

MARCH 2025



The Evangel

THE WARDEN'S CORNER

...the love of Christ urges us on...

Recently, Canon Joe Woodfin led our Vestry retreat, with a focus on our roles as Stewards, “Pray-ers”, and Evangelists for St. Stephen’s. As Stewards, we are the agents and legal representatives of the Parish; however, it is critical that our actions support the mission of our church. We learned that our actions may be temporal, but the reason behind them—the ‘why’, if you will— must always be spiritual. And our ‘why’?...the love of Christ urges us on...(2Cor. 5)

As “Pray-ers”, we support our clergy, and provide for the worship of Almighty God. As lay-leaders, we focus primarily on the temporal, and the clergy focus on the spiritual—but these two are inextricably linked by our ‘why’...the love of Christ urges us on...

Perhaps the most significant role is that of Evangelist. We care deeply about our church, and are excited about what is happening, and what the future holds for us at St. Stephen’s! We want to spread the good news by reaching out to our neighbors, and by reaching in and lifting each other up. I believe that this role as Evangelist is one that all of us should adopt.

The next time you’re asked about why you go to church?, or why St. Stephen’s?, TELL THEM! Why? ...the love of Christ urges us on...

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BURNING OF THE PALMS

The tradition of burning palm branches, most commonly practiced by Christians, stems from the practice of saving blessed palm fronds from Palm Sunday to be burned the following year to create ashes for Ash Wednesday, symbolizing the transition from a triumphant welcome of Jesus into Jerusalem to his eventual suffering and death, thus serving as a reminder of repentance and mortality; the ashes represent the need for humility and turning away from sin.

It was not until AD 601 that the start date of Lent was set. Pope Gregory moved the start of Lent to 46 days before Easter, and established Ash Wednesday at the same time.

SHROVE TUESDAY

Shrove, derived from shrive, refers to the confession of sins as a preparation for Lent, a usual practice in Europe in the Middle Ages. Although the day is sometimes still used for self-examination and introspection, Shrove Tuesday eventually acquired the character of a carnival or festival in many places and is often celebrated with parades.

As the final day before the austerity of the Lenten fast, Shrove Tuesday has many customs pertaining to food—in particular, sweet foods containing eggs, sugar, and fat, which were commonly forbidden during Lent and would otherwise go to waste in the six and a half weeks between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Pancakes are the traditional choice in a number of European countries; the day is known as Pancake Day or Pancake Tuesday in Ireland and in many Commonwealth countries. Similarly rich pre-Lenten treats include *pa czki*, fruit-filled deep-fried pastries similar to doughnuts that are enjoyed in Poland and in ethnic Polish communities in the United States. An iconic part of Mardi Gras (“Fat Tuesday”) in New Orleans is the king cake, an iced ring-shaped pastry that is sprinkled with gold, green, and purple sugar and typically contains a plastic figurine representing the baby Jesus. Traditionally, the person who receives the piece of king cake containing the figurine is named “king” or “queen” of the Mardi Gras festivities and is obligated to host the next party of the season.

MARCH OUTREACH

Clearfork Learning Camp

The loose offering for March will support the Clearfork Learning Camp.

Planning for next summer’s camp is underway. We will be relying more heavily on participation from the local community to provide adult support.

More information will be shared with you when plans are finalized. Standby!

HAITI UPDATE AND CARRIBEAN DINNER

VOUDOU practices will **not** be a focus topic at the Carribean Dinner on Sunday, March 30 following the 10:30 service. The focus **will be** the clinic at Petit Harpon, Haiti that St. Stephen's has supported from its inception.

We will be joined by guests from Haiti who have been very involved in our ministries to the community of Petit Harpon. They, along with Dr. Clary and Cameron Ellis of St. Stephen's, will share our calling to this beautiful part of God's kingdom on earth. Beginning in 1994 when Haiti, recognized as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, was our companion diocese, we, the Diocese of East Tennessee, have responded to several facets of need in Haiti. First and foremost is the work in a remote mountain village called Petit Harpon. Several Parishes have been generously involved over the years but the free walk-in clinic operating in the Petit Harpon parish, St. John the Evangelist, has been St. Stephen's calling.

