



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,

As the weather has gotten nicer over the last couple of weeks, I've been thinking a lot about walking. Walking is good for us (and our animal companions!)—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. For centuries, humans of many religious and spiritual traditions have walked as a way to, in the words of Renee Baribeau, “release expectations, trust the path ahead, and embrace the unknown.”

During the sermon on April 19, I shared my story of an unexpected pilgrimage at Point Pelee National Park in Leamington, Ontario, Canada. In early 2025, I experienced a series of hard moments in my life. My close mentor and friend relocated to another state; I took charge of a congregation in significant transition; I tragically lost my uncle; and I faced a really difficult family transition after 6 years of separation. All within two months. With the encouragement of Bishop Bonnie, I took some time for spiritual and physical renewal, found a cottage in the shores of Lake Erie, and spent three days there to pray and recalibrate.

Point Pelee is a beautiful national park, a triangle that juts out into Lake Erie, the southernmost point of Canada. On my walk, I met a swan biting a few Canadian geese, kids giggling and playing with a snake (terrifying for me), and learned about the history of the area and the Caldwell First Nation that steward the land since time immemorial.

Along the way, I was carried by the sound of the crashing waves of Lake Erie. I walked, and I walked, and I walked, not too concerned with the map or the direction. As I kept walking, I spoke with God about how I was doing, what I was feeling, and the walk transformed; it became an intentional, purposeful, spiritual path. I felt God join me in my walk, accompanying me as I named the things I was experiencing—questions, frustrations, sadness, hopes, dreams.

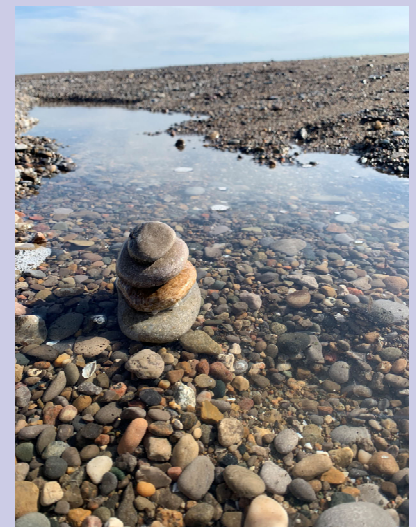
Eventually, I got to the end of the tree line... and there was still a ways to go to the very tip. At the beach, I could see water all around—on one side, the wind crashed the waves loudly and turbulently, and on the other side, the water was absolutely calm. In that narrow strip of land, with chaos on one side and peace on the other, I took a few rocks and put them in my pocket for the final part of my journey. At the end, I knelt at a small pool of water and placed my rocks, each releasing to God the weight and heaviness of my soul.

And then, I had to walk back the 4.5 miles to my car. This new walk was a new opportunity: how would I live my life after releasing to God the concerns of my heart? After putting down the weight of the rocks, how could I live into the lightness, the peace?

What path are you walking right now? Perhaps you have a clear destination and are yearning for God's strength to help you make it there. Perhaps you are returning after experiencing something powerful or difficult and are asking God for wisdom as you adjust to a new way of life. Perhaps you are weary and fatigued and would like to embark on a healing journey that brings reprieve and balm for your soul.

I hope this Eastertide you will consider taking on the practice of walking with God—bringing before God all that is in your heart and listening intently to God's response.

Gerardo+



SENIOR WARDEN'S THOUGHTS



Holy Week hit differently for me this year. The dramatic readings brought the bible stories to life in a new way. The Tenebrae service was especially powerful for me. I love the Easter Vigil but have certainly had years where it felt like the readings went on forever. Espe-

cially the reading from Ezekiel about the dry bones. But this year, even that became new and was anything but dry. Pun intended. Thank you to everyone that participated and read. You made a difference in our faith community.

