



# SAINT STEPHEN'S CHURCH

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

EST. 1837

**W**ELCOME TO SAINT STEPHEN'S – if you are new to the area or just visiting, please that we are so glad that your are here, and that you are welcome in this community of faith. S. Stephen's is an Episcopal parish in the Diocese of Rhode Island and is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Located in the midst of Brown University, it serves the communities of Providence and beyond. S. Stephen's has stood within the Anglo-Catholic tradition since its founding, and so the Mass or Eucharist is at the center of our common life, with ancient and timeless ceremonial used to draw attention to the Living God in our very midst. We strive to be a diverse community and come from many various backgrounds, while united in One Body through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are seeking a spiritual home, we would be glad for S. Stephen's to be that place in your life. *Sunday services are held at 8 and 10am & daily services are held Tuesday – Sunday.* For a full listing of service times and parish activities please visit [sstephens.org](http://sstephens.org). Welcome!

Fr. Benjamin Straley, *Rector*

## *A Guide to the Church*

**T**he present S. Stephen's Church dates from 1862. The congregation had been in existence since the 1830's and was formally organized as a parish of what is now the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island in 1839. From 1840 the congregation worshiped in a church—now the Barker Playhouse—located at Benefit and Transit Streets. As the parish grew during the 1850s, it experienced the need for a larger and more centrally located church building; and in 1860 it purchased a lot on George Street for this purpose.

The parish engaged architect Richard Upjohn (1802–1878), one of the pioneers of the gothic revival in the United States, who provided a design in the Middle Pointed or Decorated style. The cornerstone was laid on Saint Matthew's Day, September 21, 1860. The completed building was consecrated on Thursday, February 27, 1862, during a swirling snowstorm.

### **THE EXTERIOR**

The church is constructed of Smithfield (Rhode Island) granite, with New Jersey brownstone window frames and tracery. Its dimensions are 120 feet long, 86 feet wide, and 68 feet high. At

the southeast corner of the building stands the **Church Tower**, designed by the Providence firm of Hoppin and Ely, and completed in 1900. Capped by four pinnacles and a cone-shaped copper spire, it reaches a height of 93 feet—much shorter than the 180-foot tower and spire originally planned by Richard Upjohn. The tower contains a set of fifteen **Tubular Chimes**, installed and blessed in 1902, the largest of which weighs about 230 pounds.

To the west of the church stands the **Walter Gardner Webster Memorial Guildhouse**, completed in 1901. It was built in memory of the young Curate of the parish who lost his life in the sinking of the liner *La Bourgogne* in 1898. At the third floor on the front of the building, standing in a niche behind protective glass, is a **Statue of Saint Stephen**, given in memory of Walter Gardner Webster by his parents in 1903.

Carved in oak, the **Doors** at the main entrance were given in 1928 (along with the Rose Window above them) as a memorial to The Rev'd Dr. George McClellan Fiske, Rector of S. Stephen's from 1884 to 1919. On the doors appear the figures of (from left to right) King Solomon, Saint Stephen, Saint Paul, and the Prophet Ezekiel.

### THE NARTHEX

Also known as the porch, the narthex is the area just inside the main entrance to the church. Set in the west wall is the **Marriage Window**, depicting the Wedding at Cana in Galilee, where Christ performed his first miracle of changing water into wine. This fine window was made by the C.E. Kempe Company in London, and given by the Vestry in 1910 in memory of Mrs. Mary Greenough Fiske, the wife of the Rector.

Above the entrance, on the south wall, is a **Rose Window** made largely of blue and red glass. It depicts the Vine of Life with grapes and pomegranates. This window was given in 1928 (along with the doors) as a memorial to The Rev'd Dr. George McClellan Fiske.

Set in the top of the inner doors are **Four Small Windows** with symbols of Saint Stephen (dalmatic and stones) and Saint James (scallop shell and boat). They are a memorial to the Rev'd James C. Amo, an Assistant at S. Stephen's who was killed in an automobile accident in 1960.

### THE LADY CHAPEL

Separated from the Nave by a glass screen, the Lady Chapel was originally designed to be a classroom. Its use for worship dates to 1869, when an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary was first set up. It has undergone several renovations in the years since.

The present **Altar** stands at the east end, flanked by two **Riddell Posts** surmounted by candle-bearing **Angels**. On the black Retable are a silver **Tabernacle** and six **Candlesticks**, framed by the blue and gold **Reredos**, on which is mounted the **Christus Rex**, depicting Christ reigning as King from the cross. Suspended above the Altar is the **Baldachino** (Canopy). To the right of the Altar, against the south wall, stands the **Statue of the Virgin Mary**. To the left of the Altar, in the niche in the northeast corner, stands the **Statue of Saint Alban the Martyr**. Two carved oak **Altar Rails** mark off the Sanctuary area of the Lady Chapel.