Dr. Wilkine Sillyn grew up in Petit Harpon and attended secondary education at the school designed and built by our Diocese. Later, with continued support primarily from Church of the Good Shepherd in Chattanooga, Wilkine completed medical school at University of Notre Dame in Port-au-Prince. After serving his mandatory public service, he joined with us to found the medical clinic. Opening day was in May of 2015 and clinic has been held each Friday since then. Wilkine's sister Margerite is the nurse at the clinic. Although Wilkine now is living in the U.S, he continues to provide consultation and coordination.

Samuel DuMond also grew up in a neighboring village of Beloc. His relatives continue to live around Beloc and Petit Harpon although Sam is in the U.S. now. He is a preacher and a church-planter with congregations in Beloc and the much larger community of Leogane. Sam was a huge help to us on previous trips and has worked with several U.S. groups to improve the lives of his neighbors and continues to support us and Good Shepherd with communication. He, his wife (also a physician in the D.R.) and 2 children now live in Powell.

Dr. Sillyn and Sam are just 2 examples of the courage, resourcefulness, and endurance of the lovely people of Haiti. This is a good opportunity to meet them because St. Stephen's is extremely blessed that God has called us to love and serve his most humble but noble children in Haiti.

The clinic at Petit Harpon will be the recipient of the April loose offering.

LENT MADNESS

Everyone knows what March Madness is about but do you know about Lent Madness?

Lent Madness is a Lenten devotion that pits saints against each other in a bracket-style competition. The goal is to win the Golden Halo. Lent Madness was created in 2010 by the Rev. Tim Schenck, an Episcopal priest, author, and rector of the Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea in Palm Beach, Florida. It's loosely based on the popular college basketball tournament, March Madness.

Each day during Lent, two saints are paired off in a match-up. Visitors to the website vote for one of the two saints. The winning saint advances to the next round. The process continues until one saint remains and wins the Golden Halo.

Lent Madness is a fun way to learn about saints, their faith, and to see how God works in the lives of ordinary people. Hopefully we can be inspired to imitate the saints.

You can learn more and sign up for email updates at LentMadness.org. You can order a Lent Madness bracket poster and/or you can buy the official Sainly Scorecard, which includes biographies of all 32 saints. The biographies are also included in the website as each saint is featured.

MINISTRY UPDATES

CHRISTIAN FORMATION/OUTREACH

Mite Boxes

Mite boxes, named for the story of the “widow’s mite” (Mark 12:41-43) are often used by churches to encourage children and others to give their coins and small change. This Lenten season, we invite all the people of St. Stephen’s, young and young at heart, to collect coins in a mite box. The Outreach Committee and the Christian Education Committee voted that the proceeds go to Gift of Life, a subsidiary of the The Episcopal Relief Fund. Beginning March 2nd mite boxes will be available for pick up at any of the in-person worship services and during communion delivery during Lent. Mite boxes will also be available in the hospitality area during the week.

Children and adults are asked to collect coins throughout the season of Lent and return the boxes as an offering on Easter Sunday or during the week following Easter. You may wish to keep your mite boxes on your kitchen counter or dinner table where they can easily receive the tokens of your generosity and hope. It’s easy to think that such small amounts don’t add up to much, but just as the two coins were a lot to the widow, your “mites” for Gift of Life, will go a long way toward helping others in need.

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41-43)

Thanks for the above copy to St. David’s Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.

Christian Formation Wednesday Edition

Register for Living Well Through Lent on Sunday, March 2, in the Fellowship Hall

**Explore the *Fruits of the Spirit* this Lent at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church:
A Journey of Well-Being and Community**

St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church invites you to embark on a transformative spiritual journey with our new Lenten Class, rooted in *The Living Compass 2025 Lenten Devotional*, this Lenten season. This class will allow you to reflect on and cultivate the Fruits of the Spirit while exploring how every dimension of your life—heart, soul, strength, and mind—interconnects in the pursuit of balance and well-being.

Children will have their own group to explore these same themes while, of course, having lots of fun!

What to Expect

Weekly Gatherings for Reflection and Community: In our busy lives, it’s easy to feel disconnected or compartmentalized, but we are not separate from one another. Each area of our lives—whether it’s our relationships, our work, or our health—impacts every other dimension. Each week, we’ll meet in a supportive community to explore the teachings of *The Living Compass 2025 Lenten Devotional*. Through group discussion and contemplative prayer, you’ll be invited to reflect on how the Fruits of the Spirit—such as love, joy, peace, and kindness—manifest in your own life and your relationships with others.

MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

Space for Contemplative Prayer: Lent is a season of deepening our connection with God, and we'll provide ample time for prayer and reflection. This contemplative space will allow you to quiet your heart, listen for God's voice, and ground your intentions for the week ahead in spiritual practice.

Why You Should Attend

- **Holistic Growth:** The Lenten Class will help you understand and embrace the interconnectedness of your spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental well-being.
- **Community:** Walk through Lent with a supportive group of fellow participants who will encourage you and share in your spiritual growth.
- **Practical Tools for Transformation:** Learn how to integrate spiritual practices with healthy habits and intentional living, ensuring a more balanced and fulfilling life. Each student will receive a copy of *The Living Compass 2025 Lenten Devotional*.

Class Details

- **When:** The Lenten Class begins on Wednesday, March 12, and meets weekly on Wednesdays at 6:00 following the simple soup suppers. It continues through Lent and culminates in a time of reflection just before Easter. Please join us at 5:30 for a simple Lenten meal before the class.
- **Where:** We will gather each week in the parish hall.

Join Us This Lent

Come and discover how *The Living Compass 2025 Lenten Devotional* can guide you in integrating spirituality and wellness, creating a balanced life that honors all dimensions of your being. Together, we will explore the Fruits of the Spirit, deepen our faith, and grow in community. All are welcome.

We look forward to journeying with you through Lent—walking with intention, prayer, and reflection as we seek wholeness in Christ. For more information, please contact Emily Doane at: fernwoodonthehill@gmail.com.

Communication Committee

Recently, the communications committee participated in a Zoom discussion led by Brother Andrew Morehead, Missioner for Communications and Evangelism, Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee.

Brother Andrew led us through an overview of best practices for our parish communications and offered suggestions for our mission, vision, and strategy as we go forward.

Father Bailey and several of us had the opportunity to attend the annual Diocesan Conference; the theme of the gathering was "Imagine Our Possibilities." This is a wonderful guideline for us to follow as we go forward.

A special note from the Communication Committee

We have parish members who lived in Oak Ridge as children, experiencing what was called "the city behind the fence." Eight-five years ago the City of Oak Ridge didn't resemble anything close to the city we know today.

Now, the City of Oak Ridge is launching an initiative to take our city far beyond the early days, creating a new master plan to build on our unique history, culture, and heritage.

For our parishioners and our neighbors, we encourage you to sign into the Oak Ridge 2045 website: plandev@oakridgetn.gov.

MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

Evangelism

Sweetheart Dance

On February 16th, the Evangelism Committee held its first annual Sweetheart Dance, bringing together parish members for a night of fun and community. The Parish Hall was beautifully transformed into a “Sweetheart Wonderland,” complete with a popcorn machine generously donated by ORUD and an array of tasty treats for everyone to enjoy.

Guests of all ages danced under twinkling disco balls, with music spanning generations to keep the energy high and the floor full. The evening culminated with the announcement of the dance competition winners, as Craig Brent and Deborah Clary took the stage to celebrate the night’s most spirited dancers. The event was a heartwarming success, bringing smiles and memories to all in attendance.



ORMCA Fun Run

The Evangelism Committee is gearing up for its next exciting event--the ORMCA Tun Run, scheduled for March 29th. This fun-filled community event provides a perfect opportunity for St. Stephen’s parishioners to come together, support a worth cause, and connect with members of the Oak Ridge community. Whether you’re participating in the run or simply cheering on participants, it;s a wonder change to get involved and make a positive impact. Don’t miss out on another fantastic event hosted by the Evangelism Committee. Mark your calendars and come join in the fun.



MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

What's Happening in Parish Life

On February 8th, we had a Parish Pizza and Pool Party which was a hit with our families! Many thanks to Papa Murphy's Pizza and to the Oak Ridge Civic Center staff for making this such a success.

At our Parish Breakfast on the 16th, we were joined by the Maryland State Boys Choir and their chaperones. Their presence greatly enhanced our meal and the 10:30 service afterwards. Despite the lack of electricity due to a blown transformer, our gas stove and gas oven allowed us to serve a fabulous meal—albeit by candlelight!

March is a very busy time for Parish Life. We have our 3rd Annual Mardi Gras Family Fete on March 1st followed by our Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast on March 4th.

