



ST. STEPHEN'S SPIRIT

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

JANUARY 2024

Saints Sergius and Bacchus

We give special thanks to Dave Swatzler and Gary Marzolf for donating the Sergius and Bacchus icon for our sanctuary. It was created by the same artist, Brother Robert Lentz, who created the icons of the saints of African descent that adorn our walls. We rejoice in the diversity of God's kingdom and are inspired by the saints that fill our church windows, walls and pews.

On Sunday, December 17, Dave presented information about Sergius and Bacchus to the congregation, and Father Chuck gave a special blessing for its dedication. Below are some of the remarks made by Dave:



“Sergius and Bacchus were centurions in a Roman legion that was stationed in Syria, around the year 300 AD. Their job was to maintain law and order and to defend the empire's frontier against Persia. During the height of the persecution waged by the emperor Diocletian, the two centurions secretly converted to Christianity.

An ancient document from the early 5th century (known as *The Passion of Saints Sergius and Bacchus*, and which I will refer to as the Passion) describes the two as “Being as one in their love for Christ, they were also undivided from each other in the army....” Sergius and Bacchus underwent martyrdom, essentially together, sometime around 312 AD. Their Christianity became known when they refused to offer sacrifice to the Roman god Jupiter. They were arrested together and stripped of their military rank. During their captivity, they sang together, chanted psalms, and prayed. The imperial authorities gave them numerous opportunities to renounce their Christian faith and offer sacrifice to the Roman idols. But the pair still refused. Bacchus was flogged to death; and a few days later, Sergius was beheaded.

According to The Passion, the night after Bacchus was martyred, the still-captive Sergius was “deeply depressed and heartsick over the loss of Bacchus.” He wept and cried out, “You have been unyoked from me and gone up to heaven, leaving me alone on earth, bereft without comfort.” According to the Passion, later that same night, Bacchus appeared to Sergius in a vision and said, “Why do you grieve and mourn, brother? If I have been taken from you in body, I am still with you in the bond of union, chanting and reciting. Hurry then, brother, to pursue and obtain me, when finishing the course. For the crown of justice for me is with you.”

During their captivity and just before each died, they freely and joyfully confessed their faith in Christ.

These saints are revered today by the Roman Catholic, Byzantine, Orthodox, and Eastern Catholic churches. Veneration of Sergius and Bacchus as a pair has become popular in the gay community because of the devotion and faithfulness that these two men showed toward Christ and toward each other. Their story is one of faith, courage, and enduring friendship and love. They share the same feast day, October 7.”

COOKIE EXCHANGE SUCCESS!



Morning Prayer happens the first Wednesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. See you on January 3.

PRAYER FOR JANUARY

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

-Isaiah 40:31



CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

January 3-Maria Sprenkel and William Faber

January 24-Beth Hardie

Mission of the Month

Bethlehem Haven Women's Shelter

In the words of one Bethlehem Haven Women's Shelter resident, "We didn't choose to be homeless. No one chooses that kind of life. But without Bethlehem Haven, I really don't know where I would have gone."

For the last 39 years, Bethlehem Haven has provided nearly 13,000 nights of shelter, every night, and the need continues to grow. Each year, the Haven provides nearly 60,000 meals; sees around 600 men and women in the health and wellness clinic; fills countless physical and emotional needs for our residents and day program attendees; and provides employment training for more than 100 men and women in the community.

Bethlehem Haven's mission is to provide a continuum of care for homeless individuals that leads toward self-sufficiency. Our founding values of Hospitality, Compassion, Integrity and Empowerment are still at the heart of everything we do today even as we have expanded our offerings. Please see the link below to donate or send your check to the church, and we'll mail it in.

<https://bethlehemhaven.org/donate/>

SPECIAL EVENTS IN JANUARY

JANUARY 21 10:30 a.m.

Bishop Ketlen visits St. Stephen's

After the 10:30 a.m. service there will be a special coffee hour with the Bishop.

(There will be no 8 a.m. service on the day of the Bishop's visit.)

JANUARY 28

The Annual Meeting will take place after the 10:30 a.m. service. Lunch will be served. Please come!

(Vestry members and committee members, please submit your annual reports to ststephenswilkinsburg@gmail.com by January 14.)

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

Tea bags and coffee



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.

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

TUESDAY NIGHT LENTEN PREACHING SERIES!!

2024

“Hope—Rooted in Christ”

6 p.m. Dinner, 7 p.m. Holy Eucharist with hymns and sermon

*February 20 at Calvary Preacher: The Rev. Moni McIntyre
315 Shady Avenue, East Liberty*

*February 27 at St. Thomas Preacher: The Rev. Charles Fischer
378 Delaware Ave, Oakmont*

*March 5 at St. Stephen's Preacher: The Rev. Liddy Barlow
600 Pitt Street, Wilkinsburg*

*March 12 at St. Andrews Preacher: The Rev. Leslie Reimer
5801 Hampton Street, Highland Park*

*March 19 at Redeemer Preacher: The Rev. Carter Hawley
5700 Forbes Ave, Squirrel Hill*

Surrounded by our broken world, how can we live into our call to convey true hope in God's providence each day? Reasons for hope are often difficult to spot, but as Christians we have many opportunities to dig beneath the surface, exploring the promises and embracing the teachings, the Way, the Being of Jesus Christ that give us hope, not just for eternity but also for our lives today.

Sunday Worship 8AM & 10:30AM

Contact Us

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
600 Pitt Street
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
412.243.6100 (phone)
ststephenswilkinsburg@gmail.com (email)

www.ststephenswilkinsburg.org

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