All of the above-mentioned Lady Chapel furnishings were installed in a major renovation in 1964, designed by Robert and Toby Robbins of New York, in a style inspired by the work of the Scottish Anglo-Catholic priest and architect Sir Ninian Comper (1864–1960).

Hanging from the ceiling is the **Sanctuary Lamp**, given in 1908, in which a candle burns to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. The two oak **Screens** on either side of the Altar and Reredos date to a renovation of 1922.

Three of the four **Stained-Glass Windows** in the Lady Chapel date to the construction of the church and were designed by Owen Doremus of New Jersey. (Doremus also made the glass for the screen partitioning the Lady Chapel from the Nave.) Second from the front, the **Tiffany Window** depicts Mary Magdalene and the Angel at the tomb of Christ on Easter Sunday morning (Matthew 28:1–7). This window was given in memory of Carrie M. Bajnotti who died in 1892 in Palermo, Sicily, by her sister, Mrs. Rush G. Hawkins.

At the back of the Lady Chapel, on the west wall above the doorway, hangs a twelve-foot **Crucifix**. A slightly reduced copy of an original attributed to the painter Giotto (1267–1337) in Saint Mark's Church in Florence, Italy, it was given in 1926.

To the right of the doorway, also on the west wall, is a Western-style **Icon of Our Lady of Walsingham** by New York iconographer John Walsted. It was commissioned as a memorial to parishioner Malcolm Hyman (1970–2009) and installed in 2011.

The small **Altar** under the Walsingham Icon was used for many years for children's Masses in the Guildhouse. Its origins are uncertain, but it may be the original Altar used in the Lady Chapel before the renovations of 1922.

To the left of the doorway, in the southwest corner, is a **Confessional**. Its date is uncertain, but it is the church's first confessional, installed sometime prior to the 1920s.

## THE NAVE

The Nave is the area where the congregation sits. To appreciate Richard Upjohn's design, stand in the Nave and focus attention on the church's walls, pillars, arches, rafters, and ceiling. Dating to the church's original construction are the **Pews**, the **Wainscoting** lining the walls, the **Carved Panels** framing the doors to the Narthex, and the **Glass Screen**, with its black walnut gothic tracery and leaded diamond-shaped panes. The **Pillars** and **Capitals** are Portland (Connecticut) brownstone. The **Arches** are plaster cleverly simulating carved stone. Looking up, one sees in the **Clerestory** the church's original **Doremus Stained-Glass Windows**.

Mounted around the perimeter of the Nave are the fourteen **Stations of the Cross**. Carved in Switzerland, the Stations were given to the church in 1928 as a memorial to the Rev'd Frederick Spies Penfold, Rector from 1919 to 1926.

The **Lanterns** hanging from the arches were given in 1951. Photographs of the church from before that time show lampposts mounted next to the pews in the north and south aisles.

## THE WEST WALL

At the southwest corner is the **Statue of Saint Stephen**. Carved in French limestone by Gilbert A. Franklin, this statue of our patron saint was given and blessed in 1945.

The **Baptismal Font** is a reproduction of a holy water stoup in the Cathedral of Saint Mary in Orvieto, Italy. Carved of white marble, it was installed and blessed in 1904. The brass railing on the platform next to the font was given in 1916.

Mounted on the wall above the font is a twelfth-century **Relief of Saint Nicholas**, carved from alabaster and framed in Siena marble. Although at first glance it appears to depict a baptism—which accounts for its installation in this location—its subject is actually the legend of Saint Nicholas raising to life three children who had been murdered and their bodies concealed in a pork barrel. It was given in 1899 by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hale Ives Goddard.

Above the door leading into the Guildhouse is the painting of **Christ Healing the Sick**, given in 1904. Of unknown origin, it is thought to be eighteenth century.

The **Rose Window** and the two **Lancet Windows** were installed in 1898. The window to the right depicts Saint Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr, patron saint of music. The window to the left depicts Saint Luke the Evangelist. Since the construction of the kitchen on the second floor of the Guildhouse, it has been regrettably necessary to illuminate the lancet windows by fluorescent backlighting.

To the right of the confessional, in the northwest corner, is mounted the **Bust of Bishop Thomas Mark Clark**, Bishop of Rhode Island from 1854 to 1903, and Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church from 1899 to 1903. Bishop Clark laid the cornerstone of the present S. Stephen's Church in 1860 and presided at its consecration in 1862. The memorial was unveiled and blessed on Easter Eve, 1905.

