



At left: Scenes from our every growing January potluck

Above: Harry Seese and Debbe Rodasta were honored at the annual meeting for their service at the vestry.

Below: Children exploring Godly play stories with teacher Quinn Hollister.

Rector's Report: Forty Days

By the Rev. Kate Bradsen

Do you ever wonder what Jesus did in the desert for those forty days? We only hear about that one encounter with the devil, but forty days is a long time, as anyone who is giving up something precious for Lent will no doubt tell you. Most of us do not have the luxury of stopping our everyday activities for forty days, but what if you could? What would you do with that time? How would you draw yourself closer to God? How would you prepare yourself to become more active in the ministry you are called to? How would you strengthen yourself against the temptations that will inevitably come your way? And what, when it really comes down to it, is keeping you from doing that now?

Lent is often thought of as a dark time, a time of self denial and

self loathing. In truth, Lent is a time of renewal, of pruning and cutting back, of focusing on what is most important. Jesus was famous for pointing out the way that rituals are not meant to be worshiped in and of themselves, but rather to be used as a vehicle to point us toward God. Whether you are new to Lent or so used to it that it has lost most of its meaning, I would invite you to explore how you can use these forty days to draw closer to God. As we seek to follow Christ in his forty days in the desert, may we use the time of Lent as a time for renewal. Whatever brings you closer to God, whatever prepares you for your ministry, whatever sustains you in times of struggle, do that thing. Have a blessed Lent!



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Annual Award Meeting Winners

At our annual award meeting on January 28th we honored three people who made exceptional contributions to St. Stephen's in the past year(s).



Rachel Samson:
Most Valued Parishioner

Rachel grew up at St. Stephen's and has been making valuable contributions to our church for much of her life. She has served on the vestry, the stewardship committee, coordinated the acolytes, and led the youth group. Currently Rachel helps with the monthly worship at St. Andrew's Village, chairs a discernment committee, acolytes, reads and steps in whenever needed. Special thanks to her husband David, who helps with tech team, but also often comes along for the ride with youth and other ministries Rachel is involved in. We are so grateful for all Rachel has done to help make St. Stephen's the wonderful church that it is!

Betty Parko: *Elizabeth Starkey Service Award*

Betty and her husband Tom have been members of St. Stephen's for many years. Betty has been active in the outreach committee, helping to chair it with Peg Mancuso. Betty has a true heart for service and is always willing to help out those in need. She regularly volunteers to help feed people through the various partnerships St. Stephen's has in the community, such as Ronald McDonald house and Habitat for Humanity. Last year, Betty helped make care presents for members of our church who are not able to join us for worship and she has taken the lead in ministering to the hungry at St. Claire's (sometimes via a last-minute call when Rev. Kate's plans change). Tom and Betty are active with Gastromartyrs, and Tom is a regular reader and helps deliver our donations to St. Francis Center downtown. We are so blessed by the example of service they give to our church community!



Tessa Kim:
Child of God

Tessa is the first recipient of this newly established award to honor one of the youths of St. Stephen's. Tessa has attended St. Stephen's since she was a child and has participated in Sunday school, youth group, and acolyting. She has helped with our annual Easter egg hunt, youth group trips and service projects, and directed last year's Christmas pageant with Gwen Blumenschein (and even helped do a little singing). Tessa is a great leader in our church, and we are happy to honor her for all she does for St. Stephen's!

Opportunities to Observe a Holy Lent

The Last Week Book Study
Thursdays in Lent @1:30pm
Top Jesus scholars Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan join together to explore the details of events during the week leading up to Jesus's crucifixion. Using the gospel of Mark as their guide, Borg and Crossan present a day-by-day account of Jesus's final week of life. Informed, challenged, and inspired, we not only meet the historical Jesus, but meet a new Jesus who engages us and invites us to follow him. Beginning Thursday, February 1st, the Grace and Glory Bible study will shift to reading The Last Week. Each week through Feb and March the group will read and discuss one chapter as we prepare to remember the events of this book during Holy Week.

