

# The Episcopal Church of the Nativity



*Nativity, Newport*

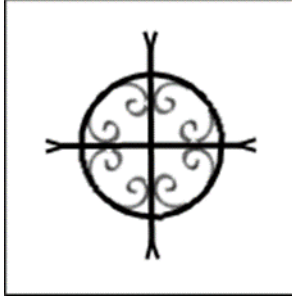


*St. Stephen, Thompsontown*

*St. Stephen*

2024 Parish Profile

159 S. Second Street, Newport, PA



## The Episcopal Church of the Nativity & St. Stephen

July 2024

Dear Candidate,

The Church of the Nativity & St. Stephen is a rural congregation of faithful people whose benefactors established the Bechtel and Deckard Trusts that allow us to continue to worship and support organizations in our community. We currently find ourselves in a time of transition while continuing to move forward under an active and devoted vestry.

We are looking for a priest whose strengths include preaching the gospel, pastoral care and continuing community outreach; someone who can help us build on our strengths, support our aging congregation, and can reach out to families seeking a place to worship. We once had a robust Christian Education program, Godly Play, and look forward to discovering how best to serve our children and families.

In conclusion, we are looking for a priest who will join our family and help lead us in our outreach and service in our community.

Yours in Christ,

The Church of the Nativity & St. Stephen's Search Committee, on behalf of the Vestry and members of the Parish

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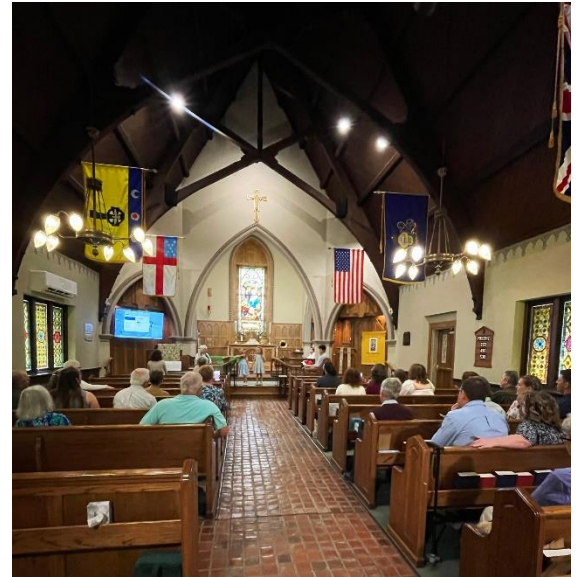
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*Worship at Nativity*



*Parish House*



*St. Stephen Interior*

## Our History

The history of what would become the Church of the Nativity and Saint Stephen began as services were held in Thompsettown, Pa, in a school or in homes in that small Juniata County settlement in the early 19th century. Our nation was less than 50 years old. John Quincy Adams served as the 6th President of the 24 united states in the union. In 1827, a stone church was erected. But the congregation disbanded in 1835. Subsequently, the church was used by several other denominations. It wasn't until 1890 that the Episcopal Church reclaimed the building and affiliated it with the newly-built Church of the Nativity located ten miles away in Newport, Perry County. That worked well for the next 80 years until it was deemed cumbersome to travel to two churches when membership in the small church was in decline. However, at the time of the Bicentennial, in 1976, St. Stephen Church was restored and reopened. Today it is used once a month during the summer as well as for special services during Lent, Christmas, and Advent.



*St. Stephen Episcopal Church, Thompsettown*

The Church of the Nativity in Newport was erected in 1889 following 14 years of gatherings at the home of Henry and Elizabeth Bechtel. A lot had been purchased at its current location for \$800 in 1886. The Bechtels were the primary benefactors, and their legacy continues today through their endowment. A major restoration was completed in 1988 at which time a handicap access was enabled by means of a ramp to enter and an elevator to negotiate the four levels. In addition, the church was connected to the original parish house which houses church offices, Sunday School rooms, and meeting spaces. Today we are blessed with two beautiful historic churches, both well-maintained. *See visual timeline here: (insert link)*



*The Episcopal Church of the Nativity, Newport*

## Our Leadership and Staff



### **Jill Hoover, Sr. Warden of the Vestry**

Jill has served as Sr. Warden since 2020.

