



# The Severn Light

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Severn Parish  
Crownsville, Maryland  
November 2010  
Advent-Christmas Edition

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\*\*This newsletter is either emailed to those who have online capabilities or sent through the postal system for those who don't. If you have a delivery preference, please let the church secretary know.



## Christmas Message

In the midst of a busy season, take time for the Lord.  
Let your heart find peace  
and may Christ be born anew in your life.

In God's Peace,

*Father Hagerman*



## Worship Schedule for Christmas

**Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve**

**5:00 p.m.** Christmas Eve Eucharist w/ Children's Pageant

**8:30 p.m.** Christmas Carols with the Choir

**9:00 p.m.** Christmas Eve Choral Eucharist

**Saturday, December 25, Christmas Day**

**10:00 a.m.** Christmas Day Eucharist

**Sunday, December 26, Christmas I**

**8:00 a.m.** Holy Eucharist, Rite I

**10:00 a.m.** Holy Eucharist, Rite II with music



## stewardship corner

### Why Do I Give?

At a recent meeting, Shaun Laughlin, the Chairman of the Stewardship Committee asked each of the Vestry members to write a quick paragraph discussing why we give to the church. I assumed this would be an easy endeavor and sat down to jot what should have been a quick note. As I started to lay out my thoughts, however, I realized the answer was not as simple as I first thought. (Full disclosure – my wife will tell you it is impossible for me to say anything succinctly. Perhaps she is right.)

At the most fundamental level, I give because so much has been given to me. As someone who came from humble beginnings I am generally fond of telling my children how much I have worked for all of the things we have, but under closer inspection I am well aware of the gracious gifts I have received. The list is long, but the basic summary includes: two committed parents, an extremely supportive wife, two wonderful children, health, an inquisitive mind, and the opportunities to build a life many from my hometown would not have thought possible.

That being said, I do not give out of a sense of guilt in an attempt to repay some spiritual debt. First off, I am quite sure that my spiritual debts far exceed anything I could ever hope to repay... And, more importantly, my understanding of the grace of God makes such repayment wholly unnecessary. Nor do I give out of a sense of pure altruism since I believe my human frailties make this an impossible proposition. Therefore, I give with gladness of heart because I know from personal experience that it makes a difference – for the recipients and for the givers.

The benefits to recipients are generally well understood – a hot meal, a warm bed, a new roof, a kind shoulder upon which to cry, and ultimately a small, human-sized hint at what the love of God might look/smell/sound/taste/feel like. What I believe is less understood, however, is that the act of giving can have a similar result on the giver. I am not equipped with the words to accurately describe the concept in great detail, but I do know that giving necessarily matches those in need with those of means. This, in turn, provides both parties a front row seat to view the awesome power of God's love.

Once one has decided to give, the next question naturally becomes *what* to give? Often we think of giving in pure monetary terms. How much do I pledge? How much can I throw in the plate? These are important considerations as money is fungible and can therefore be spent for the innumerable needs of any modern organization (utilities, maintenance, salaries, etc...). But, a strict focus on monetary giving often clouds our ability to recognize the power of donating our time and talents to those in need.

While I have yet to find a section in the *Wall Street Journal* which lists the exchange rate of monetary to non-monetary giving, I am convinced that quite often it is the donation of our time and talents that has the greatest impact on others. I challenge everyone reading this to think of their most memorable moments with loved ones. How many of those precious memories revolve around the receipt of money? Conversely, how many of those moments were created because of the time and/or talent that loved one shared with you? As a personal example, I vaguely remember that my now-deceased father gave me some money as college graduation gift,

although I can't remember the amount (or what I did with it). What I will never forget, however, are the thousands of hours he devoted to teaching me about life – hours which ultimately enabled me to receive the education he never had the opportunity to obtain.

When I extrapolate that example to my life here at St. Stephens, it becomes inherently obvious that the time (and limited talents) I share as a member of the choir, on the Vestry, as a lector, and various other volunteer opportunities around the church is as important – if not more so – than any amount of money I could provide. Not only do these non-monetary gifts provide a direct benefit to our congregation, but they also provide an indirect benefit through the demonstration effect.

