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Newsletter March 2014

Remember that You Are Dust

Last week Sara Miles, a writer and church leader from Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, came to Boston to read from her new book *City of God: Faith in the Streets*. One chapter of the book tells of her experience offering ashes in the street a few years ago on Ash Wednesday. She writes, “McDonalds was crowded with teenagers and fry cooks and families buying cheap fast food, and people reached out to us eagerly, pulling us over. A Guatemalan woman unwrapped her tiny baby, who she told me was a week and a half old, and held him up. I crossed his forehead with ashes, and took a deep breath, and told the baby he was going to die. And then his mother, like every single person who leaned forward to receive that day, said the same words: ‘Thank you.’”

“Why would you say thank you when a stranger tells you that your child is going to die? Because it’s the truth. People say thank you to that hard blessing because finally, despite all the lies of our culture, it means nothing is hidden, or pretend, or made-up anymore.

“The truth is that we all go down to the dust. And that we are loved: to the end, and beyond. We’re not alone in life or in death. And when the face of God’s truth is revealed in Christ Jesus, with all its terrible suffering and beauty, you can only say what our neighbors said on Ash Wednesday: ‘Thank you.’”

And so on March 5, we will come to the church at 7:30am, noon, and 7:00pm “to make a right beginning” to Lent. In the midst of our worship, we will pray that “these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence.”

While the stark ash crosses of Ash Wednesday will wash away, Lent’s invitation to self-examination, repentance, prayer, service, and study shapes our lives for the next forty days. We have a season to ponder deeply whether we are living as God would have us live and doing what God would have us do. As we remember that we are dust, the invitation is to look honestly at our lives and imagine how we might offer them back to God in gratitude.

Poet Mary Oliver writes, “Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon?/ Tell me, what is it you plan to do/ with your one wild and precious life?”

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS MARCH 9
SPRING FORWARD--- DON'T BE LATE FOR CHURCH**

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I write to you, the dear, dear people of Saint Stephen's parish, it is 12 noon on Tuesday, 18 February, and snow is falling heavily once again in Cambridge where I live with my beloved family: wife, Beverly; daughter, Kathleen; five precious kitties: Walter, Athena, Tecla, Cecilia, Stella, ranging in age from 18 down to 7 years; and one precious granddog, Mia (a loving mini pinscher). As I write, I am recalling a favorite television show of my youth growing up in New York City in the 1950s entitled: "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" (KFO). I am sure that some of you will remember it as well, or at least have heard of it. You can even find it via "GOOGLE" on the internet, and I encourage you to watch and hear the theme song of the show delightfully sung on "YOUTUBE." KFO was on television regularly for about ten years from the late 1940s until the late 1950s. The show featured wonderful puppets, and the two puppet stars were Kukla and Ollie, supported by several others. Fran was the female master of ceremonies providing meaningful and humorous conversation between herself and the puppets, and Burr Tillstrom was the creator and puppeteer. What I am recalling most clearly at this time in our lives together again at Saint Stephen's is the theme song from KFO entitled: "Here We Are Again" which was joyfully sung on every showing of KFO.

Yes, dear friends in Christ, indeed "Here We Are Again" together, you and I, at Saint Stephen's on our journey and pilgrimage through life for the next few months. When my time ended as your Sabbatical Interim Priest last July and we said our farewells to each other just prior to the Rev'd Jane's return, I never thought or anticipated that we would be together again, but as the KFO theme song says: "Here We Are Again!" And it is oh such a wonderful blessing to be with all of you, and I look forward to our time and ministry together. As a parishioner graciously and warmly said to me as a welcome back on my first Sunday (9 February) with you,: "Edward, welcome home!"

