



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

November, 2011

Father Jesse's Message

Giving Thanks

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As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday and as I see the leaves change into their autumn colors, I find myself in a spirit of thankfulness.

While I was reading for my MPhil degree in England, I had a companion who was studying thankfulness in her research. She was doing a study looking at how quality of life was affected by thankfulness. She studied that by having half of the participants in the study approach each new day by meditating on the opportunities before them and then end each day by "counting their blessings" in a journal.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, those who "counted their blessings" reported feeling better about life, feeling happier and more satisfied, than those who did not participate in that daily routine. It's remarkable how something so small as being thankful could impact people's lives.

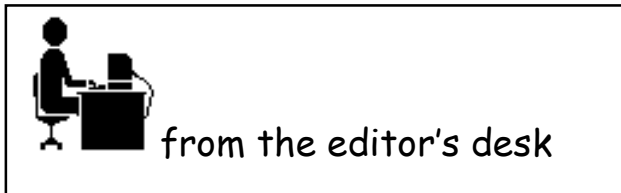
Of course, Christians have always known that giving thanks is powerful and transformative. Being a Christian mandates that we are givers of thanks. The focal point of our Sunday worship is the Holy Eucharist, which is how we render the Greek word *eucharisteo*, meaning "to give thanks." The Prayer Book even calls the Prayer of Consecration "The Great Thanksgiving" (see page 361).

Participating in The Great Thanksgiving can transform lives in such powerful ways. It can make us more aware of what it means to be children of God and can open our eyes to see how God has blessed us and been present to us in so many ways. We all are children of God and have been blessed abundantly, even if it's sometimes hard to see.

As we approach Pledge Sunday in mid-November, I invite you to count your blessings and to reflect on the many ways God has blessed your life. For many of you, God probably has even blessed you through some part of work and ministry that goes on here at St. Stephen's.

In the weeks left in this Stewardship Season, let us get into the Thanksgiving spirit by being extra aware of God's presence in all aspects of our lives and counting our blessings. Then when it comes to that Pledge Sunday morning, we will be able to completely pledge ourselves anew to the support of this parish in thanksgiving for what God has done for us.

Fr. Jesse+



A recent article appeared in the *Worcester Telegram* written by a professor at a local college. The writer starts his essay by referring to a quote by Mahatma Gandhi, who said, "I like your Christ. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." Gandhi felt that Christians should at least exemplify the compassion of Christ. The writer then goes on to comment that too many Christians today are increasingly attacking the values that Jesus taught.

This got my immediate attention for it brought to mind something that has increasingly bothered me for some time. We Americans have gotten far too used to resorting to espousing our positions far too loudly. Civil discourse seems to be a thing of the past. We try to win arguments by shouting down those who disagree with us, making no attempt to listen to other points of view. We wait for a break in the conversation and then go on with our own point of view. And if something doesn't go the way we want, we turn away as if personally insulted.

I was reminded of this again this past Sunday [October 23]. The Gospel reading was from Matthew. In it, a lawyer asked Jesus which of the over 600 laws Jews were instructed to follow. Jesus reply was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This response proved baffling to the Pharisees and prevented them from asking Jesus any more questions. It is the second part of the Great Commandment that I'd like to comment on.

Loving your neighbor as yourself is another way of saying we must treat others with compassion. We need to be aware that others may think differently from us. That does not make them wrong. There's a Native American expression that says we should walk in another person's moccasins before we can begin to understand them.

The article I mentioned up above cites the example of the Good Samaritan who helps an injured traveler after a priest and a Levite had refused to help. The Samaritan showed compassion, helping the injured man, and even paying the expenses of his recovery.

I listen to political discourse, and even though I understand where presidential candidates are coming from, I am appalled by their apparent lack of even basic compassion. Candidates talk about what this country needs, but they rarely seem to consider the needs of the less fortunate. How will they alleviate homelessness? How will they ease the burdens of people who through no fault of their own are saddled with impossible loans to repay, who are desperate to save their foreclosed mortgages? What has happened to the American Dream?

I'll stop before I really get wound up; I get totally angry at politicians who don't seem to grasp the reality for many of the people whom they hope will elect them to office. Where is their compassion for the people they hope to represent?

But still, I wish for you – peace,
frp



The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, November 21, at 7:00pm. All vestry meetings are open to the entire parish. Parishioners wishing to include items on the agenda are asked to contact one of the wardens or the rector no later than two (2) weeks before the meeting. Vestry meeting agendas and minutes will be regularly posted on the bulletin board between Fay Hall and the narthex.

NEW PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday
9:00 AM – Noon

* Please note that our email address is changing to info@ststeph.com also. *

About the trees on the church lawn: At the Pet Blessing several people asked about the tree with the pinkish fruits on the lawn. It is a Kousa Dogwood. We have seedlings if anyone wants one for their own lawn. Thanks, *Gretchen Pruden*

Bishop Scruton will officially install *Fr. Jesse* as our new rector on **November 6** at a service to be held at **3:30 PM**. Please note: The only Sunday morning service that morning will be at 9:00 AM and will be without music. The installation will be our primary service that day.

