

OCTOBER 2024



The Evangel

STEWARDSHIP

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Good morning, beloved members of our church family! It's wonderful to see all of you gathered here today. Your presence is a testament to the strength and unity of our community, and I am truly grateful for each and every one of you.

Today marks the beginning of our annual pledge drive, a time for us to come together and reflect on our commitment to this church and the mission we share. This is not just about raising funds; it is about investing in our community, nurturing our ministries, and furthering our outreach to those in need.

As we embark on this important journey, I want us to remember that our contributions are vital to sustaining the vibrant life of our church. Your pledges—whether large or small—are not just numbers; they are expressions of faith, love, and dedication to the work God has called us to do.

Now, let's talk about the backbone of our church's financial health—a solid budget. You might ask, "Why is a budget so important? The answer lies in the essence of stewardship and our collective mission.

A budget serves as a roadmap for our future. Proverbs 21:5 reminds us, "The plans of the diligent lead to abundance." A well-structured budget helps us clearly outline our goals and priorities, ensuring that our resources are allocated where they can have the greatest impact. It allows us to plan for the year ahead, setting clear paths for our ministries, outreach programs, and operational needs.

With a solid budget, we can focus our efforts. It helps us prioritize initiatives that align with our mission. Whether it's expanding our youth programs, enhancing our worship experiences, or serving our community through outreach, a thoughtful budget directs our energies toward what truly matters.

Looking ahead, a solid budget allows us to think strategically about the future. By planning now, we can ensure that our church remains a beacon of hope and love in our community for generations to come. We want to be a church that not only meets the needs of today but is also prepared for the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

So, as we launch this pledge drive, I invite each of you to prayerfully consider your contribution. Reflect on how you can support our shared mission and the impact you can make. Your pledge is an investment—not just in our church, but in the lives we touch through our ministries. (cont. on next page)

STEWARDSHIP (CONT.)

In closing, I want to express my deep gratitude for your continued support and commitment to our church. Together, let's embrace this opportunity to make a meaningful difference. Let us unite in purpose and faith, ensuring that our church remains a vibrant and loving community for all.

Thank you for your time, your generosity, and your dedication. May God bless you abundantly as we embark on this journey together!

Tyler Walker, 2024 Stewardship Chairman

WHY I PLEDGE

As time approached for the October *Evangel*, I suggested to Bailey we ask parishioners for volunteers to write about why they pledge. He challenged me to write it. Here is my attempt.

I grew up in a family that pledged; therefore, I thought that was just what one did if you were a member of a church. But, of course, that was an adult thing to do. As a child, I received an allowance but it came with restrictions. A certain amount was to be saved, another was earmarked for church donation, and what was left was for me to spend. So, the concept of supporting the church became part of my DNA at an early age.

Segueing to adult years. True confession: I always donated but have no memory of pledging at either of my previous two parishes. I may have, but I definitely do so now. The question remains, "why now."

I began to understand the reason behind pledging as I became involved in the many programs that make up the life of St. Stephen's following my retirement from the education world. Choir robes and music cost money. Wine and wafers cost money (bread is donated). The electric bill, telephone bill, gas bill, etc. must be paid if we are to remain comfortable during services and other activities. And the list goes on and on and on.

Do you have a household budget? If you do, to make it work you have to know your income and your needs. Then you allocate your available funds to cover each of your needs. St. Stephen's operates the same way. Your and my pledges generate our income. Your Finance Committee determines the allocations to each budget line-item according to availability of income. It is impossible to budget with any degree of certainty unless you know your expected income.

So, I encourage everyone to study the church's financial sheet. It is posted every month on the bulletin board by the office. Simon or other office staff would be happy to make a copy for you to review at your leisure.

If you are convinced that pledging is for you, determine what amount you can commit. As WUOT says, "No amount is too small." Also, only one person in the parish ever knows your pledge and that is neither senior leadership nor office staff. This person shares only the total amount with the Finance Committee for budgeting purposes. I can also absolutely assure you that if you make a pledge and "life" happens to you, no one is coming after you with a warrant to make you honor that pledge.

That is my story and the reason why I/we pledge. Peace as you and your family decide what to do this stewardship season.

