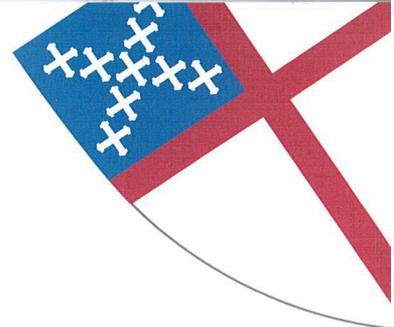


SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BILLINGS, MONTANA



January 23, 2026

Dear People of Saint Stephen's,

On April 23, 2023, we met as a congregation to discuss the possible sale of our historic home on Crawford Drive. After some discussion, beginning the selling process was unanimously agreed to. In February 2024, we closed on the sale of the building, and it was secularized in a special liturgy. Our last service there was on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024. On February 18, 2024, we began worshipping at the Ocee Johnson Chapel at Saint John's United. We worshiped there and met new friends.

In February 2025, I received an email from a lay leader at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. They were interested in exploring possible collaboration. Their story was similar to Saint Stephen's with a passion for outreach ministry. I met with some of their leaders in March and began discussions with the vestry. Our then senior warden spent time with the same leaders in April. We also discussed this with many of you. On Saturday, June 14, we had a "get to know you" event at Bethlehem Lutheran for members from Saint Stephen's to get acquainted with members of that church and their space. The event drew about thirty members from both congregations. On Wednesday, July 23, we had a special congregational meeting at St. John's United to talk more about collaboration. I shared a Lutheran liturgy and pointed out how similar it is to our own.

On August 31, 2025, we were welcomed into Bethlehem Lutheran, and we celebrated Holy Eucharist with our Lutheran partners. Over the last few months, the two congregations worshiped separately most Sundays, but at least once a month worshiped together. Throughout this time the vestry continued to discern next steps. Beginning in Advent we started to worship together, alternating between Episcopal and Lutheran liturgies.

After consulting with George Kimmet and the Bishop about the drop in attendance since Advent, the focus of Bishop Marty's annual visitation will be a spiritual storytelling at a special congregational meeting **after our 9:30 am worship on February 1st**. Food and refreshments will be offered. Please let the office know that you are planning to attend so that enough can be ordered. Bishop Marty also asks for all of us to ponder the attached page of questions and pray over what your initial responses might be.

If you have questions, please reach out to me or to George. The Bishop and I are excited to be able to have this conversation with all of you!

Lovingly yours in Christ,

Father Stephen Day

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Wondering Questions

The Bishop invites you to prayerfully consider and ponder on these questions before the special congregational meeting with on February 1. **The meeting will be shortly after the 9:30 am worship that Sunday.** We will have treats and snacks!

- How have you experienced the Holy?
 - o Can you tell a story to a friend about how you have experienced the Holy?

- How does your experience of the Holy draw you into community?

- What is it about Saint Stephen's that drew you?

- For you, what is the point of being part of a church?

- What has Saint Stephen's meant to you?