November 12 6:00 PM Special
Stewardship Pot Luck
Dinner in Fay Hall
November 13 8:00 AM and 9:30 AM
Pledge Sunday

We are celebrating **All Saint's Day on November 6th** this year. We thought it would be nice to dedicate the altar flowers to those saints and loved ones who are no longer with us. The names will be included in the bulletin on November 6th. Please write the names on the list that is on the bulletin board to the right of the flower chart in the narthex. A donation of \$5 toward the cost of the flowers would be appreciated. Please see *Michele Mongeon* or *Bev Boyer* with any questions.

SOCK COLLECTION: We will be collecting socks for veterans over the next several weeks. Please drop any contributions in the basket in Fay Hall. For questions, see *Bev Boyer*.

Prayerful Notes

As many of you know, I am in the process of having my bathroom remodeled. Actually, by the time you read this, it will be probably be complete. Praise the Lord!

Many of you have inquired about how it is going and so I thought I would like to share with you some of the lessons that I have learned from my experience.

The first that comes to mind is patience. Remodeling is a long and arduous process and certainly not without unexpected delays. Preparation work is of utmost importance but also requires long periods of waiting for compound on walls to dry. It is hard to be patient, when you don't see any visual changes.

I also learned a lesson in humility. Since this is my only bathroom, the toilet was

hooked up at the end of each day; however, during the day it was taken out and I had the humbling experience of using the "Port-a-Potty," on the side of my front lawn. As I walked over to it for the first time, I thought of my grandmother, who lived in a small town in Nova Scotia. She lived to be 86 years old and never had indoor plumbing. As a child, I thought it was so much fun when we went to visit her and use her outhouse. Needless to say, it no longer holds the same fascination for me but you do what you have to do!

My next lesson was flexibility. My home is my sanctuary. I cherish my sacred space, my early morning time of prayer and reading and reflecting on the scriptures of the day. Now I had to adjust to workers arriving at 7:00 A.M., with saws and drills going. I thought of when the Israelites were held captive in Babylon and they said: "How can we sing the Lord's song while in a foreign land?" *Ps. 137: 4* My house, my peaceful sanctuary, felt like a foreign land, so I decided to get up a little earlier to pray before they arrived. After they began work, I read and wrote my reflections on the scriptures, mentally tuning out the sounds of their power tools. Yes, I will be delighted to have my quiet sanctuary back but the Lord is always here. Given that He was a carpenter himself, I am sure He felt quite comfortable with the atmosphere! I learned a valuable lesson in "creative spirituality."

Perhaps the biggest lesson I learned was in conflict resolution. My two carpenters are about the age of my daughter. They are good, honest, respectful, dependable and excellent at their trade. I did, however, have some major, very upsetting interactions with the owner of their company. After one such incident, my level of stress was more than I could handle. I had an excellent working relationship with my carpenters up to this point; however, the next morning, after my altercation with the owner, my lead carpenter arrived in the morning and bore the brunt of my anger. He was taken aback

by my verbal attack on him. In an effort to defend himself, we ended up in an argument, in which I played the biggest part. This nice young man did not deserve my anger but he walked through my door and he got it.

The next morning, as I sat trying to pray, there was a huge roadblock and I knew what it was. Each morning, since this project began, I have prayed for the safety of my carpenters, as they work with electrical power tools that could cause injury. It had never occurred to me that I could be the cause of injury, emotional injury. This is often more hurtful than physical injury. This was really brought home to me, as I tried to pray. The Bible has a lot to say about anger and learning to "tame the tongue." The book of James in particular addresses this subject in depth. One verse that really spoke to me was *James 1:19* - "My dear brothers, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God deserves."

When Don, my carpenter, arrived about an hour later, I apologized and asked him to forgive me. Tears filled my eyes, as he hugged me and said: "Of course, will you forgive me? I yelled too." I felt the presence of the Lord, as I know it was He who brought about this reconciliation. Things are nearing completion. Soon life will be back to normal again. I hope I will always remember the many lessons I learned from this experience.

Blessings Always,

Phyl Endicott

**St. Stephen's Has Adopted a New Soldier
and Asks for Your Help**

As you may know, for several years, St. Stephen's Peace and Justice Committee has supported our troops by adopting soldiers through soldier support agencies. Adopting a soldier involves sending them emails, cards, letters and packages in order to let the soldier know that we have not forgotten them. E-mails from the soldiers express their gratitude, explaining how important it is to them to receive word from America. St. Stephen's Peace and Justice Committee tries to pick a soldier who is in contact with many other soldiers and can share the contents of the packages that arrive from St. Stephen's. St. Stephen's last soldier was an army chaplain who traveled from base to base, distributing the care packages that St. Stephen's had sent him to troops stationed in areas that have few accommodations, boosting the morale of the soldiers in the outposts. That army chaplain has finished his tour of duty and has returned home to America.