My ultimate hope, therefore, is that in addition to directly helping others, my giving behavior will provide a positive example for my children. To this end, I hope that all parents will take advantage of the children's pledge envelopes recently introduced by the Stewardship Committee. These envelopes provide an excellent vehicle through which our children can document their donations of time and talent. If you would like to introduce your children to the concept of giving with these envelopes, contact any member of the Vestry and we will provide them.

So there you have it. Giving is an important part of our lives as humans and Christians. We all get to choose how we want to give – time, talent and/or treasure. Our church, our community, and our nation need all three. Based on the needs, there is no amount of giving – regardless of the currency – that is too small. I hope you'll join me in making a difference.

*Mark Valentine*

## FISHER'S FORUM BY Sheri LaFleur



In the beginning we know nothing of God or Christ. We breathe, eat and sleep without being bothered with such thoughts. It is this thought that brings to mind one of my favorite sermons. The Rector asked the congregation, "Do you remember where you were and who it was that first brought Christ to your attention?" He went on to explain that he was in the kitchen with his grandmother. I, (never giving it any thought) wasn't sure. This personal revelation was a little unsettling. I thought to myself, "Sheri, you should know this." Well, my mother sat me down in a formal manner (because she herself was involved in some spiritual growth effort) and told me that all I had to do to go to heaven was to believe and accept that Christ died for my sins. I have spoken with my mother recently and tried to get the name of the Episcopal Church, understand what she was doing etc. etc. in an attempt to make this message to you more glamorous. Well, my mother (who is still my spiritual guide), now a devout Baptist, told me that she has no idea; it was too long ago (38 years or so). More importantly she said, it doesn't matter. What matters is, you believe it, you accept it, and you live it. To which I responded, "Thanks Mom."

It recently dawned on me that my mother was fishing. She was calling me to Christ in her own cumbersome way. As a child of ten I was bristling to get away. Uncomfortable with her questioning gaze as she asked me the important question, "Do you believe in God?" My answer was of course "Yes mamma."

Today, I do believe it, I do accept it. Through God's grace and earnest prayer I hope to live up to it. Being a Christian is hard. For me it's sometimes harder than hard because it gets in the way of my self indulgence or my sinful nature. That's a harsh realization but it's true. I want to be a reflection of Christ. I want to use my hands, feet, mouth and soul to the glory of God. A kind word or an invitation to join me in this journey may be all I have to offer but I will offer. I openly invite all who read this to come along. Pick up the charge of carrying Christ with you daily and sharing him with those who cross your path.

As we approach the Advent Season, we are faced with the most opportune time to bring folks along. To actively fish for those souls that may be looking for a spiritual foothold. Open your hearts and mind to the "Reason for the Season" and share your story. Tell someone how Christ was brought to you. Maybe, ask them how Christ was introduced to them. Walk in love as Christ loved you and have a joyous season.

### NEWS & NOTES

#### HOLIDAY PIES

'Tis the season for our Episcopal Teens (ET) to be selling their holiday pies. Those who have ordered Thanksgiving pies can pick them up on November 21. Those of you who missed out on this batch, will have another opportunity in December to order their Christmas ware. Look for the



order forms in the narthex in December or call Sheri LaFleur at 410-923-2658 before the next baking date which is December 18th. The Christmas pies will cost \$8. each and will be ready for pick-up Sunday, December 19th.

#### ASP

ET has been appointed their date for working with the Appalachian Service Project. Volunteers will be traveling to the Appalachian Mountains on July 24 and returning the 30th.

#### MISSING PERSON



Have you missed seeing someone in church? Give them a call and tell them they are missed. You'll find they are most appreciative of being remembered.

~Earnie Curles

#### The Next Newsletter

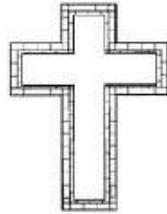
The next issue of the Severn Light will be published in January 2011.



