

S A I N T S T E P H E N ' S E P I S C O P A L C H U R C H
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Agenda

- Opening Prayer
- Comments from Rector
- Senior Warden
- Junior Warden
- Treasurer's Report
- Financial plan for 2026
- Elections/Appointments:
 - o Vestry
 - o Diocesan Convention Delegates (2 plus alt.)
(September 25 - 27 in Bozeman)
 - o Bishop Fox representative?
 - o Audit Committee
- Other Business and Reports

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy catholic church. Fill it with all truth and peace.

Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. *Amen*

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel in this annual meeting for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Rector's Report 2025

The past year has been one of significant transition, collaboration, and sustained ministry for St. Stephen's, marked by both logistical challenges and promising new opportunities.

Despite a winter and early spring impacted by severe weather and scheduling disruptions, parish life remained active and resilient. The completion of the columbarium transition, including installation of engraved nameplates, was an important milestone, providing a lasting and meaningful sacred space for those who came before us.

A major theme of the year was deepening collaboration, particularly with Bethlehem Lutheran Church. What began as exploratory conversations evolved into regular joint worship, shared fellowship, coordinated worship planning, and growing trust between congregations. While the process included careful listening to concerns on both sides, the partnership has opened exciting possibilities for shared ministry, stewardship of space, and broader community engagement.

The parish also navigated important institutional transitions. After more than a year in a new worship location, St. Stephen's continued to adapt operationally, including technology upgrades, accessibility improvements such as large-print bulletins, and planning for future office relocation to better steward resources. Leadership transitions were addressed with gratitude and care, particularly surrounding staff changes and the ongoing need to recruit new vestry members and a treasurer.

Beyond the parish, the rector carried substantial diocesan responsibilities, serving as Interim Canon to the Ordinary and later as Interim Transition Minister. This work included clergy and search committee training, transition support for multiple congregations, and ordination responsibilities. Father Stephen also participated in diocesan governance on the Standing Committee and was elected to be the president during Diocesan Convention. These roles strengthened connections between St. Stephen's and the wider church and brought valuable insight back into parish life.

St. Stephen's remained committed to outreach and service, supporting ministries such as United Campus Ministry, food pantry efforts, diocesan grants through Bishop Fox, and broader Episcopal initiatives including disaster relief, migration ministries, and youth and camp programs. The parish's engagement reflects an ongoing commitment to serving both local and global neighbors.

Worship and formation remained central throughout the year, including Holy Week and Easter observances, a wedding, a baptism, pastoral care visits, and shared liturgical leadership. The development of lay leadership, including preaching and worship participation, continues to be a source of strength and growth.

I must take a moment to thank a number of people who have served Saint Stephen's over the past year. First, many thanks to our wonderful musician, Sean for all of his gifts and skills. He also showed remarkable flexibility with our moves and (seemingly) ever changing schedule. Many thanks also to George and Brian for continuing to read throughout the year. George also took a course on preaching in

order to become a licensed lay preacher. Thanks are also due to Saint Stephen's great representatives on the Bishop Fox board – Megan Schillinger, George Kimmet, and Brian Norlin.

Next, I must take a few moments to thank to people who ended their service in 2025. First, Doris Gerstner served as treasurer for Saint Stephen's for twenty-five years. In addition to serving as treasurer, she also often helped out with maintenance issues and so, so, so much more. Doris is a blessing and there aren't enough words to describe it. She has volunteered to continue to do our books as a volunteer bookkeeper. She continues to be amazing! Also, I want to lift up and thank Laura Schillinger for her many years of service as the parish administrator for more than a decade. She submitted her "resignation" effective in October 2025. She is very much missed for her many contributions, insights, and being a sounding board. I want to thank both Laura and Doris for their many years of dedicated service to the Church.

Finally, many thanks to our wonderful vestry: Lance Doerr, our Senior Warden, Brian, our Junior Warden, and Mary Chandler, our Clerk. They helped guide the church through a very unique set of transitions and were voices of wisdom and helped to carry the mantle of leadership. Mary even continued to serve as our dutiful clerk even after moving to Minnesota in August – joining us on Zoom!