Judith Delaney

PLEDGE DRIVE - NOTE WRITING SESSIONS

This year's pledge drive is a parishioner to parishioner note writing campaign. We will write and send personal notes inviting each other to pledge to financially support St. Stephen's Church throughout 2025. This financial support is our primary funding source that provides for the on-going operation of St. Stephen's in 2025. This support enables us to worship, to compensate and care for our employees, to strengthen Christian formation and to serve others and more.

Whether you are new to St. Stephen's or have a storied tenure here, we invite you to join us in this fun and fulfilling venture of writing pledge invitations. Four note writing sessions will be conducted at the church in the first half of October, details are presented below. At the beginning of each session, prior to writing notes, we will review the purpose of the notes and examples of language that can be used. We will answer any questions you may have. All sessions will be conducted in the Parish Hall.

Note Writing Sessions:

- Wednesday, 10/2, 5 to 7 pm
- Saturday, 10/5, 9 to 11 am
- Wednesday, 10/9, 5 to 7 pm
- Saturday, 10/12, 9 to 11 am

Please join us for one or more of these sessions, we look forward to doing this together!

Most sincerely,

Courtney Manrod and Savannah Lamarr
Note Writing Coordinators

OCTOBER OUTREACH FOCUS: HAITI

Walk-In Clinic in the Mountains of Haiti

Is it crazy to attempt to provide medical services in an extremely remote and impoverished corner of our hemisphere? Considering our limited resources, it is an ambitious undertaking. There are no government resources or large charities operating in Petit Harpon, Haiti. Our church, along with Pere Bana of the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, and Good Shepherd in Chattanooga (which operates the school) provides support for this large community. Our in-country professionals, a Haitian doctor and a Haitian nurse, are treating anemia, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, machete cuts, burns, gastritis, parasitic infections and women's issues every week. Why? Well, we think we were called. In fact the Diocese of East Tennessee has been striving to make a difference in Haiti since 1994.

Many St. Stephen's parishioners have travelled to Petit Harpon in a number of "mission" trips. Our earlier trips were to build the school (now K - 11), with subsequent trips to maintain and enhance the school. We have worked for the Children's Nutrition Program on several trips especially after the 2010 earthquake. Also, since the earthquake crumbled the church, St. John the Evangelist, we helped replace it with an all-metal building designed to also house our planned free medical clinic. May of 2015 was our opening, and we have been caring for the community ever since.

(Continued on next page)



OUR MISSION IN HAITI (CONT.)



The Clinic is now our, St. Stephen's, primary mission effort in Haiti, and I could fill these pages with photos of patients being treated for wounds and illness. Hospitals in Haiti are pay-as-you-go, even the Episcopal hospital and clinic in Leogane. Most people in the Petit Harpon community cannot afford this and have nowhere else to go for medical care. Thanks to our medical clinic people no longer have to die of sepsis and anemia or other highly treatable problems.

Please allow me to mention two growing issues that are impacting medical care now and relate to the facility.

(1) In 2014 we built an off-grid solar system capable of supporting the clinic and the church functions. Shortly before COVID lockdowns, someone stole six of the storage batteries. Because of this, and since we cannot get there to look for work-arounds, we cannot store insulin or some inoculations.

(2) The doctor and nurse are concerned about the deterioration of the clinic walls. The clinic is defined inside the larger metal structure by wood partitioning and doorways. The wood was treated with available products to deter insects. That has proven inadequate. We were still grappling with a solution to that problem when COVID hit and now something must be done. There is concern for the medical supplies and medications.



It is hoped that these problems can be assessed soon and a plan for resolution developed.



INVITING, WELCOMING, CONNECTING

THE PATH TO GROWING ST. STEPHEN'S

St. Stephen's is a wonderful parish with many gifts and strengths. One of the things that I hear being said by a lot of people both within and outside our community is that we are a well-kept secret. As such, despite our wonderful newcomers ministry Bread Upon the Waters, our visitors seemingly show up because they've made the effort to find us, not the other way around!

When I was officially called as Rector earlier in the year, the Vestry devised a revised set of development goals (those goals in their entirety are at the end of this article). One of the goals was related to evangelism. It states the following:

FORMULATE a comprehensive evangelism strategy.