St. Stephen's Youth Host

# THANKS-4-GIVING

## Appreciation Breakfast



**Sunday, November 28**

**8:30 to 9:30 a.m.**



**Please join St. Stephen's Youth as they extend thanks to all those who helped support the years' outreach and activity programs.**

*Holiday Sharing, Homeless Runs,  
Spirit Singers, Dump Drives, Holiday Pies,  
Car Washes, Appalachian Service Project (ASP)*



**Menu:** Scrambled Eggs, Bacon, Bagels w/Cream Cheese, Fruit, Cereal, Coffee, Tea, Orange Juice, Milk



# Musical Notes

By Don Chandler, Organist-choirmaster

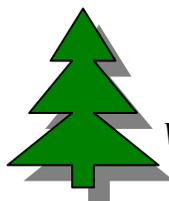
Thanks to everyone who helped make our *Requiem* a success this year: thanks to all the parishioners who attended and contributed; thanks to every choir member, to Father Hagerman, who gave the homily, to Monica Regan, who read the lesson, to our faithful printer, Tricia Seaman, to Brendon Brown, bassist, and to alto Margaret Whilden from D.C. We presented Howard Goodall's *Eternal Light: A Requiem* at Seton Parish jointly with their choir, under the direction of Brendan Walls, the Director of Music at Seton, in memory of those gone before, especially our veterans. Seton and Mr. Walls sponsored additional orchestra this year (this was the second year performing this work) so that, with the choirs' work of last year to draw on, this year was much easier and more enjoyable to rehearse and perform. Proceeds go to Crofton Christian Caring Council.

Advent II brings us the Spirit Singers, led this time by Father Hagerman in one of his compositions (!), "Prepare the way of the Lord." Don't miss this premiere!

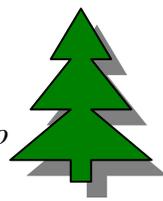
Christmas Eve is one of the most musical of celebrations here at St. Stephen's. The Spirit Singers sing at 5:00 p.m. (4:30 p.m. call time). At 8:30 p.m., congregation and choir join for a Carol Sing, and then Holy Eucharist at 9:00 p.m. We plan to have a string quartet with us again this year, enabling the choir to present excerpts from *Messiah* and possibly also Mendelssohn's seasonal favorite, "There shall a star." There will be more carols on Sunday, Dec. 26 – a few of the less-familiar.

A blessed holiday season to one and all!

Yours for church music,  
Don Chandler



## CHURCH SCHOOL NOTES



We ALL have an extremely busy time of year fast approaching. A letter will go out to all the Church School families detailing the particulars. These are the highlights:

### **Sunday, November 28<sup>th</sup> ~ (Sunday after Thanksgiving)**

There will NOT be Church School. However, I will be showing a "Veggie Tales" Christmas DVD for all our children and any child-aged guests, during the 10:00 AM Service.

### **Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup> ~ Advent Family Sunday**

The younger children will decorate the Jesse Tree in Church during the 10:00 AM Service

### **Saturday, December 18<sup>th</sup> ~ NOON to 1:30 PM**

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

### **Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas Pageant**

5:00 PM Service

All children who will be in the Pageant **must** be in the Parish Hall by 4:45 PM

### **Sunday, December 26 ~ No Church School**

### **January 2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Epiphany Sunday**

Church School resumes

Please contact Berney should you have questions about any of these dates and/or events.  
410-721-3958/shbjh@verizon.net

## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church - Severn Parish

### Financial Statement

**Period January 01 - October 31, 2010**

	Jan-Oct 2010 Actuals	Budget	+/-	Jan-Oct 2009 Actuals
<b><u>OPERATING INCOME:</u></b>				
Pledges	\$192,048	\$196,558	(4,510)	\$188,133
Plate	13,607	19,765	(6,158)	15,632
Other	13,112	14,128	(1,016)	13,542
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$218,767</b>	<b>\$230,451</b>	<b>-\$11,684</b>	<b>\$217,307</b>
# of Weeks	44	44		43
Avg Pledge/Week	4,365	4,467	-103	4,375
<b><u>OPERATING EXPENSES:</u></b>				
Parish Operations	39,801	41,965	(2,164)	37,726
Programs	14,461	13,728	733	10,999
Property	52,982	51,713	1,269	47,855
Salaries & Benefits	129,201	130,206	(1,005)	122,307
Other	6,356	4,417	1,939	6,214
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$242,801</b>	<b>\$242,029</b>	<b>\$772</b>	<b>\$225,101</b>
Cash +/-	(\$24,034)	(\$11,578)	(\$12,456)	(\$7,794)

Please note that the deficit continues to grow. It is more than 3 times the deficit at this time last year. The deficit has also more than doubled since August 2010.