## THE NORTH AISLE

Nearest the back of the church in the north aisle is the **Ives Window**. Depicted to the left is Saint John the Evangelist; to the right is Saint Clement, third Bishop of Rome (d. 101). Robert Hale Ives, Jr., was mortally wounded at Antietam in 1862; his dying bequest helped pay off the debt incurred in the construction of the church.

Second from the back of the church is the **Ormsbee Window**. To the left, Christ offers the Crown of life to a kneeling young woman—whom the artist has given two right feet! To the right, an angel bears a little child heavenward. This window memorializes Mary Spurr Ormsbee, who died at the age of four in 1870.

Next is the **Seagrave Window**, made by the **Tiffany Company** of New York. The left panel depicts Christ the Good Shepherd; the right panel depicts an angel leading a little child to Paradise. The window memorializes Helen, Howard, Loraine, and Eleanor Seagrave.

Fourth is the **Mary T. Ames Window**. The subject of this window is a mystery. One theory is that it depicts Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. Mary T. Ames died in 1860.

Fifth and closest to the front of the church is the **Chafee Window**. The left panel depicts Christ receiving the little children (Mark 10:13–16). The right panel depicts Jesus as a boy questioning the teachers in the Temple (Luke 2:46–47). The window was given in memory of Clara, Matilda, and Nathan Chafee.

Near the front of the north aisle is the carved oak **Bishop's Throne**, given in 1889 in memory of John Spurr Ormsbee.

At the head of the north aisle is the **Saint Stephen's Chapel**. The **Altar**, blessed in 1946, was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph J. Bodell. Painted at the end of the fifteenth century, the **Altar Piece** is of the German Swabian School. The panels within the frame depict four scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary: the Adoration of the Magi and the Coronation of the Queen of Heaven in smaller panels at the top; and the Annunciation and the Nativity in larger panels at the bottom. The outside panels at the bottom contain figures of Saint Peter holding a key and Saint Paul with a sword. Above are the Four Latin Doctors of the Church: (clockwise) Saints Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and Augustine. On the Altar, the ivory corpus of the **Crucifix** is southern Italian, and the gilded wooden **Candlesticks** are French from the eighteenth century. The permanent **Frontal** on the Altar was made by Saint Hilda's Guild in New York and given in 1963.

#### **CROSSING, CHOIR, & SANCTUARY**

The oak furnishings dominating the east end of the building—including the **Pulpit**, **Rood Screen**, **Choir Stalls**, **High Altar**, **Reredos**, **Altar Rails**, and **Credence Table**—date to the 1883 renovation of the church to the design of Boston architect Henry Vaughan in the Perpendicular gothic style.

In medieval church architecture, the **Nave**—the area where the congregation sits—represents the Church Militant on earth; the **Choir**—the area between the Rood Screen and the Altar Rail—represents the Church Expectant in Purgatory; and the **Sanctuary**—the area behind the Altar Rail—represents the Church Triumphant in Heaven. The **Rood Screen** thus symbolizes our passage through the Gate of Death to the eternal life purchased for us by Christ on the Cross.

In 1893 two additions amplifying this symbolism were made: the **Brass Gates** at the bottom of the Rood Screen; and the **Calvary Figures**—added to what was originally a plain Cross—at the top. The **Crucifix** bears the emblems of the Four Evangelists on its arms, with a glorious sunburst around the figure of Christ. To the right stands Saint John, and to the left the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The 1883 **Pulpit** and **Choir Stalls** were given in memory of the Rev'd James H. Eames, Rector from 1845 to 1850, by his wife. On the pillar above the pulpit hangs a bronze and silver **Pulpit Crucifix**, given in 1883 in memory of Allen Brown by his daughters. The purpose of a pulpit crucifix is to symbolize the words of Saint Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians (1:23): "We preach Christ crucified." The design of the **Choir Stalls** is unusual, providing eastward-facing seating—known as **Return Stalls**--for a number of the choristers. This feature emphasizes that church music is offered to the praise of God rather than for the entertainment of the congregation.

The **Tabernacle** upon the High Altar and the **Seventeen Painted Panels** in the **Reredos** were given in 1890. The panels were executed by the firm of John Hardman and Company of London, from designs by Roger Watts. They depict the following:

#### **Top Row**

Center—Christ in Majesty  
Right—Adoration of the Magi  
Left—Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary

#### **Middle Row**

Center—Madonna and Child  
Near Right—Saint Paul  
Middle Right—Saint Athanasius  
Far Right—Saint John Chrysostom  
Near Left—Saint Stephen  
Middle Left—Saint Alban  
Far Left—Saint Ambrose

#### **Bottom Row**

Tabernacle Door—Angel of the Resurrection  
Near Right—Mary Magdalene  
Middle Right—Mary the Wife of Clopas  
Far Right—Mary Salome  
Near Left—Saint John  
Middle Left—Saint Peter  
Far Left—Saint James

The **Crucifix** on the Tabernacle was given in 1886; and the **Six Candlesticks** on the Retable were given in 1889.

