

CROSS + CONNECTIONS

SAINT STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2012

Table Talk

Where's the Beef

Pr Scott Howard

The old Lutheran hymnal has this to say about the season of Lent:

As disciples of the Lord Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love—the discipline of Lent—help us to wage our spiritual warfare.

For many people, the discipline of Lent is merely giving up something, typically something good and enjoyable—chocolate, wine, television, swearing, caffeine, and so on.



For others, the discipline of Lent involves taking something on rather than giving something up—working out, cleaning the house, spending more time with the kids, volunteering

someplace local, giving change to charity, and so on. And most people, I suspect, don't really do anything as a Lenten discipline at all (or if they do, don't stick to it the whole 40+ days). What to do?

The discipline of Lent is meant to help us focus on the Kingdom of God as Jesus enacted and proclaimed it—to reorient our lives and participate in making God's vision for the world a reality right here and right now.

Consider what's clouding your vision. Sins? Confess them. Overconsumption? Fast. Lack of communication with God? Pray. Stuck in a rut? Love your neighbor.

This Lent, I challenge you to take on one or more

or all of the following as part of your reorientation to the Kingdom:

Fast—practice the discipline of fasting, not to lose weight or to deprive yourself, but to reorient your perspective on life, hunger, and humanity. How? Try being a vegetarian for 40 days. From Ash Wed through Easter Sun, don't eat any flesh (beef, pork, fowl, or fish). Why? To gain a new perspective on life on our planet, to feel solidarity with the 70% on our planet who cannot afford meat on a regular basis, to think intentionally about food and what it means when Jesus says we cannot live on bread alone. Will you die of protein deficiency? No, not if you have dairy, legumes, and green leafy veggies. What if you just can't give up that meat? Then consider different forms of spiritual fasting—giving up a meal a day and donate the cost of those meals to a food charity, etc.

Pray—3 times a day, every day. We all know we are supposed to pray, but do we all really consecrate time each day to pray and reorient our work to be an expression of God's kingdom? This Lent, pray three times each day: when you wake up, before or after lunch, and before you sleep. Find a book of prayers or Lenten devotional to



guide you. Ask the pastor for resources. Or just stop, take three deep and controlled breaths, and pray the Lord's Prayer. It's really that easy.

Give—give of your time, talent, or resources in an extraordinary way at least once each week of Lent. There are 6 ½ weeks in Lent; that’s at least six opportunities of extraordinary giving. Go it alone, or bring the family along. Volunteer at the food pantry. If you haven’t yet, try serving at Our Father’s Table. Wash a senior’s car (don’t ask, just show up and surprise them!). Call Julie C. and ask how you can help at the veterans’ shelter in Worcester. Volunteer to teach one of the Sunday School classes and give the teacher a ‘free pass’ and Dunkin Donuts gift card. Be creative. The sky’s the limit.

I pray that this Lent you will encounter the transformative power of Jesus’ love and mercy. And, may God give us grace and courage to accept this Lenten discipline of fasting, praying and giving.

Visioning Team

St Stephen Lutheran elected four new visionaries to be a part of our visioning team (aka the congregation council). This visioning team will meet for business and transformation retreat on Sat, Feb 11, to develop goals for the congregation, visionaries, and pastor in 2012, as well as elect new officers. Our Vision Team in 2012 include: Paula Blomquist, Norma DuBois, Pr Scott Howard, David LaBossiere, Stacie LaBossiere, Donna Lambert, Sarah Maston, Todd Priess, Elizabeth Whapham and George Whapham.



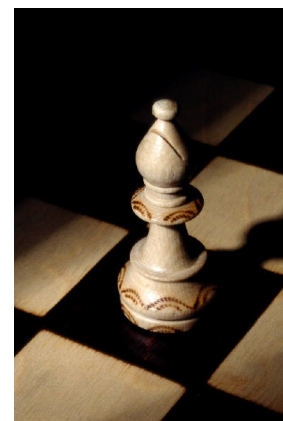
The Dish on the Bish

At St Stephen’s annual meeting last month, we elected Martha Domke and Melanie Whapham to join Pr Scott as voting members of the 2012 New England Synod Assembly in June. On the agenda is the election of a new bishop to assume office after Bishop Margaret Payne’s retirement in August. While Martha, Mel, and Pr Scott will be voting, everyone at St Stephen can give their thoughts about the direction of the synod and the

skills of a new bishop.

Here are two dates that are important to you:

Sun, Feb 12 @ 2:30p
Trinity Lutheran Church, Worcester
A meeting of the Central Massachusetts Conference to discuss the election of a new bishop. This meeting is free, and doesn’t require any registration or RSVP.