Lent brings our Free Simple Soup Suppers beginning on the 12th and continuing every Wednesday throughout Lent. Two kinds of soup will be served—one vegetarian—along with bread and crackers, fruit and a beverage.



Finally, our Monthly Parish Potluck is a collaboration with Outreach on March 30th, and will be Caribbean-themed food. We will be joined by Dr. Wilkine Syllin, who manned our health clinic in Petit Harpon. He will speak after the meal about the conditions in Petit Harpon, and the important work that we continue to do there.

See the article on Haiti for more information.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

In January, you may have occasionally said to yourself “Easter is so far away!” Yet, every time without fail, February sneaks in like a thief in the night, and before you know it, it is March, and Lent is HERE – da-da!

Just like Advent, Lent is also a season of preparation. However, I often think Epiphany has the last laugh of any church musician or clergy. It is the time of year when the best laid rehearsal plans always need to be rescheduled due seasonal illnesses, storms, etc. Just when you think there aren’t enough hours in the day to prepare for what lies ahead, the clocks are about to change. Many of my musician colleagues feel if they can survive the ‘wilderness’ of Epiphany, then Lent is more the practice of going through the motions.

It is very easy for all of us to ‘go through the motions’ during Lent and Holy Week. At a recent Shannondale Retirement Center worship service, (where you may find me on Sunday afternoons), I was reminded of the practice of ‘abiding.’ Specifically, how we might abide into our community as a way to abide into our faith and ‘dying to self.’

Between now and Easter Sunday, there are many musical offerings being presented that I want to highlight for you. May these offerings help you to “abide” into your Lent and Holy Week journey.

Firstly, on Sunday April 6th, at 4 p.m., we will have a service of Choral Evensong presented by the **University of Tennessee Chamber Singers**.

On Palm Sunday, April 13, at 4p.m. the parish choir will present ‘**Gabriel Faure’s Requiem.**’ This seven-movement work is written for strings, organ and choir. Faure’s work is unusual in that it is gentler in spirit than other Requiems by contemporaries like Mozart or Berlioz. Fauré described his Requiem as “a lullaby of death.” He once observed in a letter to a friend that he viewed death “as a happy deliverance, an aspiration to happiness above rather than as a painful experience.” The music he created is the very embodiment of that philosophy.

During Holy Week, you are encouraged to attend the many services that contain special music, but especially you are invited to join us on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil Services.

At our **Maundy Thursday** Service, the choir will present ‘*The Simple Mass in D*’ by Antonnio Lotti, as has become a tradition in recent years.

At our noon day service on Good Friday, we have a large rotation of musical offerings by various parish and community musicians. These musical offerings complement the hymns and meditations of this three-hour service known as **The Seven Last Words**. While you are encouraged to stay for the full service, there are many opportunities built into the service where you can come and go as you are able.

All of this leads to the **Great Easter Vigil** Service, where we experience the chanting of the ‘Exultet’. Otherwise known as the ‘Easter Proclamation,’ this hymn of praise calls the people of God to worship and proclaims the coming of Easter. Ultimately, we arrive at Easter Sunday services with all the celebration that we have come to enjoy, from the flowering of the cross to the rolling timpani and boisterous brass.

The experiences above are offered through both regularly budgeted funding and donations to the Music Memorial Fund. I particularly want to highlight that our Faure Requiem service on Palm Sunday will be presented in memory of Judy DiGregorio, thanks to the generosity of those who contributed to the Music Memorial Fund. I am often asked about the cost for some of these activities. Costs depend on the music and the time needed to prepare. Roughly, however, it is safe to say that one rehearsal and one service for one instrumentalist cost approximately \$300. This means that some of the individual offerings above cost in the range of \$1500-\$2000.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS (CONT.)

The financial costs are only a small element in the bigger picture of what it means to ‘abide into our community.’ We are blessed with a whole host of people who volunteer time, talent, and the financial resources to enable us to experience what it truly means to keep a Holy Lent, and not just go through the motions every year.

I would encourage all of us to abide into whatever Lenten practices you hold dear at St. Stephen’s. Music is very much a part of that journey together. So how might you abide this Lent? Perhaps it means having a bigger presence in the pew during Holy Week or inviting a friend from the community to hear the Faure’s *Requiem*. Perhaps you may feel led to contribute financially to some of these endeavors. Or, perhaps you are interested in giving your time and talent and joining our choir.

Simon

