What a month to contemplate and what weather we are having to inaugurate it!! This month we will have our annual meeting. We will take a look backward at a good year during which St. Stephen’s really stepped up to support the ministry that we call ours.

More importantly, we will be looking toward the future. Toward that end, we will elect new vestry members, discuss some important ideas for our future (like the proposed columbarium), and move on toward the next thing…One week later.

On Saturday, January 27, everyone is urged to attend the in-Church retreat (9am-2pm). We have hired Anne Ditzler, who employs a process called Appreciative Inquiry, to help us with our step toward the future. This is a retreat that has been in the formation process for almost 18 months now.

What will we accomplish through this visioning process? Visioning: For us this describes the process we are using to get to a decision about St. Stephen’s particular focus for doing God’s work in the world. Through the process, we will discern where God is calling us to act out God’s love in our community. By doing this we will add additional strength
The Pastor’s Corner

and purpose to our beloved St. Stephen’s. For a much more fleshed out description of this process, see Mary McGuire’s article in this issue.

This retreat is the beginning, during which we will collect the themes that seem to generate the passion of the participants. It will be followed by another in-Church retreat on March 17. At that retreat, we will decide the direction of this “work in the world.” In between, a number of us will commit to become “community listeners” during Lent. Our job will be to do some listening research around these themes in our community so we know what is happening and what is needed (see additional article on Community Listeners in this issue).

Also, on January 7, I announced in my sermon my retirement plans. The vestry and I have been working with our bishop, Thomas Ely, and the canon to the ordinary, Lynn Bates about this.

I will retire on November 1, 2018. Since I have a 4-month study leave in my contract, something that is required by canon by the diocese of Vermont, I will actually finish my active ministry at St. Stephen’s on July 1, 2018. My last Sunday will be June 24. During this four-month period, (though I am still technically the rector at that time), the congregation may begin its search process. In this issue you will see a note from Lynn Bates about that process. Our job right now is the visioning process that will both help St. Stephen’s know itself better and help chart a course for the future. Many times, Bishop Ely reassured the vestry, “nothing will be lost, this is the work you need to do.”

Between now and my departure, we have this visioning process to do, the great seasons of Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost to celebrate, an altar window to celebrate and have consecrated by our bishop. That’s quite an agenda. May it be fulfilling and joyous.

Susan

When a Rector Announces her Retirement

Lynn Bates, Canon to the Ordinary

When a Rector announces her retirement, it marks the beginning of a new season of change. Change, for individuals and systems, can be uncomfortable and anxiety-producing, so our mindset going into a time of transition is crucial. Transition times in the life of a congregation are no longer times of “treading water”, waiting for the arrival of the next ‘settled’ clergy person. We know these changes happen and collectively the Church on every level has an abundance of experience and tools which are useful.

I approach my work as Diocesan Transition Minister with an expectation of meeting a congregation where it is, joining in the journey for a time, bringing my experience and connections, and working together to prepare to invite clergy into ministry with and among you. I don’t have a “one size fits all” process of discernment. There are things I need from you to be able to connect with clergy who are interested in learning more about you and possibly joining you in ministry. There is a guidebook “Calling New Clergy Partnership” which can be found on our diocesan website if you are curious about components involved. However, if you do look at this document, please read it knowing it is a guide based on shared experiences. It is a place to start and contains some useful tools.

The work you have done at St. Stephen’s and the visioning work you are doing with Anne Ditzler will be invaluable as you move forward and begin considering your ministries as Susan retires. Your focus on and full engagement with that work is the on-going discernment of a Christian community that will inform and enrich the transition process.

When the time comes (likely early Spring), I will meet with the Vestry to make decisions about creating your path to calling new clergy leadership to St. Stephen’s. I look forward to being part of your process and to working with the vestry and all of you.

Faithfully,

Canon Lynn Bates
Canon to the Ordinary and Diocesan Transition Minister
Candidates for Vestry, January 2018

SUSAN ANDERSON-RAY

After 16 relocations in 42 years of marriage, Ben and I moved to Vermont in 2008. St. Stephen’s was one of the many reasons we made Middlebury our home. My professional background is in social work, although my past 20 years have focused on volunteering in social agencies, community organizations and economic programs including international microlending. Energy efficiency is another passion that led us to build our new home in a small, in-town neighborhood that we helped develop.

