



Newsletter, February 2021

A Message from Reverend Greg

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year 2021! Going into the New Year was not easy for many of us. For all of us, we entered 2021, with a great deal of hope; hope that the global pandemic would end, and we could resume the routine of our lives. Since March of 2020, our personal lives and our community gatherings have been interrupted or stopped. Each time I walk into the church building, I look at the song board and I am immediately reminded that the last time you gathered as a congregation, was on the Third Sunday in Lent.

Since then, many lives have been lost to the virus. But as I write this, I look out into a new day, a new beginning and even though it seems far beyond the horizon, I see hope. We have to endure this together with hope that sometime soon, we will gather again. It may not be for the Third Sunday in Lent, or even for Holy Week and Easter, but **we will** gather again.

I pray that each day you are learning something new about yourself and your relationship with God during this pandemic. I hope that this time away has taught us each something valuable, so that when we return, we can all make St. Stephen's a stronger, unified congregation. I also hope that as a congregation, we have learned how to pray in different situations, using technology that still seems strange to some of us, with the assurance that it will only get better.

Together, we observe all the safety precautions so that we can protect not only ourselves, but one another – AND – our first responders and all medical personnel. Take care of yourselves and one another and in the words of St. Paul, *"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts (Colossians 3: 14, 15)."*

Peace and Goodness,
The Rev'd Gregory Perez

OUR ANNUAL MEETING GOES VIRTUAL

Naturally, due to the on-going health crisis caused by COVID 19, our Annual Meeting will be virtual on Sunday, February 28, 2021 at 12:00 Noon. A link will be sent out a week prior, including the Annual Report. The Annual Report will be mailed to those who do not have access to internet a week prior to the meeting.

Because I am only in my fifth month of transition during a pandemic when we are officially not open to the public, I have requested that all members of the Vestry extend their term of service by one year. On Sunday, January 31st, the Vestry met with the Diocesan Consultant and me to set goals for the next six months. It will be of utmost importance to me, if I can work on these goals together with the Vestry prior to a change in leadership. The minutes from the January 10th meeting reflect that the Vestry recognizes this change is temporary due to unforeseen circumstances (Transition during a global pandemic) and is not in the By Laws.

LENT IS COMING....Ash Wednesday will be observed on February 17

REGARDING ASH WEDNESDAY, LENT AND EASTER

(A letter from our Bishops)

Jan. 21, 2021

We approach Lent once again with a determination to observe this season as a time for self-examination, repentance, and the renewal of our relationships with one another and with the God who yearns for our deepest love and most authentic service.

For many of us, the ashes of Ash Wednesday are a tangible sign of our mortality and penitence, and a powerful sign of our entry into the spirit of Lent. We know, however, the ashes merely point towards the deeper signs of repentance, renewal, and reconciliation. These yield the fruits of the Spirit in our life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Even while advancing our spiritual health, this year's Ash Wednesday observances must also safeguard our physical well-being and that of those in our communities. The coronavirus pandemic is in the midst of a dramatic surge. At this writing, we are warned of a new more virulent strain on its way, while our health care facilities and providers are already stretched to their limits. The imposition

of ashes presents a grave challenge to public health guidelines regarding physical distancing and physical touch.

Accordingly, guidelines for Ash Wednesday are offered below. May we find this Lenten season a time to bend the knee of our heart, praying with the psalmist: *Give me the joy of your saving help again, and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.* [Ps 51:13]

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates
The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris

While devoutly cherished, **the imposition of ashes is an optional portion of the Ash Wednesday liturgy**, which includes in its richness the exposition of the Gospel; the powerful Lenten exhortation; and the penitential outpouring of Psalm 51 and the Litany.

- **“Ashes to Go” should be forgone this year.** Despite the popularity this practice has achieved as a form of evangelism and pastoral outreach, its practice will involve the repeated violation of public safety guidelines in maintaining adequate social distancing and the avoidance of physical touch.
- If desired, **ashes may be made available to the people in their homes**, in the manner suggested by prior guidelines for the distribution of previously consecrated communion elements. A small quantity of ashes, having been blessed and placed in a small envelope, plastic bag, or disposable covered cup, may be distributed to the homes of the people by clergy, lay visitors, or pastoral caregivers, or obtained during specified hours at the church, observing all physical-distancing protocols. **Worshippers are to self-impose the ashes during a subsequent online Ash Wednesday liturgy.**
- The bishops continue to emphasize that, since the Nov. 19 communique, all churches are **strongly urged to suspend all in-person, indoor worship**, and continue to affirm all limitations of those guidelines as well as those of the Commonwealth. Any congregation which has chosen to continue limited in-person gatherings under the restrictions of the diocese and Commonwealth should convey ashes only by providing ashes in a sealed container (as above) for self-imposition by the worshiper.
- If ashes are to be distributed for self-imposition (as above), clergy and altar guild members must **exercise extreme care in the preparation and packaging:** wash hands thoroughly before preparation; wear a mask at all times during

