



Blue Divinity

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

Happy New Year!

WE ARE HERE. Finally 2026 and I am sure some of us, me included, do not know how we arrived and maybe don't want to retrace the steps of our happy or unhappy 2025 adventures. What is relevant is how we will go forward.

ONE BENEFICIAL COMPONENT of being a Christian is we can forgive, forget and move forward. It is difficult to move ahead in a new year with plans if you are constantly blaming someone else for your situation or harbor a good amount of ill will or bitterness in your heart in an old year. I have to say and you will laugh, too that one of the great joys of my old age is that you get to perceive that

your righteous rage and indignation is not always so righteous as you thought it was in the moment. Age does give a ringside view into how life unfolds as it does. A New Year does mean some progress.

THAT MAY NOT ALWAYS change that way you feel, no, of course not. We all feel as we do or we're gonna feel, but, the years unwinding can give a kind of porous grasp on the reality of how someone else felt or feels and possibly remind us how we are not necessarily who we sometimes think we are/were. And that is a fascinating discovery at any age, so if nothing else, enjoy the wisdom that the passage of time could bring to you in 2026. •

some interesting thoughts: (not mine)

Re: New Year's Resolutions:

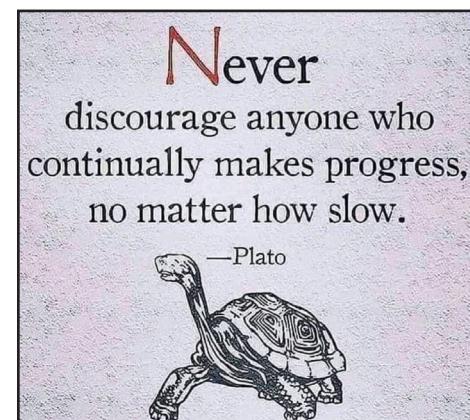
Proverbs 17:24 An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions. (GNT)

I can relate to that one really a lot! Christian writer/preacher **Sam Hepner** tend give us both help and humility when he thinks New Year's resolutions such as "*maximizing our impact, and thinking we need to work harder, move faster, do more, try better, fix what is broken, push through a lot, and carry more weight than we already do*" is possibly NOT God's way. He focuses on maybe more good coming from *unlearning* these sorts of resolutions

and states "*You can't change hearts. You can't make choices for people. You can't fix people. You can't carry everything or be everything to everyone around you. But God can.*"

So his idea for us to have an impact is to let God impact us and THEN focus on making the resolutions."Wise action" in **Proverbs** meaning we can connect with God like in **John 15:4** i.e. "*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*" 5 "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*" NIV

It is a legit way to solve problems among choices and the vine metaphor is intriguing. At the same time, sometimes, I feel Jesus as really wanting us to have our own heart-filled life experiences. So we all have our challenges in what we want to change about ourselves:) ✌



ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY

JANUARY 2026 Worship Schedule

SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10 AM
WEDNESDAY SERVICES AT 11 AM

SUNDAY, JAN. 4TH
ADVENT RESERVE SACRAMENT
Officiated by Jena Young

SUNDAY, JAN. 11TH
EPIPHANY EUCHARIST SERVICE
Our Missioner, the Rev. "Mo" Trimm

SUNDAY, JAN. 18TH
MORNING PRAYER
Service Leader, Paul Hay

SUNDAY, JAN. 25TH
EPIPHANY MORNING PRAYER
Service Leader, Charles Guenette

EVERY WEDNESDAY
HOLY EUCHARIST SERVICE
IS HELD AT 11 AM IN THE CHAPEL
with The Rev. Paula Marvic



PHOTOS (l. to r) Melissa at Christmas;
Allison with her mom, the Rev. Paula Mar-
vic; Charles Guenette as St. Nicholas



PHOTOS (l. to r) Dawn Martin prepares
to serve marvelous cookies; David Block
sings *Adeste Fidelis* at Lessons & Carols

The Musical Outreach program
(cont. on back page 4)



TIME FLIES SOMETIMES too fast for all. While changes are not always welcomed, there will be inevitable changes in 2026. One of the earlier changes will be combining the music notes with the normal bulletin that Karen has always done like FOREVER! Allison and I will be effecting this change beginning on Sunday, Jan. 4th, but this is a new venture so we ask for patience for a few months as we learn how to do it and coordinate it.