While at St. Stephen’s I’ve served as a Eucharistic minister and on many committees/groups including worship, stained glass windows, discernment, college student dinners, foyers, gardening, quilting and many fellowship-related activities. I’ve also been both a delegate and alternate to diocesan conventions in Vermont and Indiana. A recent experience that was especially meaningful for me was hosting the Howard University Choir for lunch prior to their amazing THT concert.

Over the years I’ve served on vestries in two other parishes, including as junior warden at our previous parish. My biggest hope for St. Stephen’s is that our current visioning work will help us grow together in faith and service to God, our community and the greater world around us.

MIKE DAVIS

I have been a member of St. Stephen’s for over 10 years, and was most recently on vestry for a term lasting through 2016. I believe I have skills and insights that will contribute productively to the important upcoming work.

My approach to the Vestry’s work is pragmatic and informed by my experience as a business person, and as a member and vestryperson in a variety of parishes; with respect for difference of opinion and an understanding of the necessity for compromise. I believe that our parish is able and willing to make changes when properly informed about the risks, benefits, and opportunities to extend our Christian mission.

Whether or not this process results in an election, I think parishioners will want to know what to expect from any candidate. If you have questions for me about anything related to St. Stephen’s or its Vestry and my opinion thereof, please call 989.9820 or email windmikeyt@gmail.com.

BARRY STRATTON

Where I came from: Seattle area for about 45 years, including 18 years on Vashon Island, a rural island in Puget Sound near Seattle, accessible only by ferry.


My work: CPA, partially retired. Special interest in not-for-profits. Served as CFO for a large Seattle agency providing a variety of services for persons in recovery. Served on a number of nfp boards, provided pro-bono accounting and consulting services to a variety of nfp’s. At our Vashon Island church, served as treasurer and on finance and stewardship committees. Active with Vashon Rotary, serving both the Vashon and larger Rotary communities. Currently serving on finance and annual campaign committees at St. Stephen’s and am serving the Town of Bridport as an auditor.

Qualifications for Vestry: Feel led to using my gifts and experience to help SS move into serving our community in a more focused way. Able to connect with people, and am a catalyst for helping others connect with one another. Able to see the big picture, the small picture, and connect the dots. Find a lot of fulfillment by working on boards as a way of giving back to my community and getting to know a variety of people.

Hopes and dreams for SS: That we are successful as a congregation in coming together to develop our vision and to serve our community. When we have an audacious vision we will be led to take audacious actions that can have an audacious impact on our community. I’m excited at the possibility of being part of that process. SS has been amazingly welcoming to this newcomer, and I feel drawn to give back.

ALICE VAN TUYL

I grew up in New York City and the Hudson River Valley, and went to Vassar College. Shortly after graduation, I went to Washington, D.C., where I worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and where I also met my husband, Harry Van Tuyl. We moved to Arlington, Virginia, and had two daughters. Altogether, I lived in Northern Virginia for twenty-seven years and worked at the C.I.A. for ten of those years. Then, seeking a cooler climate and a country life, we retired in 1987 to Addison, Vermont, and joined St. Stephen’s Church. We both became active members of the Church; I served on the Vestry when Terry Gleason was the Rector, am an early member of the Monday Lunch group, and have co-chaired the Antiques and Book Booths at Peasant Market. I have volunteered for the Vestry again in the hope that I can help contribute to the effort we will all be making to define our mission and place in the community, and to the work these goals will entail.
Come Together, Right Now!

Visioning our Future by Mary McGuire

“Come Together, Right Now” at the Visioning In-Church Retreat, January 27th, 9am-2pm

St. Stephen’s has so much going for it, but we all sense the capacity for much more, and we know the needs in our community and world are immense. We also know that churches around the country are struggling to find relevance in the society of the 21st century.