Sat, Mar 10 @ 9:30a Bethel Lutheran Church, Auburn
A meeting of the wider Mission Area of Conferences to discuss the election of a new bishop, nominate questions to be asked of finalists, and participate in the synod’s *Doing What Matters* workshop. This one has a registration requirement (\$15), and you can register at:

<http://nesynod.org/events/2012-mission-area-assemblies>

Mark our calendars now, and stay tuned to more information about these two important venues that give each of us a voice.

Faith Formation

SAFE—Slaying Giants

Come one come all to the next Special Activate Faith Event where we will hear the story of David and Goliath, and try our hands at slaying the Giant! Kids of all ages and their parents and grandparents are encouraged to join us for a fun and faith-filled event on Sun, Feb 18 at 4.30pm. Be sure to invite your friends, neighbors, and family.

Adult Education

The adult forum continues its walk through Rob Bell's *Love Wins: a book about heaven, hell, and the fate of every person who ever lived*. We meet in the pastor's study after the Sunday School opening. This month we will discuss the following chapters: *What About the Flat Tire*, *Here is the New There*, *Hell*, and *Does God Get What God Wants*. You can join the discussion anytime, and need not have read the book or chapter to participate. Your knowledge, opinion, and experience count.

VBS

This year, "Operation Overboard" Vacation Bible School (VBS) will be taking place from August 6-10th, 9am-12pm. Please mark your calendars and plan on attending! If you would be interested in helping out, we are looking for "age group" teachers, games, arts & crafts, and snack helpers at a minimum, as well as teen helpers too. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Cathy Schoenleber (ccschoenleber@yahoo.com) 978- 568-0724 and/or Sarah Maston (sem56@yahoo.com) 978-562-5357

REACHING OUT

Food Collection

Have you ever wondered what a difference our collections for the food pantries make?

Our own Ken LaPlante shared a story with Pr Scott about an experience of his while volunteering at the Marlborough food bank. Ken explained what he saw as a glaring contradiction in our consumer world and our call to a life of



generosity and faith. While going home from work in the Natick mall, Ken browsed through a luxury department store (which he laughably called *Needless Markup*), and saw a simple shirt on the rack for \$800. He marveled that someone would not only have the means but the desire to spend that much money on a single item of clothing. The next day, while volunteering at the food bank, Ken was asked by a client for a special variety of baby formula for her child. Ken checked the meager shelves, but they only had a



different variety in stock. She explained that other varieties made her child very sick, and only this particular formula would do. The woman left despondent and frustrated. Ken reflected how upside down our world seems: on the one hand there are \$800 blouses for sale (and people that buy them); and on the other hand a mother who has come upon hard times can't even get the proper baby formula for her child from a food bank. Something doesn't seem right.

Your contributions to our local food pantries make a profound difference in the lives of individuals and families in need in our local community in ways many of cannot fathom. We are a congregation blessed with many things, and called to share those blessing with those around us, to change our priorities and set them on the Kingdom, and to heal the sick, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant, and love our neighbors.

In Feb we are collecting food and toiletries, with a special appeal for soups and stews of all sorts. Our collection baskets are just inside the doors to

the worship space. Thank you.

Recycle & Reuse

The Hudson Girl Scout Brownies will be participating in a stomp-rocket program at the end of March and need donations of empty 2-liter or 16 oz plastic bottles. Please rinse out and bring to church at your convenience. A collection box will be set up near the kitchen. If there are any questions, please see Sarah Maston. Thanks so much!



OUR FATHER’S TABLE

3rd Thursday

Our Father’s Table (OFT) is an interfaith ministry to serves a free meal to neighbors in need in downtown Marlborough at the First Baptist Church. Volunteers from St Stephen provide the food and serve on the third Thurs of each month @ 4.30-6p. This month we are scheduled for Feb 16. Look for the sign-up sheet for food and volunteers on the table in the foyer the previous Sun. See Donna Lambert for details.

PARISH LIFE

Playing with the Queen of Hearts

Who will be crowned the King or Queen of Hearts this year? Who will wallow as the lowly Jester? Come find out at our annual Hearts Party Tournament on Sat, Feb 18 at 6pm. Bring a snack and beverage to share. Brush up on your Hearts game, and come



ready to shoot the moon! Coordinators for the event are needed—please see Norma DuBois.

Congrats

February Birthdays

- 3 Joe Trudeau
- 8 Erin Kellogg
- 16 Paul Canham
- 17 Al Broz
- 17 Emma B.
- 20 Jackie George
- 20 Maria George
- 28 Laura Ingilido
- 28 Shirley Singleton



February Anniversaries

- 18 Natalie & Norm Smith
- 21 Emily & Scott Howard
- 27 LeeAnn & Fred Brewitt

If your birthday or anniversary does not appear on a given month, or if there is an error, please send corrections to the church office.