- a. Develop further processes and resources by which new individuals are invited, welcomed, and connected into the life of the parish.
- b. Discern gifts and perspectives newcomers bring into our community and ways by which they may be shared within our wider parish setting
- c. Create an additional, alternative worship service to broaden informal spiritual community.

This goal was designed in recognition of the fact that, with notable isolated exceptions, St. Stephen's has been rather passive in its work of evangelism. It is a testament to the fact we are a strong community that we get as many visitors and new members as we do considering we have, in recent history, spent relatively few resources on active networking and building up our presence in the community.

The Vestry has been working on the last two parts of that goal (discern gifts and create an additional worship service), the latter of which has taken an initial leap with the creation of the Celtic service we share with First United Methodist. But the processes and systematic way in which we draw in new people is of utmost importance.

The good news is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. The Episcopal Church has a program called Invite, Welcome, Connect which is geared toward helping congregations do this very work.

St. Stephen's does the Welcome part very well with our Bread Upon the Waters ministry. But there is always room to grow. This past month, I invited four teams of people to go visit other congregations in our area to look at how they welcome newcomers and follow up with them. The Vestry has received great feedback from these teams, and I will share the data from these teams regarding ideas, suggestions, and celebrations of things we do well in next month's Evangel.

But the areas we really need to invest in are the Invite and Connect parts. The class I'm leading on Sunday mornings on Storytelling and Sharing God's Story in us is teaching us the tools as to the when, where, how, and why of our inviting people into deeper conversations with us that sometimes (but not always) lead to us specifically asking people to check out this community that is our spiritual home.

What can you do? First, I invite you (pun intended!) to check out Invite, Welcome, Connect at their website www.invitewelcomeconnect.com. There is a mass of resources available, but read the overview of what they are about and check out some of their introductory videos. Next, I will be writing more about these mission strategies and engaging the parish in deeper conversations about how we can do them. Lastly and most importantly, as we enter this stewardship season, I would ask you to intentionally think about what this parish means to us. Jog out specific reasons by writing them down or saying them aloud to yourself or someone else. Use these thoughts to then formulate what you would say to someone who has never encountered our

INVITING, WELCOMING, CONNECTING (CONT.)

community about why it is special. Do NOT think of it in terms of how you can get someone to come visit; tell them why it is meaningful for you. Why is this place worth your time and energy, and how has it shaped your life?

In my next article, I will dive deeper into more of the ways our stories become an invitation to share our faith story and even what God is doing for you. Eeek, then you'll be doing Evangelism! And you will be doing this before we've even begun considering the Connect part of this. There is much to come on that topic.

As promised, below is the list of developmental goals. As you look at that list, view all of them through the lens of how St. Stephen's can enhance its current strengths, build up areas in which it is weaker, and seek out potential opportunities of relationships or ministries that might not be revealed to us as yet. Above all this, be intentional. You make a choice to be here among many choices you have to be somewhere else. How and why would someone else choose to be here? And how can you share your story with someone else so that they might choose to respond to God's call to be here as well?

This work is exciting not just for the future of our parish, but the sharing of stories and the giving of our lives to one another is the essence of our call as Christ's church. I cannot wait to work with you as we grow this spirit of evangelism in the very fabric of our identity at St. Stephen's.

Christ's Peace,

Bailey

THANKSGIVING DAY MEAL AND SERVICE RETURNS!

Do you want to lighten your cooking load for Thanksgiving this year while enjoying fellowship with your St. Stephen's friends? St. Stephen's is excited to once again host our Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 28) meal open to all St. Stephen's parishioners and their invited guests. The festivities will begin with a Thanksgiving Day Eucharist at 10:00 AM followed by the meal at 11:00 AM. The event will be sponsored by Parish Life and hosted by Fr. Bailey's family. The main courses (turkey and ham) will be provided; each participant will be invited to bring a side dish to share.

This event is a great opportunity for you to both celebrate with your St. Stephen's community AND to invite someone who may not have a place to celebrate this year. We hope that this event would be an outreach to welcome those not part of our church to find a reason to truly give thanks with our community this year.

So if you haven't made your holiday plans yet, please mark it on your calendar and join us! Sign-up sheets will be sent out in the next couple of weeks.