Bob Dylan’s line, “The times, they are a’changin’...” may be more true today than when he wrote them in the turbulent ‘60s. Certainly, church culture has changed. Families have many options and expectations for Sunday mornings. The workday is longer, so adults cherish a morning to sleep in or read the Sunday paper without rushing off. Churches are closing their doors at an alarming rate. We at St. Stephen’s have felt the pressures.

We also recognize that our community faces many challenges. High taxes, expensive housing - these are only two of the elements that bring many members of our county’s population to the brink of poverty. St. Stephen’s has been doing its best to respond to the needs: successful Peasant Markets have provided generous sums available for the Outreach Committee for disbursement. Monday and Wednesday lunches feed several dozen people each week. The Community Suppers we host via Charter House and Congregational Church serve as many as two hundred people. Beautiful music, meditation, 4th Sunday services at Porter Rehab and Nursing Home...these are all important ministries, and nothing suggests to me that we will stop doing any of these. I offer my sincere thanks and respect for you who are so faithful to this work.

The Visioning In-Church Retreat is our next step towards identifying and framing our particular outreach ministry to bring God’s light and love into the world. What is your passion for helping? You might be able to answer that immediately. Or maybe you want to take a few minutes and ponder that, reflect, consider the current events. Do you know mine? Or the person who sits two pews behind you in church - any idea what that person really cares about? It’s time to know. January 27th is the day that we will spend in conversation and imagining - where could our skills, passions, and energy take us to start serving?

Where does it fit with what we’ve done in the past and where we know we will be going in the near future? Good questions. During the past few years, the vestry has led us in important work with SISP (Strategic Investment in Sacred Spaces), and a task force of skilled, passionate church leaders led us in this self-study of our value to the community. This led to members creating and leading Neighbors, Together. This group gathered town leaders and businesses to work together to protect our town in the face of the railroad tunnel rebuild. With the railroad project delayed, Neighbors, Together has paused, but they’ll rev right back up when needed. That’s the past. Future? With our rector retiring next fall, we face some months of interim clergy and discernment for our new rector. This Visioning work is just what we need to show this priest who we are, what we value, and where we want to go. As we begin the discernment process, we will not be waiting for someone to tell us what to do; we’re going to be doing it!

And the societal challenges we face, as a church in the 21st century? We believe that the visioning process will strengthen our community internally by helping us become more relevant to our community. We have all experienced the bond that builds when we work together for Peasant Market; this new particular outreach ministry we identify will bring all hands on deck. The Beatles song I quoted in titling this article invites us: “Come Together, Right Now”. So let’s go!

You will be getting a phone call from a member of the vestry (or the stewardship committee which kindly offered to share in the calling since they’re so practiced with their phones!) to invite you to the in-church retreat on Jan 27. Please say yes. Five hours is not too much to invest in our future. We want to offer childcare for families - help us plan for that if you need to bring your children. Highly participatory, this is not a “sit and listen” day, nor will we put you on the spot to speak to a large group.

One-on-one interviews and small group discussions make up the majority of our time as we talk about our own experiences in church and why we value St. Stephen’s. As we talk and listen, themes will emerge from each small group. We’ll break for lunch, see the products of other groups, and vote for the themes of ministry that most resonate for us as individuals. We will learn from and about our fellow parishioners, and in the process, begin to see the possibilities God holds for us. This is exciting work – please be a part of it.

If you’re out of town that day, we would like to spend a few minutes interviewing you so that your voice can be part of the message. Let one of the vestry know this, and we’ll arrange a time to chat.

Timeline:

- January 27, 9am-2pm In-Church Retreat
- January 28, 12:30-3pm training for community listeners
- Lenten listening: Those trained will spend time researching the themes iden-

continued on page 5
Proposed amendments to three sections of the parish by-laws will be on the agenda at the upcoming annual meeting. Two-thirds of those present must vote in favor for amendments to the by-laws to be approved.

**Quorum.** A quorum for meetings of the parish is now 15 members. The proposed amendment would increase the quorum to 40, in order to reflect the current size of the parish. The 15-member quorum was established when the parish was considerably smaller than it is today. The membership roll currently stands at about 240. Average weekly service attendance in 2016 (not counting Christmas and Easter) was 87. The Vestry and the By-Laws Committee believe that a quorum of approximately half the average weekly attendance would be appropriate for the current size of the parish.