Well, there is another aspect of "Here We Are Again" and that is that we are about to individually and collectively experience another Lenten journey in our lives in Christ Jesus—a pilgrimage to Easter Day and beyond. Since the fourth century, pilgrimage has been important in the Christian church. It all began with a faithful and adventurous woman from Spain named Egeria who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land between the years of 381 and 384. In her writings, now referred to simply as the Travels or the Pilgrimage of Egeria, Egeria relates what she observed in the Holy Land during the season of Lent. She emphasized sacred places and their connection to biblical events, Lenten practices and observances of Christians such as fasting and ritualistic gatherings, and descriptions of liturgical services and prayer. She lets us know that what we today call "Holy Week" was called the "Great Week" in Jerusalem in the late 300s.

So, "Here We Are Again," preparing to begin another journey in our lives in Lent. As we prepare to enter this pilgrimage, think along with me that we are given again the opportunity to be on another threshold, another chance to make something of this special journey to Easter and beyond. As we travel along, let us seek to become a "new creation in Christ" (Saint Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:17). In prayerful reflection, let us discern what that new creation might be for each one of us. As we witnessed in the parish's annual meeting a short time ago, there are many opportunities right here in Saint Stephen's Parish to step up to and into a new creation in Christ to do the mission of God within the walls of Saint Stephen's and beyond its walls as well.

I pray that you may always know the peace of God which passes all understanding, the healing power of Christ Jesus, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, who has brought us together as friends,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

St. Stephen's is an open and affirming Christian church worshipping in the Anglican tradition. Crossing lines of color, class, culture, and generation, we seek transformation of our lives and our community through Christ's Gospel of love, compassion, and justice.

ST. STEPHEN'S MISSION IMPERATIVES 2014-2020

- **Being good stewards of our resources: physical, financial and human**
- **Deepening community connections**
- **Forming children, youth, and young adults**
- **Nurturing the congregation**
- **Strengthening our structures of communication**

2014 MISSION GOALS

Being good stewards of our resources: physical, financial and human

Physical:

- Re-constitute Restoration Committee: set plan for future restoration; create fund raising strategy for restoration; build relationships (individual & institutional) that will support fund raising
- Re-constitute Building Committee: identify short-term building needs & set priority list; oversee maintenance & repair projects
- Increase number of people involved in care of plant inside and outside through creating teams responsible for particular areas
- Create process for identifying and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships

Financial:

- Establish sustainable structure for Treasurer's Office
- Evaluate fund raisers (Soul Celebration, Big Money Raffle, Fair) for effectiveness in fund and fun raising, and sustainability of leadership
- Understanding that St. Stephen's will always require a mixed income stream (pledges, grants, endowment income, fund raising) create a strategy for long-term financial sustainability

Human:

- Revise lay Personnel Handbook
- Identify and train 1-2 lay leaders in clergy personnel issues
- Provide opportunities for training & skill development for lay leaders (business practices, prayer, healing, pastoral care, fund raising / grant writing, faith formation, diversity...)
- Develop lay succession planning in the various ministries for future leadership

Deepening community connections

- Evaluate existing community ministries: Food Pantry, My Brother's Table, ECCO, Christmas Presents Projects for Kids (CPPK), Kids in Community (KIC), Community Cook-Outs
- Create opportunities in worship to tell the stories of the transformative effect of our community connections to inspire, to witness to the Gospel, and to encourage broader participation
- Walk our neighborhood building relationships with our neighbors, listening to community concerns, & telling people about St. Stephen's and our various ministries
- Create a Vestry Advisory Group to support existing community connections and investigate new opportunities such as Bootstrap / Family Literacy

Forming children, youth, and young adults

- Strengthen church school through recruiting, training & retaining teachers
- Strengthen acolyte program creating opportunities for training as well as fun activities
- Launch Middle School Youth Group
- Host more Family Friendly activities led by parishioners
- Explore ways to strengthen Kids in Community (KIC) and to deepen relationships with KIC families; form KIC Advisory Committee
- Explore the possibility of creating a Youth Choir
- Explore ways to offer more “young person friendly” worship
- Explore ways to create sustainable ministry with young adults
- Create a Vestry Advisory Group to support and integrate existing ministries as well as exploring new opportunities

