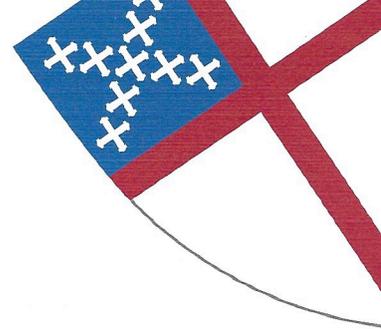


SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BILLINGS, MONTANA



The Ninth Sunday after the Pentecost - 2025

Dear People of Saint Stephen's,

Allow me to begin with a prayer of dedication from *The Book of Occasional Services*,

Christ Jesus, you go before and behind us, you are our light and our shield; guide our path, be our clear sight, lift us up in your Gospel joy, and bless the work we do in your name and honor, for you are our beloved, and our life made new. *Amen.*

First, allow me to begin with an update about my work for the Diocese of Montana. In April I became the part-time (one-quarter) Interim Canon to the Ordinary after the previous Canon took a position in another diocese. I served in that role for three months and then the bishop asked me to continue to function as the Interim Transition Minister for the remaining six months of 2025. During this time, I will be training the new Canon to the Ordinary in transition ministry. This continues to be a very part-time position, and the church has benefited in that the diocese is contributing $\frac{1}{4}$ of the costs of my health insurance benefits.

Next, I wanted to remind everyone that we are still in need of a treasurer. Doris Gerstner has volunteered to function as our bookkeeper which has greatly helped this transition. However, we need someone who can attend vestry meetings and present the reports generated by our stupendous bookkeeper. We also need someone who can sign off on the occasional document. This is a much, much easier job than being the bookkeeper AND treasurer. So, please ponder on whether you might be willing to take on this vital role. Treasurers and vestry members are vital to the life of a congregation and provide insight, wisdom, and alternative perspectives.

I also wanted to update everyone on the funds that were collected to honor Doris's long service to Saint Stephen's. Doris politely, but firmly, declined to receive the funds offered. Instead, she encouraged them to be donated to Episcopal Relief and Development (episcopalrelief.org), which is a very worthy cause and serves the needs of many around the world. Many thanks to all who contributed.

Over the past few months, we have been discussing the possible collaboration with Bethlehem Lutheran Church. In June we had a meeting with interested parties at Bethlehem Lutheran and in July we had a mid-week congregational meeting at St. John's United. Throughout this the vestry has also been in discussions. At this point, we feel it is worth trying this out in practice. To that end, there are some changes in the short-term to our worship arrangements. But before I explain them, **please remember all of this is still exploratory – nothing permanent has been decided.**

ststephensbillings.org
ststephensmt@gmail.com
(406) 259-5017

On **Sunday, August 31**, we will shift our worship location to Bethlehem Lutheran Church (40 10th Street West). That day we will **worship jointly** with the Bethlehem congregation beginning at **9:30 am**. I will be presiding over a Eucharistic service from *The Book of Common Prayer*, while a Lutheran pastor will preach. Following the service there will be a coffee hour to welcome us. I know that this is Labor Day Weekend, but this the exciting beginning to a possible future of collaboration.

The following Sunday, September 7, we will be worshipping in the Bethlehem Lutheran worship space at 10:30 am. The Lutheran liturgy will begin at 9 am, which is thirty minutes earlier than their historic worship time. There will be a joint coffee "hour" between the liturgies at 10 am. We will continue this practice on September 14 and 21. On **Sunday, September 28** we will again **worship together at 9:30 am** and at that liturgy I will be preaching with a Lutheran pastor presiding over communion.

The goal of this trial month (or so) is to see how limited collaboration works for us and how the new space feels. This will be an ongoing process and will involve a lot of ongoing discussions. For now, this is simply an exploration. We are receiving a lot of support from both the Diocese of Montana and the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. As I explained previously, the Episcopal Church in Big Sky, Montana is a joint Lutheran-Episcopal (or Episcopal-Lutheran) congregation. It is both Episcopal AND Lutheran. This is a trend in the wider Church. Collaboration is the future of the Church as a whole. Bethlehem has a somewhat similar story to Saint Stephens', and I think that we both have a lot to offer. Please consider taking part in this exploration. If the new worship location poses a burden for you, George Kimmet has offered to help coordinate transport for anyone in need.

Also, I want to let everyone know that our dear bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Marty Stebbins will be joining us for worship on **Sunday, September 21** at our new, for now, location at Bethlehem Lutheran. We will likely end up with a second coffee "hour" following worship that Sunday too, so come and enjoy!

Finally, we recently became aware of an attempt at "phishing" at our office. Our parish administrator got an email from someone claiming to be me and asking for her to send "me" a digital copy of our membership list. She did not send it. Regardless, please be aware that any actual letter from the Saint Stephen's would come on this stationary or something close to it. Likewise, no funds will be solicited that are not being sent directly to our offices. Please alert our office if you are contacted by anyone claiming to be us and asking for anything different.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or our Senior Warden, Lance Doerr, if you have any questions or concerns about this move or anything else.

Lovingly yours in Christ,



Father Stephen Day