



ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
223 E. 4TH STREET N., NEWTON, IA 50208
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February 2019

St. Stephen's Beacon

*From the desk of
Rev. Karen Crawford*

No sooner had we caught our breath following Christmas, New Years, and Epiphany celebrations than it was time for our Annual Meeting and vestry retreat. The weather was less than desirable so I was very grateful for the large number of individuals who braved the elements to help plan for 2019. It was not an easy agenda.

We tackled the issue of combining our two Sunday services into one, and addressed the dilemma of how to fund mission following the stock market plunge at the end of 2018. We wrestled with the pros and cons of 1 or 2 services in small groups and then gathered as a whole for discussion. Lets face it, this could have been a battlefield with each person intent on promoting their own agenda. Instead, there was honest dialogue, acknowledgement and acceptance of other's spiritual needs and the willingness to sacrifice individual wants for what would be best for the parish. The Holy Spirit was a powerful and guiding presence as we sought a suitable solution. Valuable input was generated for the vestry retreat.

We strive to be the hands, feet and face of God, but our ability to continue to fund our designated recipients such as the St. Nick's effort and the Blessing Box has been severely impacted. Many excellent ideas were presented at the meeting which will allow the mission committee to move forward in setting priorities and fundraising efforts.

We thanked Nancy Henderson for serving on the Vestry for the past three years and welcomed Winonah McGee to the class of 2022.

Our closing prayer of thanksgiving on page 836 from the Book of Common Prayer echoed in the minds of your vestry as they met on Saturday to develop new priorities for 2019 and discern how best to meet the needs of the congregation.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.



Winonah McGee

MEET YOUR 2019 VESTRY NOMINEE

I am a relative newcomer to St. Stephen's having been a member only four years. I have past experience serving on church governing boards from another denomination. I choose to go to second service at St. Stephen's because I am not an early riser, but more importantly, because music is an important element to my worship experience. Being a single, retired person, I hopefully, have some insight that might be useful to the Vestry. St. Stephen's strength is living Christ's mandate to reach out beyond our doors to serve others. My dream is that we continue to serve others to the very best of our ability as Christ's servants.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2nd Craig Carpenter
 4th Jim Clements
 13th Winonah McGee
 15th Rita Baker & Kris Long,
 22nd Ann Adams & Edwin Dobbs

No Anniversaries for February
Best wishes on your birthday from your family at St. Stephen's



**Wednesday
 Evening Prayer
 at 5:15 pm**
 Led by
 Rev. Merle Smith



- St. Stephen's Vestry 2019**
- Rev. Karen Crawford
 - Rev. Merle Smith
 - Steve Halstead (SW)
 - Jim Tracy (JW)
 - Kathy Trotter
 - Rita Baker
 - Janice Carpenter (treasurer)
 - Kay Clements
 - Winonah McGee

LITURGICAL ROSTER



**THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 14TH
IS VALENTINE'S DAY**

*Share your love with those
around you.
Have a sweet day!*



Feb. 3 (4th Sun. after Epiph.)
10 am Layreader/Chalice: Rita B.
Layreader: Rev. Merle S.
Petitioner: Rev. Merle S.
Ushers:
Counter: Rita B.

Feb. 10 (5th Sun. after Epiph.)
10 am Layreader/Chalice: Jim &
Meredith T.
Layreader: Barry H.
Petitioner: Jason M.
Ushers: Winonah M. & Ron H.
Counter: Lorraine W.

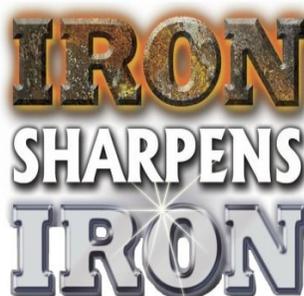
**Feb. 17 (6th Sun. after Epiph
and Healing Litany)**
10 am Layreader/Chalice: Steve H.
Layreader: Steve H.
Petitioner: Steve H.
Ushers:
Counter: Mary H.

Feb. 24 (7th Sun. after Epiph.)
10 am Layreader/Chalice: Kathy T.
Layreader: Winonah M.
Petitioner: Winonah M.
Ushers:
Counter: Janice C.

Mar. 3 (Last Sun. after Epiph.)
10 am Layreader/Chalice : Rita B.
Layreader: Rev. Merle S.
Petitioner: Rev. Merle S.
Ushers:
Counter: Rita B.