Nurturing the congregation

- Offer quality worship in the Anglican tradition while exploring ways to enliven worship, deepen sense of the sacred and engage young people
- Train ushers in greeting newcomers; establish follow-up process; create welcome materials
- Offer variety of short & long term faith formation opportunities on Sundays & mid-week (days & evenings; lay & clergy led; at St. Stephen’s & at SSJE, BCH Camp, or DioMass)
- Provide learning / training opportunities for members of ministry teams: Choir, Church School teachers, Altar Guild, Healing Prayer Team, Pastoral Care Team, Restoration Committee, Treasurer’s Office Team, Stewardship Ministry Team, Vestry
- Strengthen Pastoral Care Team: increase Eucharistic visits, recruit flower deliverers, create cards (Church School students & Cloran photos) & faith reflections for homebound, identify people to take on phone and/or card ministry of pastoral care & connection and explore possibilities for Nursing Home worship
- Involve parishioners in writing daily, on-line Lenten reflections
- Explore possibility of creating a Prayer Group
- Explore ways to deepen our understanding and appreciation of our diversity so that we might become a more welcoming community
- Create a structure for a sustainable year ‘round “Coffee Hour”
- Sustain existing fellowship opportunities while encouraging parishioners to invite others to join them in church, home or community-based fellowship
- Create Vestry Advisory Group to support existing worship, faith formation, fellowship, and pastoral care while exploring new opportunities

Strengthening our structures of communication

- Improve parish list: update information including cell numbers & email addresses; remove disinterested people; create possibilities for segmentation based on activities & interests
- Improve our use of electronic communication for newsletter, ministry leaders, Vestry
- Evaluate communication effectiveness of monthly newsletter, Sunday written and oral announcements, and bulletin board announcements
- Launch new website as we continue to add content
- Broaden content on Facebook and explore ways to use it
- Explore ways to use notes and phone calls to stay connected
- Explore ways to tell our story better & more often in the Lynn & Diocesan communities
- Create Vestry Advisory Group to evaluate and strengthen communication strategies

VIEW FROM THE PEW: FACING AN OPERATION by Helen Patmon

“It’s okay to be afraid”

Last November, I had a complete knee replacement. Now that is a big deal. I had a lot on my mind. In this and the next two parts, I want to share my thoughts and fears and the warm responses of the people of St. Stephen’s. After you read this, I think you’ll see why I have a smile on my face a good deal of the time these days! I call the three parts “Advent Moments.” “Your surgery will be at 12:00 noon,” said a Nurse. The last words I remember before fear moved in and decided to stay awhile.

Reverend Jane asked me if I wanted a healing service and I said “yes.” I didn’t realize she meant a healing service for me. I came late, certain I would be able to find a seat, but the place was packed. Surely this was for someone else – but when I looked up, hands were on shoulders, all ending with me. “It’s okay to be afraid,” said Tina Lloyd

“So that’s what I am,” I thought.

Gethsemane: Alone and Afraid

“Ms. Patmon, you’re having your surgery tomorrow.”

“Yes.”

“Who’s taking you to the hospital?”

(Silence)

“When you get there, a face you recognize should be there.” But when I was admitted I DIDN’T RECOGNIZE NOBODY!” It’s okay. I can do this, I thought. It was 12 noon. I was unconscious for the next eight hours.

When I woke up, I saw a familiar face. “Lucinda has been here. She left about six-thirty,” said Reverend Dorothea. “I just think everybody should have someone there,” Lucinda had said.

Soon I would be home. But then what?

Not afraid...but still worried

“It’s good when things work the way they’re supposed to.”(paraphrasing Jane Gould)

No money, no bed...how to get one? It still had not occurred to me that I was not alone. I called Reverend Jane. A small army got me what I needed. When I got home I thought I was in Santa’s workshop! Harry Jackson and Neil O’Donnell were in full “let’s get this done” mode as a brand new bed was assembled.

