



## Rector's Report: Turn and Face the Change

By the Rev. Kate Bradsen

“Turn and face the change,” David Bowie tells us. “Time may change me, but I can’t change time.”

As we begin a new year (and the season of Lent by the middle of February) many of us make resolutions to live in different ways, or at the very least goals for what we imagine we might be able to accomplish. I love goal setting and strategic planning. I am so thrilled to be beginning the strategic planning process with St. Stephen’s following our discernment process last year. However, turning to face the change isn’t just about looking forward, it’s about recognizing the past- what went well and what went wrong.

Our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Kym Lucas, recently shared that she does an examen at the end of each year. Examen is a spiritual practice created by St. Ignatius in which

you look back on a period of time (usually the past day, at the end of the day) and reflect on where you felt God’s presence or absence. Ignatius called these moments of consolation and desolation, but many people practice this using other language at work check-ins or sitting around the dinner table. What were your highs and lows? Roses and thorns? Or my personal favorite- poopsicles and popsicles?

St. Stephen’s went through two significant staff changes during the season of Advent and the end of the year, which are busy enough seasons without having to say goodbye, hire new staff, and find a way to cover their work in the meantime. In the midst of all this change, I forgot to look back on the year that had passed.

Did you know I went on sabbatical for three months last year? It seems like eons ago. But the lessons both I and St. Stephen’s learned- how this community continues to be a

*Pictured: scenes from Christmas Eve.*

*At left, Mimi Munroe, Patrick O’Flynn, Laurie and John Williams provided beautiful music for the 7pm worship. At right, Talia Kim helps prep Ben to ride in on a skateboard with the other (stuffed) animals in the Christmas pageant at 4pm.*

welcoming, diverse, spiritual home for many even in my absence- and my great joy in serving this church, especially as a preacher, teacher and spiritual director- are still with us. I have been loving leading small groups in spiritual discussions.

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# St. Stephen's Welcomes New Staff Member

*This month, St. Stephen's welcomes Frank Perko III who will serve as both our director of music and our office administrator. He has a strong background in both areas and is glad to be joining St. Stephen's full time. We are so grateful to God for sending him our way! Be sure to say "Hi" to him on Sunday morning or stop by during office hours to introduce yourself.*



**Frank Perko III** a native to Colorado, recently moved back to the state in 2023, with his partner Jason, and his fur baby, Murphy, the sweetest Shar-Pei dog ever! Prior to Mr. Perko's return to Colorado, he held the position of Director of Music/Organist to the Episcopal Church of St. Bernard de Clairvaux, at the Ancient Spanish Monastery in North Miami Beach, Florida. Mr. Perko is the former Director of Music, Arts,

Worship, and Liturgy at First Plymouth Congregational Church of Denver, Colorado, which was one of the largest churches in the nation, within the denomination of the United Church of Christ. Mr. Perko began his professional work by age ten, both as a church musician for his local church, and also working as a professional staff organist, playing the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ at the Organ Grinder Pizza Restaurant in Denver, Colorado. In his professional career, Mr. Perko has served as Director of Music, Liturgical Director/Coordinator, and as Principal Organist for numerous churches across the United States. Frank has served as consultant, and been responsible for numerous new organ installations across the country, consisting of both large pipe organ and digital organ installations. He also created, owned, and cultivated his own large music, and piano based teaching studio. In 1996, Mr. Perko placed first, winning the Strader International Organ Competition in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**New office hours:**  
Tuesday and Wednesday 12-5pm  
Thursdays 10am-3pm  
or call 303 364 3186 to set up an appointment.

Since then, Frank has won many awards and competitions as a classic/concert and theater organist, and continues to perform regularly in numerous concerts throughout the United States in churches, theaters, and concert halls. He has become known for his specialization in musical innovation, creativity, knowledge, and performances with MIDI capable instruments and in conjunction with the pipe organ. Mr. Perko is also a well-accomplished and formidable orchestral and choral conductor, responsible for leading large and major works of music in the church and in the concert hall, with very large music ensembles of 150+ musicians. Mr. Perko holds a Bachelors of Music degree from Colorado State University, and a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

*At right: Gwen Blumenschein, Rev. Kate Bradsen, Ariel Strickland, and Rev. Doug Dunn— at our annual holiday staff luncheon before we said goodbye to Gwen. Special thanks to Ariel for serving as interim office administrator while we were searching for a new person to fill the position.*



# Meet the Vestry Candidates

Below you will find information about our current candidates for the three open positions on vestry. Be sure to join us on January 28th to help elect our new leaders.