Above the High Altar, in the walls of the **Apse**, are three sets of **Stained Glass Windows**. The center window depicts the **Archangel Michael** (to the left) and the **Archangel Raphael** (to the right). Designed by Roger Watts and made by John Hardman and Company of London, this window was dedicated on Easter Eve, 1895.

To the Gospel (left) side are the **Bishop Griswold Memorial Windows**, depicting **Moses** to the left, and a figure whose identity has been conjectured to be that of the **Prophet Elijah** or perhaps **Saint John the Evangelist**, to the right. From 1811 to 1843 the Rt. Rev. Alexander Viets Griswold was Bishop of the Eastern Diocese, which encompassed all of New England except Connecticut. He consecrated the original S. Stephen's Church on Benefit Street in 1840.

To the Epistle (right) side are the **Bishop Henshaw Memorial Windows**, depicting **Saint Peter** to the right, and **Saint Paul** to the left. The Rt. Rev. John P.K. Henshaw was Bishop of Rhode Island from 1843 to 1852.

Looking further up, one sees the **Painted Ceiling** of the Apse and Chancel, featuring gold stars against a blue background. A watercolor of the church in the early days shows the ceiling of the entire nave painted in these colors.

Hanging from the ceiling is the **Sanctuary Lamp**, in which a candle burns to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. It was given in 1897 by The Rev'd Dr. Walter Gardner Webster in memory of his sister. (Father Webster lost his life the following year; and the Guildhouse was built in his memory in 1901.)

Within the Sanctuary, against the wall on the Epistle (right) side, the **Sedilia**—the bench used by the Sacred Ministers during Mass—was given and blessed in 1949 as a memorial to all parishioners who have served their country in time of war. The inscription “That we may reverently use our freedom” is from a Prayer Book Collect.

The **Austin Pipe Organ** was built in 1917, incorporating elements of the earlier Roosevelt Organ of 1893. It was rebuilt in 1955 with a gift from Mrs. R.H. Ives Goddard in memory of her husband, a long-standing Vestryman and Church Warden, and subsequently dedicated as the **Robert Hale Ives Goddard Memorial Organ**. The **Organ Console** is set between the Choir Stalls and the Altar Rail on the Gospel (left) side; its inner workings were completely rebuilt during the summer of 2006. The casing for many of the organ's 75 ranks of pipes can be seen at the head of the South Aisle. More pipes are housed above the doorway between the Narthex and the Nave.

In the Crossing, outside the Rood Screen, is the **Eagle Lectern**, given by Trinity Church, Stoughton, Massachusetts in 1992. This gift came in thanksgiving for the ministry of the Rev'd Alan P. Maynard—a priest long associated with S. Stephen's—as Interim Rector of Trinity Church from 1988 to 1991. Flanking the lectern are two massive **Candelabra** given to the church in 1893. Designed by Henry Vaughan, they originally stood on the Altar Steps.

At the head of the South Aisle of the Nave, under the organ casing, is the **Thomas à Becket Altar**. This Altar came from the Chapel of the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity, which maintained a convent associated with S. Stephen's from 1888 until 1983, when the last Providence Sisters returned to their motherhouse in Wisconsin.

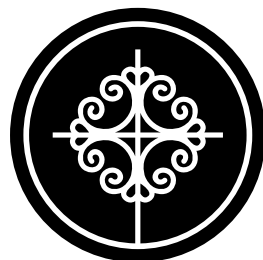
## CONCLUDING WORD

**A** church building is not a museum. Rather, it is the home of a living community of faith. The building shapes the life of the parish family; and the life of the parish family in turn gives the building its true meaning and significance. The beauty of a church can only be fully appreciated in the context of the activity for which it was built and for which it exists: the worship of God.

The furnishings, artifacts, and objects of art found within the church's walls are precious family heirlooms. They bear witness in visual and symbolic form to the Faith taught by the universal Church and believed and practiced by the local worshiping community. They memorialize previous generations of worshipers—who rejoiced, grieved, laughed, cried, prayed, and struggled with doubts and temptations just as we do—and who remain no less members of our parish family

even though no longer visibly present with us. When viewing a memorial window or plaque, it is particularly appropriate to say a prayer for the soul of the person in whose memory it was given. They pray for us as well.

If you have found your visit to S. Stephen's Church in Providence rewarding, we invite you to join us for worship. If you live nearby and are without a church home, we invite you to consider becoming a member of our parish. And if you are already a member of another church, we ask you to remember us in your prayers.



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