**Filling Vacancies on the Vestry.** On occasion, a vacancy on the Vestry has occurred between annual meetings. The proposed amendment would give the Vestry the discretion to decide whether or not to appoint someone to fill the vacant position until the next annual meeting. A vacancy occurring in the spring would very likely be replaced; a vacancy occurring in the fall might not be. If someone is appointed to fill a term that extends beyond the next annual meeting, the appointment would end at that annual meeting, but the appointed member would be eligible to be elected for the balance remaining in the term.

**Parish Standing Committees.** In many instances, the language in the current by-laws (last revised in 2002) is not an accurate description of the structure and responsibilities of the standing committees – those that report to the Vestry. The amended descriptions, prepared in consultation with the chairs of the committees, bring the committee section of the by-laws up to date. The standing committees are Audit, Facilities, Finance, Nominating, Personnel, and Stewardship.

Copies of the text of the amendments have been circulated electronically and are available on the back table in the sanctuary. Questions about the amendments may be directed to Eric Davis, who chaired the By-Laws Committee, at ericd@middlebury.edu or 802-236-0991.

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Bishop Tom Ely has written twice to thank and update us about the Rock Point Partnership Campaign. First he is grateful for our 3 year Pledge of $17,900.

Thank you to all who have pledged and for your 2017 contributions, which have already been forwarded to Rock Point.

His second letter updates us saying that the plan to renovate the Property Manager’s 1840 home has been abandoned due to mold and poor drainage which could not be addressed without a greater expenditure than planned. Therefore the funds allocated to that house and the road into Rock Point will be used for a new dwelling for the sole Property Manager and his family and look for other uses of the old farm house.

We are one of over 130 donors, foundations, and congregations contributing $1,558,000 toward the $1.7 million goal.

“Funds have already been put to work on a trail study, paying for solar trackers, replacing roofs at the Conference Center and Camp and planning for improved public access and signage on 130 acres. Fundraising also allows us to increase our leadership capacity, with the addition of two part-time directors for Operations and for Finance who are expanding partnerships with the City and with other organizations the Rock Point and assuring that resources are used wisely.”

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**Come together right now!**

**Visioning by Mary McGuire** continued from page 4

- **March 17, time TBD, approximately 4 hours:** In-Church retreat to report our findings from the community listening and begin the “innovate” phase.

- **Spring:** We prioritize ideas and begin the first steps toward enacting the ministry.

If you have questions, please get in touch with a vestry member. We want to hear from you.
From the Senior Warden
Mary McGuire

Dear St. Stephen’s friends,

So much to tell, and I want you to read and probably re-read this entire edition of Parishscope, so I’ll aim for brevity.

• Save the date: Annual Meeting is January 21, immediately following the 9am service. We will aim to be efficient and thorough. With childcare available and some snacks to keep the nibbles at bay, we anticipate every parishioner’s attendance. Your participation is one of the key elements of a vibrant church. Voice your concerns, celebrations, and questions. Please come!

• Save the date: January 27 Visioning In-Church Retreat - yes, two weekends in a row. So worth your time, though! I am very encouraged by the thought and skill going into planning a day when we closely listen and come up with the first steps of determining our particular outreach ministry into our community. This will be a day for each of us to bring our personalities and passions to the table and see how they blend with each other’s into a church ministry to carry God’s light and love into Addison County and the world beyond. See, my article later in this issue.

• Susan has announced her retirement date of November 1, 2018. Prior to that she will be taking a 4-month study leave. This sabbatical-type time is in her contract, but she and the leadership agreed that the time for this had not presented itself before this. So she will preach one last time on June 24 and then continue on our payroll, having earned her much-deserved study time. The vestry has voted to invite supply priests to serve us during the summer through Labor Day and to hire an interim priest after that.

The Bishop has promised that all the work we engage in during our visioning process about outreach will serve us well for the rector discernment process. He and Lynn Bates, the Canon to the Ordinary, will work with us to design a discernment process that fits our needs after we finish the visioning work, probably sometime in May. We believe that this process will not be as lengthy as the processes have been in the past, having done much of the self-study kinds of work before the process formally begins.

