

Season of Lent

Sanctuary

The first time I stepped foot into the Stephentown Federated Church was not just last year. I visited once over a decade ago. I came to a committee meeting in Pierce Hall as one of the reps from the Presbytery of Albany. At the end of the meeting, I remember asking if I could see the Sanctuary. I said something akin to: "I'd like to visit the Sanctuary whenever I visit a church to get a sense where they gather each Sunday." At that time, I had no earthly idea that I would be stepping foot in that room every Sunday and be part of this community of believers.

I remember walking into the Sanctuary of the church where I grew up. It had big heavy doors for a kid of my age. I felt at home in the Sunday School rooms, the hallways, the large foyer where people gathered before and after worship, the gym where we ate meals and played games. The Sanctuary felt different from the rest of the church. It was set apart for a special purpose.

Being "set apart" comes with original sense of the word. The word Sanctuary has roots in the Latin to set apart, consecrate, sanctify or make holy. Holiness was never an inherent quality of a person, place, or thing. Holiness has always taken an earnest intentionality to set a place apart or to make space to meet God. Consecrating, setting apart--that is the first sense of the word Sanctuary.

There is second sense of the word Sanctuary. It comes from the Hebrew Scriptures insistence of setting apart places of refuge. The medieval church followed suit by giving refugees, fugitives, and debtors immunity from retribution within the walls of the church. In that way, Sanctuary became synonymous with a place of safety and refuge.

This season, I feel compelled to create Sanctuary--not one tied to a place, but rather creating a sacred space wherever I go. We can each be a moving, breathing Sanctuary--consecrating a space to meet God, and creating a place of safety for others to feel free from judgment and be able to learn and grow any way they need.

It seems to me, Sanctuary is all about a safe space to feel a sense of belonging. This season of Lent, we have several opportunities to intentionally set apart space to encounter God, create a safe space for others to grow, and to foster a sense of belonging.

- *Lenten Devotionals* - "The Sanctuary for Lent" is a daily devotional with a scripture, reflection, questions, and prayer. It's a great way to explore the different ways to experience Sanctuary this season.
- *Lenten Lunch Series* - Tuesdays at noon on Zoom. Bring your own lunch and discuss the Scripture lessons from each Sunday. Join others in conversation about what happens after the sermon ends. How does Sunday's scripture relate to the rest of the week outside the church building? Email morg104@aol.com for a link to join.
- *Membership Class* - Find out what it means to belong to our church community in the official sort of way. We will meet for at least two sessions before Easter to explore what it means formally to join the church. Contact me for more information.
- *Good Friday* - The Sanctuary will be open 12-3 to come as you are. Come at a time that works for you. This is a time set apart to contemplate, pray, journey with Jesus through self-guided stations of the cross. It's an open house in which you can pray alone or receive pastoral prayer if desired.
- *Easter Services* - This year join us at 6:30 am for a Sunrise Service in Garfield Cemetery, and/or in the Sanctuary for our Easter service. This is a great time to invite friends and family to this place of safety to belong--whether they believe or not.
- *Eastertide Stewardship & Giving* - We can respond to the grace given from Christ's sacrifice and resurrection with practical giving. We give of our time, talents, and offerings. Many express gratitude and experience a sense of belonging to our church community through giving. You can continue to give to our capital projects--such as painting and roof repair funds. You can also give to the General Fund--since this season we have needed to dip into our cash reserves when giving has not met expenses. This is also the season we've needed to pay our denomination apportionment dues. Apportionment is what we have committed to pay for the work of the wider church in the area. It supports the mission and a network of local churches. (The Presbytery ask us to \$46 per member or \$1334 total; the Methodist conference asks \$79 per member or \$3636 total). There are several ways to give if you feel led to do so--the website "Give Now" button in the upper right-hand corner, or mail, or the free will plates set in the Sanctuary during worship.

When I first set foot in this Sanctuary, the Stephentown Federated Church, I never imagined that I'd call this place home. You have become a Sanctuary for me. I am grateful for this place where I can belong.

Peace,
Chris

EASTER FLOWERS



IT IS TIME TO PLACE YOUR ORDERS FOR EASTER LILIES AND/OR SPRING BULBS IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES.

THIS YEAR THE EASTER LILIES ARE \$15.00 A PIECE AND SPRING BULBS \$10.00 A PIECE. WE ARE ASKING THAT YOU HAVE YOUR ORDER IN BY MARCH 27TH.

PLEASE SEND YOUR CHECK AND ORDER FORM TO: STEPHENTOWN FEDERATED CHURCH, ATTN: TREASURER, PO BOX 10, STEPHENTOWN, NY 12168.

THE FLOWERS WILL BE PLACED ON THE ALTAR IN TIME FOR OUR EASTER SERVICE. ORDER FORM IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER OR IN PIERCE HALL ON BULLETIN BOARD.



DEVOTIONS BY BONNIE AND BEV

The March issue of the monthly devotions has been uploaded.

If you have trouble getting them always refresh your browser to make sure you have the most updated information.