## Jean Burkhart



My name is Jean Burkhart and I am running for a position on the St. Stephen's Vestry beginning in January, 2024.

My husband, Tom, and I have been members of St. Stephens for over 40 years. We have both have had the honor of serving on vestries in the past. And I have served as Senior Warden in the mid nineties. I look forward to serving our church again.

## Talia Kim



My name is Talia Kim. I am 15 years old and a sophomore at Grandview high school. I enjoy spending time with family, friends, and our pets. My hobbies include horseback, riding, and painting. I am interested in athletic training/sports medicine, and I'm currently a part of a student athletic training program at my school. I am interested in the vestry because I want to contribute to this church that has been such a big part of my life. Thank you!

## What's next for St. Stephen's?

At our annual meeting on January 28th, we will discuss our goals for the next year. Here are three key areas you can expect to hear ongoing reports on as the year unfolds.

### Continued Growth

We have been blessed not only by new faces and families in recent years but also by a deepening of our relationships with God and one another. Growth has been a strong part of what we feel called by God to do and will continue to shape our strategic plan going forward. Specifically, two key areas will be focused on next year:

#### 1) Processes for Newcomers

Our congregational growth committee will be focusing on developing a communications plan to reach out to specific groups in our community who might be best served by what we have to offer. We want to make it easier for people to communicate with us through website and social media. If you are interested in being part of the congregational growth committee, please speak

with Ariel Strickland.

We also want to have a clearer process for membership—identifying key practices that define our church, what opportunities for service and fellowship are available for newcomers, and developing classes and rituals to support people in becoming a part of church. During Lent, Rev. Kate will be offering a pilot course called Foundations of St. Stephen's. This class would be a 4 week class for newcomers to get to know one another and the church. We are hoping both newcomers and old-timers will join us for the class beginning February 28th (at 11am or 6:30pm) as we discuss the core values and practices of our community and offer feedback on this class.

We'll also have a confirmation

class in April and May and celebrate new members and recently confirmed members at Pentecost.

*(continues on page 4)*

### By the numbers

**89**

**2023 Average Sunday Attendance**

**\$197,816**

**Pledged for 2023**

**\$214,607**

**Pledged for 2024**

**45**

**New or Increased Givers**



## Thanks to all who helped with this year's Christmas pageant!

*Pictured above are the cast. Thanks to Rafael Roman for providing amazing narration, our adult and children's choirs for leading beautiful music, Katherine and Ryan Funk jumping in to be Mary and Joseph, and the Kim family for corralling the whole gang,*

*(What's next for St. Stephen's continued from page 3)*

### 2) **Adding an additional worship opportunity**

Our church is beginning to get full at the 10am service, especially in the summer when the choir is in the pews. We also have energy for trying different times, music, and formats in worship. In January, we'll take a survey of the congregation to see what options people might want to be a part of new worship. We'll also be looking for a small group of people who would be interested in helping plan and launch a new service. We will meet throughout the year and begin offering monthly worship in the summer then hopefully weekly in September.

### **Strategic Planning**

In 2023 we spent time reflecting on who we are as a church and what God is calling us to do. After months of conversations, a vision team put together a statement (see box).

The next step is to adopt this vision statement and create a balcony team that will help plan concrete steps to put into action over the next 3-5 years to implement this vision. The team will be appointed in January to begin work in the spring. Please speak with Rev. Kate if you would be interested in helping.

### **Administration and Finance**

We are in the process of rearranging our staff configuration. Members of the vestry are reaching out to similar sized churches in our area to see

how they handle everything from bookkeeping to house keeping to benefits for staff. We plan to work with a bookkeeper in the coming year and will be implementing a new software program to better manage both our membership database and our finances. We also plan to finally go through the various vendors and fees of the church to see if there are any places to cut costs. Overall the intention is to streamline operations so that we continue to grow and use the resources God and our congregation has so graciously blessed us with well.