A good friend of mine anonymously hung a simple but powerful sign on a back street in Middlebury last year; maybe many of you saw it too, and the message had an impact on me: Kindness Matters. How we speak to each other has impacts far beyond what we may anticipate.

I pray that each of us will remember that we all bring good intentions to our participation in the life of our church. Different opinions are to be expected, but it is our kindness and patience with each other that determine our humanity. Let us be like the carpenter who measures twice and cuts once: may we think more than we speak. May we listen more than we react. May we all experience God’s peace, love, and joy as we approach the beginning of our visioning work together.

--Mary McGuire, senior warden

Rock Point Family Weekend

Years ago many parishioners would decamp to Rock Point’s wonderful Bishop Booth Conference Center. We would go out Friday after school and return after the Sunday service in the chapel.

We are working with Tony, the director of BBCC, to restart this wonderful tradition. We are looking at a weekend in April possibly that matches up with the school vacation. We have tentatively been offered 13-15 April.

Look for more details in the next issue of the Parishscope. And if you have ideas to share, see Ed McGuire or Steve Snider.
Become a Community Listener!

Great ideas!!! But, what is already happening? Where are the gaps? Is there a place where a passionate community could start small and have room to grow?

These are some of the questions Community Listeners will be seeking to answer during a dedicated listening time between January 28 and March 17. We will certainly generate themes and ideas during our January 27th retreat. People who commit to becoming Community Listeners will work in the community with both service providers and common people who struggle in one way or another to seek some wisdom around our particular work to come.

Can you be one? Mark your calendar and save the time between 12:30-3:00 pm on Sunday the 28th for a training session with Anne Ditzler. Why train? So we can truly think through what we need to know and get a standard way of listening and asking so we come to the retreat on March 17th ready to make ideas of paper really come to life.

If you are interested or have questions, see Susan McGarry or Mary McGuire.

Ideas Already on the Table:

During our SISP process, a number of ideas for our “work in the community” have been posed. Here is a list of many of them. One of these might be the one we go forward with, though it is possible that something totally new may be what generates the most interest and commitment once we work together on January 27 and March 17.

Feeding the Hungry:
- Direct programs, an out-county delivery program, education and advocacy
- Serving people developmental challenges.
- Setting up a vibrant learning center for children in the community.
- Serving people with mental health challenges.
- Offering our facilities, particularly for people in cramped, low income housing, for celebrations (birthdays, showers, anniversaries, etc)
- Working to help solve the addiction crises around us: Support people struggling with addiction.
- Housing for the homeless or for people moving out of shelters
- Working internationally to aid refugees who are in mortal danger in their own homes.
- Setting up a center for the mediation of differences and places for calm reflection.
- Providing a music performance center for all kinds of music.
- Becoming a wedding chapel for the whole community.
- Welcoming teen programs for musical performance and sharing of teen created videos and movies.
- Setting up programs that take the “real message” of Jesus into the community.
- Working with teens and young adults through cooperative programs with groups like “Young Life,”
- Supporting working parents with “parents’ nights out” and other programs that help the stability of families.
- Offering a “parents without partners” support program for single parents.
- Offer a place for “supervised visitation” with the court program and Womensafe.
- Become an art gallery for special art programs, like youth, new artists, seniors or others.

From the Junior Warden

Things were pretty quiet during the holiday season, so there is not much to report. We have contracted with Adams Electric to install a security light/camera in the side office entryway as well as installing outlets leading up to the bell tower. These outlets will be used to install lighting (yet to be determined) to illuminate our bell tower in the evenings.

For a comprehensive summary of what has happened in 2017 and a look at projects in the works for 2018, please join us at the annual meeting following the single 9am service on January 21st. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Klemmer
Parishioner Profile: The Rev. Donald Morris
by Mike Davis

A lot to remember
Don Morris Profile

Don Morris has two challenges in sharing his personal history; one is Parkinson’s, which slows his responses to questions and sometimes just interferes with accessing memories; two, HE HAS A LOT OF MEMORIES. So, rather than an exact chronology, this story will hopefully show the breadth and intensity of Don’s journey to this place and time.

