

...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

St. Stephen Episcopal Church Oak Harbor, WA



Annual Report 2007

The Rev Rachel K. Taber-Hamilton, Rector

Phone: 360-679-2023

Website: www.ststephenepiscopal.com

Dear Beloved Community,

As we begin our second year together, I am aware of feeling deeply proud of our congregation and the important work we have done on behalf of our Diocese and our National Church. During the past year you have put yourselves forward in every possible way to answer the various needs, concerns, and calls that have been extended to us throughout 2007. I have witnessed an abundance of genuine treasure in the tremendous generosity of time, energy, talents, leadership, gifts and resources you have shared.

Through our corporate worship, our various outreach ministries, our study and reflection series, our opportunities for fellowship, and our continuing commitment of loving care for one another, I believe that this community has deepened its understanding of its identity and its awareness of God's grace in ways that many congregations may never have the opportunity to experience. Bishop Rickel recognized this himself during his inaugural visit to us, and has since consistently lifted up our congregation to the Diocese and National Church leaders as an example of the courage and faithfulness associated with the first century church communities who had little else to go on except the promise and witness of Christ's love.

As an indication of the Bishop's genuine commitment to addressing current issues confronting the Church today, Bishop Rickel made a particular point in the first moments of his Episcopate in the Diocese of Olympia of selecting us as the location of his first official visitation. I hope we will always remember and appreciate the significance of his symbolic gesture on behalf of our community.

The year 2007 was very busy for everyone but, I believe, absolutely worth it! We grew in membership, income, and outreach ability while offering Sunday school and adult education opportunities. We also increased the number of containers, boxes and closets containing our material bounty. We were blessed by able bodied Wardens and Altar Guild members who gamely move all of these items from place to place like a giant liturgical Rubik's Cube so that everything settled into place, assembled in the right liturgical color, when required. We also gained an organ and a home communion set, both generously gifted in memorial of Phyllis Hammond by Ray Hammond and his family.

In 2007 we were blessed with the baptisms of Kira Grimes, Dorothea May, and Cole Taylor. Bishop Nedi Rivera joined us for the confirmation of T.K. Wegg and reception into the Episcopal Church of Sherry Buckner, Pat Matthews, and Marianne Tuttle. In the year we also entrusted to God's eternal care those we love but see no longer: Kevin Teays, Wayne Chapman, and Molly Hopper.

Our average Sunday service attendance for 2007 was 34, and a total of 2,192 people attended our Sunday and special services throughout the year. This is a significant increase from 2006, when the average Sunday attendance was 16 and the total attendance for all services was 946. A dedicated corps group was the seed for a blessing of growth, and I give sincere thanks to God for all of them.

From a little leaven came an abundance of *bread* for the future. Our 2008 pledge average of a little over \$2000 per pledging unit is above the diocesan and national average which runs around \$1900 to \$2000. Carl Knirk, the stewardship chair for the

diocese, says about us, “The high percentage of those making a financial commitment is excellent, which speaks to the commitment of all those who’ve chosen to carry on. In some congregations the participation is 50% of households.”

In our congregation 81.5% of our households have submitted an annual pledge for 2008 (23 out of 27 possible family units). You need to know that this is an outstanding commitment, and I am deeply grateful to the whole community for all the many ways you each support one another, the life of the congregation, those you love and the community at large. I give thanks every day for the variety of gifts in the people of St. Stephen Episcopal and for the sincerity with which they are given, with kindness and genuine affection. You are a treasure, and we are rich indeed in the many gentle devotions you each make every day.

A Postcard from Our Journey

	2006	2007	2008
Pledging Units	0 ¹	16	23
Out Reach	\$1303.30	\$5,641.43 ²	\$5,350.57 ³
Diocesan Assessment	\$2,345.99 ⁴	0 ⁵	\$8,460 ⁶
Income	\$13,033.00	\$48,379.23 ⁷	\$47,000 ⁸

Among so many benefits, I give thanks for the ever helpful and ready efforts of Mimi Bouchee (for managing the prayer list), Sherry Buckner (for her willingness to attempt to take on creating the bulletin and for coordinating the readers), Jean Fitzgerald (for coordinating our Dine Outs), Jim Wihlborg (for his hours of developing a computer program specific to our book keeping needs), Sara (for her help with the Sunday school), Amanda (for her faithful service as our Acolyte), and the rest of our awesome kids: Jared, Hailey, Kylie and Kira (for sharing their wonderful and creative selves with all of us, who love them very much!).

