



ST STEPHEN'S SIGNPOST

ST STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HEATHSVILLE, VIRGINIA



A welcoming family united in Christian love, worship, and service

ststephensheathsville.org

THE RECTOR'S COLUMN

Sometimes there are people on both sides of a conflict who don't really want to keep the conflict going. Sometimes people on both sides of a conflict hope for a future relationship that is better than the present relationship. I think God smiles on those hopes and those desires. I think the angels in heaven are cheering on those hopes and desires, as they spring up in both sides. It is the destination the scriptures lead us to. As Isaiah describes it, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox." That kind of perfect peace finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven, but even on earth we get glimpses of it.

How do we move those hopes into practice? I don't know exactly. I heard a guy on NPR talking about how school students spend a lot of time in history classes being taught about the causes of wars. He asked what would happen if the students spent just as much time learning about the numerous conflicts around the world that were successfully resolved without bloodshed? What would happen if the students had the chance to learn not just the causes of wars, but also the causes of peace? So in retirement, this guy researched "peace studies" and volunteered his time to teach it in a local school. And I expect the angels rejoiced.

Probably the students learned methods that could be useful in resolving conflicts in their own lives. I expect, though, that the most valuable lesson of the course would be the vivid reminder that conflicts don't have to escalate: there are other ways people can relate to each other.

Individuals have much more flexibility than organizations in putting their hopes for good relationships into practice. An individual can reflect: "There is more to me than a position on a particular issue, and so there is also more to my neighbor than a position on a particular issue." Individuals can see that there is more to life than stark either/or choices.

Our efforts at better relationships are often awkward or fumbling, but I think that's okay. It may even be a good thing, because it helps us to recognize that other people's awkward or fumbling efforts toward us are just as good-hearted as ours toward them. We make ourselves vulnerable in those moments, we risk getting hurt. But we may also find out that we're more resilient than we expected, or that we're more compassionate than we expected, or that there's more of God's grace in the world than we expected. Maybe that's what the angels have been trying to tell us all along.



BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
Rufus, the wolfhound puppy, and Mike Hammer, Northumberland County's new bloodhound were among those blessed.



Grace and peace,
Lucia+

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

October 14, 2010

The treasurer presented the 2011 proposed budget. Final acceptance will be voted at the November meeting.

The Stewardship Committee met on September 28th. The 2009 audit was finalized at this meeting. Dick and Ellen will update the 2010 stewardship letter and plan the campaign.

Joel and Nancy (outgoing vestry members) agreed to represent the vestry on the Vestry Nominating Committee. Bill Kirby has agreed to serve. Meade Kilduff will be asked to serve. The slate will be presented at the November vestry meeting.

The vestry unanimously approved a motion to purchase a permanent inside speaker system to go with the new keyboard AND to purchase a 300-500 watt portable outside speaker system suitable for both outside summer services and events. The Oyster Roast event will make a donation toward the speaker system purchase.

Dick briefly reported on the Ashland Stewardship of Creation meeting. The Mustard Seed grant monies will be used for water filter systems in Northumberland, Lancaster, and Westmoreland.

To facilitate hospitality setup the church will stock more "standard" food stuffs like crackers, cheese and cookies in addition to coffee makings.

The Red Cross needs to identify people who might need assistance in an emergency; Rick will prepare a list.

Joel reported the mowing season is over. The 2011 budget may include funds to hire a lawn service.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Gates & Dick Eager, vestry members

2010 Annual Meeting
Sunday, December 12th
following the 9:00 service
at Chilton House

SENIOR WARDEN



Dear Parishioners,

The fall is always a busy church season. The vestry is hard at work bringing the current year to a close. Our annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday December 11th after service at the Chilton House. The priest, warden, treasurer and activity leaders will highlight this year's accomplishments. The proposed 2011 budget will be approved by the congregation.

Many thanks to Nancy Gates, Joel Stubbs, Bill Kirby, and Meade Kilduff, this year's Nominating Committee. Anne Freeman and Phil Johnson have agreed to serve on the vestry for three year terms starting in January. The vestry accepted their nominations and will present this slate to the annual meeting for approval.

The stewardship program is in full swing. ***Please return your completed pledge cards promptly, it helps with financial planning.*** If you did not receive a stewardship statement and pledge card, please call the church office. Your financial support is vital to maintain our facilities and support community outreach programs. Also, please complete the "Time & Talent" portion of the pledge card. This season you could try something new (training is always available) and add something more as there is always much to do.

The property case took a significant step forward for the Episcopal Church earlier this year when the Virginia Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision. The next phase of litigation is now getting started. A brief statement of where we are in preparing for it appears on the following page.

Many thanks to everyone that participated in making this year in the St. Stephen's community so wonderful.