She continues to faithfully lead us during our period of transition.



### **Sue Beamer, Organist and Music Director**

Sue has served as our organist since 1980.

She chooses the Sunday hymns and helps to coordinate the choir and guest singers and musicians.



### **Andrea Jezewski, Organist and Music Coordinator**

Andrea plays at least one Sunday per month.

She helps to coordinate guest singers and musicians.

### **Michele Neibert, Parish Administrator**

Michele joined our staff in 2015.

She has been instrumental in helping stay on track during our time of transition. She has strong computer skills which have greatly enhanced our worship and office efficiency.

### **Becky-Gephart Crup, Treasurer**

Becky has been our treasurer since 2021.

She works tirelessly at keeping our books up to date using QuickBooks and our audit team. She is instrumental in completing the financial portion of our parochial report.

### **Bonnie Oren, Financial Secretary**

Bonnie has been a part of our staff for more than 25 years.

She is responsible for payment of church bills, balancing our accounts and assists in filing reports.



### **Aiden Shiffer, Media Assistant**

Aiden joined our team in 2022.

He streams our weekly worship services via Zoom each Sunday.

### **Vestry and Search Committee**

Our Vestry consists of 7 members. The Search Committee is comprised of the vestry members and 4 parishioners. They have been working to plan for our future and discern who we are looking for in our next priest.



## Our Mission and Worship



*Eucharist at Nativity*

The mission of our church is to seek and serve Christ through service to others; to welcome and involve all into our parish family, valuing diversity and unity; to foster learning Scripture, tradition, and reason: and to build a community of faith for worship, spiritual growth, ministry, and mission.

*Link to video of 'What Nativity Means to Me'*

A weekly service of the Holy Eucharist, Rite II, is currently held at 9:30 most Sunday mornings, with occasional celebrations of Morning Prayer. Our Sunday Liturgy is Eucharistic Centered. We share in the presence of Christ in the bread and wine in order to be fed and

to be sent out to do the work God is calling us to do. Our liturgical rhythm is taken from the 1979

Book of Common Prayer and Enriching Our Worship. An average of 30 people are present at weekly services. We are blessed to have a large portion of the parish community involved in our services: four people are crucifers; four altar guild teams; four parishioners serve as lay ministers and chalice bearers; two members serves as eucharistic visitors; eight are lectors or read Prayers of the People; and most members serve as greeters/ushers throughout the year. While we presently do not have a choir we love to sing. Our music is basically taken from the 1982 Hymnal and Lift Every Voice and Sing. Two part-time organists offer weekly worship music.



*Worshipping Outdoors*

A large portion of the congregation is actively engaged in parish activities, which give members a sense of ownership. Service is encouraged, gratefully accepted and appreciated. At the same time, the members reach out to visitors and new members. Although our members have tended to reflect the fairly homogeneous demographics of the local communities where they live, we believe our church to be a warm and responsive family to all who enter her doors. We have been and continue to be flexible and adaptable to the worship styles of our clergy.



*Baptism*



*Children during Worship*



*Organist Sue Beamer*



*The Altar*

The parish of Nativity and St. Stephen completed a building project about 10 years ago that made all parts of the Nativity and St. Stephen physical facilities accessible to elderly and handicapped individuals. The church building and parish house are connected through a cloister containing an elevator; the elevator also provides access to the kitchen and undercroft facilities for suppers, meetings and, importantly, weekly coffee hour. The former rectory serves as parish house, with meeting rooms, classrooms and offices for the rector and part-time secretary.



*Jubilee Certificate*

Our parish is a Jubilee Ministry Center, having been designated such in 2004 by diocesan bishops and affirmed by Executive Council. Most of our parishioners are actively engaged in outreach work throughout the community, giving of their time and resources to help others. Some of these organizations include the Neighbor Helping Neighbor Food Bank, the Perry County Literacy Council, and Join Hands. Our church was instrumental in the development of the

Episcopal Gardens (Honaman House) in Thompsontown which is subsidized by Housing and Urban Development, and Episcopal Commons in Newport, subsidized by the Rural Rental Housing Program. Both housing projects serve low-income and disabled persons. We continue to be actively engaged in ministering to the residents.