Once I got back to church so many people congratulated me! “You walk better than I do,” said Ginny Fuller. I work every day to try to keep God’s miracles and respect all the people who are praying for me. I’m still afraid and often need reminding that I am not alone. I am always amazed. I am always in awe. I believe prayers work in a certain way. I forget sometimes, but I do pray. And I ask others to pray with me, and for me.

BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF RESOURCES

ANNUAL MEETING FOCUSES ON MISSION GOALS. More than 75 gathered for the 170th Annual Meeting on February 9, 2014. Vestry members presented the new mission imperatives discussing their hopes for congregational involvement as we live into them over the next 5-7 years. The complete Annual Report is available by mail for \$5.00 to cover copying and mailing costs. Treasurer Paul Stonkus encouraged people to read his report and thanked the volunteers whose dedicated service keep our finances afloat. The approved 2014 budget includes a small operating deficit. Election results: Sr. Warden Chris Trahan, Jr. Warden Virginia Fuller, Treasurer Heather Collis Puro, and Clerk Carolyn Hoy. Vestry 3 year: Pauline Leslie, Neil O'Donnell, & Steve Switzer; and 1 year Joanne Droppers. Diocesan Convention delegates: Irene Axelrod & Joyce Wallace, and alternates Pam Alleyne & Beth Graham. Deanery Representatives: Pam Alleyne, Irene Axelrod, Robert Dixon, Beth Graham, and Joyce Wallace. We thanked outgoing Treasurer Paul Stonkus, and Vestry members Keyana Brown, Sally Gosselin, & Patrick Lafortune.

VESTRY SUMMARY. February 16, despite another snow storm, the new Vestry gathered for relationship building and orientation. In addition, the Vestry discussed March training options, grant proposals submitted, & clergy leadership for the short and long term. Vestry voted Rev. Edward Kienzle's housing allowance as he joins us through June for 2 Sundays a month and one day a week for pastoral care. March 2 the Vestry and Kiswahili Leadership Council will gather on World Mission Sunday for lunch and relationship building.

FR. EDWARD RETURNS! The Rev. Edward Kienzle will be back with us from February through June. He will join us for worship twice a month on Sundays preaching at 8:00 and 10:00 one of those weeks. We are hoping for a few Sunday afternoon Lunch and Learns as well. In addition, he will spend one day a week in Lynn visiting those who are hospitalized or homebound. If you would like a visit from Fr. Edward or the Pastoral Care Team, please call the office. In the summer, we hope to welcome a new Urban Assistant for whom the search is already underway.

BISHOP WALKABOUTS COME TO ST. STEPHEN'S MARCH 16 AT 4:00. Sunday, March 16 at 4:00 help us show hospitality to the candidates for Bishop of Massachusetts as well as people from across the Diocese coming to hear from the candidates. Candidates include: Holly Antolini, Tim Crellin, Ron Culmer, Alan Gates, Mally Lloyd, Ledlie Laughlin, and Sam Rodman. This is our chance to show the candidates that St. Stephen's is a vibrant place living out God's mission in the city of Lynn. We need healthy and yummy finger food as well as people to provide hospitality in the seven conversation rooms and four coffee/tea stations. We need food by 3:00 and helpers by 3:30. Sign up today to let us know how you can help on the 16th.