We have a rich collection of stories here at St. Stephen's. Throughout my time here, we've had several opportunities to explore these stories together and identify common themes and our strengths and values as a parish. The vestry, along with a few others, recently had a storytelling and community values workshop and I was not at all surprised that we still see ourselves as being a welcoming church. Don Ingersoll definitely has a passion and calling for this work. By the time the choir comes to the back of the church, he can tell you exactly how many new people are visiting us that day. On April 19th, there were 5 and Don shared that with me with pure joy on his face. This made me pause and think about my own behavior about newcomers. My conclusion is that I have a lot of work to do. It's very hard for me to walk up to a stranger and introduce myself. I feel awkward and worry about what to say, so I avoid doing it. Don inspired me this week, and I made myself turn around after the final blessing and welcome a visitor. Guess what? Nothing bad happened. It was a brief but lovely exchange. If you struggle with this too, I encourage you to turn around one Sunday and give it a try. Wouldn't it be amazing if each one of us took time to bring the story of St. Stephen's to life in a new way week by week?

"Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

Peace,
Cheri



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SHARE YOUR STORY

BY: JOHN MORLEY

“Excuse me, how do you get to Carnegie Hall?”



“Practice, practice, practice,” goes the old joke. Recently, I had the honor of performing there for the first time, singing Elaine Hagenberg’s *Illuminare* in a 120-person ensemble with full orchestra. It was a spectacular, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I’m an unlikely person to be telling this story. I’m an engineer who didn’t start singing until my thirties. As a kid, I thought “singing is for sissies.” I wanted brass! So I joined the school band, played trumpet, and later tuba (the tuba gets no respect, but its combination of power and sensitivity is unmatched by any other instrument). I loved jazz band, thanks to my jazz loving father, and kept playing through college in the Wisconsin Marching Band. The band allowed me to play at football, basketball, hockey and bowl games and two NCAA Hockey finals. It gave me lifelong friends in the process. Band was the heart of my college years.

Then I graduated and figured I was done with music. After all, where does an adult play tuba? Years later, the Methodist church we attended asked for choir members and my wife Karen encouraged me to join. “What? Me sing?” The only singing I had done was drinking songs with the tuba players - and none of those songs are suitable for church. Their choir was serious and full of talented vocalists. Although intimidated, I gave it a try. To my surprise, because of my band background I could read music better than

most singers and my ear for pitch and harmony was spot on. I just needed to train my voice, which came along with practice. That led to an extraordinary opportunity to sing with jazz legend Dave Brubeck, one of my teenage idols. I thought it couldn’t get better than that.

At 40, I learned bass guitar because the church combo needed a bassist. I thought, “I played tuba, I understand bass music, how hard can it be?” Really hard as it turns out. Brass and strings are worlds apart. My first performance felt like that nightmare where you step on stage, sit down at a piano and realize you don’t know how to play. My heart was pounding like a fourth grader in front of the school assembly. I stood up front with a guitar slung over my shoulder, and I DIDN’T KNOW HOW TO PLAY THE GUITAR! I only knew 5 songs. Barely. But I hacked through that first show and stuck with it and now play regularly with the Ad Hoc folk and Irish bands. I love playing bass.

SHARE YOUR STORY

BY: JOHN MORLEY (CONTINUED)

After retiring from a career in the auto industry, I joined Cantata Academy Chorale, a community choir...but one composed of high level musicians and music educators. Somehow, I passed the audition but had much to learn. Singing at this level involves details of diction and timing I didn't know existed! That training led directly to the Carnegie Hall opportunity. It happened the same weekend as Karen's and my 35th anniversary, so we celebrated with New York sightseeing, a Broadway show, and a long "Central Park death march." (Who knew Central Park covers 843 acres?)

Our conductor, Dr. Jeffery Redding from the University of Central Florida, was the finest I've ever worked with. He could spend five minutes perfecting two measures, hearing everything, pinpointing individual voices in a 120-person choir. He drilled us relentlessly, teaching, cajoling, haranguing, until the music was flawless. Then he announced we were only at "five out of ten." Huh? What comes after singing a piece flawlessly? We had to find the emotion. "Unity is in the vowels," he told us. "Passion is in the consonants." He told a personal story of growing up fatherless, and becoming a man under the tutelage of a mentor who showed him his life's calling in music. He challenged us to think about why we sing and why music is important to us. "Sing to inspire, not to impress". At the end of the last rehearsal, he had us hold hands, close our eyes, and sing from memory. We dug down deeper than we knew was possible and poured ourselves into the music. By the end, people were crying.