### **Vision Statement**

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  
-building Christ's beloved community where all feel truly welcomed  
-empowering and celebrating each person's gifts of the Holy Spirit  
-serving as a healing presence for our community

# Serving as a Healing Presence in Our Community

What does it mean for St. Stephen's to serve as a healing presence in our community? Is it simply about offering healing services or serving a meal at the Ronald McDonald house? What would healing mean for our community? What does it mean to you? Healing is not simply about making those who are sick well or even caring for those in poor health, it's also about offering a place for people to see a different way to live: a chance to be in relationship with God and one another in a deeper way. Here

are a few ways you might be able to offer healing in the days to come:

-Pray for healing for yourself and for the world. Is you have a *Book of Common Prayer*, there are some ideas of prayers beginning on page 823. Consider joining noon prayer online, or taking time out of each day to pray for those in need.  
-Continue discernment for yourself and for St. Stephen's. What might God be calling us to do next? Where is God showing up? Share your ideas for healing with other members of the congregation

-Reach out to the people in your life and in the church who could benefit from some contact during the lonely winter? A call or note can go a long way  
-Help with outreach to those in need. St. Stephen's serves supper at St. Clare's ministry downtown each 1st Tuesday of the month. We will also be planning to serve lunch again in March at Habitat for Humanity. Bring some socks or skivvies to donate to those who are unhoused, or drop off some donations for hungry people who come by church



Above: Betty Rich hands St. Stephen's donations to a member of the salvation army

*(Rector's Report, continues from page 1)*

We had a great stewardship drive and two major building repairs not too mention several other needed updates. Our outreach exploded during my time away and we now have multiple community partners that we are serving alongside. Our wonderful volunteers continue to offer formation for our children and youth, opportunities for us to gather for fellowship, and most importantly, a beautiful Sunday morning worship experience where

people are growing in their faith. 2023 was a great year!

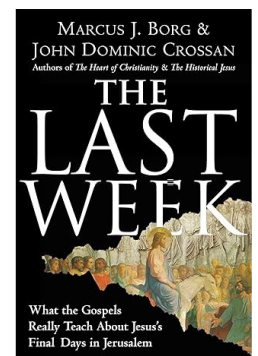
What about you? How was 2023 for you? Where did God show up? Where did you feel disconnected from God? As we turn to face the changes of a new year, what will you do to continue to pay attention to where God is showing up and where God is calling you?

## READ THIS!

### *The Last Week*

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.*



# Upcoming Events at St. Stephen's

## Annual Meeting: January 28th, 11:30am

Please join us for this important meeting as we reflect on the year that has passed and plan for the year to come. We will elect new vestry members and honor those who serve our church. We will also discuss our plans and budget for 2024. You can join us in person or online. If you cannot join and would like to delegate someone as your proxy, please contact the church office. Please come and share in shaping our future as we live into what God is calling St. Stephen's to next.

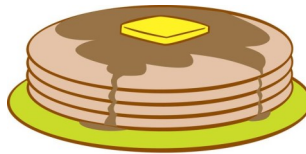
## Absalom Jones Sunday: February 11th, 10am



Absalom Jones was the first African American to be ordained in the Episcopal church and helped to form the first black Episcopal congregation. As we celebrate love, we'll remember the brotherly love we are all called to as we honor this important person from our history.

## Shrove Tuesday: February 13th, 5:30pm

Get one last celebration in before the season of Lent. Our men's group will treat us to breakfast for dinner. We'll have crafts and activities for kids as well.



## Ash Wednesday: February 14th, 12pm & 7pm



We begin our Lenten season with the imposition of ashes during a simple service at noon or with music at 7pm. Join us for this important day as we begin our season of repentance.

### January 2024

16- Community Potluck  
23- Executive Committee meets  
21- 9am kid and youth formation  
Blessing of h, St. Andrew's homes  
**28-Annual meeting**

### February

1- Last Week Book Study begins  
3- Altar Guild meeting  
4-9am kid and youth formation  
Newcomer meet n greet  
6- Staff meeting;  
Serve at St. Claire's  
7- Outreach meeting  
10- Vestry Work Day  
11-**Absalom Jones Sunday**;  
Realm training following church  
youth fellowship night  
**13-Shrove Tuesday**  
men's group meets;  
discernment committee  
**14- Ash Wednesday**  
18- 9am kid and youth formation;  
communion at St. Andrew's  
28- Foundations of St. Stephen's  
Lenten series begins (11am or  
6:30pm)



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