I am also very grateful for the faithfulness and commitment of Anne Katherine in initiating and developing our music program; from organ to choir to drumming and the occasional lovely viola movement, her offering of music and dedication to the community are deeply felt. Additionally, Dallas Viall’s willingness to step in when Anne is away has ensured that we are not without the precious gift of music as a part

¹ During 2006 the pledging system was not used and all income was categorized as “plate” (non pledging checks and cash)

² A surplus of \$650.57 from 2007 Outreach was rolled over and added to the Outreach budget for 2008, this figure also includes \$1,985 given to the *NetsforLife* program

³ In addition to the \$650.00 roll over from 2007, this figure includes \$4,700 as 10% of the 2008 pledge total and does not include any additional special offering opportunities we may add throughout the year

⁴ This was not a formally assessed figure but reflects the congregation’s commitment to give 18% of the congregation’s income to the Diocese as a free-will assessment offering in 2006

⁵ Financial staff of the Diocese asked us not to pay an assessment for 2007 pending our Annual Financial Report of 2007 to be filed this month (February 2008) so that the Diocese can submit an assessment to us for this year that is based on our 2007 pledging income

⁶ This is a projected figure of 18% based on the total pledging of \$47,000 for 2008

⁷ This figure is the actual total of “plate” and pledges from 2007

⁸ This figure is the *base pledging total* only and does not include any income that may yet come from “plate” or additional contributions (from visitors, new members, and non-pledging members)

of our worship experience and prayer. Thank you both so much for all that you bring to us.

I am moved also to genuine awe and prayerful thanksgiving for the artistic gifts and contributions of Lyn DeShong, whose generosity of time and patience has brought us profoundly moving gifts of banners, altar appointments, chalice veils, refurbished chasubles and stoles, Christmons at Christmas time and beautiful treats throughout the year. The beauty of her work creates a worshipful space that will travel with us wherever we are, like setting a tent in the desert Exodus experience, her work tabernacles our community and surrounds us all in an embrace of God's love that can be clearly seen and richly understood.

I am especially grateful for the work and commitment of every member of our Vestry: Bob Taylor (Senior Warden), Jim Wagner (Junior Warden), Wilma Patrick (Stewardship and Outreach), Margot Weiss (Treasurer 2007), Barbara Wihlborg (Secretary 2007), Sandy Taylor (Altar Guild, Sunday School and Communications), and Virginia Wagner (Website Designer and Liturgy & Arts). Each of these amazing people has demonstrated outstanding leadership, having repeatedly risen to challenges and invitations that would cause many people to melt into quivering globs of Jell-o. Without their continuing commitment, perseverance and endurance we would not be in a position to celebrate and thrive as a worshipping community today.

We have journeyed a long way (in every way) throughout 2007, and there is much to celebrate and lift up in thanksgiving as we enter the new realm of 2008. I believe that whatever our future holds we will continue to meet the challenges presented to us with the same forbearance and grace that this community has demonstrated over the past two years. We have learned much from the challenges we have already met and surpassed; we must never forget these days but always remember the lessons and insights we gain even now.

For only by experiences such as we have known together, experiences that harvest what is essential to life, crack and fly away the chaff, grind the grist and kneed the dough of the human heart until it is utterly soft can we be made ready to rise. Only then can we truly begin to feed those who hunger for the same wisdom and love that has been made known to us in our time.