On the evening of March 22, we made our way to Carnegie, with its lush Gilded Age splendor and perfect acoustics. The orchestra and choir filled the hall with a sound that no recording can capture, and that I may never hear again. It was pure magic.

The point of my story is that at age 65, I'm still improving. I've learned that growth never stops unless you let it. The passions we had as kids when the world was magical, still matter and they can be rediscovered anytime. What inspired you when you were 12? Or 22? Find that spark again and let it guide you.

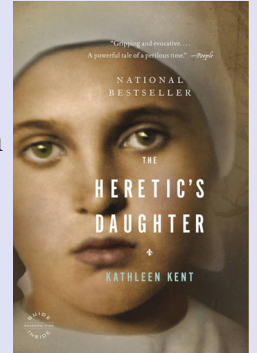
So, how do you get to Carnegie Hall?

Take the train to Grand Central Station, hop the S train to Times Square, transfer to the R-N-Q north, exit at 57th Street, and you're there! It's a piece of cake.



NOVELS AND NIBBLES MAY 18, 2026 at 2:00pm

Join St. Stephen's Book Club "Novels and Nibbles" for a wonderful conversation on *The Heretic's Daughter* by Kathleen Kent. This historical fiction is based on the author's own family history, telling the story of the 1692 Salem Witch Trials through the eyes of Sarah Carrier, the daughter of accused witch Martha Carrier. The book follows the Carrier family as they navigate the rising hysteria. If the Carrier name sounds familiar, you are correct. We know Jere and Jeannine Carrier!



The Heretic's Daughter-In-law (11x removed)

By: Jeannine Carrier

This month's assigned reading for Novels and Nibbles, St. Stephen's very own book club, is "The Heretic's Daughter", by Kathleen Kent, a historical novel set in Andover, Massachusetts during the Salem Witch Trials. The book recounts the story of Martha Carrier, accused of and imprisoned for witchcraft. As it happens, we have a witch in the family. Martha is my husband Jere's great grandmother, 9x removed.

Martha's story was handed down from generation to generation, until finally, one of her descendants, Kathleen Kent, did the historical research and wrote her ancestor's story. The novel became a New York Times best-selling novel. Luckily for the rest of the family, Kathleen took her work a step further and organized a Carrier family reunion, which was held in Salem in the fall of 2010. My husband and I, his sister, Betty, and her children were all fortunate enough to be able to attend.

Salem had an air of gravitas that I had not expected. Yes, I had heard the family stories, read the old court transcripts and the novel, and knew my American history. Yet, I was not prepared for the sadness I felt. I saw where Martha lived and raised a family. I saw where she died. I saw her grave "marker" and visited the memorial garden honoring all those executed for witchcraft during this period. I learned a more complex and complete history of this era of American history. Martha was hung as a witch because her community was afraid of that which they failed to understand.

When Kathleen Kent was a child, she asked her mother if witches were real. Her mother replied that there are no such things as witches. There were only ferocious women. Strong-willed women. Intelligent women. Women who spoke their minds. Like Martha Carrier. Cotton Mather called her the Queen of Hell. Her neighbors called her a witch. I am proud to call her my mother-in-law, 11x removed.

And, of course, the next chapter is still to be written.



ALTAR GUILD

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THIS REWARDING SERVICE!



What is Altar Guild all about?

It is an integral part of St. Stephen's mission to bring Christ into everyone's life through Holy communion. We set the Lord's table for Eucharist, from candles and flowers to bread, wine and water. It is easy and fun.

It may seem a mystery- All the different parts. But really it is as basic as a plate of bread and a cup of wine. All of us will be happy to have you join us. We have cheat sheets, diagrams, and it does not take a lot of time (unless we get to talking). Working together we take turns, once a month to set up and clear the 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. services. Helping each other during busy dates (like Christmas and Easter), and if someone is out of town. We are a team.

How did I get involved?

It is not that I followed my mother and her friends into the Sacristy. It is that they lead the way. It was important to them to provide this service to our congregation. I hope that I can be an example to others in continuing to set the Lord's table for all to share.