Another inevitable change is business related with my personal software subscription costs being just short of doubled from my favorite company for our newsletter, Adobe, whom I'm been with for *over 25 years!* Mind you, this does not mean you will not be getting a newsletter, we don't just give up when things don't fall in our favor and no doubt Adobe is worth what they want to charge, especially for professional designers, but in my semi-retired life, this new change just doesn't make sense for either me or St. Stephen's to pursue, so at least, momentarily, I will be experimenting with new software design programs instead of hibernating with my coffee this winter.

If anyone would be interested in joining in this communications venture, in either print or web form, pls. come to our communications meeting on Jan 28th after the Vestry meeting. If not, just being alive is a huge contribution in itself. YOU are enough! ♦

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COURAGE & COMMITMENT

A REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH BY SUSAN HARRIS



Sue Harris, lector & Jr. Warden

I GREW UP In Appleton and attended Catholic schools through my freshmen year in college. The first 8 years of my education were spent at St. Joseph Catholic Grade School in downtown Appleton. There were statues of the Holy Family and statues of Joseph peppered liberally throughout the school and very large church across the street.

BUT NOT MUCH WAS EVER SAID, during those eight years of daily catechism, about Joseph the man. To be quite honest, I never gave Joseph much thought until I began to prepare for today's homily. I very much wring my hands and agonize during the preparation. I always want the message to not only reflect the Gospel but to have some relevance to our daily lives. Most assuredly, I do not want to put you sound asleep! And lo, and behold, I found the story of Joseph's courage to be quite relevant in the crazy world in which we live.

TODAY'S GOSPEL REMINDED ME, once again, of the gift a reliable person with great integrity and reliability can be in our lives. God asked reliable Joseph to listen and respond without question...wedding a pregnant Mary, finding a place for the baby to be born, fleeing from Herod and his madness with the child and his mother to far away Egypt... about 350 miles away across an inhospitable desert. When it is safe, the scene is repeated, and Joseph returns from Egypt with his family and settles in Nazareth.

IF HEROD'S PLAN HAD WORKED, the joy of Christmas would have been snuffed out even as the light of Christ was coming into the world. It is irrational really! Big Bad Herod afraid of a tiny little baby and wreaking chaos and agony by executing

all those babies in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and younger.

WHAT DO WE SUPPOSE it would have done to the story if at any point along the way, Joseph had refused to listen to God's angelic messenger? If Joseph had said: *" Nope, sorry, I am not going to Egypt. I don't like the climate and I don't speak the language so we will stay put and take our chances."* Or if once settled in Egypt, he had balked at moving his family again, this time to Nazareth, some tiny insignificant village in Galilee? Where would we be if Joseph had refused to listen to the Angel who came to tell him about Mary's expected baby and the role he was to play. Where would we be if Joseph had not been a righteous and just man who was merciful and compassionate and willing to listen and to do what was asked of him?

THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS is not only that God loved us enough to give his only Son to redeem the world but that God trusted two perfectly ordinary, normal people to raise this extraordinary Child as their own. That is quite a message in my book!

I HAVE TO BELIEVE God singled out Mary not just because she was obedient and good but also strong and courageous. And God singled out Joseph for exactly the same reasons. Joseph becomes for us the a man of integrity and reliability.....a man who has no higher will than to do the will of God. And what relevance does the Gospel have today? Can you imagine being in the position the Holy Family found themselves in? You have a newborn baby, you have to flee for your life because of imminent danger. We must sympathize with Mary having just given birth to travel like that. Through the lens of Joseph and Mary's fears and hopes, we can clearly see the fears and hopes of the millions of refugees across the globe.

GOD CLEARLY WAS NOT GOING to let anything happen to that little baby or his parents.

Herod was not going to put out the light of God's presence in Bethlehem. Herod could not steal the gift of love which was Jesus. And, especially now, let us not forget the other human families at risk on our planet. I have to believe God works in our times through each of us ordinary people, each in our own way, to make this world a better place for not only our families but also families in crisis in our midst and throughout the world.