The newly chosen soldier, named Eric, is a medical platoon sergeant stationed in Afghanistan and wrote the following on his application:

"I run an aid station that sees patients from our unit and anyone passing thru. I try to offer some comforts when folks are here. Just taking over and the old unit has not done this. Personal hygiene items are great. We are in a remote location with poor to no shower facilities, baby wipes would be great. MRE's are getting old and we have a microwave so anything we can cook in it would be a feast for us. Thanks for all you do for us."

The items most requested by soldiers include sunscreen, baby wipes, skin creams, brushes, hair gel, nail clippers, nail files, powder such as Shower to Shower, razors, shampoo and dry shampoo, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc, although

almost anything is appreciated by the soldier. Microwave food that the soldiers can use includes macaroni and cheese, popcorn, hot chocolate and cup of soups. Other requested items are treats such as gummy worms, gum, beef jerky, and candy, packets of cookies and flavor packs for water.

The soldiers would love to hear from people in America to know they are not forgotten. If you would like to reach out to our troops, a letter can be placed in the St. Stephen's care packages addressed to "Any Male" or "Any Female". This may result in a pen pal.

Please help by supporting our troops. Any contributions can be put in the box on the Peace and Justice table. Thank you!

St. Stephen's Collects Socks for the Veterans in Honor of Veterans' Day

Through the middle of November, in honor of Veterans' Day, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church of Westborough will be collecting socks for [the] veterans to be distributed by Veterans Inc. a veteran support agency in Worcester that feeds, clothes and provides training and support for veterans. For more information on Veterans Inc. please go to www.veteransinc.org.

Although the requested item from Veterans Inc is for socks, good condition jackets and coats would also be appreciated.

All contributions can be dropped off at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 3 John St., Westborough, 9 AM until noon Monday to Thursday. For more information, please go to St Stephen's website at www.ststeph.com. This is one of the many projects of Mission & Outreach to help

those in need in the community. Please help support our veterans.

STEWARDSHIP

The small group meetings held during October were a tremendous success. Chairing them, Fr. Jesse outlined his vision for what lies ahead and then encouraged our members to offer our hopes and to comment about life in the parish. You all offered some great ideas and comments that the leadership will endeavor to implement in the days ahead.

As part of the preparation for this Stewardship season, your Committee met with Co Treasurer Peggy Yankee and together we developed a projection of what the 2012 year might look like from the financial viewpoint.

In 2010-2011, our total pledging income dropped to about \$137,000. Despite that overall drop, our actual average pledge increased slightly to \$36 a week. Nevertheless, at that level we will face another deficit budget year of \$20,000 - \$30,000. As a parish family, let us not accept that! There are some specific measures we must take to move more closely to a balanced budget. This will include a more deliberate effort to develop a specific set of fund raisers and to make an active effort to market our unused space. While church leadership is extremely conscious of this goal and will do everything in it's power to support and promote the programs to reach it, there is one other area which we want to explore with you. Can we raise the average pledge by \$2.00 to \$3.00 per week? If our parish membership was able to accomplish this objective our projected deficit could be substantially

reduced. Are we, as a parish family willing to embrace that goal together?

We are gratified and humbled by the membership's willingness to respond to need in every aspect of parish life, and we feel it is our responsibility to ask you to assist at this time to ensure the future of St Stephen's mission. We are grateful to each of you and to God for the wonderful efforts you have always shown when we face difficulties together.

We hope you will join us on Saturday evening, November 12, for a pot luck supper to continue the work of building our future together. That is followed on Sunday morning, November 13, when we will celebrate Pledge Sunday and lay our hopes before God and return to Him some of what He has freely given to us.

We ask for your prayers for our parish life together and we give thanks for all of God's Blessings.

Your Stewardship Committee

Westborough Community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Wednesday, November 23
7:30 PM

at

The Congregational Church
of Westborough
(8 Church Street, Westborough)

Please join us.





Blessing of The Pets at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

On Sunday, October 9th, 2011, approximately 25 St. Stephen's parishioners and members of the community brought their pets to be blessed to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 3 John Street, Westborough. The Blessing of the Pets is an annual event held on a Sunday near the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, a Saint known for his love of animals. Shown on the right in the photo is St. Stephen's new priest, The Reverend Jesse Abell, who performed the service with Gretchen Pruden on the keyboard providing music. The members of the Church and community and their cats and dogs were blessed following a short service.

In Memoriam

Saint Stephen's extends its sympathy and condolences to parishioner *Sylvia Doran* on the passing of her brother *Leslie (Lee) Gavel*. May he find eternal rest in the Lord's heavenly kingdom.

A Word From Our Nominating Committee

The Vestry has established a nominating committee for the 2012 Annual Meeting. The committee members are Don Shapleigh, Jeff Barte, Bob Jarvis, Dave Small and Heather Plasterer. This group is seeking nominations for the following positions in 2012:

Senior Warden
 Jr. Warden/Newcomer Coordinator
 Treasure
 Clerk
 Vestry Member for Stewardship
 Vestry Member for Property
 Vestry Member At-Large
 Vestry Member for Christian Education
 UTO Chairperson
 3 Deanery Delegates
 3 Diocesan Convention Delegates
 EMC Chairperson

If you are interested in any of these positions or know of someone who might be, please contact a member of the nominating committee or Fr. Jesse.