The Peace of the Lord is Always with You!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel K. Taber-Hamilton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rev. Rachel K. Taber-Hamilton, A Very Grateful Rector

Senior Warden's Report

January 2007 began a new era for St. Stephen Episcopal Church (aka The Faithful Remnant). We began meeting in All Saints Chapel after meeting in homes for a little over a year. We then called the Reverend Rachel Taber - Hamilton as our Rector and had an outstanding celebration for a new ministry on February 11, 2007. With outstanding support from people throughout the Diocese of Olympia we filled the Sanctuary across the lot to overflowing. The support continued with many churches throughout the diocese loaning and gifting us with books, vestments and altar linens. This has been an event filled year.

Jim Wagner, Pastor Rachel and I were able to take our story to the Standing Committee and the Diocesan Council which has led to increased support for our community by the Diocese and newly elected Bishop Greg Rickel.

Submitted by: Bob Taylor

Junior Warden's Report

A philosopher (I think he was probably Chinese) said, "The longest journey begins with a single step, Grasshopper." From my point of view it has been a year of many small and wonderful steps on a long path. In tangible things, we have walked from essentially zero to a place where we can gather for worship surrounded by beauty in our own hand-made symbols of devotion appropriate to each season. The altar linens, vestments and hangings made by our altar guild and especially Lyn deShong not only have brought us closer to each other and to God but are helping spread our story throughout the diocese. (At a recent showing of liturgical art, Lyn was the only one of the twenty to thirty artists exhibiting who got a standing ovation after telling our story.) From our permanent (though intermittently exhibited) church sign to our newest addition, the wonderful Stations of the Cross, we have come quite a distance in our small steps. Let us take heart and persevere.

Faithfully,
Jim

Submitted by: Jim Wagner

Clerk to the Vestry Report

24! Yes, the secretary/clerk attended 24 Vestry or Parish meetings, listened, and typed up minutes for all. With open ears and flying pen, St. Stephen Episcopal's recorder of the minutes has been busy. All minutes are available to any parishioner at any time.

Submitted by:

Barbara Wihlborg

Clerk

Treasurer

Positions: Treasurer, Pledge Secretary, Mail Person

If ever there was an example of "small but mighty" it would have to be St Stephen Episcopal Church as the generous gifts of plate, pledge and dedicated funds came to a total of \$48,379.23 for 2007.

A total of \$5,641.43 went to Outreach. Rector's Salary--\$17,162.26 and Pension--\$3,086.42.

The challenge for this position has been the lack of computer knowledge on my part and I would like to acknowledge Jim Wihlborg for the many hours he donated on the computer. Perhaps we could honor him as Saint Jim!

The year ended with a checking balance of \$15,262.01 and Savings of \$10,027.88.

Submitted by: Margot Wiess

Stewardship and Outreach

Stewardship:

The focus was on total stewardship—how we use the many gifts from God both in the church and in the wider community. We accept the tithe as the measure of giving.

On Commitment Sunday our pledges of financial support and time to the church as well as our individual involvement beyond the walls were placed on the Altar and offered to the greater glory of God.

Outreach:

St. Stephen Episcopal Church pledges 10 percent of its undesignated income to Outreach. In 2007 we gave Outreach Funds to the following:

Children of the Ukraine (vitamins)	200.00
Rev Jo Beecher Juan and Antonio Paz	200.00
Kim & Kailey Fund (fire victims)	250.00
Smile Train (cleft surgeries)	300.00
World Vision – Darfur	200.00
Christian Children’s Fund	200.00
Susan Georgis Fund (Mark Davis Medical)	200.00
Help House (Saar’s Market Certificates for food (Thanksgiving/Christmas))	450.00
St. Paul’s—New Orleans	500.00
Pregnancy Care Center	100.00
Habitat for Humanity	500.00
Episcopal Relief and Development	500.00
CADA	295.00
Soroptomist (Digital Mammography)	295.00
La Inglesia de la Resurrecion	195.00
TOTAL	\$4,340.00

In addition to the gifts listed here, we individually provided gifts for 27 children at Rev Jo Beecher's church and participated in the Malaria Net project of the National Church. Through your purchases of nets and a large donation from Island Ministries we were able to buy 164 nets.