Faithfully, Dick+

UPDATE ON PROPERTY CASE

The legal system takes a long time. We are hopeful about an eventual return to our church home.

There will be a hearing on Friday, December 17th at 2:00 at the Fairfax Circuit Court to discuss the procedural issues for how the next phase of the trial will go. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

You will be able to hear for yourselves what is involved and your presence is a gesture of support. In the meantime keep praying for a positive resolution. The trial itself may take place in April, May, or June.

We will announce the results of the procedural hearing in Sunday, December 19th immediately following our worship service.

Lucia Lloyd

Documents regarding requests for scheduling and conduct of the next phase of the litigation are posted on the diocesan website. Go to the newsroom and click on the Property Dispute tab for the full texts.

STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT

We, the Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, believe that God has blessed us with many spiritual and material gifts, and with many talents. We believe we have a responsibility to be careful stewards of those gifts and to use them in ways that will ultimately bless others. Our experience has been that by giving our time, talent, and resources to support St. Stephen's we have been strengthened spiritually, and in our bonds to one another as a faith community. We think this has been especially true during this time of transition for our parish. We think that this shared experience has transformed us individually and collectively, and for that we thank God!

We therefore commit ourselves to prayerfully appreciate our many blessings and, as good stewards of those gifts, to give a significant and

growing portion of them to support God's work in the community of St. Stephen's.

We encourage everyone in the parish to reflect on your own blessings, and consider helping us in strengthening St. Stephen's family by committing a growing portion of your many gifts, as well. We are a small but growing band, with many needs as a community.

So, as you consider how to fill out your stewardship card, please consider these points:

- ❖ ***Your support is vital to us.*** Please return the form so we know that you support what we are striving to accomplish in this parish.
- ❖
- ❖ ***If you normally circle 2 or 3 areas in which you can commit to help, consider circling 3 or 4.*** You know what your talents are, and we can sure use them! We need help maintaining the parish grounds, teaching Sunday School, organizing our education programs, and planning fundraisers and other events. We need people to serve on outreach, inreach, and stewardship committees, as well as serving as ushers and choir and altar guild members. If you have a talent we haven't tapped, let us know. We can use it!
- ❖
- ❖ ***If you normally pledge, prayerfully consider what percentage of your income you will devote to doing God's work through the mission and ministry of St. Stephen's.*** We are moving into a new phase of our life as a parish. Please realize that each increase in pledging will make a big difference at this point. We appreciate plate contributions from those who, for some reason, cannot pledge.
- ❖
- ❖ ***Invite a friend to church or to an event.*** We want our community to see that we take our worship and our work seriously and joyfully. Help us demonstrate our commitment to being a welcoming family.

Thank you!

Faithfully,

Dick Eager, Joel Stubbs,
Nancy Gates, Rick Skelton,
Phil Moore, Ellen Kirby

CORRESPONDENCE FROM FAR AND NEAR

As you know, we have been sending out letters of support and encouragement to those on our prayer list. (They deserve to know that we are praying for them!) We also celebrate joyful events in the life of our congregation. Here is a sampling of the letters we have received recently.

From Sven Van Barrs on his installation as the new rector of Abingdon, White Marsh:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
I don't know when I have received a more joyous, more caring note. Thank you for your prayers. I have often prayed for you especially over these last few years, and I am glad that our bonds are grounded in our Lord.

God bless you,
Sven

From an old friend recovering from surgery:

Dear St. Stephen's Episcopal Church members,
To cover me with prayer is a blessing. I know that I have many friends in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and I treasure them.

Christ's love,
Virginia Townshend

Dear St. Stephens's Family and friends:

You made Sunday, October 17th one of the happiest and most memorable days of our lives with the beautiful reception you held for us. Words cannot express the love, support, and joy we felt on that remarkable occasion. We have endless thanks for Lucia whose help and encouragement kept us moving forward in this endeavor and for our reception co-hosts Ellen Kirby and Ann Silver and everyone else who helped make this event so wonderful.

Peace, love, and grace,

Phil and Gary

From Caroline Lindemann Brandt's son, who is in seminary (and clearly visualizing a larger congregation). Welcome to the "prayer team"!

Dear Lucia,

I received my letter from St. Stephen's prayer team today, wishing me well in my studies for the new academic year. I want you and the prayer team to know that I was deeply touched by your gesture. Expressions such as this are rare indeed, so I consider the letter a genuine gift, fully undeserved but totally appreciated.

Thank you for thinking of me. You all really made my day.

God's peace,

Steve McGhee

During our Shrinemont retreat this fall Barbara Crafton told us this story, and offered us this approach toward forgiveness.