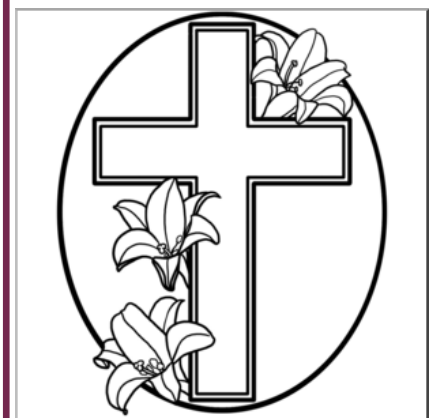
Foundations of Saint Stephen's
Wednesdays in Lent: February 28th, March 6, 13, and 20, 11am or 6:30pm
Please join us for an exploration of our new mission statement and the ministries of our church that are connected to it. The class will include prayer, discussion, and information about the activities of our church. We hope to get feedback from both new members and long-time members so that we can continue to offer this class regularly. Daytime class is at 11am followed by lunch, Evening begins with soup supper at 6:30 and class follows at 7pm. Look for sign up sheets near the bulletin board. Reach out to Rev. Kate with questions

Lenten Outreach: Collecting for St. Francis

During Lent we will again be collecting clothing for the homeless served at the St. Francis Center in Denver. At their request we are asking for mens pants sizes 30 to 36. New or gently used is what they are in need of, besides their usual clients, they are also serving the many immigrants that have come into Denver. Last year we purchased 20 pair of new jeans with the money we received, if you would rather make a monetary donation we would be happy to make purchases this year also.

Easter Donations

At St. Stephen's we continue to be blessed by the generosity of so many people. Thank you for supporting us as we seek to love as God loves, welcoming all as we grow in our faith, our relationships, and our service to others. Please consider making a special donation this Easter as we celebrate the way Christ is Risen in the lives of so many people in our church and community. You can make a special donation by noting Easter on check, envelope, or online donation



Below: A celebration of the anniversary of St. Stephen's, Kator youth service in 2019



In November and December we collected donations for St. Stephen's Kator in South Sudan so that they can put in a sound system for their church. Below is the thank you we received after parishoners Lula Baku, Yuil Yuil, and Ayen Yuil delivered our gift.

Greetings from St. Stephen Church in South Sudan. We celebrated the Christmas peacefully and we thank the Almighty God for His provisions and protection. The believers of St. Stephen convey their warmly Christmas greetings to you and all the Christians in your church. Let 2024 be a year of abundant blessings, healing and prosperity. May the Almighty God bless you all.

Encouraging and Embracing Spiritual Journeys

The people of St. Stephen's are called to love as God loves by encouraging and embracing all people wherever they are on their spiritual journeys.

Our community is full of many people from those who are new to the Christian faith to those who are life-long Episcopalians. Young and old, those who love to talk and those

who would rather listen, storytellers, artists, and students- all are welcome wherever they are in their journey of faith. Part of the invitation to the observation of a holy Lent is to a period of reading and meditating on God's holy word. Wherever you are on your journey, consider joining us for a time of formation during Lent or for one of our regular offerings such as online noonday prayer. We invite you to deepen your faith as you grow in your experience of God's love. Consider joining a small group for online daily noon prayer, or joining one of our Lenten formation opportunities on page 3.

READ THIS! A Word from your librarian

We have two new acquisitions in the library (NB: There are stands marked "New to the Library" for new books). First: We frequently think of a prophet as one who predicts the future, but a more accurate description would be one who would fit our modern description of a social critic, one who points out our failings with an eye toward reform (or else!). *Stuff that Needs to Be Said*, by Rev. John Pavlovich, addresses some of our modern failings as humans in general and Christians in particular. This will, in the future, be shelved with Contemporary Issues.

The second acquisition is *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom. This is an interesting contrast to the blockbuster film *Schindler's List*. While Oskar Schindler was a womanizing war profiteer, primarily concerned with looking out for number one, and Corrie Ten Boom was a pious woman living an unremarkable (to the point of boring) life as a watchmaker, they both had a mission as the Nazi party came to power. This is a call to us all--no matter what your station in life, a time will come when you need to help others, including those alien to you. Be ready!

