



Newsletter October 2014

Here Am I; Send Me!

This year, the Stewardship Ministry Team chose as the theme for our Fall Financial Pledge Campaign, “*Here I am, Lord*” quoting the refrain of one of our favorite hymns and echoing countless passages in Scripture. Our holy book is filled with stories of God calling people to give their lives to God—to follow, to lead, to prophesy, to serve.

When the temple shook, the seraph descended with hot coal, and God spoke calling Isaiah to prophesy, Isaiah definitely did not feel worthy or ready to represent God in the world. When God called Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Moses felt inadequate and inarticulate. When God called Jonah to proclaim God’s judgment on the people of Ninevah, Jonah took a boat in the opposite direction. When God called the boy Samuel in the night, Samuel did not even recognize the voice of the Lord. And when God sent the angel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she was to bear the holy child of God, Mary asked, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

Everywhere we look in scripture, God is calling and we are saying, “No, not me, Lord.” Whether the “no” comes from a sense of unworthiness and inadequacy, or cluelessness about the ways of God, or a desire to ignore God and do what we want to do, the Bible is full of stories of people like us resisting giving themselves to God.

But, we know that all God asks is for each of us to say, “Here am I; send me!” In fact, God depends on us saying, “Yes.” God does not expect us to be perfect or to have all the answers or to make the right choices all the time or to be able to succeed on our own; but God does need us to say, “Yes.” God needs each of us to do our part.

As 16th century spiritual leader Teresa of Avila wrote: “*Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*”

And so this Fall, I invite you to think and pray about how God is calling you. I encourage you to reflect on the reality that God has no one but you to make manifest God’s love, compassion, and justice. And, without each of us giving as we are able to support the people of St. Stephen’s doing God’s work in the world, our ministries will wither.

Sustaining and strengthening our church depends on the generosity of each of us as we say, “*Here I am, Lord!*”

Janet Janet

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Dear Friends,

Since arriving at St. Stephens I have been spending a lot of time thinking and praying about the Sabbath. It's an amazing gift that God worked into creation from the beginning. Yet I know that I am not a good observer of the Sabbath. Often times I fill my Sabbath day trying to catch up on work, chores, emails and all that other stuff! And even though I know that it can all wait for another day, part of me can't let go and enjoy this day with God. But why is this true?

First claiming the Sabbath as a holy day is risky. Who has time to take a day off from all work, relaxing and enjoying God's created world in all its splendor. If someone asks you how are you, most of us respond; "busy!" We wear our "busy-ness" as a badge of honor. People who take the time to enjoy a day of leisure are seen as lazy. Our culture almost demands that we are going 24/7. So do we ignore the Sabbath to avoid being called lazy?

Or maybe it's because observing the Sabbath day means that you'll become more fully aware of God's presence in your life. This new awareness might, and probably will, lead to seeing the world and yourself in a new way. And this new world and self might lead to some discomfort as well as immense joy. As you allow yourself to rest in the beauty of God's creation you might realize you need to make some changes.

I know when I actually let myself have a day of rest two things happen. First, I notice that everything becomes sharper. I see and hear things I usually don't notice on other days. This is a wonderful gift from God to us. Second, I notice I need to rearrange my priorities. All that important stuff that had to get done, is no longer so important. The emails and phone calls and texts can wait, not because I'm lazy but because I need to keep God first on my list.

My hope for all of us this fall and winter is that we find a way to observe the Sabbath each week. I know the calendar is full and overwhelming, but we can take control of that by giving one day to God. If you have trouble finding the time, sit down and ask God for help.

May you find true rest and the peace of God, in your Sabbath day,

May you become fully aware of the Creator, in the stillness of the day,

May your spirit and soul be refreshed by your day of rest. Amen.

Peace,

Sarah

Pledging Questions from the Stewardship Ministry Team

What is a pledge? A pledge is a commitment to give a set amount of money to the church in the coming year. It is an expression of gratitude to God for all that God has given us. It is neither another charitable donation nor a bill from the church.

Is my pledge a faith statement? Yes! A pledge affirms our trust that God will provide. We pledge out of the abundance of grateful hearts giving thanks for all God does for us. Regardless of the amount, great or small, we give because we trust the heart of God with our open hands.

Why are pledges important? Pledges keep us focused on our need to give back to God from the abundance we receive. They also allow the Finance Committee and the Vestry to create an accurate budget because we know what the income from our members will be. Our Vestry has set a pledge goal of \$130,000 for this year.