*Delivering Christmas Gifts to Join Hands*



*An outing with residents of the Episcopal Commons*



*Coffee Hour*



*Honaman House, Thompsontown*



*The Commons, Newport*

## Our Ministry

Coffee Hour is served every Sunday at Nativity or at St. Stephen according to a schedule of volunteers. We coordinate an annual picnic for the residents of Honaman House and Episcopal Commons as well as a church picnic at the Landis Farm. Holiday bags with goodies, a craft and an inspirational message



*Church Picnic at the Landis Farm*



*Honaman House Cookout*

are delivered to both residential facilities. College students from our congregation receive goodie boxes with treats and even on one occasion a hand-embroidered pillowcase. Appalachian Trail hikers have been welcomed with a warm meal and a place to sleep.

## Christian Formation Outreach

Following coffee hour, many meet in the parish house parlor for Parlor People, a time of spiritual growth and renewal. Together we participate in group discussions of topics related to our understanding as Christians. In addition to Sunday liturgies, during the week ECW meets for a time of prayer and fellowship either on Zoom or at a local restaurant.



*Weekly Fellowship at a Local Restaurant*

Our members make efforts to give back to Mother Nature by organizing an annual road cleanup day and by serving as a pickup center for saplings to plant. We participate in the efforts of Join Hands in an annual Christmas program by purchasing gifts and donating food gift cards for more than 50 children. We host a table in conjunction with the YWCA at the annual Canal Day celebration on the town square. In the past, our priest has blessed the animals on St. Francis Day and presented a St. Francis Pet Medal to owners.



*All set up for Canal Day in Newport square*



*Community Food Pantry*

Our food pantry in the parking lot is filled and refilled, our grounds are open with a labyrinth, bench, and plantings displaying an invitation to all. Everyone passing by can see we open our hearts to them and invite them to share in our revitalizing experience. All are welcome!

ECW is open to all women. Their mission is to give back to various community mission works, in addition to weekly devotions.



*Bench and Garden Area at Front of Nativity*



*The Labyrinth*





## Our Community

The Church of the Nativity and St. Stephen draws parishioners primarily from Perry and Juniata counties but also has faithful members in Cumberland, Dauphin, and Mifflin Counties. Central Pennsylvania is a land of rolling

farm fields and green mountains with scattered villages and towns. The area covers 1,700 square miles bounded on the east by the Susquehanna River and bisected by the Juniata River. To the south is Blue Mountain which forms a boundary with Cumberland Valley. Small towns like Lewistown, Selinsgrove, Carlisle, and Mechanicsburg dot the region with the city of Harrisburg, the state capital and seat of the Diocese, dominating its southernmost point. The area was originally home to the Susquehannock Indians and later settled in the 18th and 19th centuries by Scots-Irish immigrants and by Amish and Mennonites. Agriculture, logging, and tanning were major occupations in the early years.



Today Norfolk Southern and Amtrak use the same routes. Farming and logging continue to thrive. Families and retirees make their homes here. Artists of many genres appreciate the area and the Amish and Mennonites pursue agriculture and building trades.

Preservation of farmland and local history are important locally. Most of the towns have retained their historical character with bandstands, town squares, and monuments. Brick, stone, and frame



M.W. Smith Farm, Newport

houses are seen in the center of towns with modern homes in the outlying areas. Covered bridges still in use dot the area. Farms produce many varieties of crops and animals. Organic farms sell produce locally. Wineries, distilleries, and breweries can be found many of which host musical, artistic, and charitable events.



