



# ST. STEPHEN'S SPIRIT

The Newsletter of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Wilkinsburg PA

DECEMBER 2023

In Matthew's **Advent** story, the story of Jesus' coming, there is a wonderful surprise because five women are named as those who made the Messiah's coming possible. Women were considered powerless in Jesus' day, so five women being named in his genealogy is something to ponder. Even more surprising is the fact that one of those women, Rahab, was not an Israelite, but a Gentile who was a prostitute who lived at the edge of the city in a house built into the city wall of Jericho. This woman made Jesus' coming possible! This woman who ultimately aided the Israelites in their military efforts was the great-great-great grandmother to King David from whose line Jesus came! We are thinking of these five women who made Jesus' coming possible in our Advent Bible Study as we read, "Expecting Emmanuel" by Joanna Harader. An excerpt from the book is "Rahab's Blessing:"

*Perhaps you have been there, too  
on the edge,  
A mere windowsill away from being cast out completely.*

*Maybe you have been there, too,  
Stuck with a label  
That is true and fine and used to diminish.*

*For all who have been there (or for wherever you have been),  
I offer this blessing  
As a bright crimson cord to disrupt destruction:*

*When you are pushed to edges,  
May you insist on your own story with such grit and grace that they have no choice but to tell it.*

*When you are far from center,  
May you know the power and freedom that God grants to those on the margins.*

*When you face impossible choices,  
May you act with integrity and courage, resting in the shield of God's grace.*

*When others dismiss you with a label,  
May you claim your deep identity as a beloved child of the Creator.*

## St. Stephen's Advent and Christmas Events

December 10-Annual Cookie Exchange at Coffee Hour (bring 2-3 dozen to share!)

December 24-10:30 a.m. Fourth Sunday of Advent Service/Lessons and Carols. After the 10:30 a.m. service we will decorate the church for Christmas. Please join us!

December 24-7 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

December 25-10:30 a.m. Christmas Day Service (There will be **NO** 8 a.m. service on Christmas.)

## PRAYER FOR DECEMBER

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I  
AM GOD.

-Psalm 46:10

### KEEP A LOOK-OUT!

*St. Stephen's is now hosting a community dog toy lending library, beside the ramp, leading up to the church! We are happy to be part of the neighborhood in this way.*

**Morning Prayer happens the first Wednesday of each Month. See you on December 6.**

### 2024 Stewardship Report

23 members made a pledge for next year. Out of those 23 members, 13 increased their pledge, and 4 were new pledges. Total pledged was \$122,534! That is an increase of \$9574 from last year. If you'd like to join this small but mighty group, please find an envelope marked "stewardship" in the back of the church to get a pledge card. We are thankful for you who pledge and for those of you who give when you can. Your generosity, along with God's blessing, enables us to serve this community.

- Gerry Dalton



## CELEBRATIONS

### BIRTHDAYS

December 9-John Ferraro and Joann Rau

December 16-Rayonna Thompson

December 25-Chris Sovich

## Mission of the Month

### Shepherd's Heart

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1

The founders of Shepherd's Heart Fellowship were once homeless themselves. They know the truth of Psalm 46 which they quote on their homepage. Shepherd's Heart provides housing and support for 15 formerly homeless male veterans. In fact, 30% of those using their services are veterans. In downtown Pittsburgh, Shepherd's Heart has a drop in center that provides food, prayers, referrals, clothing for the homeless. They provide a shuttle bus to the VA, and use it to reach people in need. They have a food pantry, resource center, emergency fund for those in dire financial need and a cold weather shelter for women. If you wish to support this vital ministry, you can visit their website or drop a check payable to "Shepherd's Heart" in the collection basket, and we will make sure they get it. Thank you!

<https://shepheart.org/>

**BISHOP KETLEN WILL VISIT ST. STEPHEN'S  
ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 21.**

THE 10:30 A.M. SERVICE WILL BE THE ONLY SERVICE THAT DAY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF ST. STEPHEN'S ON THAT DAY OR BE BAPTIZED (or have your child baptized), PLEASE LET FATHER CHUCK OR THE CHURCH OFFICE KNOW AND WE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH YOU.



Our annual cookie exchange will take place during coffee hour on Sunday, December 10, after the 10:30 service. Bring 2-3 dozen cookies and take a different batch home with you! Fun!

**PRAYER CYCLE BOOKLETS FOR THE NEXT CHURCH YEAR ARE AVAILABLE IN THE BACK OF THE CHURCH. THEY HAVE AN ORANGE COVER. IF YOU'D LIKE ONE MAILED TO YOU, LET THE OFFICE KNOW. LET'S PRAY FOR EACH OTHER!**



## **FOOD OF THE MONTH**

Please put in boxes in back of the church.

### **HOLIDAY MEAL FOOD**

*Did you know that 25% of Wilkinsburg residents are food insecure? Let's help our neighbors by contributing to the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry holiday meal bags.*

**Boxes of stuffing mix**

**Cans of green beans**

**Cans of corn**

**Cans of cranberry sauce**

**Cans of sweet potatoes**

**Boxes of corn bread mix**

**Boxes of dessert mix**



SACRED GROUND is a film based dialogue about faith and race consisting of eight week sessions that meet once a week. There are sessions at Calvary and other churches. If you'd like to attend one, please contact the office or find it on the diocesan website.

[Episcopalpgh.org](http://Episcopalpgh.org)

# 2023 Christmas Poinsettia Order Form

Red Poinsettias - must order by December 10 (the date by which the florist needs the orders)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dedication: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Size	Cost	#Red	#White	\$Total
Small	\$8.95 each			
Medium	\$19.95 each			
			Sub-total	
Please write Christmas Flowers on your check & Envelope			Total Due	

Sunday Worship 8AM & 10:30AM

Contact Us

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Parish Staff

Rev. Chuck Esposito, Priest  
 Soon Choi, Dir. of Music Ministry  
 Melanie Sprenkel, Parish Ministry Coordinator  
 Gerry Dalton, Financial Admin.  
 Elise Morris, Archivist & Historian  
 Tim Brucker, Caretaker