The Altar Guild would love to have you join us in this rewarding service.

Please contact me.

Blessings,

Alice Moss (248)840-3631



Support St. Stephen's Every Time You Shop at Kroger

Did you know you can support St. Stephen's just by doing your regular grocery shopping? Through the Kroger Community Rewards program, a portion of your purchases is donated to our church, at no additional cost to you.

Signing up is quick and easy:

- Visit www.kroger.com and sign in (or create an account)
- Go to Community Rewards in your account settings
- Search for St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Troy and select it
- Use your Kroger rewards card each time you shop or plug in your phone number on your account.



That's it! Once enrolled, Kroger will automatically contribute a percentage of your purchases to support our ministries and outreach.

Thank you for helping strengthen St. Stephen's in such a simple and impactful way!

How long has it been since you created something besides dinner?

Crafting Kindness Sewing Edition provides that opportunity in a non judgmental way. We encourage you to help us sew for our parish and our community.

We have tons of fabric, and opportunities for you to come and sew, even if only sewing buttons on materials. One member who had not sewed in years, came and said how satisfying it was to use a sewing machine and make something to help the Alzheimer's Association provide fidget quilts to people who could benefit from this item.

Enclosed is a picture of us all holding our new fidget quilts. Then another picture that shows how Crafting Kindness makes things for our church baby shower last July.

We will be meeting again in May 30th and come see what we plan to make. All welcome, even if only

for curiosity and coffee ☕ .

Any questions contact Jill Stein at 248-376-0560



Rise Against Hunger feeds not only the body.....

Not only do our Rise Against Hunger efforts feed the body, but they also feed the mind. It's true! One Of the stories told about the RAH experience in Africa is that in one small village, only the boys went to school. The daughters were kept home to help around the house. However, that all changed when RAH started giving out the small bags of dried grain like the ones we've packed. When the boys went home with the food they told their parents that everyone at school received a bag to take home. It didn't take long for the girls to start going to school with their brothers and getting their RAH bag as well. Now the girls attend school regularly and are getting the same education as the boys. What we do makes a difference in ways we can't imagine!

Believe it or not we have purchased the grains and packed over 65,000 meals since our first event in 2022! Our goal is to pack another 15,000 this year. To do that we all need to make a donation to pay for the materials. It is not too early to make a donation! Make sure to note "Rise Against Hunger" on your check. And don't forget September 19 will be the date to help pack the meals.

Peace,

Dave Stein

Rise Against Hunger Chair





Have you had a God Moment lately?

In March of this year we prepared, delivered and served dinner to over 80 clients at Hope Shelter in Pontiac. Jackie Ingersoll led the effort. We prepared a chicken casserole with green beans and corn, mashed potatoes dinner roll and cupcakes and brownies for desert. It was gratifying enough to help prepare everything in our kitchen at St. Stephen's, but the real God Moments came to those of us blessed enough to help serve.

If you recall, February weather was BRUTAL. Imagine being homeless that month! Even in early March the shelter packed as many clients as they could on temporary beds even in the dining hall. They were so grateful for a hot meal—they could not express their thanks enough to us. I know we all felt just as grateful for the opportunity to serve—to meet Jesus in the eyes of his grateful people.

You will find a list of Outreach opportunities elsewhere in the Witness and available at church. You owe it to yourself to experience one of these moments.

Dave Stein

Outreach





WE CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS!



MAY

May 4 Sandy Jose
 May 5 Sara Sundarson
 Emily Gerard
 May 6 Barb Spina
 May 7 Emmett Thiel
 May 8 Sue Gore
 May 11 David Eldon
 May 13 Cathy Hoffman
 Kristi Grubb
 May 14 Jacob Hardy
 May 15 Caleb Sobolewski
 May 16 Chase Gunther
 May 24 Donna Bronsteen
 May 31 Peter Burean

JUNE

June 1 Jonathan Sams
 June 6 Brendan Gerard
 June 12 John Morley
 June 17 Megan Cole
 June 18 Kamsi Ezeugwa
 June 25 Judy McClendon
 June 26 Connie Jose
 June 30 Paul Kish