Recognizing special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, milestones or other achievements is a part of our ministry at St Stephen. Pass along any news you would like to share with your faith family so that we can all join in thanking God for such blessings.

Midweek Lenten Series: *The Trials of Jesus*

Like a courtroom drama, a series of witnesses comes forward to give testimony about their

experiences with the accused—Jesus Christ. Through their accounts we will come to know the truth that Jesus came to take our place in the defendant's chair.



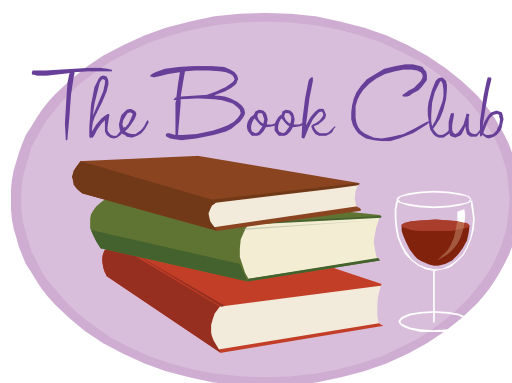
The Trials of Jesus begins on **Ash Wed, Feb 22**, with two worship services: at **12pm and 6.30pm**. There we will hear the *Voice of Satan* as Jesus faces the tempter in the wilderness.

The program continues on each subsequent Wed in Lent with worship at 6.30pm and a simple soup supper at 7pm. Please sign-up to bring a favorite vegetarian soup at the sign-up station in the foyer.

The series includes:

- Wed, Feb 29 *The Voice of Judas*—Jesus' betrayer defends his actions
- Wed, Mar 7 *The Voice of Annas*—the chief priest discusses Jesus' arrest
- Wed, Mar 14 *The Voice of Caiaphas*—the high

- priest faces off with the Son of God
- Wed, Mar 21 *The Voice of Peter*—Jesus' bold disciple speaks of his weak faith
- Wed, Mar 28 *The Voice of Herod*—One King of the Jews testifies against the other



The St. Stephen Book Club met last Friday to discuss the book, "No Ordinary Time" by Doris Kearns Goodwin", a biography of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Goodwin captures from letters, diaries and other sources these two different but extraordinary characters that create a remarkable and successful partnership. This book was a major undertaking to read but well worth the effort.

The Book Club meets at noon on the first Friday of every month, our schedule through June is:

March 2 At Pam Narahara's "The Last Week" by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan

April 6 At Deborah Robert's "Singing & Swinging & Getting Merry like Christmas" by Maya Angelou

May 4 At Beverly Broz "State of Wonder" by Ann Patchett

June 1 tbd "Cutting for Stone" by Abraham Verghese

Feb 2012

SAINT STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29 Winter 9.30 Worship 11.30 Annual Meeting	30	31	1	2 6-8 Scouts 7 Confirmation	3 12 Book Club @ Parente's	4
5 Winter 9.30 Worship 11 Faith Form 12 Worship Planning Mtg.	6 5.45 Scouts	7	8 4.30 Scouts 6.30 Bells 7.30 Choir	9 12 Seniors 4.30 LSS 7 Confirmation	10	11 8-4 Visioning Retreat
12 Winter 9.30 Worship 11 Faith Form 4.30 SAFE— Slaying Giants!	13	14	15 6.30 Bells 7.30 Choir	16 4.30 OFT 6-8 Scouts 7 Confirmation	17	18 6 Hearts Party
19 Transfiguration 9.30 Worship 11 Faith Form	20	21 GMPI Art Class	22 Ash Wed 12 Noon Worship Service 6.30 Worship	23	24	25
26 Lent 1 9.30 Worship 11 Faith Form	27 5.45 Scouts	28	29 February 6.30 The Trials of Jesus 7 Soup Supper	1 March 6-8 Scouts 7 Confirmation	2 12 Book Club	3

Worship Assistants Feb 2012

Date	Worship Assistant	Reader/Lector	Table Server/ Acolyte	Asst Table Server	Ushers	Table Guild
Feb 5	Julie Ciolino	Donna Lambert	Gabriel Ingelido	Anna Ciolino	Blanchard/Youkstetter	Lisa Baumbach
Feb 12	Judy Kellogg	Stacie LaBossiere	Abby Casady	Zach Gogan	Kellogg/Lambert	Anita Phelan
Feb 19	Pam Narahara	Sarah Maston	Samantha Gogan	Abby Maston	LaBossiere/LaBossiere	Donna Lambert
Feb 26	Anita Phelan	Barbara Parente	Anna Ciolino	Caitlyn Gogan	Blanchard/Youkstetter	Gerda Youkstetter



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