In summary, 2025 was a demanding but fruitful year. Through change, collaboration, and faithful service, St. Stephen's has positioned itself for renewed energy and opportunity in the year ahead, grounded in a shared commitment to loving God and neighbor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Father Stephen Day

SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
ANNUAL REPORT FOR BISHOP FOX CORPORATION FOR 2025

The Bishop Fox Company was established originally with the goal of creating a third Episcopal Church in the Billings area. Eventually, it was decided that the funds raised for this goal would be used for other purposes. During 2020, the board of Bishop Fox spent a lot of time discussing what the mission and priorities of the Corporation should be. The board eventually came to an agreement that it was important for the Corporation to be a perpetual entity that would engage in philanthropic work in our region. The board also agreed to a new vision and mission statement.

- VISION is to seek and serve Christ in all persons and strive for justice and peace among all peoples through the Episcopal Church in the Eastern region of Montana, the Diocese of Montana and the wider world.
- MISSION is to be a faithful steward of the resources entrusted to us in the Name of Christ who is our center and cornerstone.
- GOAL is to provide fair and objective discernment in the granting of funds requested through the lens of Christ and teachings of Jesus.
- OBJECTIVE is to partner with parishes, the diocese and various non-profit community agencies in service to their specific mission and ministries.

During 2025, Saint Stephen's was ably represented by George Kimmet, Brian Norlin, Megan Schillinger, and Father Stephen. Additionally, George served as treasurer and Father Stephen as secretary.

The Bishop Fox Corporation met quarterly in 2025 to oversee stewardship of assets and the distribution of grants in support of diocesan, parish, campus, and outreach ministries. Meetings were held at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, with the December meeting hosted at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Governance and Participation

Meetings were well attended by board members and clergy, with prayer opening each session. Bishop Marty was on sabbatical during part of the year and participated by Zoom when available. Minutes from all meetings were reviewed, corrected as needed, and approved.

Financial Oversight

The Corporation's financial position remained strong throughout 2025.

- Total assets grew steadily despite market fluctuations early in the year.
- By November 30, 2025, the RBC investment account balance stood at **\$1,691,995.63**, reflecting an increase of **\$135,372.78** during the year.
- Over the past three years, the RBC account has grown by more than **\$443,000**, demonstrating sustained financial health.
- A total of **\$66,000** was to be distributed in grants in accordance with previously established guidelines.

- Administrative obligations, including insurance and state registration, were maintained in good standing.

Grantmaking and Mission Support

In 2025, Bishop Fox Corporation supported a broad range of ministries, reflecting its commitment to both local and global mission:

- **Ascension Church & Emmanuel Church (Miles City/Forsyth):** \$13,000 to support supply clergy and congregational stability.
- **United Campus Ministry (MSU Billings):** \$19,000 to support chaplaincy and student-led ministry, particularly important as other denominational funding is ending.
- **Tumbleweed Ministry (St. Luke's outreach):** \$8,000 to support youth services, including drop-in care, transitional housing, counseling, and meals.
- **Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem & Episcopal Church in Sudan:** \$10,000 (split evenly and distributed through Episcopal Relief & Development), approved in addition to the annual grant allocation.
- **St. James Episcopal Church, Lewistown:** \$10,000 to support emergency shelter work through Shelter Solutions for Central Montana.
- **Diocese of Montana (Youth/Event Support):** Grant increased to **\$15,000** to support broader diocesan engagement opportunities.
- **St. Luke's Episcopal Church:** \$42,000 for the 2026 assessment payments to the Diocese of Montana during their transition period.

Discernment and Stewardship

Throughout the year, the Corporation engaged in thoughtful discussion about balancing generosity with long-term sustainability, considering both local needs and global responsibilities. Attention was given to ensuring that grants supported ministries with clear impact while preserving the endowment's growth for future mission.

Looking Ahead

Based on recent asset growth, the Corporation noted the possibility of significantly increasing the 2026 grant budget while continuing prudent financial management. The next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2026.

The year concluded with expressions of gratitude for leadership and service, particularly honoring Mother Melinda St. Clair for her decade of faithful involvement with Bishop Fox Corporation, St. Luke's, and the Diocese of Montana.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the other Saint Stephen's members of the Board,

Father Stephen