The Vestry has made a concerted effort to control expenses; however, revenue is just not keeping up with necessary expenditures. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

Respectfully submitted,  
James D. Dietrich, Senior Warden

### *Christmas Music*

What's Christmas without special music? Please help St. Stephen's voices rise above the ho-hum. Guest soloists and instrumentalists for our Christmas Eve service *do* charge for their talents, and this year's budget for church music was slimmer than ever. Starting in December, envelopes will appear in the back of the church for the gift of music this Christmas. Thank you for helping the choir!



### *Thanksgiving Services*

Tuesday, November 23  
at 7:30 p.m.  
&  
Wednesday, November 24  
at 10 a.m.



# CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

I once had a priest who on the first Sunday of Advent would start the service by shouting, “Happy New Year!” Advent is the start of the church year. Focus your attention on the altar and note the changes —The Advent wreath, the hangings are now blue, the flowers have changed to green branches. Advent is the season to prepare for Christmas. And, of course, the altar during Christmas is full of poinsettias. Now is the time to order your thanksgiving and/or memorial poinsettias using the form in this newsletter or in the Sunday bulletin. The price is \$8.00 per plant and the last day for ordering is Sunday, December 12, 2010. If you have any questions call Gail Brooks, Altar Guild Director, at 301-261-0647.



## *Christmas Poinsettia Order Form*

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **plants @ \$8.00 each**

**In memory of** \_\_\_\_\_

**In thanksgiving for** \_\_\_\_\_

Last day for ordering is Sunday, **December 12**

## Sausage Making and Gold

*St. Stephen's Stewardship Address 10-17-10*

Well I see we have once again done a poor job of telling you that this was the Sunday for the Stewardship sermon since there are so many of you here!

My name is Shaun Laughlin and I represent the Stewardship Committee for St. Stephen's as its Chair this year. Our family has been here at St. Stephen's for nearly four years now. It is customary for the Stewardship Chair to give a brief presentation on this Sunday each year so I have prepared an in-depth overview of the history of Giving and Stewardship that shouldn't take more than a couple of hours to cover. Kidding! No more than about 10 minutes and NO PowerPoint slides I promise!

We have been working hard on the Vestry and Stewardship Committee to develop a solid year-round Stewardship program for St. Stephen's. We have been working with the Diocesan resources available to us, reading and discussing various books and programs on the topic and generally working with a lot of new tools so please bear with us as we try our best to communicate well and to be responsible stewards of the resources of St. Stephen's this coming year.

Last year, I wrote about yard care for the stewardship sermon so it will come as no surprise to you that this year I have chosen SAUSAGE MAKING as my theme. Well, at least as my metaphor... Advance apologies to any vegetarians in the pews.

Vestry meetings are a lot like sausage making only without the aprons and meat. Especially meetings from the late fall until the early spring when we finalize the budget for the year. We cut and add and move things around and hash and rehash how much to put in where and what the utility costs may be this year and whether or not we will have to deal with record snow removal fees and on and on. We grind over the numbers and add theories and projections and really, really good guesses, like spices, until we are fairly sure we have done the best we can based on the information at hand. It is not a clean or an easy process. (All of this budget information is available to you as you know.)

So, it turns out that sausage making is also a notoriously messy process. It is often described as a process you really don't want to watch. But, sausage EATING is a very good and yummy process. So from this messy process of church budgeting based on pledge commitments and income projections that may or may not be accurate, and often fall a little short of projected needs, comes something truly good. A viable and responsible operational budget that we hope meets the business needs of the church while also allowing us to honor God with our service and outreach.

When my wife, Amy and I got married, I had my grandfather's wedding band used in the making of my wedding band. In order to do this, since his band was so worn and thin, they had to melt it down and add more gold to make it strong enough to wear which I was nervous about because the ring meant so much to me. When it was delivered to me I had to be assured that "my gold" was in there. In the past when I filled out my pledge card I often wondered how much of my "gold" really makes a difference. Is it really "in there"?

After several years working in church leadership roles in parishes just like this one I can assure you that every dime you pledge to the church is honoring God, treated with care by loving, responsible stewards, and returned to you, your community, and your world, many times over. It is very much like turning the crank on a sausage grinder and having gold come out. Your "gold" is in everything that St. Stephen's is and does.