NURTURING THE CONGREGATION

JOIN US ON ASH WEDNESDAY—MARCH 5 EUCHARIST AND THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

7:30AM NOON 7:00PM

Make a right beginning on the season of Lent
Pick up a token to carry with you through Lent

JOIN US FOR MARDI GRAS/ SHROVE TUESDAY ON MARCH 4 AT 6:30. Whether you go for Mardi Gras Gumbo or Shrove Tuesday Pancakes, we will have food and fun for everyone as we celebrate the last day of Epiphany. **Join Neil O'Donnell in the kitchen on Sunday, March 2 at 4:00 to make the Gumbo!** Join teens & YAs at 5:30 for set up and pancake making with Danielle Pappas. At 7:30 we will serve Debbie Potter's King's Cake to see who will be blessed! At 7:45 we will gather outside for prayers and burning of the palms as we prepare for Ash Wednesday. **Don't forget to bring your old palms on Sunday or Shrove Tuesday.**

LOOKING FOR A FEW MORE LENTEN MEDITATIONS. Many of you have already responded to the invitation to write for our daily Lenten Meditations series but we still have a few of the forty days unclaimed. Con Squires will encourage, collect, edit, scribe... whatever it takes to encourage you to offer a 100 word reflection that describes an experience or a moment when you knew that God was at work in your life and/or in the world.

PRAYER WORKSHOP AT SSJE. On Saturday, March 15 Br. David Vryhof will lead a workshop on "Silence and Solitude." Sign up by March 2; cars will leave the church 7:45am.

DIOCESAN LEARNING EVENT. March 8 (8:30-12:30) join the Diocese at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, for workshops on business practices, global mission, and practical tools for websites. Cars will leave St. Stephen's at 7:45. Sign up is required.

PASTORAL CARE & HEALING PRAYER TEAMS GATHERS MARCH 6. The PCT & HPT meet on Thursday, March 6 for check in and discussion of the final section of Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*.

12th ANNUAL SOUL CELEBRATION APRIL 27. Our guest speaker and preacher will be the Rev. Angela Ifill, Missioner for Black Ministries for the Episcopal Church. Her talk will focus on "*Pipelines to Possibility not Prison*." Last year's Soul Celebration raised over \$12,000 and Debbie Potter & her team are hoping to be even more successful this year. To reach our fundraising goal, we all need to buy and sell ads for the Soul Celebration Ad Book. **Covers start at \$500; full-page ads cost \$150, half page \$75, and quarter page/ business card \$50; and supporter listing only costs \$20.**

FORMING CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS

CHURCH SCHOOL UPDATE. On Sunday, February 23rd, Church School teachers gathered for fellowship and conversation about how their classes are going. We discussed reconfiguring the classroom grade levels so that student numbers and ages are appropriate. We are continuing to recruit new teachers and subs. The plan is to have two adults for each class by Lent.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP LAUNCHES IN LENT. All 6th-8th graders are invited to join Maiya and her grandmother Debbie Potter at 14 Hovey Terrace in Lynn on Friday, March 28 from 5:30 to 8:00 for food and fun. Dinner and a creative project are planned. Friends are most welcome. RSVPs are appreciated.

MONTHLY FAMILY DINNERS KICK OFF MARCH 30. Parish families are invited to join families from Kids In Community for a Community Dinner on Sunday, March 30, from 5:30-7:00 pm. Families will help prepare the meal together (ingredients will be provided), and after dinner, we'll play some games that are fun for kids and adults alike. Adults will also have some "kids-free" time to converse. Please note that everyone is welcome, but all children are expected to attend with an adult. Please join us! But do let us know that you will be attending!

OASIS AND YOUNG ADULT UPDATE. Teens continue to meet for the Spot on Tuesday afternoons and for OASIS on 2nd and 4th Fridays. YAs meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (March 11) for food and fellowship. February highlights included YAs gathering for hotdogs and painting a room for a YA hang-out and study space, and a teen/YA Brunch with special guest Charlie Knuth (former diocesan intern now studying at Yale Divinity School).

DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

NORTH SHORE FORUM ON HOMELESSNESS MARCH 2. Join Sally Gosselin and the St. Stephen's Team next Sunday to "listen, learn, and act to end homelessness." The advocacy training will be held at First Church Swampscott (40 Monument Ave.) at 2:00 on Sunday, March 2. It's an opportunity to learn about the shelter crisis in Eastern Massachusetts and to gain tools for advocating with our elected officials. And mark your calendars now for the April 3 Legislative Breakfast at North Shore Community College.