AS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON comes to an end and decorations are packed away, the lights taken down and life returns to normal, I wonder how we will care for the gift of love God so clearly gave us with the birth of his son and remember to act with the courage, integrity and reliability Joseph embodied as we face the challenges of daily life in our world.

LET US PRAY:

AS WE REMEMBER THE HOLY FAMILY on their way to and from Egypt, we pray that parents today may share mutual respect and responsibility in caring for their children as Joseph and Mary did. Like St. Joseph, may we keep trusting God as we make our daily life decisions. Lord, you make all things new. You bring hope alive in our hearts and cause our spirits to be born again. Thank you for this new year and for all the potential it holds. Help us to face and ups and downs of life and guide us, as you guided the Holy Family to safety. This we pray in your name. **Amen.** ☩



(which is part of our St. Stephen's Outreach) continues on **Sunday, January 11th at 10am** with **Glenn Bengry, Trumpeter** playing some beautiful & uplifting music in our service to bring an some positive and healing energy for us in 2026.

Glenn will perform “*Sleeper’s Awake*” by J.S. Bach & “*Some One to Watch Over Me*” by George Gershwin with **Lani** accompanying him and also playing a few **short Bach solo preludes** before service begins and ‘**Shall We Gather**’ to celebrate **Christ’s Baptism** with **Phil Stapert** also participating playing our beautiful hymns on our newly renovated organ. **The Rev. “Mo” Trimm** will lead this service and we will be having a fun luncheon prepared by **Dawn Martin** and an assorted baked goods sale afterwards in Canterbury Hall. Let’s start the year off with some fresh socializing, healing & new energy.♪

WEBSITE

Our website, www.ststephensescanaba.org has been going strong for a couple years now until this Nov., when it didn’t. Although we do get traffic, not much of it is from our congregation. Were we a larger church, or I was involved in ministry or on that side, I could envision it becoming an interesting blog, but I’m not. I am only a musician so I am going to redesign it for music outreach unless something else is desired from the communications committee. While I do enjoy many forms of communication, God created me to be a musician & fish don’t become rabbits. However, it will be discussed at the communications meeting on Jan., 28th and your ideas are important! ♪



PHOTO: the congregation (we can recognize Valerie) listening to Lessons & Carols service on Dec. 14th, 2025



J. S. Bach (1685-1750) arguably one of the greatest composers to walk the earth, saw his music as a form of worship, a way to bring God’s presence into the world and offer spiritual solace, making his entire compositional output a deeply religious statement. He often began his compositions with “**Jesu Juva**” (J.J.) “Jesus, help,” asking for divine assistance in his creative process or “**Soli Deo Gloria**” (**S.D.G.**): signifying all glory belongs to God alone.

When reflecting on his life’s purpose, he is quoted as saying: “*The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.*” ♡



PHOTO: St. Stephen’s 2025 Christmas tree

JANUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

WED. JAN. 7TH & 21ST at 12:30 PM
COVENANT GROUP MEETS

SUN. JAN. 11TH 10:00 AM
EPIPHANY EUCHARIST SERVICE WITH GUEST MUSICIANS FOLLOWED BY BRUNCH AND BAKESALE.

WED. JAN. 14TH 12:30 PM
MST/OUTREACH MEETS

WED. JAN. 28TH at 1:00 PM
VESTRY WITH COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AFTERWARDS

SUNSHINE CLUB – Please inform Pat Royer or Fran Ziegler if you would like any birthday, get well or sympathy cards mailed out.

BREAKING BREAD – Jack’s restaurant in Rapid River, 4th Tuesday of the month @ 6pm. Notify Rayford if you plan to attend.

COFFEE HOUR – Please sign up for Coffee Hour. Share the Love:)

FEEDING AMERICA WEST MICHIGAN’S MOBILE FOOD PANTRY WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, AT 10:00 AM AT SALVATION ARMY ESCANABA, 3001 5TH AVE. S., ESCANABA, MI 49829. DRIVE-THRU DISTRIBUTION.

THINKING OF YOU, MIKE!



PHOTO: The blizzard of Dec. 28th & 29th leaving our Sexton with much work!