Now, if you are new to St. Stephen's and have recently joined us, first, let me apologize for the poor timing of stewardship Sunday! I know that coming to a new church (or even coming back to one if you have been away for a while) is a lot like being asked to help clean up a stranger's kitchen after a big dinner party. You don't know where anything goes and what's OK to put in the dishwasher and what's not. If you hang around long enough and open enough cupboards and drawers you eventually get some idea of what to do and how to help but it seems like it takes forever. If you are new, I promise never to ask you to clean up my kitchen! I also promise you that we all would be more than happy to show you where "everything goes" and you are free to eat whatever you find in our pantry. (In our house, the pantry is where the good stuff like popcorn and cookies and squeeze cheese live!)

**Sausage Making and Gold**—continued from page 8

Let me wrap this up with a quick word on pledging and tie it all in to the New Testament scripture for today. In my recent learning about stewardship campaigns I have found that many churches are reluctant to talk about their “average pledge”. Let me be clear about this, I have had good fortune and bad and am certain that I have been well off the “average” in BOTH directions for many years of my life. The average pledge number has often been a number that helped me to decide how much to commit to since it gives good information about what it takes to keep the church operating and viable on a per family basis so I will give it to you now.

At St. Stephen’s as in most churches our size, the AVERAGE pledge is right around \$2500 per year or about \$50 per week (about what the local Jewish Temple charges for good seats for the High Holidays!!). Now this means of course that many are below this number and many are above it. For the record, I have no idea who gives what. What an individual gives is between them and God and based on factors that are complex and deeply personal. Remember II Corinthians 9: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”. Think about it; have you ever met a person who was really unhappy and grumpy AND truly kind and generous?

One of the goals for this stewardship campaign is simply to have as many parishioners as possible at or above the average number. **If we are able to get a rise of 10% or so in the total pledge income this year, we will begin to overcome our growing deficit that we have been carrying for a few years now and which simply needs to be addressed this coming year.** We MUST be sure that we give the Vestry the basic income to simply keep the church running and this is largely achieved through the pledge drive each year. Please prayerfully consider joining my family in committing to a 10% or larger increase in your pledge. Your overstressed Vestry will be forever grateful to not have to consider cuts in services or programs next year. We would also be very grateful to have the pledge information as early as possible. Even though pledges come in at all times during the year, we have to make important budget decisions in the next few months.

In closing, allow me to point out how timeless the principles of stewardship and giving are to our world. The last few sentences of today’s scripture are filled with joy and gratitude; *“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”*

Timeless and beautiful right?

Now, here is something I copied off of a sign on the wall of a kindergarten classroom a couple of years ago titled “We Promise To”: It’s kind of a “Top 10” List for gracious Christian behavior.

**WE PROMISE TO:**

- 10 Wash our hands
- 9 Give 5
- 8 Not call names
- 7 Keep our hands to ourselves
- 6 Be quiet when teacher is talking
- 5 Be quiet in the hall
- 4 Raise our hands
- 3 Follow directions
- 2 Be nice to our friends
- 1 SHARE WITH EVERYONE

I wish the faith of a child on you all. AMEN

*Shaun Laughlin*  
St. Stephen’s Stewardship Chair



## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Severn Parish

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The Rev. Steven W. Hagerman, *Rector*

## St. Stephen's Green

Somehow Christmas and being environmentally-conscious don't quite go together in my mind. Because all of my recycling etc. isn't yet automatic, it still seems a bit of a discipline. But Christmas should be festive! You pull out the stops! Celebrate the greatest gift we'll ever know!

Still, maybe being environmentally-friendly is one more way to mirror The Gift we're given. You give to your family, to the church, the kid who brings your newspaper. How about a little giftie to the Earth? So here are painless ways to do that:

- ◆ Buy Maryland wines to give as gifts or a certificate to tour a local winery
- ◆ If you're replacing outdoor Christmas fairy lights, look for solar powered ones.
- ◆ Look for Christmas cards on recycled paper.
- ◆ Soy candles, unlike wax, are biodegradable.
- ◆ Decorate with REAL holly and evergreens (fa-la-la) and throw 'em in the composter afterward.

*Marjorie Centofanti* for St. Stephen's Green Committee

\*\*\*\*\***LEAN AND GREEN**—We don't meet often, but we're getting St. Stephen's greener. Come to St. Stephen's Green Committee's Fall Meeting, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. That's November 30, from 8 p.m. 'til 9 in Woodward Hall. Light dessert. We'll talk about energy audits, greener kitchens and Bishop Sutton's wish list. All welcome, including high schoolers working on community projects.