Prayer Without Agenda

Both men are members of the same parish. Both are active. One sits in my office.

Milt's mouth is a grim line as he leans back in my velvet wingchair and crosses his arms. "It's getting so I can't pray at all anymore," he says. "Every time I start, I swear I see Frank's face in my mind and I get so angry I can't stand it. I mean, I can't pray even when he's nowhere in sight. I even have physical symptoms: my heart pounds so hard I think it's going to jump out of my chest. I can feel the blood pounding in my ears. I think I may have to give up officiating at Evening Prayer. I end up just wanting to put my fist through the wall."

"We've got enough holes in the wall here already," I tell him. Then I ask him how he prays for Frank, and he looks at me in disbelief. He assumes I have misunderstood. "Well, I *don't* pray for him. I can't I just get too mad."

I tell Milt that the first thing that needs to happen is that he needs to be desensitized. "Like those programs for people who are afraid of flying," I say, "first they take you to a ticket counter, and then you practice with an airline seat, and learn to deal with it, then you fly, and you're all right."

Right now, just the thought of Frank sends Milt over the edge. First, he needs to cut Frank down to size in his imagination. Frank is taking up valuable real estate in Milt's spirit. Milt can get that space back for something more productive.

"There is a way to do this," I tell him. "It takes some time, but it will work. Are you game?"

He looks discouraged and shakes his head. But he wouldn't have brought it up if he didn't want some help with it.

"Well," he says at last, "I sure don't see how. But I really hate being like this. Yeah, so, okay. What do I do?"

"The first thing is that you never, never, never pray without praying for Frank."

Milt looks annoyed. He thinks I'm asking him to do some nice Christian thing, where you summon up warm, fuzzy thoughts about people you can't stand. He thinks that making up attractive lies about unattractive feelings is the ticket he must buy in order to gain admission to God's presence. I head him off at the pass.

"Just the name. That's all you have to say. That's all you should do. Just say his name, without an agenda. Just 'Frank'."

I go on to suggest to him that, when anger is in the driver's seat, we simply cannot be trusted to pray *with* any agenda at all for the one with whom we are angry...No, I cannot be trusted to pray *for* anything specific right now. I'm too mad. Instead, just the name is enough.

Milt began to do that: he said Frank's name every time he prayed. Every time.

"How's it going?" I asked one evening after Evening Prayer. I thought he had seemed a little calmer.

"I'm doing it. That's about all I can say." Milt paused. "At first, it was awful. I'd say his name, and his face would come into my mind, and I wanted to punch his lights out. But now I can say it without going ballistic. So maybe there's been a little progress."

Well, I told him it would take a while—and it did. But, as time passed, the name of his enemy ceased to be an immovable barrier to Milt's prayer life. It became possible for him to be in the same room as Frank, and then to work on a project of brief duration with him. About six months later, I answered the telephone one evening, and Milt was calling me from Frank's place, where they were having dinner together.

Are they best friends? No. But beginning to pray without an agenda for his enemy simply by speaking his name in prayer began the process of removing a grudge from its inappropriate squat in the center of Milt's life and put it on the fringe, where it belonged. Everyone has annoyances, and we all have people we just don't like. But these things shouldn't rule us. The normal negatives of life can run away with us if we allow them to, and then we find ourselves squarely in their grip. Milt had inflated Frank's transgressions until they became all there was to Frank. But nobody is

reducible to his or her sins. Or his or her virtues. We're all more complex than that.

But wait a minute! You can break the back of a terrible anger by just praying the name of the one who has hurt you? After all the bitterness that has passed between you, you're going to get over it by praying his *name*?

Yes. Praying the name without agenda removes us from the management role in this transaction. God knows perfectly well how to deal with Frank. God knows Frank, and God knows Milt, and God created and loves them both. God doesn't need Milt to iron out Frank's behavior or to plan a favorable outcome to their impasse. Milt was too mad to do that anyway. When we present our sorrows to God, God accepts them. The rest is not up to us.

Prayer without agenda works in any arena, not just in the arena of anger. "I just don't know what to pray for," someone will say about a mortally ill person; "I don't know if I should pray for her to live or for her to die, she's so terribly ill." As if God might just pull the plug if we pray for the wrong thing. In a very real sense, it doesn't matter what we pray for. What matters is that we pray. Prayer is not an ecclesiastical term for planning—as in those Dear-God-let-Mary-not-have-to-have-her-gall-bladder-out-but-if-she-does-please-make-it-the-kind-that-can-be-removed-laposcopically-instead-of-the-kind-where-they-cut-you-just-about-in-half prayers into which we sometimes fall. Neither is prayer simply worrying with an "Amen" on the end of it. Prayer joins one's love for someone to God's love for that person. That is all, and it is enough.