SOUPER SUNDAY WAS SIMPLY STUPENDOUS. Bishop Shaw teared up as children carried bags, boxes, and cans of food to the altar on February 2. Souper Sunday was a wonderful way to honor the many ways Bishop Shaw and the Diocese partner with St. Stephen's. Harry Jackson sorted and counted close to 200 items, which went into 60 bags on a wintry Valentine's Day. Many thanks for all the contributions and remember your food donation is always welcome.

ECCO ASSEMBLY THURSDAY MARCH 27 AT 7:00. We made a difference with the Raise Up Campaign. Now it's time for St. Stephen's to build a strong ECCO Team and for ECCO to organize to make a difference in our community. To get involved, talk with Rev. Jane.

OBSERVING A HOLY LENT

TAKE ON SABBATH SUNDAYS. Join us every Sunday for worship at 8:00 or 10:00am. Don't let anything get in the way. After worship, we encourage people to stay for healthy snacks and fellowship—but no meetings. Take time to slow down the pace of life and be with God in community. Please sign up to bring a healthy snack one Sunday during Lent.

TAKE ON TUESDAYS AT THE MONASTERY. Cars will leave St. Stephen's by 4:15 every Tuesday to join the monks of the Society of St. John the Evangelist for worship and soup supper. Whether you are drawn to incense and the sung mass, the hospitality of the brothers, or the soup and sermon conversations, please join our weekly pilgrimage. Sign up is required.

TAKE ON MIDWEEK WORSHIP. Come to Compline Wednesdays at 8:00pm. Join others for a peaceful time of prayer at the end of the day. Or commit to the Thursday noon Healing Service. We pray for ourselves and the world as we ask for God's healing presence.

TAKE ON WEDNESDAY EVENING SOUP (6:30) AND STUDY (7:00). Every Wednesday at 6:30 we will gather for a simple soup supper. At 7:00pm join us for Bible Study with a 2014 spin-- **The Episcopal Church has "Ideas Worth Spreading."** Each week a 6-13 minute TED Talk is paired with a piece of scripture to invite us to talk about how we are called to live out our faith. By combining these high quality presentations with scripture we can set the stage for meaningful conversations with spiritual depth that connect to our daily lives. For best results come regularly—but do come any time!



TAKE ON TEA AND TALK. Thursdays at 1:00pm we gather with tea and Herbert O'Driscoll's *God with Us: The Companionship of Jesus in the Challenges of Life* to discuss our lives and faith.

TAKE ON A PRACTICE OF GENEROSITY. Pick up an Episcopal Relief & Development Hope Chest and contribute money daily as an expression of gratitude for life's blessings. Fill a quarter card with a daily offering. Commit to a regular act of service with ECCO, My Brother's Table, or our ministry with young people. Visit someone who is homebound or lonely.

TAKE ON ST. STEPHEN'S DAILY REFLECTIONS. Thanks to editor Conrad Squires and all of you, we offer St. Stephen's daily Lenten reflections describing an experience or a moment when you knew that God was at work in your life and/or in the world. Email the office (ststephens@ststephenslynn.org) to receive the meditations daily as an email; read them on our website; or pick up a weekly reading booklet each Sunday when you come to church.

TAKE ON A DAILY PRINT OR ON-LINE MEDITATION. Copies of *God's Abiding Love: Daily Meditations & Prayers* by Henri Nouwen as well as *Forward Day By Day* are in the Galahad Area. In addition, we have Lent prayer and activity posters for children and teens in the Galahad Area and Church School classes. Check out ssje.org for the Monks' *LOVElife: Living the Gospel of Love* series or the TearFund.org for the Lenten Carbon Fast.