian
April 30 Virginia Bennett

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

March 2 Jerry and Lani Nolan
March 9 Joe and Jan Hopper
March 21 John and Karen Morley
March 31 John and Debbie Pincura

April 5 Richard and Winifred Lowery
April 13 Paul and Mary Ann Kish
April 19 James and Marilyn Elwarner
April 27 Daniel and Tammy Gerard

WE HAVE A NEW RECTOR!



2026 VESTRY

On February 1, 2026 Pastor Gerardo led the commissioning of our Vestry leaders for 2026.

- Cheri Salanty, Senior Warden
- Mike Szott, Junior Warden
- Chris Herfurth, Secretary
- Joanne Gondert
- Miranda Spates
- Ann Williams
- Darra-Lee Walker
- Dave Stein
- Mary Rini
- Stephanie Deller



On February 14, our Vestry attended the Bishop's Vestry Day via Zoom. If the breakfast that they brought in and shared is any indication this is going to be a very collaborative Vestry!

Remember to pray faithfully for them and support them in their work!



STAY TUNED.....

TO THE KEY NEWS FOR INFORMATION ON:

- ◆ *New Directory (with pictures)*
- ◆ *Holy Week Services*
- ◆ *Easter Services*
- ◆ *And special things on the horizon for crafters*

For fun WITNESS articles

Pastor Gerardo is providing us with a very robust weekly Key News and announcements.

Stay tuned for some sharing requests, member spotlights, maybe more testimonials. I am not sure where this will take us but let's tell our stories! The next Witness Deadline will be **APRIL 20!**

As always thank you for your tolerance of any imperfections that may be in this issue. -J.Gondert

DATES TO REMEMBER

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Weekly Opportunities

Eucharist Service Rite II on Sunday at 8 am

Choral Eucharist Service Rite II on Sunday at 10 am

Live Stream of Sunday 10 am on St. Stephen's Private Facebook page and YouTube Channel

Bible Study-Wednesday 10AM in Bishop Emerich room-all welcome

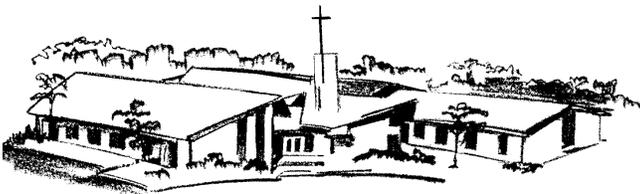
Men's Breakfast Group-Fridays 9 AM at Leo's Coney Island on Opdyke Rd

The QR Code (below) will take you to our Website, just take a picture of it with your phone or use a QR reader app.



- March 2 Novels and Nibbles Book Club 2pm
- March 14 Irish Night (potluck) 5:30pm
- March 27 Crafting Kindness 10am
- March 29 Palm Sunday
- April 5 Easter
- April 19 Easter Cantata 3pm

*** Check the Key News for upcoming events and the church calendar on the website.**



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