preparation; if gloves are worn for preparation, use only disposable gloves and wash and/or sanitize hands before donning gloves; thoroughly clean any vessels used in preparation, before and after use; keep ashes covered during the priest's prayer of blessing.

STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY TEAM. As we reach toward our pledge goal of \$155,000, the Stewardship Ministry Team and Vestry has made pledge follow up phone calls in December to encourage previous pledgers to return their 2021 pledge commitment cards and to inspire new people to join the ranks of pledging members. Already we have pledged \$104,985 and a total of 55 pledgers with a balance of \$50,015. Please pledge so that we can continue to let God's light shine in and through St. Stephen's.

SUPPORT CHASE AND CHILL

Join Our Virtual Sit and Knit at 4 pm on Tuesdays

We had our first virtual meeting this week! Thanks to Charlotte, Marilyn, and Ginny for joining us! The group is putting together kits to make simple fleece lap blankets - all you need is a pair of scissors and a few moments of time. We will be offering the blankets and directions for pick up from the Parish Office. Please let Father Greg or Heather know if you want a kit! We will be showing how to make the blankets at our 2/23 meeting at 4 pm. Join us for crafting and conversation!

Chase the Chill is an organization of volunteer makers in Lynn who collect, knit or sew hats, mittens, blankets and scarves to give to those who need warm items, many of whom are homeless. For about five years, they have organized "scarf bombing" events to allow the warm donated items to get into the hands of those who need them. To see a video of past events you can follow [this link](#). This year, they are distributing items through local service organizations. Kecia Rideout is the lead organizer, and you can view more information at www.ChasetheChillLynnMA.com.

Please join Heather Collis Puro and Father Greg at St. Stephen's virtual Sit and Knit every Tuesday. Details are at the end of the message. Bring your knitting, pattern ideas, and questions!

Priority items are all items suitable for men, lap blankets, and mittens. Please feel free to make or buy items for donation. In addition, Chase the Chill is collecting coats, which will be dry cleaned by Anton's cleaners before being distributed to those in need. Please contact Heather Collis Puro at heather@collispuro.net or 781-775-3942 to arrange your donation or with any questions.

See you on Zoom!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/4719621353?pwd=dERURjBvWHlaRUtPWVVqSVdVbEM4UT09>

Meeting ID: 471 962 1353

Passcode: 381301

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

The Pantry could always use volunteers to help fill and distribute the bags. We have been following strict protocols to keep all our volunteers and clients safe. Masks, hand washing, and physical distancing are mandatory. If you can help, please call the Office at 781-599-4220. We distribute food every Fridays from 2 – 4 PM, except the first Friday of the month. We always need extra help unloading the truck on the second Friday around 11 AM and on the third Thursday around 9:30 AM. We set up and fill the bags on either Thursday or Friday at 11 AM. Thank you Pam Alleyne and Joyce Wallace for chairing this important ministry AND Thank You to ALL of our volunteers.

ST. STEPHEN'S PHONE SYSTEM

The phones at St. Stephen's have been updated. When calling the main number, you will immediately hear an introductory message, followed by a directory. You can now leave private messages for Rev. Greg, Brandi, Shannon, the Treasurer and a general mailbox by pressing the following extensions:

General mailbox – Extension 1 Rev. Greg – Ext. 2

Shannon (KIC) – Ext. 4

Treasurer's Office – Ext. 3

Brandi Walker – Ext. 5

SUNDAY WORSHIP, 10:00AM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/86093922921>

Phone in for audio only dial 1-929-205-6099 — Meeting ID: 860 9392 2921

Recording of Our Sunday services can be found on our website

<https://www.ststephenslynn.org/> and on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ststephenslynn>