

ST. STEPHEN MARTYR

In the Beginning...

Father Jim Gordon knew *someone* would come, that he wouldn't be sitting alone in an empty school auditorium. And yet, it was hard not to wonder whether there'd be enough to fill the first couple of rows at that first Mass on June 29, 1997.

But come they did, and by the dozens. So that by the time Mass began that day, the question of "Would they come?" was more than amply answered. The folding seats were filled, and people crowded into the aisles and gathered in the hallway. On the spot, Father announced there would be three Sunday masses from then on, to accommodate the people of this new parish.

"People kept coming and coming and coming," remembers parishioner Pat Snow, who helped organize that first service. "It was an incredible experience. Father was going out into the hallway blessing people with holy water."

So it is that Southeastern Elementary school with its basketball hoops and school-milk smell would be the genesis of St. Stephen Martyr.

To come took a leap a faith. To envision a community without a building. A mission without a structure. The presence of God without the usual backdrop of church.

In ways, not having a building has helped us focus on the true work of the church. Michael Siedlecki remembers how the parish's first function was throwing a pancake breakfast to raise money for Habitat for Humanity, less than two months after that first Mass. Education ministries were set up in people's homes. Homeless ministries coordinated with Prince of Peace. Advent baskets gathered and delivered in a family-to-family approach, instead of dropping goods off at a church for someone else to deliver. "It enabled parishioners to experience first-hand where and how their contributions were being used," Michael said.



The early work of the church proved to the parish that a church is not a building but a community of people, a place of good works.

Starting anew, striking out, building something out of nothing. It takes a leap of faith. It is how every community begins.

This newsletter is a leap of faith as well. I hope it will be a place where good works can be recognized, and where we can learn how to further our faith. A place to welcome newcomers, and bid farewell to those who are leaving. A place where we can learn more about our parish and one another. Anyone with ideas about a name for the newsletter, what the newsletter should include, who you'd like to see profiled, please e-mail Elizabeth Earley at eliz@flashmail.com.

Like that first Mass, this is just a starting point, a place to begin.

2 Spotlight on ministry:

Small communities ministry extends a helping hand.

3 Verbal Design:

Learn more about the building the parish hopes to build.

Spotlight on Ministry:

Even at its smallest, the Catholic Church of St. Stephen Martyr was big enough that a parishioner could get lost within the crowd.

That's the reason behind one of the most vital ministries of the parish: Parish Life and Small Communities. Under this ministry, the parish is divided into seven geographical areas. Each area has leaders and co-leaders assigned to help welcome new parishioners and help established members of the congregation with any needs they might have.

The ministry begins at the point most new parishioners enter the community: At the registration table. Ministry members help new members with filling out forms. They explain the church's mission statement, describe the ministries, and welcome the new person into the community.

Within two weeks, a ministry member contacts the new member, answers any questions they might have, not just about the parish, but about the entire community. They also deliver the parishioner's name tags, and help make them feel welcome. "As a church gets bigger, it's easier to feel more distant," said Small Community co-leader Debbie Jackson. "This is a way to give people a sense of feeling connected."

The ministry also helps community members through crisis. When a parish member has a death, or some other crisis, within the family, the ministry contacts people within that particular community to provide support. For instance, community members might prepare food for a reception following a funeral. Each community has a telephone tree that can provide a quick response to whatever needs a parishioner might have.

"We want to give people a sense of

'Here we are if you need us,'" Debbie said.



This ministry provides a backbone of support to those in need, and a warm welcoming in behalf of the entire congregation. Many thanks to this ministry's members for providing that outreach.

Community leaders for the seven communities are:

1. Community of Good Works: Jean Sorenson
2. Community of Peace: Sharon Cannon
3. Community of Hope: Monica Murphy
4. Community of Justice: Dorie Auten and Cheryl Van Buren
5. Community of Faith: Sue Jarvis
6. Community of Wisdom: Donna Bean; Margaret and Sam Reed; and Betsy Bolac
7. Community of Charity: Leah Brown

Bereavement ministry leaders:

Fran Holden and Adele Davis

Registry members:

Kathy Daly, Carol Flach, Chris Geary, Lisa Hirschmann, Monica Murphy, Susan Viau, David Cotnior, Barbara Brinkley, Len Hughs, Donna Shelton, Diana Yarashevich, Kristi Dibe.

For more information about the Parish Life and Small Communities

Ministry, or to find out which community you belong to, call the ministry's co-leaders, Debbie Jackson or Sharon Achorn. Please also consider volunteering for this ministry. It's a wonderful way to meet new people, welcome newcomers and lend a helping hand.

Peace and Justice Notes:

Father John Leonard, during his weekend with us for liturgical education, said that on the weekend, we come to church to celebrate the Eucharist. Monday through Friday, however, is when we live the Eucharist.

We do that through outreach, and by how we care for our neighbor. Many opportunities to help others are available before the end of the year. Work is already underway preparing for outreach projects centered around the holidays. These are providing Thanksgiving dinners for needy families, Advent Outreach, which is providing dinners and gifts for children at Christmas, and Gifts from the Heart, an alternative gift giving program to raise money for local charities.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in these projects to help those in need enjoy the holidays and to help them know they are not forgotten.

People are also needed on the Peace and Justice committee to help administer these and other outreach events throughout the year. Watch the bulletin for committee meeting dates. For more information, call Earl Lienemann at 482-1991. All are welcome.

What is the Verbal Design?

The phrase keeps popping up during discussions of St. Stephen Martyr's building campaign, but not everyone knows what it means: The Verbal Design.

What is it? It's simply a written description of what our church building should include. The Verbal Design is the work of many within the church community. Each ministry within the parish met to discuss the needs of their particular ministry.

For instance, the Peace and Justice committee met to hammer out what is needed to house the homeless each year, and what kind of space is needed to collect food for the poor. Christian Formation leaders met to determine what is needed to educate parishioners of all ages. Liturgical ministers considered the needs of a worship space.

Then a committee of parishioners took all of those needs, discussed them, and drew up a plan that would best meet those needs in terms of rooms and space and configuration. The result was the Verbal Design.

The finished document breaks the building process into two phases, to put the project financially within our reach.

Phase I:

- A worship area, that will later convert to a social hall in Phase II. The Phase I worship space will be able to seat 700 people, and will have moveable chairs that are fairly formal. The worship area will be used for worship and education, but not for social functions during Phase I. Any social functions will be held in the commons area, or off site.
- A commons area large enough for 300 people to mingle after church. The commons area will be used for fellowship after

church, special event receptions and to house the homeless.

- A nursery large enough to care for 20 children.
- A meeting room that will accommodate up to 100 people, but that also has partitions to create spaces to serve 20 to 30 people in more intimate settings.
- A classroom wing of eight rooms, each able to accommodate 20 students.
- Parish staff area will house the offices of the pastor, Christian Formation minister, music minister and administration staff.
- The Reserve Chapel will accommodate 10 people with formal chairs and kneelers.
- The Reconciliation Room will have two chairs and a table for face-to-face reconciliation. There will also be a kneeler or chair and screen for those wanting anonymity.
- The Sacristy will be located near the worship space.
- A pantry area to store monthly food collection for the poor, and Thanksgiving and Advent food baskets.
- A small kitchen will be located next to the commons with capacity to serve about 60 people.

Phase II:

- A new, permanent worship space will be built and the Phase I worship space will convert to the social hall. A permanent baptistry font will be in the worship space, to replace a temporary baptistry in the Phase I worship space.
- The social hall will accommodate 500 people during social functions, and house 60 people during the annual homeless

ministry.

- A larger kitchen will be built during Phase II to accommodate the needs of the social hall functions.
- A Daily Chapel will be built to accommodate 100 people for daily mass, small funerals and small weddings.
- The Reserve Chapel, Reconciliation Room and Sacristy of Phase I construction will convert to storage space during Phase II when these same features will be built into the permanent worship space.

Stop by the pastoral center to see a full version of the Verbal Design or browse the document at St. Stephen Martyr's web site:
<http://home.att.net/~gregorre>.

The Verbal Design is the foundation upon which the church building will be built. For instance, the architect is now using the Verbal Design to devise plans and project costs of the new building. Since the form follows function, the Verbal Design will lead the way in the final vision of the St. Stephen Martyr church.

Who was St. Stephen Martyr?

St. Stephen is the first martyr of the early Christian Church. The Apostles needed help to spread the news of Jesus and to care for orphans and widows, so they selected seven disciples to ordain as deacons.

St. Stephen is the most famous of these. The Acts of the Apostles describe him as a man "full of grace and power, who did great wonders and signs among the people."

Many people became followers of Jesus after hearing his inspirational sermons.

Church enemies saw the great success St. Stephen's preaching had become so they falsely accused him of speaking sinfully against God to the high priests. He was arrested and brought before the council.

There, he scolded them for not having believed in Jesus. As his enemies were shouting at him, St. Stephen said he saw the heavens opening and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

St. Stephen was dragged outside of Jerusalem and stoned. While being stoned, the Saint prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and then he pleaded to God to not hold this sin against his enemies. While praying, and without fear, he died.

It is with his spirit and devotion this church was founded.

St. Stephen's Feast Day is Dec. 26.

Letter of Thanks

Dear Earl:

Again, we at CHIP/Healthy Families find ourselves grateful to you, the Peace and Justice Committee and the parishioners of St. Stephen for your creative outreach to low-income children in Chesapeake. The school

supplies were so timely and the children and families were extremely appreciative.

We sorted the supplies and organized them according to published grade requirements and then reviewed the grade level of our most needy clients. Through your generosity we were able to deliver all necessary school supplies to 44 children prior to the first day of school with a sufficient reserve of paper and notebooks to replenish supplies in January.

One particular family with eight children touched us deeply with their surprise, family fairness and appreciation. I gave a picture of this event to Cindy Picorrelli to share with parishioners.

Thank you again for your personal efforts, particularly, your delivery in the rain.

Sincerely,

Anna D. Roach
Executive Director, CHIP/Healthy Families



Did you know...

- That New Parishioner Welcoming Receptions are held each quarter for new members of the parish? The luncheons are held at the Pastoral Center and give new members a chance to meet Father Jim and leaders of the various ministries.
- That the October Yard Sale raised more than \$4,000 for the building fund? Not bad for all those treasures stuffed in the back of people's closets. Thanks to everyone who donated items, baked goods, set up, priced, sold, cooked hot dogs and cleaned up afterwards. Special thanks to Debbie Guardino for coordinating the event.
- That more than 150 people came to the Last Dance of the Millennium? A good time was had by all. We found out who the best dancers were, educated Father Jim on the intricacies of line dancing, and raised more than \$600 for the building fund. Thanks to Les Springer and the fund-raising committee for organizing the event and to all others who helped out.
- That we're looking for ideas for a name for this newsletter? Please send any and all suggestions to eliz@flashmail.com. We're also looking for submissions and ideas for features for future issues. The winner of the Name-the-Newsletter contest will get a free subscription to the newsletter...like everyone else in the parish.
- That this newsletter, the church bulletin, the Verbal Design and building progress notes are available on line? Check out the St. Stephen Martyr web site at <http://home.att.net/~gregorre>. Thanks to Bob Gregory for setting up and maintaining the web site.

Welcome....

New Parishioners since June (Children in parentheses):

James and Susan Brown (Patrick,
Elizabeth, Michael)

James and Heidi Neff (Joseph,
Jennifer)

Jay and Rosemary Reist (Joshua,
Ryan)

John and Helena Oakey (Kevin,
Kathryn)

Jeremiah and Phyllis Balsler (Jeremy,
James, Joseph, Jacqueline)

Scott and Frances Cooney (Ryan,
Steven)

Andrew and Lynne Dickman
(Benjamin, Matthew)

John Maiorana

Dennis and Diane Nikles (Jenna,
Sara)

James and Maria Carollo (Michael,
Lauren)

William and Elsie Pickens

Jon and Mary Rix (Julie, Ellen, Chaz)

Bennett and Bettina Thomas
(Alexandra, Bennett)

Mark and Meg Taylor (Chris, Lauren,
Kay)

J. Robert and Josie Barbour (Melissa,
Lisa)

Greg and Jeanine Hamscher
(Whitley, Zachary)

Craig and Kimberly Pinello (Jessica,
Allison)

Doug and Debbie Eagan (Ryan,
Katie)

Jerry and Angela Grant (Andrew,
Katie)

Cindy Hendrick (Rachelle, Melissa)

William and Kristen Sukovich
(Kaitlyn)

Chris and Kelly Warren (Taylor)

Michael and Tara Zigarelli (Michael,

Laura, Sarah)

Mary Beth Hurrell (Megan)

Carmen and Shenda Iannello
(Jessica, Erica)

John and Eleanor Wynn

Patrick and Constance Grandelli Sr.
(Heather, Patrick Jr.)

Tim and Jackie Becker (Jacob,
Megan, Joe)

Jack and Darlene Gorman (Jamie,
Jack, Michael)

Dean and Anne Chase (Caleb, Colin)

John and Cindy Skinner (Danielle,
Haley, Jonathan)

Fred and Brenda Devito (Morgan,
Freddie)

Walter and Jackie McCorkill (Taylor,
Mary)

Carol Stone (Bryan, Kevin, Tyler)

David and Cheryl Weimer (Amanda,
Matthew, Nathan)

Trish Clark (Rob, Patrick, David)

Biull and Janet Forge (Jenna,
Michelle)

Steven and Candice Geary (Kara,
Alysia)

Mark and Jeannette Neff (Mark,
Justin)

Donald and Donna Reich (Stephanie,
Michael, Matthew)

Doreen Smith

John and Pat Walsh

Terry and Monica Griffin (Tom, Dan,
Melissa)

Amber Phillips

And Farewell....

Parishioners who have moved from the area:

Ray and Carol Considine (Sara,
Megan)

Jim and Peggy Langlois (Nicole)

Leon and Patti Beekman (Jacob)

Catherine Grant

Dwayne and Beth Hagood (Ashley,
Austin)

Brian and Debbie O'Donnell (Shane,
Colin)

John and Sue Bartolotto (Sarah,
Emily, Hannah)

Bruce and Claudia Sacavage
(Kathryn, Ryan)

Lee and Marcia Cochran (Beth,
Travis)

Bill and Chris Parker (Bill Jr.,
Elizabeth)

Ricardo and Patricia Requena
(Michael)

Bob and Tracy Lynch (Patrick, Kelly)

Mark Fischer

John and Agnes Fino

Baptisms since July 1:

July 18:

Christian Thomas Hansen

Parents: Robert and Amy Hansen

August 28:

Emily Lauren Dorchak

Parents: Michael and Denise
Dorchak

August 29:

Madison Leigh Belby

Parents: Michael and Jennifer Belby

Benjamin Patrick Carrigg

Parents: Daniel and Therese Carrigg

Olivia Grace Egress

Parents: Charles and Deborah
Egress

Sydney Michelle Geary

Parents: John and Jodi Geary III

Zachary Michael Hamscher

Parents: Gregory and Karen
Hamscher

Mission Statement:

Baptized into the body of Christ, nourished by word and sacrament, celebrating our faith in the Catholic tradition, we are the people of St. Stephen Martyr.

We are called to create a community in the image of Jesus: Led by the Spirit, rich in forgiveness, committed to service, working for justice...a place of peace!

For this, we give thanks.

Parish Information

Pastoral Center: 1544 S. Battlefield Blvd.
Chesapeake, Va. 23322-2041
Phone: (757) 421-7416
Fax: (757) 421-7488
E-mail: ssm@exis.net
Web site: <http://home.att.net/~gregorre>
Pastor: Rev. James E. Gordon
(gordonje@exis.net)
Christian Formation Minister: Sr. Gale
Marn (galek@exis.net)
Minister of Music: Renee Cunningham
(ssm@exis.net)
Administrative Assistant: Phil Knoll
(knollp@exis.net)

Ministry Chair People:

New Construction:

Mike Siedlecki:

Pat Snow:

Maintenance and Grounds:

John Houlihan:

Christian Formation:

Barbara Keith:

Finance:

Pam Wilgus:

Liturgy:

Catherine Wright:

Peace & Justice:

Earl Lienemann:

Parish Life/Community Ministry:

Debbie Jackson:

Sharon Achorn:

RCIA:

Rita Hughes:

Scripture Groups/Adult Ed:

Laura Miller:

Youth Group:

Jean Lamay:

May our community be known for our service to the needy, our fearless faith even in adversity and our great forgiveness.