How do I calculate my pledge? Pledges are based on giving the church a percentage of our earnings. The back of the pledge card provides a percentage chart to help calculate pledge commitments based on different income levels. The chart also helps us see what percentage of income our gift represents, and to consider whether this percent of giving accurately reflects our gratitude to God and the church.

What does it mean to tithe? The tithe is the Biblical standard of giving set by Jacob. "Of all that you give me I will surely give one tenth to you." (Gen. 28:22) Our Diocesan stewardship statement encourages Episcopalians to work toward giving the Biblical tithe of 10% or more.

What is stewardship? Using the gifts God has given us, to do the work God is calling us to do.

What if I cannot fulfill my pledge? We cannot always predict our finances and sometimes our pledge is more than we can give and other times it is less than we might give. Pledges can be adjusted up or down during the year through a call or a note to the treasurer or the clergy.

How much does the parish need to raise in pledges? While our need will always stretch our ability to give, the Vestry voted a 2015 Pledge Campaign Goal of \$130,000.

What sources of money fund our budget?

How do we spend our money?

STEWARDS OF RESOURCES

VESTRY SUMMARY. September 22 the Vestry continued work on Mission Imperative Implementation. Stewardship Ministry Team circulated a draft of pledge letter 1 to be signed by Vestry; Vestry set 2015 pledge goal at \$130,000 and agreed to ask each member to prayerfully consider an increase of 5%. August financials are strong except for lagging pledge payments (statements will go out by the end of September). Hosting Convention will help the budget in 2014 and 2015 due to \$30,000 assessment abatement. **We will need the entire parish to help greet and feed 700 when we welcome the Diocese-- including our new Bishop Alan Gates-- for Diocesan Convention on November 8.** The Fair leadership team is in the midst of solicitations and asked all Vestry members to help now and at the Fair on October 25. New computers have been installed with all necessary upgrades to software and systems costing just under \$5,000, which exceeds the 2014 technology budget but was within parameters approved by Vestry. Repair of handicapped entrance and Anderson Building stairs will be done by the end of September. Rev. Matt Stewart will be our Guest Preacher for Homecoming on September 28.

TREASURER'S REPORT. Pledge statements that reflect giving through August will be mailed by the first week of October. If you are on track or ahead, thank you! If you have fallen behind, please catch up as soon as possible because our budget counts on 100% pledge payment.

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY TEAM LAUNCHES "HERE I AM, LORD" CAMPAIGN. It's October and speakers come to the lectern every Sunday to tell us why they pledge to St. Stephen's. Our Leadership Reflection this month comes from the SMT and includes frequently asked pledge questions. Soon, the Vestry's letter asking each of us to pledge will arrive in the mail. Our response to the Vestry's call to pledge generously determines the quality and shape of the ministry of St. Stephen's in 2015. Please say "Yes" to this holy invitation.

HARVEST FAIR NEEDS YOUR HELP OCTOBER 25! The Harvest Fair offers us an opportunity to raise funds and make friends. We enclosed a Fair flier with this mailing; please use it to remind yourself or others that the Harvest Fair will be Saturday, October 25 complete with Silent Auction, Same Day Raffles, crafters, new gifts, knit items, and food at the Bake Table, Cookie Walk, and Cafe. **We need your help!**

- **solicit donations and program book ads from businesses (by October 12)**
- **take out a family or group ad in the Harvest Fair Program Book**
- **recruit crafters/ vendors for our outside tables (only \$25)**
- **contribute jewelry for Tiffany's or New Gifts for auction, raffle or sale**
- **bake cookies, cakes, pies, fudge, & other goodies for Bake Table & Cookie Walk**
- **volunteer with set up (Friday, October 24)**
- **give an hour or two on Fair Day**
- **encourage your friends, family, and neighbors to come to the Fair**
- **BUY AND SELL MULTI-GIFT RAFFLES**

The Fair raises funds and makes friends for St. Stephen's only if we all contribute as we can. **Please come to the Fair Meeting on Sunday, October 12 at noon and say "Yes" when a member of the Fair Leadership Team asks you to help.**

BUY YOUR MULTI-GIFT RAFFLE TICKETS TODAY

GRAND PRIZE: 2 Nights at The Trapp Family Lodge

Thursday, June 25- Saturday, June 27 in Trapp Guest House, Stowe, VT; sleeps 6

Second Prizes:

Garmin GPS Nuvi42 w/ touch screen OR Keurig K45 Elite Home Brewing System

Third Prizes: \$50 Gift Cards

\$50 VISA Pre-paid OR \$50 Panera OR \$50 Marshall's/TJMaxx/Home Goods

Tickets cost: \$2.00 or 6 for \$10; Drawing at Mini-Fair November 23

NURTURING THE CONGREGATION

TUESDAYS AT THE MONASTERY. Call the Office to sign up for our trip to the Society of St. John the Evangelist on Tuesday, October 7. We will join the Brothers for worship and supper. We will leave St. Stephen's at 4:15 and return about 8:00. Drivers are needed.

HEALING PRAYER & PASTORAL CARE TEAMS MEETS OCTOBER 9. The Pastoral Care Team will gather at 10:00am on Thursday, October 9 to check-in and organize visits for October. At 10:30 the Healing Prayer and Pastoral Care Teams will meet together. Copies of [The Shack Revisited](#) are available from Rev. Sarah.

COMMUNITY FAMILY DINNER OCTOBER 26 AT 5:00. Come to an evening of fun and games as the parish and KIC communities gather for a Halloween Celebration. Costumes are encouraged and prizes will be awarded.

BAPTISMS ON ALL SAINTS SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 2. If you or someone you know is interested in baptism as we celebrate the Feast of All Saints, please complete a baptism registration form as soon as possible. Our Baptism Preparation Class will meet on Monday, October 27 at 6:30pm. Please talk with the clergy or Irene Axelrod for more information.

OCTOBER FORMATION & FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES. KNIT CLUB: All levels of knitters, crocheters, and sewers are encouraged to join the spirited fellowship of the Knit Club on Tuesday evenings at 6:30. **BIBLE STUDY** continues on Wednesdays at 6:30 as we learn about the early church through the letters of Paul. **TEA AND TALK ABOUT FAITH** meets on Thursday afternoons at 1:00 as we read and discuss short, spiritual reflections. **ADULT CHOIR** gathers Saturday mornings at 10:00 to learn new music and prepare Sunday anthems.

HOSPITALITY TO CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

TEACHERS AND CLASSES AWAIT YOUR KIDS! The Church School is back in full swing with teachers and students gathering every Sunday mornings at 10:00 (drop off at 9:45). Parents and Godparents need to make sure young people are in church every Sunday because if they aren't here we can't "do everything in our power to support them in their life in Christ." Registration forms for Church School and all programs for young people (Kids' Choir, Acolyting, Middle School Youth Group, and High School Youth Group) are available.

HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU TO JOIN OUR MINISTRIES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE? Whenever we baptize, we promise to do everything in our power to support these people in their life in Christ. Our mission imperatives challenge us to show Christ-like hospitality to children, youth, and young adults. Living into these commitments requires that adults teach in our church school, serve as mentors with our middle school and high school young programs, prepare meals for our teen groups, help train acolytes and maintain their robes, drive young people to Diocesan events, volunteer with Kids' Choir, serve on the KIC Advisory Board, and faithfully bring children and youth to our formation ministries. Talk to Rev. Sarah today about how and where you might serve.

KIDS' CHOIR SINGS AGAIN. Our Kids' Choir will offer anthems during worship on October 19. All 2nd-8th graders are encouraged to join the Choir. **Rehearsal will be Saturday, October 18, 1:00-3:00.** Volunteers are needed to assist Kids' Choir Director Juliana Davis. Registration forms are available at the church for children who want to learn to read music and have opportunities to perform. October rehearsal is particularly important as the Kids' Choir prepares to sing at Diocesan Convention on November 8.

CALLING ALL ACOLYTES—COME TO THE OLYMPICS OCTOBER 5 AT NOON. On Sunday October 5 from noon to 2:30 all acolytes will gather at church for pizza, a quick training session, and the Acolyte Olympics! Teams will work through a challenging scavenger hunt to win a prize. **All young people in Grades 6 to 12 are encouraged to join the Acolyte Corps this year as we prepare for the National Acolyte Festival at Washington National Cathedral next October.** Acolytes serve once or twice a month on Sundays and on Holy Days. Contact Rev. Sarah, Nelson Woodfork, or Chris Trahan with any questions.