Submitted by: Wilma Patrick

Liturgy Committee Annual Report

The Liturgy Committee has met informally several times over the past year, but it had a formal meeting on Jan 13, 2008. Attending the meeting were Anne Katherine (Music), Sandy Taylor and Virginia Wagner (Altar Guild and Liturgy Planning), Lyn deShong (Altar Guild and Artist in Residence for Liturgical Art), Pat Matthews and Sherry Buckner (Readings and Lessons for Worship) and the Rev Rachel Taber Hamilton.

This year at St Stephen we began a program to provide ways to enhance the liturgy in our small chapel. With borrowed altar linens from Trinity, Everett and the Diocesan Altar Guild, we dressed the altar every Sunday in the appropriate colors. For Easter we purchased a Paschal Candle with a wooden stand and provided five services during Holy Week, including a Good Friday Stations of the Cross.

After Easter, Lyn deShong volunteered to make a Pentecost banner which started her ongoing commitment to provide a banner for each season in the church year. To date she has created three for Pentecost, three for Ordinary time, four for Advent, one for Lent and one for Palm Sunday. She also created a family tree banner for our All Saints celebration and the Diocesan shield and Episcopal Shield banners that hang beside the cross in the front of the church. She has also continued to review, repair and make new altar linens, including white and blue frontals. Using existing hangings and other materials she has rebuilt a purple set, a gold and blue set for advent, a rose set and she has plans for a red altar set for Palm Sunday this year. During Christmas she guided the women of the church in making cross stitched Crismons for our Chrismon Tree, as well as making pressed paper ones to hang in each window.

We have had several special activities to help us celebrate events over the year from birds flying overhead during Pentecost, to leaves for in honor of family members to put on the All Saints tree banner. We had special music at Christmas, guided by our organist and choir director, Anne Katherine. She has plans for special music for Palm Sunday and Easter. We are blessed to have Dallas Viall to assist with our music worship. Plans are underway for an activity to create Stations of the Cross for Good Friday and a full week of worship for Holy Week. Later in the year, we will have a Children's Service with the children doing readings and lessons as part of the service.

In July 2007 Sandy Taylor and Virginia Wagner went to the Liturgy and the Arts Institute at Seattle University. That experience led to the purchase of a baptismal font and many discussions about rearranging the furniture in the church. Our need for space made us move the altar back to the wall, but in the future we hope to be able to move it back out again. As we begin our second year in the chapel, we plan to continue to provide a welcoming environment for our worship.

We are grateful to all who participate in our worship services:

Our readers: Mimi Bouchee; Pat Matthews; Michele Chapman; Lyn deShong; Barry Dunn; Jean Fitzgerald; Les and Marilyn McClaine; Bob Taylor; Jim and

Virginia Wagner; TK Wegg; Margot Wiess and Barbara Wihlborg. Forgive us if we have missed someone.

We are also grateful to those who serve at the altar during worship: Marilyn McClaine, TK Wegg, Margot Wiess, Amanada Peterson (acolyte), and Bob Taylor.

Submitted by: Virginia Wagner

Children's Sunday School

We began January 2007 in the Chapel but we had no children in attendance. In mid-February we had a couple of families with children visit and so Sunday School began.

Our group has five faithful participants—Kylie, Amanda, Jared, Hailey and Sara. Sara is also our teacher's assistant. The ages range from 3 to 17 and—thanks be to God—it works for us.

Each Sunday we have a lesson (based on the Lectionary), an activity and a craft project. We go for walks and explore our environment.

We use lesson plans from the Episcopal Church National website. These lesson plans are for small church groups and they are mindful of cost and availability of craft project materials. The lessons are well written.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be with these children each Sunday.

If you would like to assist with a special project, share some special knowledge or occasionally be the teacher, please contact Sandy Taylor.

Submitted by: Sandy Taylor

Altar Guild

Our Altar Guild group consists of Virginia Wagner, Lyn deShong, Barbara Wihlborg, Sara Tuttle, Marianne Tuttle and Sandy Taylor.