Take up and read. Augustine of Hippo

-Don Henry

Below: Our choir began rehearsals began again with new Director of Music and Administration, Frank Perko III



Stewardship and Strategic Planning Updates

Church Growth: New Worship & Newcomer Procedures

We have 30 surveys completed so far, with 15 people interested in a new worship service and 7 interested in helping to plan and plant the service. We will meet in March to begin planning. Watch for some monthly services to begin in May.

Congregational Growth Team worked on a communications strategy, primarily focused on people who are new to our area and are looking for a church like St. Stephen's. We will create a postcard to advertise our Easter services to mail to our neighbors in mid March. There will also be copies available if you would like to invite friends and neighbors.

Strategic Planning

Vestry meets for their first meeting of the year at the work day on February 17th. We will be appointing a strategic planning team at that time, so please let Rev. Kate know if you are interested.

2024 Finances through January

	Actual as of 1/31/24	Budget as of 1/31/24	Difference
Income			
Total Donations			
Pledges			
Loose Offering			
Space Use			
Designated/Other			
Expense			
Staff			
Administration			
Buildings and Grounds			
Program			
Deficit			

Help Prepare for Holy Week and Easter

Holy Week Work Day And Palm Cross Making *Saturday, March 23rd @10am*

Join us to spruce up the grounds for the Easter Egg hunt and prepare for spring, or Join the altar guild to prepare for Holy Week and help fold palm crosses (or both!) Hot dogs and chips will be served for lunch.

Donate towards flowers and music for Easter

Interested in remembering someone or offering Thanksgiving at our celebration of Easter on March 31st. Simply note on your check, envelope, or online donation Easter flowers and your dedication. Or you can use a flower dedication form. Please return donations by **March 17th**

Eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt

Bring some eggs with stickers, small prizes, and of course, candy! You can pick up empty eggs on Sunday or just bring some stuffed already. Please return eggs by **Sunday, March 24th**

Bring finger foods for Easter

Following our Easter celebration we typically have a festive coffee hour with finger foods (appetizers, desserts, etc). Please bring a dish to share if you can!

Upcoming Events at St. Stephen's

Holy Week Schedule



All worship is offered both online and in person unless otherwise noted.

Palm Sunday: March 24th

10am Worship

Worship featuring a palm procession & remembrance of the last days of Jesus.

Maundy Thursday: March 28th

7pm Worship

A traditional service with communion and feet washing

Good Friday: March 29th

12pm Stations of the Cross & Solemn Prayer

Walk through the last events of Jesus life, as we honor the cross and remember his death.

7pm Solemn Collects

Traditional Good Friday service including music from the choir, and veneration of the cross

Easter Sunday: March 31st

7:30am Great Vigil of Easter

An interactive family friendly worship that follows an ancient liturgy. This worship includes story telling and elements of fire and water as we honor the movement from death to life.

9am Easter Egg Hunt

Fun for our youngest members.

10am Festive Eucharist

Celebrate the holiest day of our year with festive music and communion.

February

- 15- Last Week Book Study, Thursdays through Lent
- 17- Vestry Work Day
- 18- 9am kids and youth formation; communion at St. Andrew's; Habitat for Humanity visits
- 20- Parish Life Committee meets
- 25- God's gardener's meet; Girl Scout Cookies sales
- 28- Foundations of St. Stephen's Lenten series begins Weds in Lent (11am or 6:30pm)

March

- 3- 9am kids and youth formation; worship planning follows church
- 5- Serve at St. Claire's
- 7- Serve lunch at Habitat
- 8- Revive Closing retreat
- 10- vestry meets, youth fellowship
- 12- men's group meets, discernment group meets
- 17 9am kids and youth formation; communion at St. Andrew's; Lector and Acolyte Training
- 23- Work Day: Easter prep
- 24- Holy Week begins (see left)



1 Del Mar Circle
Aurora, CO 80011