Mar. 10 (1st Sunday of Lent)
10 am Layreader/Chalice: Jim &
Meredith T.
Layreader: Barry H.
Petitioner: Jason M.
Ushers: Winonah M. & Ron H.
Counter: Lorraine W.

Men's Group Meets
Saturday, February 9 at 9 am
Come for scripture reading, food
and fellowship.



Reminder!
**Sunday,
Feb. 17th**
Vestry meets at
11:30 am
in the
undercroft

FEBURARY
DONATIONS FOR THE
SALVATION ARMY
Detergent
and
Dish Soap





St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
223 East Fourth Street North
Newton, Iowa 50208

*Our Vision: To be the hands,
feet and face of God*



The 2019 Vestry Retreat—The Rector's Perspective

The vestry retreat was held on the Saturday following the Annual Meeting. We began with morning prayer and invoking the Holy Spirit to guide us throughout the day. Three major concerns determined the agenda. Our first task was to review and assess the 2018 priorities and establish the 2019 priorities.

They are as follows:

1. Improving external communication
2. Reconnecting with those whose presence we miss and connecting with those who are seeking a spiritual community.
3. Continued emphasis on mission work.
4. Provide leadership and opportunity to address justice issues in our immediate community, our country and the world.

Next we dealt with the one versus two service question. We began by reading the pro and con responses generated at the Annual Meeting. It became abundantly clear that the unique and wonderful gifts which each individual brings to this parish also translates to worship preferences and how that fills one spiritually. Some prefer a quiet service with time to reflect and meditate while others are fed by hymns and energetic sharing of the peace and other forms of participation. Yet, there was also the concern that services which are attended by so few is also not healthy for the parish. Community is an important part of worship and it is hard to get a sense of community when most of the pews are empty. Clearly the vestry is faced with a difficult task. The vestry concluded that on a trial basis we try one service during Lent. During that time we will include quiet meditative time in addition to hymns, Rite one or Rite 2 on various Sundays. The time is yet to be determined but 9 or 9:30 seems to be a suitable compromise. Using one service for an extended period of time will allow us the opportunity to make a more educated decision as to what is best for St. Stephen's. Please make your thoughts known to the vestry and your clergy. We all want what is spiritually best for the good of the whole. Third and last on the agenda was to address mission. The mission committee and vestry will research funding and report at a later date.

You Spoke—We Listened

A Letter from your Senior Warden

St. Stephen's held its 2019 Annual Meeting on January 20 in Latham Hall. The meeting began with a single worship service at 9:00. After learning, praising, singing, and feasting on the body and blood of our Savior, we adjourned to the parish hall for yet another feast. If you doubt the validity of the parable of feeding the 5,000, attend a potluck at St. Stephen's!

Vestry/Clergy concerns over our declining attendance and participation as well questions if we are meeting the spiritual needs of the parish, prompted us to engage in a discussion of the pros and cons of going to just one service on Sunday. Participants were invited to get into table groups of four or five and to work through a specially prepared worksheet.

After a general table discussion, each table was asked to report to the greater group. Another great discussion took place with many ideas/ concern openly and prayerfully expressed. The participants were asked to submit their completed worksheets so that we could get a better and deeper understanding of what we were hearing.

I took it upon myself to tabulate the results but quickly found it was easy to count the "votes" but not so easy to categorize the comments. Of the eighteen responses, eight (44.4%) were in favor of continuing with two services while ten (55.6%) felt we should go to one service. As to what time that one service should be offered, there was no consensus.

The pros ranged from more people at one service and all of us worshipping together to providing a larger pool of leaders and better community and fellowship. The most concerns expressed in the cons (four responses each) were that 9:00 is too early; the loss of a quiet service; and the loss of more people. At its retreat on January 26, the Vestry read every comment made by every responder and weighed these against the greater need of the parish. Nearly half the four hour meeting was devoted to the discussion.

In the end, it was decided that we would try a single Sunday service during the six weeks of lent and after Easter, do an evaluation. The Rector was charged with coming up with the nuts and bolts of the service—that is time, rite, music, etc. which are the Rector's canonical responsibility. Rev. Karen will be working closely with parish leaders to make the many compromises that will be necessary.

We ask two things of you: 1) Give the trial an honest, unbiased chance; and 2) Talk to your Vestry/Clergy and let them know what you are thinking and experiencing.