We began our year with borrowed everything. There were two candles and a fair linen (altar covering) on the altar when we arrived to clean up the Chapel before our first Sunday service on January 7, 2007. We had a chalice, paten and a lavabo bowl which were gifts to our congregation from Pastor Rachel from her trip to the Holy Land. We had a borrowed set of a burse, veil and pall from Father Charlie Forbes.

Over the period of the next 2-3 months, we were either loaned or gifted with a beautiful metal chalice and paten, cruets for water and wine, linens, altar frontals, stoles, chasubles, and other items from the Diocese Altar Guild and individual church communities—most notably Trinity Episcopal in Everett.

Our Altar Books—Lectionary and Service Book—were gifted to us as was our baptismal font.

We purchased several items including a Paschal Candle and wooden stand and additional candles for the altar. A set of brass candle sticks are on permanent loan.

The final gift for our worship service was 40 Prayer Books and 30 Hymnals which were brought to us for our Christmas Eve Service. These books were a gift of The Bible and Common Prayer Book Society of the Episcopal Church.

Finally our resident artist, Lyn deShong, gifted us with her talent of designing and making many items for the altar and our Chapel environment.

We have been truly blessed.

Submitted by: Sandy Taylor

Communication

Communication is vital to the life of our community. Sunday Service time and the fellowship time that follows is an important time for us to talk and to hear about upcoming activities off/for the group.

Email: We also keep in touch with all of you through our weekly email which gives details of services and activities for the coming week and month. Copies of the email are available for those without computers. The copies are on the bulletin board.

Bulletin Boards: These boards are updated weekly and are displayed in the library/coffee hour area. The boards have activity sign up sheets, notes of interest, Vestry minutes, etc.

Website: www.ststephenepiscopal.com

Our website has items of interest for our community, the diocese and the national church. It contains our monthly calendar, book reviews, sermons, art, photo gallery and numerous items of general interest.

Prayer List: A weekly list emailed to the community of those in need of prayer. Mimi Bouchee is the faithful overseer of the prayer list. Copies of the prayer list are available each Sunday morning.

In the near future we will attempt to go to a monthly newsletter. At that time we will discontinue our weekly email update and will only use the email when we need to send out "urgent" notices or reminders.

Submitted by: Sandy Taylor

**ST. STEPHEN EPISCOPAL
MAJOR EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2007**

Jan 6—Clean up day prior to our first service (Bishop Sandy washed the windows)!!

Jan 7—Father Charlie Forbes, the first priest for St. Stephen in 1953, presides at our first service in the Chapel (Fr. Charlie actually helped build the Chapel). Bishop Sandy and Pastor Rachel also participated in this service.

Feb 10—Rachel becomes Rector of St. Stephen Episcopal

Feb 11—Rachel's Celebration of New Ministry: More than 180 people attended the service. Bishop Nedi Rivera was the Presider.

Lent 07—Special Sermon Series (glasses, rocks, bulb, etc)

Holy Week 07—Four special services: Tenebrae (darkness), Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil

Easter 07—Flowering of Cross; New Paschal Candle

May 13—First Communion, TJ Smith

May 20—Baptism of Kira Grimes in the Sanctuary

May 27—Pentecost—New banner and doves

Jul 13—Wayne Chapman Memorial Service in the Sanctuary

July 28—Mollie Hopper Memorial Service in the Sanctuary

July-August: Episcopal 101--Adult Education

Aug 14—Bishop Nedi Rivera Visitation. TK Wegg confirmed. Sherry Buckner, Pat Matthews and Marianne Tuttle received.

Sep 30—Bishop Greg Rickel and family make their first Diocesan visit to our community.

Oct 21—Dorothea May (91) and her great-grandson Cole Taylor (2) are Baptized.

Dec 23—Greening of the Chapel: Banners, Chrismon Tree, cedar swags etc.

Dec 24—New Hymnals and Prayer Books presented to the community.

Additionally, we participated in potlucks, receptions, dine-outs, soup lunches and picnics providing many opportunities for fellowship throughout the year.

Lyn provided new banners and/or altar pieces for each new season of the church year.