Most of us at least know Don as a priest, both at St. Stephen’s and earlier in life at the Episcopal church in Vergennes. Assuming that he has been a priest for a long time, however, would be to miss an entire career of service to our country, in both military and civilian pursuits. And a fairly colorful academic history as well! Maybe that’s a good place to begin Don’s story.

Don was born in Schenectady, NY, near the Mohawk River. His telling of his early years jumps quickly to college, and the time late in high school when his guidance counselor grabbed him in the hall and said, in essence, ‘have I got a deal for you!’ Don had been talking about going to Union College in Schenectady, but the guidance counselor saw bigger things in his future and recommended a new Navy ROTC program that was being offered through selected colleges. Don applied for the program at Harvard and 5 other top schools, and was accepted at all of them! He chose Harvard, and eventually graduated and was commissioned as an Ensign in the Navy – and fairly quickly found himself on an escort carrier, the USS Salerno Bay, as a communications officer. After a two year stint shipboard, Don was again identified for a select program within college ROTC, this time teaching ROTC students at Yale. There he taught naval engineering, leadership, and shipboard damage control. He closed out his Navy career in the Reserves, and moved on to civilian life.

Civilian life for Don was the State Department. Like his Navy career, his civil service career was regularly marked by being identified as someone who could do more, and being promoted or reassigned. He jokes that most folks familiar with his State Department career ask why he couldn't hold a job! So rather than run down the chronology, and in the spirit of Google, I will list the search terms that would illustrate Don's career: MS Harvard Russian Studies, Secretary of State office, Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Disarmament, Economic Officer in the Diplomatic Corps, Beirut, NASA, International Affairs Office in NASA, State Department Office of UN Affairs, Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, Office of Science and Technology in Carter White House, Geneva Conference of Experts on Cessation of Nuclear Tests, Reagan administration...say all of that three times fast! (I think I missed at least one of the ‘Special Assistant’ designations, but let’s just say this guy was busy!) His life in the fast lane of public service was coming to an end, however.

Don was born an Episcopalian, (married May in a chapel of the National Cathedral!) and somewhere along the line he felt ‘the call’ to ordination. He left the Foreign Service and the Bishop of DC approved his pursuit of ordination, and he was able to take advantage of a program that allowed ordination without completing a regular seminary education. After a lot of nights and weekends studying, he was ordained (again, in the National Cathedral) and his first assignment was a church in a poor part of DC called The Church of The Holy Communion. During (or soon after) this 5 year assignment he met May (he had previously been married and divorced). That’s a good story too, as it involves May being in a DC hospital, with her name on the ‘Episcopal’ list, and Don being assigned as visiting clergy to this hospital. Courtship, marriage, honeymoon in South Carolina, met Navy buddy there whose Episcopal church needed a priest – which led to a call to serving three churches in SC. (kinda reads like a novel, doesn’t it!). And the novel goes on – Don and May vacationed in New England and somehow got an interview with the search committee in Vergennes. And the rest is history – almost – because he retired from St. Paul’s, Vergennes after 5 years, unretired when he got an assignment to the little church in Killington, and then same thing to Swanton. All while living in Bristol, VT.

A goal of these articles is always to illustrate aspects of parishioners’ lives that lead to conversation and friendships (or the deepening thereof) with others in our pews. Everybody knows Don, but I suspect few of you knew all of this. There’s enough here in Don’s life to animate a years’ worth of coffee hour conversation, so all that’s left is to wish Don full recovery (he’s doing well) so he gets back to St. Stephen’s. We are blessed to have the richness of lives fully lived sprinkled throughout our parish family, and you’re missing a treat to not learn more about Don, and others like him. There’s a lot more to tell here, and so let’s close by suggesting – if you can’t think of anything else to ask about – that you ask him about playing trombone in the Harvard Marching Band. That should get him started.
“Future Shock--Is the Episcopal Church Destined for Extinction?”

