

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Parish Profile

*Open hearts. Progressive minds.
Listening to the voices of faith and reason.*

St. Stephen's is a community of 100-250 individuals that worships at the corner of Woodruff Avenue and High Street, adjacent to the campus of The Ohio State University. The community gathers individuals from the OSU campus and wider metropolitan area of Columbus, Ohio to grow in faith through **worship and prayer, nurturing minds, and service in the local community.**

All are invited to explore faith with us in an atmosphere that strives to be open, inclusive and challenging. For us this means an open table--our practice of inviting all to share in the meal of bread and wine--but it also represents a broader vision of openness and inclusivity in ministries. Everyone is invited to participate fully in the life of the parish, in any way he or she feels called.

St. Stephen's enjoys a favorable relationship with the Diocese of Southern Ohio and Bishop Thomas Breidenthal. We have ongoing dialogue with the Bishop about open table, and while we hold disparate theological views about Eucharistic open table, the Bishop shares our broader vision of openness and inclusivity within mission and ministry of the church.

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Worship at St. Stephen's feeds our spiritual bodies and gives us a venue for continuous revelation by providing opportunities to connect with God. We strive for creativity and beauty within the traditions of the Episcopal Church and rejoice in the beauty of our sacred space and music.

At St. Stephen's, we believe that religion should stimulate us intellectually, as well as emotionally and spiritually. We live out that belief by focusing on the presence and incarnation of Jesus in our lives and grappling with what it means for us and for our world.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday is our primary gathering time, where we share a simple Eucharistic meal of bread and wine and hear sacred words and stories that inspire us to engage in God's presence. Using traditional formats for worship, we incorporate elements from many faith traditions to challenge our thinking. While the ordained clergy perform the primary aspects of the services, the parish family also actively engages in every service.

Liturgy at St. Stephen's is thought provoking and challenges us to expand our understanding of God. Our clergy incorporate education into their preaching. We have a tradition of inviting voices from campus ministry, seminary and diaconal interns, visiting theologians, and occasionally, members of the congregation to reflect on the variety of ways God speaks to us. In this way we are encouraged to explore emerging theological ideas.

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SUNDAY

Our 8:30 a.m. service is drawn from The Book of Common Prayer, Rite 2. The liturgy with Holy Communion is simple and straightforward, and silence is one of the hallmarks of this service. Though music is not usually included during this service, a sermon is always offered.

The 10:30 a.m. Eucharistic service uses a variety of sources for the liturgy, including the Book of Common Prayer, various Anglican prayer books, and other Christian traditions. Music from many eras is sung by both the congregation and St. Stephen's choir. Visiting musicians and talented parish members share music several times a year.

A 6:00 p.m. evening Eucharist is designed for students and the OSU community, often presided over by our resident missionary for campus ministries. Dinner is offered after the service.

WEDNESDAY

St. Stephen's hosts a Midday Prayer in the nave of the church, which opens at Noon for a period of silent prayer and meditation. Spoken prayers and reflection begins at 12:30 p.m., followed by lunch and conversation in the kitchen.

EVENSONG

Evensong is a tradition of gathering when the busy world of Columbus makes morning services less accessible, e.g., when a citywide marathon makes the church less accessible to everyone.

PRAYER

COLLECT WRITERS

As a matter of spiritual discipline and biblical exploration, collect writers read, reflect and write the opening collect once or twice a quarter based on the weekly scriptural texts.

LITURGICAL READING SELECTORS

The liturgical reading selectors also practice spiritual discipline and biblical exploration while identifying and reflecting on poetry and prose that expand our view of the scriptural readings.

WEEKLY PRAYER GROUP

Collected prayer intentions on Sunday mornings are held up by a group of dedicated individuals who pray for those individuals during the week.

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NURTURING MINDS

St. Stephen's is a strong, loving community, which shares collective joys and celebrations and unites in bringing the love of Christ into situations of need. We are good at a loving welcome, celebration and caring for each other--spontaneously and in response to requests. We also support strong small group ministries that serve as outlets for fellowship and support.

The St. Stephen's community loves to eat, play and engage each other in formal and informal ways that grow our faith and relationships with one another.

NURSERY

Our nursery is for children four years old and younger. Interested children are also welcome to join the AWAKE group for more structured activities, regardless of age. The nursery opens at 10:15 a.m., and children may join their parents at communion time or remain in the nursery.

AWAKE

AWAKE is the Sunday morning children's program at St. Stephen's for kids aged four to 11. From September through May, the children meet during the 10:30 a.m. service. They gather in the church for the opening hymn and a prayer, then head upstairs for the AWAKE adventure. Every Sunday provides a fun experience through play, song and hands-on activities. All of this occurs in an environment that honors the questions that our children bring to class, and integrates their growing faith with the progressive Christian theology of St. Stephen's. During Lent, when the liturgy and sermons call on us to love our neighbors, the children support Neighborhood Services, Inc. (NSI). It is truly a case of "let a little child lead them," as the children collect personal care items and other items that cannot be purchased with food stamps to donate to NSI. (Read more about the church's relationship with NSI below.)

AWARE

AWARE is the Sunday morning program for almost-teens and teens, ages 12 and up. From September to May, the group gathers in the church at 10:30 a.m. for the opening hymn and a prayer, and then heads upstairs to the classrooms. The time is designed to help everyone feel welcomed by sharing questions, thoughts and feelings while exploring issues related to the week's liturgy.

ADULT FORMATION

At this time, our adult formation experience is lay or clergy project-generated. During this past spring and summer, St. Stephen's hosted asset-mapping sessions to help identify gifts and skills within our church family, a memoir-writing workshop, and an introduction to spiritual practices. More recently,

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the Rev. Dr. Roger Ferlo explored the rich possibilities of engaging scripture with a multimedia presentation of sound, sense and sight.

Adult formation is a priority for the congregation, and we desire help in developing a more intentional program.

COMMUNITY CARE

We recognize the need for more organized lay ministry and leadership – including pastoral care and fellowship – and the need to be more proactive in our approach to caring for each other. We would like to build on the success of our existing small group ministries by creating new groups around different activities and topics.

BOOK CLUB

Book club has a 20-year history at St. Stephen's. The group meets monthly in one of our parishioner's homes, sharing a potluck meal and conversation about a group-selected book. Size of the gathering varies each time, sometimes eight people, other times 20+, as folks are able to attend or have interest in a particular book.

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY

When fall arrives we gather to celebrate St. Stephen, the parish's namesake, as a transferable feast. After worship, we share a meal and explore and celebrate ministries of the parish.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

St. Stephen's is one of three parishes in the diocese whose buildings were built by Bishop Hobson in the 1950s to serve both as church and university center. Historically, the parish has tried to serve the whole campus, providing a meeting place for student activist groups, a rehearsal place for campus choirs and, in the last five years, a gallery space for students and faculty. Our campus ministry efforts take two forms: outreach to the campus arts community via the E.A.S.E. Gallery; and worship and Bible study provided by the Diocesan Missioner for Campus Ministry.

The parish community of St. Stephen's is beginning a dialogue about how to grow an ever-evolving relationship with University students, faculty and staff to stay relevant and engaged with campus life.

Our campus ministry is currently funded through Diocese of Southern Ohio and is a part of Praxis Communities, the Fresh Expressions home within the diocese. Reflections on spiritual life, group events and activities are posted on the Praxis Communities website, and community leaders meet several times a year for retreats, conferences and worship experiences.

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EASE GALLERY

The home of the EASE Gallery, in St. Stephen's lower level, has a rich background of nurturing as it has previously been used for a daycare center and a used bookstore. EASE is committed to the concept that creative expression is a basic human need and seeks to provide individuals (regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, creed, class, or faith) with the opportunity to meaningfully engage with art. We believe that a vibrant arts community is a necessary component of a just society. The Gallery strives to offer programming that supports the professional aspirations of artists and encourages the building of supportive arts communities. It is a nonprofit gallery dedicated to providing an inclusive space for artists to experiment, explore, and engage with the public through exhibitions, educational programming and more.

SERVICE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Micah 6:8: *"He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

St. Stephen's sees Micah 6:8 as a continuing core value in its history. We work to make the political and economic systems in which we live more just, while also extending a helping hand to those who need one. The community engages in social concerns in multiple mercy ministries and is a part of the metropolitan area justice ministry.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES, INC. (NSI)

NSI serves the neighborhoods surrounding The Ohio State University. For 49 years, churches in the University Area have combined resources to sustain NSI, which provides food, emergency help, back-to-school supplies and holiday packages for families in need. Homeless men, women and families are also provided specifically designed items, such as items that don't require can openers or cooking. In addition to the food pantry, there is also a clothing room for children ages infant to 12 years old.

St. Stephen's congregants are regular volunteers at the NSI resource center; supply specific monthly requests for food, household items, or clothing; and contribute monetary support. St. Stephen's facilitates and serves as the conduit for a major funding grant to NSI from the Episcopal Community Services Fund.

CLINKING QUARTERS

A "Clinking Quarters" program happens every Sunday when parishioners drop quarters with a clink into the collection plate. The quarters go into a fund which is distributed quarterly to outreach ministries.

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HIS PLACE DINNERS

St. John's Episcopal Church, Columbus, serves a Wednesday evening meal to those in need in the Franklinton area, a historically neglected neighborhood. Churches of several denominations from all over the city take turns providing food and services for these meals, and St. Stephen's members regularly take part in the program.

MANNA LUNCHESES

This ministry provides sack lunches to homeless individuals in Columbus. The Manna ministry has, since its inception, provided tens of thousands of sack lunches. Many churches and some elementary school classes in the University area participate in this program. People pack lunches once a month, usually in teams of two. Cost and schedule are up to the individuals.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY EQUALITY AND DIGNITY (BREAD)

The BREAD organization is 40 congregations, of different religious traditions. Each congregation believes something different--about the nature of God, the name of God, about what God wants us to do. Each shares a commitment to pursuing justice in God's name. St. Stephen's participates in BREAD as a social justice ministry to address systemic issues/problems in the Columbus metro area.

The St. Stephen's BREAD Team and Justice Ministry Network organizes house meetings to discern issues of concern and build an organizing network to keep parishioners informed on BREAD's progress. The Team and Network recruit participants to do the research work in defining the issues, finding solutions and meeting with decision makers on action plans. They also work toward getting our average worship attendance to participate in the Nehemiah Action, a mass gathering of congregations where the faith community brings current issues before those with the power to make change. St. Stephen's participation in BREAD has helped bring about change in the delivery of mental health services, the development of a land bank for abandoned housing, a focus on stopping violent crime and restorative justice program.

As BREAD: we listen to our community; we research the problems to identify workable solutions; we gather a large number of people, in order to show our power and get the attention of the decision-maker who can implement the solution we are asking for; we follow-up on the public commitments to address the problem and the implementing the solution requested.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

St. Stephen's is an urban church adjacent to a college campus. Most parishioners travel from 10-20 minutes away. We are a multigenerational congregation who work to meet each other in unvarnished authenticity.

We have a wide range of long-time congregants and transient undergrad/graduate students; middle aged working couples and singles; mixed with many young families. The congregation is mostly educated and middle class; 90% are white, 10% are African American, with a few Asian American members. Many work in academia, health care and business. Diversity comes through most strongly in age and sexual orientation.

St. Stephen's has an average worship attendance of 100, with an overall membership of 250. Typical attendance for Sunday school is 8-10 children. Our 12-15 member volunteer choir ranges in age from college students to senior citizens.

STAFF AND CLERGY

In addition to the full-time rector, St. Stephen's has several part-time paid positions, ranging from two hours per week to 20 hours per week:

- Parish Administrator
- Organist-Choirmaster
- Sexton
- AWAKE & AWARE Coordinator
- Nursery attendants (2)
- Kitchen staff member

St. Stephen's enjoys clergy associations with a deacon (retired chaplain at OSU hospitals), a retired deacon, a priest (full-time Director of Chaplaincy at OSU Hospitals), and the priest who serves the Diocese as missioner for campus ministries and is resident at St. Stephen's.

Organizationally, we operate in between a pastoral and program church structure.

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FINANCES

STEWARDSHIP

In the summer of 2015, St. Stephen's began "The Gratitude Project" as a way of focusing on the gifts each of us have as part of our worshiping community. This begins our shift to year-round stewardship. The Gratitude Project and pledge campaign are working with five themes (listed below) that highlight our core values and ministries. Our operational spending reflects a dollar break down in the following way:

Open Table/Hospitality	\$.15
Worship/Liturgy	\$.40
Strong Loving Community-Pastoral Care/Fellowship	\$.15
Formation/Education	\$.20
Witnessing for Justice/Being the Change	\$.10

ENDOWMENT AND SETTLEMENT INCOME FROM THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

In 2014, St. Stephen's received a monetary settlement from The Ohio State University after a multi-year negotiation regarding the development of our land and building(s). This came about because of the following: An internal committee, Vestry and the congregation worked with a private developer and award-winning architect to better integrate our space into the university landscape. We had approved demolishing our current two-story parish hall to rebuild a mixed-use, four-to-eight story building that included a new parish hall, student apartments, and ground level retail space.

Ultimately, the University offered, and we accepted, a settlement to buy the airspace above our current parish hall so that we would not build the apartments now or in the future.

St. Stephen's received an initial lump sum payout of \$1M, as well as an annual payment of \$212K for an additional 25 years. (Additional monies were paid to the developer.) With congregation and finance committee input, Vestry approved allocating the initial payment into three areas: building and grounds and structural improvements; mission and ministry; and endowment reserves. We have also needed to allocate significant portions of the ongoing annual payments (we have received two so far) to sustain the annual operating budget. As part of the settlement, we were also allocated extra parking in a campus garage across the street from St. Stephen's, as well as street parking access on Sunday mornings.

With the sustained income and additional parking, St. Stephen's is able to re-envision our mission pertaining to our building and sacred space, and what we can offer to a growing congregation. We are currently working with an architect to structurally improve the entire building and update the outdoor space to create welcoming and open areas for students, our congregation, and the public.

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St. Stephen's has an endowment fund established in the 1980s which has been used to maintain the upkeep of the buildings and sustain the operating budget. The endowment has in the past averaged a balance of \$250,000. With an addition from the OSU settlement monies, the endowment now stands at just over \$475,000. Vestry voted on formal endowment guidelines in 2015. The monies will be invested with the Episcopal Church Foundation in 2016.

PROJECTED 2016 OPERATING BUDGET

St. Stephen's 2016 projected budget is \$267,515. This budget is achieved with parishioner pledges, donations, special appeals, and building use income, totaling approximately \$150,000. The additional funds will come from the OSU settlement fund.

On the expense side, our major expenditure is staff compensation, followed by Diocesan mission share, utilities, administration, building care, outreach, worship, and fellowship.

St. Stephen's is looking for a rector who is well versed in budgeting with limited funds and who can help us leverage income and save money for future generations.

We have experienced a slight decline in membership and pledge dollars for five years, predating the negotiations and settlement. We are looking for leadership which can help change these dynamics and turn us around. We believe the potential is there, since we have a healthy diversity of age, backgrounds, and many young families.

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ST. STEPHEN'S, A SHORT HISTORY: LEGACY OF WORSHIP & SERVICE

1928: St. Stephen's was formed from the merger of two congregations: The Church of the Good Shepherd and the Mission of the Holy Spirit. Church of the Good Shepherd, located on Park Street near Goodale, was formed in the 1880s as a mission to railway workers and the poor. Mission of the Holy Spirit was an evangelical outreach in 1900 to the growing university community located on the current building site.

1930: Henry Wise Hobson became Bishop of Southern Ohio and issued a call for college ministries.

1950: The old frame of St. Stephen's church was razed and the congregation worshipped at the Old World Theatre during construction of a new church building, now on the corner of High Street and Woodruff Avenue. Members of Vestry slept at the construction site to prevent theft of building materials.

1954: The new St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and University Center was dedicated. The unique architecture of the church buildings resulted, in part, from shortages of some building materials during the Korean War. Its neo-Gothic design was based on a traditional basilica form and attracted much attention and won several architectural awards.

1960s: St. Stephen's became an eloquent symbol of peace and reconciliation. During one period of campus unrest, it was said to be the only building that remained open, providing a place for opposing voices to mediate their differences.

1970s: St. Stephen's hosted the Center for Peace, served as a homeless shelter as the state deinstitutionalized its mental health facilities, and continued as a place of dialogue in time of social and economic upheaval.

1980s: St. Stephen's continued a tradition of openness as it explored emerging issues such as the ordination of women, inclusive language, human sexuality, and alternative lifestyles.

1990s: St. Stephen's challenged the Episcopal Church to become authentic, genuinely open, and inclusive. It became part of the Center for Progressive Christianity movement and developed a speakers' series including Bishop Spong, Marcus Borg, among others. In 1995, the parish effected a capital campaign for the first renovations of the current structure.

2000s: St. Stephen's explored new uses for the building and land; became more active in BREAD and social justice actions; developed and supported sermons from the laity; included poetry as part of the readings; and developed lay collect writers.

2010s: St. Stephen's explored new ideas for our land and building, including a student housing project to serve the OSU community and expand our presence on campus. The project generated a struggle with the university president and board of trustees. After several years, a monetary settlement guaranteed St. Stephen's a 25-year income stream to fund programs and maintain the building and grounds.

Out of this history grows an open and challenging Christian community.