*A parishioner with his catch*

Outdoor recreational activities are available including hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, birding, cross-country skiing, bicycling, swimming, horseback riding, and boating. Both rivers are popular with campers and kayakers. The Appalachian Trail runs along the top of Blue Mountain and crosses the Susquehanna River at the Clark's Ferry bridge in Duncannon. Little Buffalo State Park is three miles from the center of Newport, and other parks and hiking trails are nearby. Both Port Royal and Selinsgrove offer speedways. For more information about Perry County, visit <https://perryco.org/>



*Kayaking Holman Lake at Little Buffalo State Park*

In addition to public elementary, middle, and high school, several Christian Schools operate in the area. Home schoolers are an active population, and they also participate in public school activities. Some students attend private schools such as Harrisburg Academy, Harrisburg Christian School, St. Stephen's Episcopal School, St. Patrick's Catholic School, Holy Name of Jesus or Trinity High School. Vo-Tech schools prepare students for the work force. Students wishing to pursue higher education have many options nearby: Harrisburg Community College, Harrisburg University, Bucknell University, Susquehanna University, Juniata College, Gettysburg College, and Dickinson College. Parents with preschoolers have options such as preschools and day care centers. Home day care is also available.

Doctor and dentist offices abound and Newport has a medical arts building, and both Newport and Loysville have health clinics. Although there are no hospitals in Newport, it is a short distance to hospitals in Harrisburg, Lewistown, Hershey, Camp Hill, Mechanicsburg, Carlisle, and Enola.



*The UPMC building at Bretz Court, Newport*

There are several nursing homes in the Perry County and Juniata County area in addition to those in nearby counties. The Perry County and Mifflin-Juniata Area Agencies on Aging provide services to older citizens

Newport Public Library located on N. 4th Street and the Perry County Council of the Arts on the square serve Newport and surrounding areas with books, galleries, exhibits, and classes in art, writing, and photography for adults and for children. Musical and theatrical performances are easily reached in larger venues in



*Hershey Theatre*

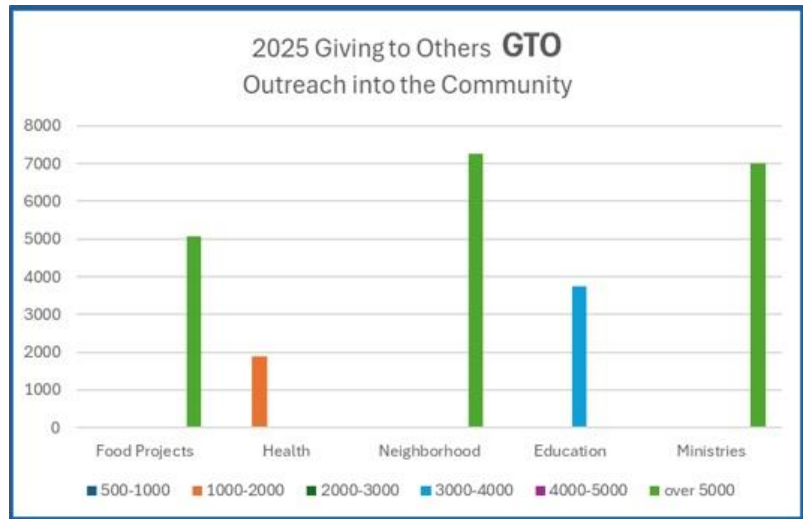
Harrisburg, Hershey, and Lewistown. In addition, Harrisburg offers museums, art galleries and restaurants. New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. are within easy reach by car, bus, or train.



*PCCA*

## Our Finances

Church of the Nativity and St. Stephen has an annual budget income of approximately \$250,000. Our parish has been blessed to be the beneficiary of two endowments: the Bechtel Trust and the Deckard Trust. We tithe 10% of the larger of these two endowments, the Bechtel Trust, giving this money back to our local community through various charitable organizations. This program is known as Giving to Others or GTO.



Because of the endowments and the generous giving of our parishioners, we are proud to contribute our Fair Share to the mission of the Diocese. Our level of giving is in line with the levels within our diocese and typically amounts to \$40,000 in pledges and \$6,000 in plate offerings annually. The Kyle Weller Scholarship Fund provides financial support to students.

Nativity and St. Stephen is in a solid financial position to meet the salary and benefit requirements of a full time priest.