And so started a very out-of-the-box talk by Don Romanik, President of the Episcopal Church Foundation or ECF.

At Ben Anderson-Ray’s invitation, a couple of St. Stephen’s parishioners met Don at Rock Point’s Bishop Booth Conference Center way back last fall. Bishop Tom Ely introduced him and reiterated what we have heard Tom tell us here in our parish hall “…we must become the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement…” Don brought data about steady decline of Episcopalians in the pews and the disappearance of churches. But he was not all doom and gloom. There are bright spots; some churches our size are growing. Some by 10% or more per year.

So what I am going to do next is offer up the things I heard and wrote down that day pretty much in the order I heard them.

* Half of the churches have part-time clergy and are not growing.
* Churches are mostly white, aging.
* Non-diverse churches don’t tend to grow.
* Those that grow--mission based. Nimble!
* Smaller but impactful. (Love that word).
* “Pub church.” (Novel idea)
* Tell story; invite all in. Resource parishes.
* 6473 parishes and missions in 2016. Will be down to 2500 by 2020. (This is scary)
* Lay-clergy teams serving groups in the community.
* We are slaves to our buildings.
* The future: multi-purpose! Gallery, auditorium, meeting hall, homeless shelter...
* People >>>>>>Passion! What does this look like?
* Collaboration with others; fewer dioceses. There are 800 deputies at Convention which hinders decision making.
* Focus on why! Why does St. Stephen’s exist? Why are we here? What would happen if we weren’t here?
* Focus on core values AND mission.
* Create a sense of urgency!

Hard to swallow in one reading. It is for me and I have been browsing these notes for several months.

Now it happened that a close friend of mine, Rev. Tim Franklin of Bridport shared a book with me that fit well with Don’s presentation. FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH by Travis Collins. It is all about reinventing church to serve in the community. Go where they are. Missional churches. The “pub church.” Satellite churches.

Tim is a perfect example. He wants to create a missional church right here in Middlebury. Here’s what he has been doing for the past couple of years. He and his wife Annette and their children transport African Middlebury College students to their house for supper and worship and community. It takes a couple of round trips to get all of them out to Bridport and back. So Tim and Annette want to find a large house in walking distance from the College in order to continue this ministry. He does not have the resources! Might he become a mission church of a mainline church?

Tim and Don would say that mainline churches are not destined for extinction. However it is going to take some hard work and new ways of thinking. We need to plant fresh expressions of church where the people are.

Here’s a note from EXPRESSIONS: “...a look at the Book of Acts helps answer the question, why plant a fresh expression of church? For one thing, some have noted that today’s Western cultures look more like the world of the early church than has been true in almost two millennia…”
“What I Learned on the Vestry”
by John McWilliams

I present it in bullet form:

I thought that, after forty years, I knew something about Saint Stephen’s. I learned that I knew, and still know, just about nothing.

I learned from experience that Saint Stephen’s has a very strong, energetic, committed and numerous group of elderly members, aged fifty and above.

I learned that all members of the St. Stephen’s Vestry agree on nothing, but that almost every vote taken at a vestry meeting turns out to be unanimous.

I learned that there is much more attentive listening, and far less self-serving soliloquizing, at a St. Stephen’s vestry meeting, than there is at a Middlebury College faculty meeting.

I learned that, as a Parish, we are more likely to become petty and divisive over small matters than over large ones. Let us hope that this ratio will not be reversed.

I learned from our readings that, since 1965, 15% of America’s mainline Protestant churches have gone under; they no longer exist.

I learned that, as of 2008, 80% of America’s Christian churches had fewer than 200 listed members, and 50% had fewer than 100 active members.

I learned that, since 1965, the average age of members of mainline protestant churches has risen by about eleven years.

I learned that one of the causes of this slow decline and aging is the increasing irrelevance of what is called the “attractional model” of church membership. Well, what is “the attractional model?” It is the confidence of a congregation that says to itself, quite plausibly, “we have wonderful liturgy, wonderful music, we have fine preaching, we are good people; come join us.” The failing of the attractional model is not that these assertions are wrong. It is rather that fewer and fewer people, especially young people, hear or heed them.