The March issue goes hand in hand with our daily Lenten readings that were sent to you via the mail.

As always you will find them and our Sunday Worship services on our website:
www.stephentownfederatedchurch.org

CHOIR

We are looking forward to having choir for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. if anyone is interested in joining our rehearsals, we would welcome you. Our only stipulation the group has asked is that each member of choir be fully vaccinated. I honor their request.

I wanted to share with you our schedule for Lent and Easter. It is as follows:

Thursday, March 24...6:30 p.m. rehearsal in sanctuary

Thursday, March 31...6:30 p.m. rehearsal in sanctuary

Thursday, April 7...6:30 p.m. Rehearsal in sanctuary

Sunday, April 10...9:00 a.m. rehearsal followed by Sunday service at 9:30 a.m. Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 14...6:30 p.m. rehearsal in sanctuary

Sunday, April 17...9:00 a.m. rehearsal followed by Sunday service at 9:30 a.m. Easter

Music....

Palm Sunday...
After procession - Sing Hosanna For Evermore
Anthem: He Dies For Me At Calvary

Easter...
After procession - An Easter Alleluia
Anthem: He Is Risen

Regular Choir will resume in September hopefully barring any other Covid variants.

If anyone is interested in being a part of special music for the spring and summer, please let me know. I will make a schedule.

God bless each of you

See you on the 24th of March

Bev

Committee Members Needed

You can make the difference!!

A Committee is being formed and General Committee wants YOU to have a say!!

Are you willing and able to volunteer (male or female) for a committee to investigate different materials to be used on the church's buildings? Both the manse and the church buildings. The manse has siding on two sides but is wood on the other two and the garage and they need paint or siding. The paint/stain we had put on the church did not hold up. The boards were wet and caused the paint/stain to come off. We have about 3 holes in the steeple from squirrels that need to be closed to keep them out. These are the issues. Are you willing to work on the solution?

Contact Larry or another general committee member to put you on the committee. We want this group to investigate and bring back to general committee information on the different types of materials available, their cost to install and the longevity of the products. The General Committee is looking for the best long-range solution.

Each month: 1st Sunday
Communion - Open to all

2nd Sunday
Hymn Sing at beginning of service

2nd and 4th Sunday
Contemporary Service -
Visual screen used for readings and hymns

Please address mail to:

PO Box 10

Stephentown, NY 12168

The Men's Community Group Breakfast News

We had our first breakfast meeting since March of 2020. The group hadn't met for 23 months because of Covid-19. The event was held at the Eckhardt's Farm Shop, complete with a hearty meal, robust business discussion and warm fellowship. There was 18 total in attendance. Matt Eckhardt and Bryan McMillian were the chefs. Thanks so much to everyone who helped out and came to enjoy breakfast.

We discussed our finances, bank accounts and leadership. We voted to donate \$200 each to the Food Pantry, Fire Dept., Historical Soc. and Library for all that these groups had done thru the pandemic. Don French commented that it fit appropriately with our original group mission to help the community. Larry E was re-elected leader of the group, Ted Bears was re-elected treasurer. We decided to table the election of our secretary until Rich Terpening was in town. Matt Eckhardt and Kirk Kellogg kept the minutes – for now.

Our hopes are high that we can meet again for breakfast for the remainder of the spring dates – April 3rd, May 1st and June 5th. We are considering having meals at the church. The general committee will ponder allowing meals to start up in Pierce Hall at their March meeting. Stay tuned for where the next breakfast will be held!!!

If you'd like to be on our e-mail list, please reach out to Paul McMillan, Larry Eckhardt or Ted Bears. Everyone is invited to join us –come one, come all. We especially ask you to attend our "All church" breakfast on June 5th. It will be our last monthly get together until October.

March/April/May 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:00 am Choir April 10 & 17th		9:30 am Heavenly Quilters		Choir Rehearsal 6:30pm		9 - 11 am Food Pantry
9:30 am Service				March 24, 31 st April 7, 14 th		
10:30 am Coffee Hour		Lenten Lunch Series - Zoom 12-1 March 10 th to April 13 th			Good Friday Service April 15 th 12-3pm	
March 27 th 8am Breakfast at IOKA PYO						
Palm Sunday April 10 th 9:30am						
Sunrise Easter Service 6:30am Garfield Cemetery			6:00 pm AA			
Easter April 17 th 9:30am		7:00 pm Gen Com 4 th week of month				



March 6 Laurelyn Mayen, 21 Bill Whipple, 23 Barbara Terpening, 24 Arlene Longo

April 2 Tom Foody, 5 Desiree Williams, 6 Carolyn Gokey, 7 Leigh Lewandoski, 8 Mary Hamilton,

18 Neal Truax

May 3 Betty Whipple, 5 Andrew Eckhardt, 7 Anthony Williams, 9 Everett Madden, 11 Larry Eckhardt,

11 Andrienne Gundrum, 12 Lillian Dette, 17 Stephen Sparkhawk, 29 Jonathan Koepp, 29 Doug Mayen