JULY

July 3 Erinma Ezeugwa
 July 5 Norah O'Neill
 July 6 Nancy Sparrow
 July 9 Darrel Middlewood
 July 11 Adrian Brokenshire
 July 16 Ann Williams
 July 17 Jim McQuiston
 July 19 Kathy Davis
 July 20 Brian Thiel
 Alex Ezeugwa
 Nancy Sams
 July 22 Brian Ingersoll
 July 26 Daniel Gerard
 July 26 Chloe Ingersoll
 July 29 Audrey Brokenshire

AUGUST

August 2 Robert Brokenshire
 August 3 Liz Siniovich
 August 8 Paul McClendon
 August 11 Jan Hopper
 Linda Lambert
 August 14 Joe Hopper
 August 21 Richard Kenefic II
 Lydia Thiel
 August 25 Joan Knapp
 August 26 Gerardo Aponte-Safe
 Ami O'Neill
 August 37 Kathryn Hassel
 August 29 Bob Westbury
 August 31 Cathryn Hardy



MAY

May 2 Stephen and Dawn Parker
Stephen and Margaret Brandon
May 10 Dean and Gerardo Aponte-Safe
May 11 Edward and Elaine Church
May 20 David and Janet Eldon
May 26 Bob and Sara Sue Westbury

JUNE

June 12 David and Kristi Grubb
June 18 Robert and Donna Brokenshire
June 19 George and Margaret Klempay
June 24 Paul and Melissa Hardy
June 26 Lee and Virginia Bennett
June 30 David and Jill Stein
June 30 Alice and Chuck Moss

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

JULY

July 8 Mike and Erin Brokenshire
July 11 Rod and Donna Johnson
July 12 Sandy and Connie Jose
July 15 Rick and Barb Spina

AUGUST

August 3 Alex and Erinma Ezeugwa
August 6 Brian and Liz Thiel
August 24 Alan and Helen Giles
August 31 Robert and Cathy Hoffman



Crafting Kindness Extravaganza! Saturday May 30 @10am

Join us for this crafting event for all! We will have knitting and sewing projects as we prepare to celebrate Pride Month and how God's love includes everyone, no exceptions. People of all ages are welcome, whether you have a lot of experience or are new to knitting and sewing. There's a place for you!

Have questions? Reach out to Darra-Lee Walker at dlwlpncnc@aol.com or Jill Stein at jillhstein@gmail.com

FINAL WORDS

Pastor Gerardo is doing a wonderful job communicating our happenings in the Key News, announcements, and other social media sources. In this issue, you may sense a different feel in the format. I am taking the title "The Witness" more literally to tell your stories.

In this issue we spotlight John Morley's journey to singing at Carnegie Hall. I hope you are inspired and a little bit awed. Who knew! And if you are ever going to New York, please thank John for the directions.

We also have stories related to family, service, and creative togetherness.

Thank you to all who shared your stories!

With much gratitude and blessings, Joanne

p.s. – If you're ever looking for a walking partner, let me know! Sometimes, it's better to walk the spiritual path together, and I'd be honored to join you.

Gerardo+

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.



May 6 Better Ways to Read the Bible 6pm

May 14 Ladies Lunch Bunch

May 18 Book Club 2pm

May 20 Better Ways to Read the Bible 6pm

May 24 Crossroads Meal

May 27 Better Ways to Read the Bible 6pm

May 30 Crafting Extravaganza for Pride Month

June 7 Hope Shelters Meal

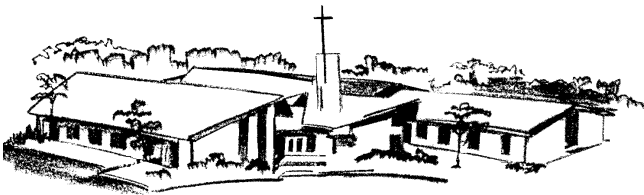
July 7 Crossroads VBS Lunch

July 19 Annual "Baby Shower" Collection

August 1 Car Show

August 23 (Tentative) Celtic Isles Fundraiser for RAH

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



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