I learned, at first reluctantly, that all churches need to give heed to these problems, to devise ways to meet them, and thereby to better serve the coming of the Kingdom, to better extend love to others. Do we not need to do so, collectively, here in Middlebury, Vermont? Perhaps we would benefit from an enhanced vision of who we are.

So that is what I learned, and what I hope for, from my term on the vestry.

“To everything, there is a season; and a time for every purpose under heaven.”

I am glad to have served. Thank you.
John McWilliams

Community Lunch Program Starts Tenth Year

On January 9 a group of community lunch coordinators and regular assistants and bag lunch providers met to affirm with enthusiasm that the program at St Stephen’s is still strong going forward and to shuffle some responsibilities and welcome new associates.

Among the original coordinators for the noon lunch, Lonnie Fisher, Alice Van Tuyl and May Morris will continue in this role. Holly Stabler will retire as a coordinator and co-chair and assume responsibility for the supply of staples needed for the program. Coordinator Winky Thomas will join May Morris as a program co-chair. Sandy Ketcham will be newly responsible for managing the rotas for main lunch and bag lunch making. Sharon Tierra will continue to manage the rota of individuals supplying food for the bag lunches, a contribution by Sharon that has been vital in spreading our work more widely and tapping the generosity of St. Stephen’s parishioners. Peter Dempewolff and Annmarie Deering, we hope, will continue to provide invaluable logistical support. Susan McGarry has been a cheerleader since her first day as our rector.

We are especially pleased to welcome Ryan Nevius and Chree Perkins as main lunch coordinators.

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Musical Musings

“How Brightly Shines”
by George Matthew, Jr.

The New Year season offers a rich treasury of organ compositions for Epiphany, Transfiguration and Lent. In February we also observe Black Music Month, a time of familiar spirituals, but also of original African organ music. From the Episcopal Cathedral in Lagos, Nigeria came first Ekandayo Phillips, then Fela Sowande and recently Godwin Sadoh. I personally knew Dr. William B. Cooper (1920-1993), whose career besides college teaching included serving as organist of St. Martin’s Church in Harlem where he often mesmerized people by improvising in the style of the great French organist Louis Vierne.

Throughout Epiphany, we’ll hear works based on hymn #497 “How Bright Appears the Morning Star.” (The “morning star” of course, refers to Jesus... “Like a bright star shineth, matris in gremio”, etc... one of many such reflections). Pachelbel, Buxtehude and Bach loved this tune and more recently Karg-Elert, Flor Peeters, Helmut Walcha and Fridthjov Anderssen.

Lent is just a little further on, with Thursday noon programs. The last three are set: March 15, organ recital by Fred DeHaven, a new member of St. Stephen’s, retired organist of Christ Church, Gross Pointe, Michigan, and before that, CT and NYC. March 22, Ellie Gebarowski-Shafer and friends, with some familiar works and some great new surprises. March 29th, orgelgebet (organ prayers), an annual Maundy Thursday tradition now.

But when to start? We have some other exciting possibilities as early as February 15th, but what about the railroad and what about Mother Nature? I’m just recovering from -22 and defrosting pipes three times in one day... I’d much rather deal with organ pipes

Community Lunches continued from p. 11

They will also continue in their roles as lunch assistants and bag lunch makers. We expect that Barb & Mike Kieran will continue to work as coordinators and bag lunch makers during the two-third’s of the year that they spend in Middlebury. We remain grateful for our roster of some 15 people who provide helping hands either for the main lunch or bag lunches throughout the year and several of whom have also been part of the program since its beginning.

All of this may sound very bureaucratic. But it speaks to the countless volunteer hours and management challenges of providing annually over 1400 full sit-down lunches for our guests and over 1300 bag lunches for clients of HOPE and CVOEO. And we are just one part of the Charter House food program that serves meals seven days a week to walk-in guests and enlists numerous volunteers from other churches and organizations.

And Please Note: Those of us involved in the community lunch program enjoy ourselves and feel good about the good that we are doing. As always, we can use more help. We invite you to join us and experience the satisfaction that comes from serving our neighbors through this important ministry.

Holly Stabler