OCTOBER IS BUSY FOR TEENS. During October our youth will be creating artwork for sale to raise money for the Church Presents Project for Kids (CPPK). This annual fundraiser provides Christmas presents for hundreds of children living in Lynn. **OASIS Community Youth Group meets from 6:30 to 9:00 on Friday, October 10; Middle School Youth meet from 6:30 to 9:00 on Friday, October 17.** On Friday, October 24 all youth group members (Jr & Sr High) are invited to help set up for the Fair, to create and hang signs, and to receive training for waiting and working tables at the Fair. On Fair Day, October 25, we need teens for the Café, Fair Tables, and to raise funds for CPPK.

YOUNG ADULTS GATHER FOR DINNER & CONVERSATION ON OCTOBER 14. On September 9th, young adults gathered at St. Stephen's for their fall kick-off dinner. "YAs" had the opportunity to check in with each other, laugh and be silly, and discuss topics for future conversations. These topics include current events ranging from war in the Middle East to racism in our own country; questions about religion and faith; and personal concerns such as how to find guidance for life after college. Recognizing that there are no easy answers, the goal of YA conversations is to give everyone the space and support they need to explore important issues honestly and without judgment. On October 14th, when YAs gather again for dinner, they'll have the chance to focus the conversation around one or two topics that they want to dig into more deeply. All 18 to 25 year olds are welcome to YA dinners, which happen every second Tuesday of the month at 6:30. For more information, please contact Dan Bell.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP COMES TO ST. STEPHEN'S OCTOBER 19 AT 6:00. Sunday, October 19 at 6:00, the clergy along with Juliana Davis and her Berklee Band will offer a contemporary worship experience with lots of inspired singing, time for scripture reflection, and opportunity for Christian fellowship. **We'll kick-off this new worship experiment with Youth Minister Jason Cruz offering our faith reflection.** All ages are welcome at these times of prayer and praise but they emerge out of the spiritual hunger of some of our BCH formed young adults. Please join us as we kick off this new St. Stephen's worship experience.

DEEPENING COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

HELP THE HUNGRY IN OUR COMMUNITY. Please add tuna, spaghetti sauce, canned chicken, and boxed milk to your shopping list to donate to our Food Pantry because our shelves have gotten bare this summer. Also, we can use your help **Friday afternoons from 3:00-4:00 at the Pantry.** To help, talk with Sally Gosselin. Also, we need people to join the Table Team **servicing lunch at MBT from 1:00-4:00 on Sunday, October 26.** If you can't help us serve, feel encouraged to make cookies, brownies, or cupcakes we can share.

ECCO ENGAGES ELECTIONS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Our St. Stephen's ECCO Team is leading a **Voter Commitment Canvas every Sunday afternoon in October.** 11,000 of our neighbors in Lynn receive no earned sick time on their jobs; if they miss work because they or a family member is sick, they risk losing their jobs. Voting YES on Question 4 will provide them and one million other Massachusetts workers with the opportunity to earn sick time for hours worked. As followers of Jesus, we embrace the Gospel's call to love, compassion, and justice. It is because of our faith that we engage the electoral work of educating voters about Question 4 and encouraging people to vote. Our strategy with congregations across the state is to focus on voters who tend to vote only in Presidential election years (1/3 of Lynn voters). Our goal is to talk with as many neighbors as possible to share our stories about the importance of earned sick time and voting Yes on 4, and encourage them to complete a Voter Commitment Card, which ECCO will mail to them before Election Day, November 4. Please join our Voter Commitment Canvas at least one Sunday in October. **If canvassing is not for you, we encourage you to phone bank for Question 4 Voter Commitment.** Here at St. Stephen's, we will host our own **Voter Sabbath on October 19th to make sure that our community understands the hardship of workers who earn no sick time and to work for 100% St. Stephen's Voter Turn-out.** Lynn has 6,000 potential voters who are not registered; **potential voter may register by postcard until October 14.** We can change "politics as usual" if we **do the unusual and vote.** Join our Sunday afternoon Voter Commitment Canvas; join a Phone Bank; but most of all **VOTE!** You can make a difference! To get involved, contact our ECCO team captains, Debbie Potter and Liz Fortes.

ECCO CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES' FORUM

A new person will represent us in Washington beginning in January

In late October ECCO plans to host a 6th Congressional District

CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD TISEI AND SETH MOULTON

Watch for the date and help us turn out 100s so that our candidates know that

WE WANT LAWS THAT PROTECT THE DIGNITY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING