

The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

February 2012



"A religious space that celebrates doubt, encourages experimentation and allows one to utter the word God without embarrassment"

In December, author Eric Weiner wrote an essay published in *The New York Times*: "Americans: Undecided About God." It was one man's thoughtful description of his search for God in our culture, but his reluctance to become involved in a faith community or congregation.

I've quoted from the essay in a sermon, and distributed it to Council members for conversation because this describes those we are called to invite into our congregation!

Weiner writes that he is part of "the nation's fastest-growing religious demographic. We are the Nones, the roughly 12 percent of people who say they have no religious affiliation at all. The percentage is even higher among young people; at least a quarter are Nones.

"Apparently, a growing number of Americans are running from organized religion, but by no means running from God. On average 93 percent of those surveyed say they believe in God or a higher power; this holds true for most Nones — just 7 percent of whom describe themselves as atheists, according to a survey by Trinity College.

"Nones are the undecided of the religious world. We drift spiritually and dabble in everything from Sufism to Kabbalah to, yes, Catholicism and Judaism.

"Why the rise of the Nones? David Campbell and Robert Putnam, of the University of Notre Dame and the Harvard Kennedy School, respectively, think politics is to blame. Their idea is that we've mixed politics and religion so completely that many simply opt out of both; apparently they are reluctant to claim a religious affiliation because they don't want the political one that comes along with it."

Here I have a problem! Weiner is assuming that all religious congregations and traditions are like those religious people who are members of the fundamentalist "Christian right," and who are judgmental towards those they don't approve of.

Of course, our congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is not anything like that! But how will those seeking God know that?

I am struck by where Eric Weiner ends up in his essay: "We need a Steve Jobs of religion. Someone (or ones) who can invent not a new religion but, rather, a new way of being religious. Like Mr. Jobs's creations, this new way would be straightforward and unencumbered and absolutely intuitive. Most important, it would be highly interactive. I imagine a religious space that celebrates doubt, encourages experimentation and allows one to utter the word God without embarrassment. A religious operating system for the Nones among us. And for all of us."

Well, unless I'm missing something, Weiner is describing exactly what takes place when we gather in this congregation for a Monday night or Wednesday afternoon Bible or book study! And I think, in our worship, a seeker after God would find a non-judgmental community engaged in the same openness.

Am I right? If so, how will a seeker know that what Weiner is searching for already exists?

It seems to me that that will only happen as you and I invite the “Nones” into our worship and study groups. Is that true? I would love to hear your thoughts!

Pastor Ballentine



Ministry Associate Quill Musings

How do you ask for help? Raising a child, I hear a plea for help pretty frequently. We are trying to teach Abigail to ask for help by saying “help please,” thus abandoning the current technique, a rather annoying whine when she can’t do whatever it is that she is trying to do. This is taking a while. She is getting better, but still reverts to the whine far more often than the “help please” that we are seeking. The movement from non-verbal to verbal communication is a progression that is still moving slower than we would like!

While pondering this, I wondered, how do I ask for help? I don’t do it very often, since that would violate the manly code of self-sufficiency that was inculcated in me in the Army. If I do ask for help, it is usually something that I need in order to finish something else for myself. I don’t like being able to do things myself, but in the complex world we live in, mastering everything that you possibly need to be self-sufficient, while still remaining a part of society, is utterly beyond the grasp of anyone. Who do you know that can fix plumbing, run computer cabling, troubleshoot gardening problems, diagnose and fix a car, perform advanced lifesaving support tasks, help their child with school work, work a full time job, and answer the deeper moral and ethical questions that we come in contact with? There are not too many people out there with all those skills.

While there are a lot of people out there with a few of the skills we might need (the professional fixers of stuff that breaks), the help that we most need isn’t generally physical. Who do you turn to when you need help figuring out the questions that most perplex you? I have a friend that I served with in Iraq who is still in the Army and getting his Master’s Degree. He recently emailed a group of people about a

question he had dealing with morality. I won’t get into the topic, but looking at the list of people that he was asking was pretty interesting. It was a real mix of people, a few senior officers, a couple of people no longer in the military who had served with him during deployments, a couple of those who served under him, and at least one of his professors. I haven’t seen any of the replies, but I bet that diversity will be reflected in the responses that he received. Having a diverse group of friends to ask those questions is important, but sometimes that isn’t really what you are looking for.

One pretty obvious response to the, “who do you turn to” question is God. I haven’t heard too many deep voices coming from on high answering me directly of late, but if I am wrestling with something, even if I say nothing about it, somebody comes along who is able to help me in answering my questions, usually out of nowhere! While I may not have asked God for specific guidance, it is usually supplied via somebody who points something out or asks a question. Perhaps I should become better at asking the questions, or seeking out help, but if I turn it over to God, I have found that I will get an answer, just usually not from the source that I expected!

Perhaps we should all be a better job at channeling our inner two year-old, and when we are wrestling with a problem or question, turn to our Father and say, “Help Please!”

Doug Cummings Ministry Associate



From our Music Director

It seems to me that we have barely finished our Christmas and Epiphany celebrations, and Lent is upon us! February 22 marks the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday, a tradition that is shared by many houses of the community of Christ.

This month I'll explore some of the reasons why we want to have our heads marked with ashes, and try to explain the JOY in the Lenten Season. Growing up in the 50's, Lent was always a dark time in which we were constantly reminded of our sinful natures and the word "joy" would not have been in any of my descriptions of Lent. We took sackcloth and ashes very seriously, and something, (that you liked!), had to be given up for Lent so that you could share some mortification imitating the selflessness of Christ. Well, not all bad, but fortunately we are a bit better informed and have shifted the focus of Lent. While we still have our sinful nature, we now use the 40 days of Lent to reflect upon our journey to the ultimate union with God which began with our baptism.

The practice of marking one's self with ashes can be found in several places in the Old Testament, including Job 42:6, Isaiah 61:3, and Daniel 9:3. In the New Testament in Matthew 11:21, we find reference to then penitential practice of the imposition of ashes. In the early Church, Ash Wednesday, which is always calculated to be 46 days before Easter, is found in some of the earliest books of worship. By the 10th century, it was well established throughout the entire Church. One of the most Spirit-filled teachings of Martin Luther was his emphasis on Baptism, and the whole Lenten season is an opportunity to see just where you are on your baptismal journey towards union with God. Rather than focusing on the dark, we now look towards the light. JOY!

With the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, Lenten practices can indeed be joyful as we await the miracle of Easter. I look forward to sharing the journey with you through our Music Ministry.

Michael Monaco - Organist/Music Director

Stroke: Know the Risk Factors



Many factors can increase your risk of a stroke. A number of these can also increase your chances of having a heart attack. Stroke risk factors include:

- Being overweight or obese
- Drinking heavily

- High Blood Pressure Your health care provider can help you decide on a target blood pressure based on your age, whether you have diabetes and other factors
- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- TIA's (Transient ischemic attacks) "warning strokes" stroke-like symptoms that occur rapidly and last a relatively short time. TIAs are strong predictors of stroke.

Risk factors for women include; migraines, birth control pills, estrogen or hormone replacement therapies, and clotting disorders.

Stroke: Know the Warning Signs and Get Help

150,000 people die of a stroke annually. A stroke happens when blood flow to a part of the brain stops, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and food. Within minutes, brain cells begin to die.

A stroke is a medical emergency. Prompt treatment is crucial.

A person may not know that he or she has had a stroke. Watch for the following signs and symptoms if you think you or someone else may be having a stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Seek immediate medical attention if you notice any signs or symptoms of a stroke, even if they seem to fluctuate or disappear. Call 911 or your local emergency number right away. Every minute counts. Don't wait to see if symptoms go away. The longer a stroke goes untreated, the greater the potential for brain damage and disability. To maximize the effectiveness

of evaluation and treatment, it's best that you get to the emergency room within 60 minutes of your first symptoms.

Marcie Clark RN Parish Nurse - Health Ministry

References:

American Stroke Association. <http://www.strokeassociation.org/>

National Stroke Association. <http://www.stroke.org/>
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001740/>



An interesting program opportunity

"Brain Fitness for Healthy Aging" will be presented by Neuropsychologist, Scott Sautter PhD. on **February 9 - 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM** at the Colonial Heritage Clubhouse.

Dr. Sautter will discuss how the brain works, what illnesses affect it, and how to keep your brain healthy.

The program is free of charge and open to the public.



New "Book of Faith Study begins in March

"The Greatest Story: Jesus" will be an 18-session "Book of Faith" study, beginning March 5 and 7 (Monday evenings or Wednesday afternoons). This study will compare the different ways the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the stories of Jesus' life. The study book will cost approximately

\$13. Indicate your interest on the blue sheet. Deadline for ordering study books: February 20.



Parish Life Spring Events

Parish Life isn't a committee; it's the event life of our congregational family. Twice a year, all who have ideas for those events come together, set dates and ask for volunteers to organize one or two of these events. Paper products, coffee, tea, creamer and sugar are purchased for your use and available in the kitchen pantry. No one needs to provide items out of their own pocket, just let **Chris Punchard** know if you need funds for special items for a particular event.

The following events will be upon us soon and **Chris** (mrschris16@aol.com; 603-8461) is looking for some HELP. If you can take one event and volunteer, it would be greatly appreciated.

Ash Wednesday Pot Luck - February 22: Volunteers are needed to set up and clean up.

Lenten Soup Suppers: There will be a sign-up poster for people who attend to bring soup or bread. A volunteer is needed to check the poster, make sure it gets in the fellowship hall for Wednesday nights and, if needed, remind the folks who have the next week. Everyone pitches in to get out the paper bowls, plates, etc. Please watch for the poster coming soon.

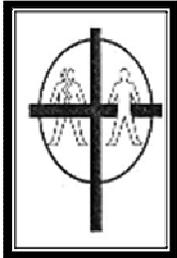
Easter Breakfast - April 8: Volunteers are needed to organize and provide bulletin announcements, decorate the tables, set up, and clean up.

Confirmation Reception - Sunday May 27: One volunteer to order the cake and get materials for punch or other beverages, volunteers to set up and clean up.

Bike Hike and Picnic – June Event: **Reed and Karen Nester and Nancy Carter** have agreed to organize the Bike Hike part again for us, but a volunteer is needed to organize the pot luck picnic.

The next organizing meeting will be **Sunday, April 29 at 7:00 PM** to plan for the rest of the summer and

fall of next year. We already have a summer game night in the works for **July 21**. Anyone with an idea to contribute or willingness to organize a congregational outing or event is welcome to come. Several folks have suggested a golf outing again or another trip to see a ballgame. If you are willing to organize one of these but can't come to the meeting; just let Chris know when you would like to have the event.



My Journey With (and without) Stephen Ministry

"Is there something wrong—is there anything I can do?" I looked at the young violinist and sniffed "I'm fine, I just have a cold." Inside my head a voice screams "No I'm not!" "Would you like me to pray with you?" I thought, "Fine Stephen Minister you are—she's offering you help and you are not taking it!" And so we prayed and cried. My makeup a mess, I went to the ladies room to try to get presentable. "Can we do anything for you?" said the two ladies at the mirror. And I stood there like a dutiful child and let those ministering angels apply their makeup to me. Accepting help is difficult, and yet in allowing others to help, admitting you can't do it all by yourself, opens that relationship with God. *"There appeared to (Jesus) an angel from heaven, strengthening Him" – Luke 22:43*

Cindy Gibbs



A Day at the Women's Retreat

It's almost here--the St. Stephen Women's Retreat at Eastover Retreat Center, **March 9-11!** We would still like to invite any ladies to join us for the day on **Saturday, March 10**, which includes lunch, three sessions of "**Scandals of Scripture**," led by the Rev. Janell Nickols, and the fun of assembling school kits for Lutheran World Relief. Please let **Nancy Egloff (229-7859)** know if you can come and we will send you a letter with the information you will need. The fee is \$25 for lunch and the use of the facility, and will be due by February 17. If you can't

commit to the entire weekend, this is a great way to enjoy the fellowship that the retreat offers!



Last Year's Retreat Project

Help the Women's Retreat Members Assemble School Kits

The women attending the retreat in March will be assembling school kits for distribution through Lutheran World Relief. According to the LWR website, these school supplies "mean the difference between getting an education or not. . . . In the places where LWR works, even a few required supplies . . . may be more than many families can afford."

We would like to invite the congregation to contribute supplies for the kits. Items may be brought to the narthex and placed in the available bin. Financial contributions are welcome as well, and checks can be made out to SSLC, with "Women's Retreat—School Supplies" on the memo line.

Items needed for the school kits are:

- Four 70-sheet notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper approximately 8" X 10½"; no loose-leaf paper
- One 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- One pencil sharpener
- One blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)
- Five unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band
- Five black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink); secure together with a rubber band
- One box of 16 or 24 crayons

One 2½" eraser

Thank you for your help with this mission project.

Nancy Egloff



Christian Education -- Faith Formation for Children and Youth

The Christian Education Committee had a wonderful fall 2011 semester. A big "Thank You" to all our volunteers, the children and youth, and of course to the parents. As part of the fall semester, community projects included collecting food for FISH and donating collected and purchased outerwear (coats, hats, gloves) for the Grove Christian Outreach Center. The middle school youth prepared cookie gift bags for the Grove Christian Outreach Center and the high school youth wrapped Christmas gifts in exchange for donations to the Mongai Parish.

Spring Semester: Children's Age 3 through 5th Grade

Youth age 3 through 5th grade meet in the undercroft between the services and are divided into appropriate age groups for lessons. In January, the children continued lessons that centered around the New Testament. In February, the lessons cover The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), Woman and the Well (John 4: 5-42) and the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Luke 15: 1-10). The lessons include reading the Bible, acting out the stories, craft or other activities, demonstrations, and singing. The calendar for the entire year is available on the St. Stephen website (<http://www.saintstephenlutheran.net/>).

We are still looking for a couple more volunteers to help with the children's Faith Formation. The schedule is flexible and volunteers are not needed for every Sunday. Please let **Jim Ivey** know if you have time and talent to share; he can be reached at 757-645-4480 or jvivey@cox.net.

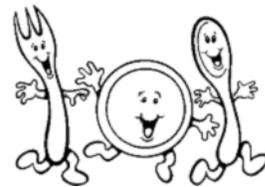
Middle School and High School

The middle school and high school youth also meet between the services in the library/conference room and in the pastor's office, respectively. For February, both groups will be discussing current events and focusing on New Testament scriptures: Who is My Neighbor (Luke 10: 25-37), No Prejudice/Living Water (John 4: 5-42) and Jesus Never Stops Looking for the Lost (Luke 15: 1-10).

Jill Lucy



Welcome back! We are so glad to see our students return.



Delicious Dining in February

A group of folks from St. Stephen will gather at the Opus 9 Steakhouse on **Saturday, February 11, at 11:15 AM** for what is sure to be a delicious lunch. Opus 9 is located in New Town Center at 5143 Main Street. The restaurant is continuing the Restaurant Month Special Lunch with two courses for only \$10.12. The complete menu may be found at Opus9Steakhouse.com on the internet. Please join us by signing the Blue Sheet or calling **Preston or Birdie Burton** at **564-8846** before February 8 for reservations.

Opportunities For Giving

In Memory or In Honor of Loved Ones or in Celebration!

What an amazing difference our new gathering area makes before and after worship! The space is bright and welcoming. The furnishings are simple, but elegant. People come early and stay late, to share a cup of coffee or tea and conversation. The space itself encourages us to deepen relationships and to welcome newcomers, and that will strengthen our congregation into the years ahead.



The entrance to our church now reflects the spirit of our congregation – open – welcoming – joyous!

We will dedicate our gathering space and furnishings February 19, 2012. Meanwhile, there is opportunity to pledge toward the cost of particular furnishings in memory or in honor of loved ones, or to commemorate a celebration! Below is a list of furnishings, with their costs.

Pledges will need to be received by February 19, the date of the dedication. That way, we will be able to dedicate furnishings in memory or in honor of our loved ones. **Funds will be due September 1, 2012.** In September, our construction line of credit will be converted into a mortgage. The less we finance the better!

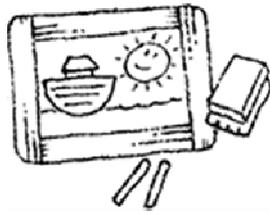
If you would like to endow all or part of any of these furnishings, please contact Pastor Andy Ballentine or Parish Administrator Sandy Peterkin. The numbers change regularly so contact the church as you decide.

Interior Furnishings

The audio loop, allowing hearing aid users to hear clearly.....	\$3,500
Video monitors and audio-visual equipment.....	2 @ \$4,400 each
<i>Doors from the gathering area into the worship space.....</i>	<i>\$3,600 (These are no longer available. They were spoken for on January 22)</i>
Handrails along the ramps	2 @ \$2,400 each
Remote-controlled shades for stained glass	2 @ \$1,550 each (one was spoken for so 2 remain instead of three)
Benches/storage units in the Gathering Area	14 @ \$200 each
Tract rack cabinetry in the Gathering Area	2 @ \$500 each
Name tag storage cabinets.....	2 @ \$300 each <i>(Only one of these remains available. One was spoken for on January 22)</i>

Landscaping

Hoogendorn Hollies	6 @ \$50 each
<i>Knock-Out Roses</i>	<i>3 @ \$25 each (These are no longer available. They were spoken for on January 22)</i>
Loropetalum	11 @ \$25 each
Dwarf Fountain Grass	9 @ \$10 each
Nana Juniper	28 @ \$20 each



February Preschool News

The children are busy making valentines for their family and friends. They will become "mail carriers" and deliver their valentines to each other's "mailboxes" on Valentine's Day.

Enrollment for the coming school year is awesome! Our Open House went very well and we have many returning families and new families as well. If you know anyone who is interested in a great Preschool, let them know about us and that registration forms are available in the Church office!

Our Early Morning Care program is underway, and working very well. Families can purchase "punch cards" to drop off their children at 8:15 AM, before the school day starts.

School will be closed on Monday, February 20 for President's Day.

The Extended Day program will visit the Muscarelle Museum this month.

February is Dental Health Month and Dr. Morrison will visit the students on February 13 to visit and to teach the children about good dental hygiene.

For the Preschool, Rudy Stegmann

The Church mouse hears



Sonja Landvogt joins Chuck Hilbinger's previously reported "Wish of a Lifetime" experience with her own granted wish. During World War II, Sonja was an army nurse and later was a charter member of the Women In Military Service for America Memorial Foundation at Arlington National Cemetery. She had always wanted to visit, and the Jeremy Bloom Foundation which honors seniors granted her wish. She was introduced to Brig. General Wilma Vaught, the highest ranking officer of military servicewomen and, with her family, was taken to the flag-filled Hall of Honor

and given the American flag they had just used in the Pledge of Allegiance. She was also honored by a folder detailing her service as a Charter Member, a lapel pin and the World War II Victory Medal. In addition, she was given a luncheon and a private tour through Arlington cemetery – even taken to her brother's grave site! What a special experience.

The mouse has been so impressed with the St. Stephen recycling efforts. Just as an experiment, he counted the offerings the last time he took them out to the Colonial Williamsburg Recycling area: 297 #5s and #6s which go in the #3 - #7 collection tubs; 15 #1s and 18 which he couldn't find the numbers on the bottoms so had to discard. In addition, several of our members have told me they are taking them to the center themselves because it is so convenient. If they are in bags marked with a number, no more sorting is needed. If not, the mouse would love some sorting help so that the bags will get in the appropriate bins. Call **Anne Schone (229-8674)** if you would like to be on the list.

We celebrate with **Glenn Carlson, Jr.**, who has completed his Associate's Degree at Thomas Nelson Community College!



Reverend and Mrs. Al Kuhn
Bethany Village
6445 Far Hills Ave, #515
Centerville OH 45459



February Birthdays

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Hailey Shearer | |
| 2 | Don Hardenbergh | Gretchen Osborn |
| 3 | Thord Einarsen | Debbie Lawhon |
| 5 | Gwendolyn Agor | |
| 6 | Kurt Bailey | Robert Mazur |
| | Larry Shoberg | Christopher Stempien |
| 14 | Harlan Schone | |
| 15 | Rebecca Drake | |
| 17 | Jane Bailey | Pat Janot |
| | Marilyn Johnson | |
| 18 | Glenn Joppa | |

20 Samantha Shearer
 22 Keara Mahony
 23 Nicholas Brisson Angie Groom
 25 Nancy Egloff Max Hinders
 26 Kate Sipes
 27 Chelsea Dunbar
 28 Michael Nester

Is your name missing? Is your date wrong? Please let us know immediately!
 Rev. January 21, 2012



For Your Prayers This Month

We give thanks for the birth of **Corbin Finn Black** on New Year's Eve to **David Black and Abby Villenave!** Corbin is the grandson of **Heidi Flatin.**

Pray to know God's will for healing **Jack Behlendorf, Shana Brisson, Ray Crocker, Cliff Henderson, Grant Hudson, Marilyn Johnson, Paul Kristiansen, Thomas Radke, Paul Reier, Dan Stimson**

Prayers of peace to **Ursula Murden** on the death of her sister-in-law in Mississippi and her cousin in Germany; to **Gary Toler** and his family on the death of his grandmother in Louisiana; to **Ina Berkey** and her family on the death of her mother in South Carolina; and to **Amy Bergh** and her family on the death of her grandmother in Maryland.

Pray for those who are physically unable to get to worship: **Bill Dickerson, Elsa Englert, Ruth Ennis, Bernice Fahncke, Elsie Hall, John Harms, Willetta Heising, Anna Lou Hobday, Jean Kircheis, Helen Lenox, Chuck and Jo Schumacher, John Warner, Dot Wright, Earl and Lois Wysong**

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: John Accomando, Eleanor Adams, Betty Alexander, Laurie Berger, Linda Bospuda, Lois Bomba, Hannah Calderon, Susan Calver, Linda Campbell, Joanne Carlson, Bob Canny, Jane Cattermole, Donna Cherel, Michael Compton, Gary Crickenberger, Rosemarie Cristofolo, Janice and Walter DeGree, Nancy DeVincenzo, Clarence Eyler, Mike Fescina, Nick and Ann Finley, Will Flatin, Mary Funkhouser, Sheryl G.A. Gabram, Lonna Gibson, Bill and Nancy Gottschalk, Joe Gutierrez, Nick Halupka, Eleanor Harms, Mary Heminger, Janis Hepburn, Carol Horton, Gerda Hudgens, Loretta Hughes, Ruth Jordan,

Steve Karajcik, Jeanne Keller, Jerry Kent, Sarah Kobezak, Laura McDonald, Aidan McGraw, Larry and Margie McLenagan, Sarah Marie Nelson, Matt Nester, Pat Passarella, Arthur Pate, Bill and Joyce Pate, Sarah Pettifer, Morgan Porter, Bonnie Rinehimer, Lisa Rivolta, Danny Robertson, Don Romig, Mary Catherine Ryan, Don Scanlan, Roland Scheiding, Zad Setian, George Siegert, Nancy Spaniol, Connie Testerman, George Thomas, Liz Thompson, Bob Tuttle, Kari Vickermann, Vivian Villaseñor, Jone Wares, Shirley White



Lea Ellen Chenault from Gary and Karen Chenault



Letters from our members

From Sonja Landvogt

Many, many thanks and best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year to all the fine members of our St. Stephen church family for giving up their last Sunday afternoons before Christmas to come to Chambrel to sing Christmas carols to our residents. It was a lovely gesture and so much appreciated.

Thank you again for your thoughtfulness.

From Kathryn Dieter

Thank you to so many of my St. Stephen friends for sending me Christmas wishes! It means so much. I miss you all, and ask God's blessings for you throughout the New Year.



Letters to our Members

FISH, Inc. has thanked us for the work done by the volunteers on Tuesdays through November. Link of

Hampton Roads thanked us for the donation of \$600 helping the less fortunate.

What's happening at St. Stephen

Annual Meeting: January 22



Thanks to all who worked so hard for making the meeting go so well!

Choir Party at the Shobergs



Both the 8:30 and 11:00 choirs enjoyed a special evening at the Shoberg's home