For God is free. Praying without an agenda for all our concerns puts us in mind of God's freedom, helps us to lift our sorrows to the love of God and keep them there. They may break us, these sorrows, but they do not break God. We can trust in God's strength when we are not strong. There is no need for us to enlist God in the service of our desires or our biases: God is free. The love of God in a situation exceeds our love, even our love at its very best.

Barbara Crafton



VESTRY NOMINEES 2011



Phil Johnson

I have been an Episcopalian since 1956. Suzanne and I were married at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Va. (in 1964) I transferred my membership to St. Stephen's after our full time move to the Northern Neck in 2008.

After graduating from Franklin & Marshall College, I served in the Army for three years. then worked in the printing industry in Washington, DC. After I sold Charter Printing Service, Inc, the company I owned and operated for 25 years, we moved into the cottage we have owned in Lewisetta since 1986.

I was a member of the Rotary Club of Alexandria for 25 years, and past president. I was also a member and past president of the Printing Industry of Washington Association . I have served on several boards in Alexandria. At St. Stephens I have served as an usher, worked at our fund raising events, and helped with the water ministry.



Anne Freeman

Until my transfer to St. Stephen's, I was a member of St. Paul's, Richmond, the church my family joined at its inception in 1843. George and I made our permanent move to the Northern Neck in 1995 and have been associated with St. Stephen's ever since.

I attended St. Catherine's in Richmond and did my undergraduate work at Bryn Marr. I completed my master's degree at the University of Virginia where I taught writing for almost 20 years while writing fiction and nonfiction works published in book form and in various publications.

Immediately after the split in 2006, I became St. Stephen's communication's director, managing our public affairs initiative. I am a member of the choir.

BIIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 2	Anne Silver
Dec 6	George & Anne Freeman
Dec 8	Zeke Hurst Phil & Nancy Gates
Dec 10	Rick Skelton
Dec 15	Wayne Ogburn
Dec 16	Ted & Lynn Hower
Dec 19	Phil & Suzanne Johnson
Dec 21	David Chilton (owner of Chilton House)
Dec 30	Tom Scott Jr.
Dec 31	Dolly & Tony Rabelais

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMS

Nov 25	No program. Happy Thanksgiving!
Dec 2	Service in memory of George Mahaffey
Dec 9	Vestry meeting
Dec 16	Advent program
Dec 23	No program. See Holiday Schedule.
Dec 30	New Year's Eve Service of Light
Jan 6	Epiphany celebration
Jan 13	Vestry meeting

HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 19, 10:30 a.m. Parish Brunch at Lottsburg Café (aka Baughn's Tire and Auto) to celebrate our fourth anniversary.

December 24, 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Eucharist and Nativity pageant, followed by parish potluck supper at 6:00.

December 26, 9:00 a.m. St. Stephen's Feast Day celebration at regular worship service.

December 30, 7:00 p.m. (Thursday) **New Year's Eve Service of Light.**

January 6, 7:00 p.m. (Thursday) Epiphany Celebration.

IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

Ushers

Nov 21	David Kirkpatrick
Nov 28	Bill Kirby
Dec 5	Phil Moore
Dec 12	Herb Cox
Dec 19	Phil Moore
Dec 26	Phil Moore



Altar Guild

Nov 21	Lynn Hower
Nov 28	Betty Whiteside
Dec 5	Leslie Hatch
Dec 12	Barbara Tricarico
Dec 19	Loretta Blakely
Dec 26	Sunday School Class

Lesson Readers

Nov 21	Anne Freeman(L), Rocco Tricarico(P)
Nov 28	Rocco Tricarico(L), Tal Day(P)
Dec 5	George Freeman(L), Nancy Gates(P)
Dec 12	Betty Whiteside(L), Sandy Kirkpatrick(P)
Dec 19	Tal Day(L), Ellen Kirby(P)
Dec 26	Nancy Gates(L), Rocco Tricarico(P)

Eucharistic Ministers

Nov 21	Nancy Gates
Nov 28	Margaret Horsmon
Dec 5	Ellen Kirby
Dec 12	Nancy Gates
Dec 19	Rocco Tricarico
Dec 26	David Kirkpatrick

Coffee Hour Hosts

Nov 21	Dick & Mary Eager
Nov 28	Tal & Barbara Day
Dec 5	Sandy & David Kirkpatrick
Dec 12	Beverly Edwards & Rick Skelton
Dec 19	Dawn Mahaffey & Betty Burroughs
Dec 26	Ellen & Bill Kirby

BOOK CLUB SCHEDULE

January Daniel Okrentz's *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*

February Bishop Spong's *This Hebrew Lord*

Contact Bill Kirby for additional information. We would be delighted to have more people join our discussion.