



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WHERE GOD IS SEEN, LOVE IS FELT, LIVES ARE CHANGED!

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## 2023 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order and Welcome	Fr. Bailey Norman, Priest-In-Charge
Voice vote to amend By-laws	Fr. Bailey Norman
Election of 2024 Vestry Members and 2024	Barbara Steele, Nominating
Diocesan Convention Delegates/Alternates	Committee Chair
Priest-In-Charge Remarks	Fr. Bailey Norman
Senior Warden Remarks	Courtney Manrod, Senior Warden
Finance Remarks	Tom Clary, Finance Committee Roger Johnson, presenting
Stewardship Report	John and Olivia Cox
Acknowledgements	Fr. Bailey Norman

Note: Voting implementation will be conducted by outgoing Vestry members (Barbara Steele, Rachel Kirk, Jim Rousey and Cyril Meredith III).

### MINUTES FROM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 13, 2022

*The annual meeting was led by the Senior Warden, Judith Delaney, because of the extended medical leave of the Priest-in-Charge, Bailey Norman.*

Judith Delaney called the meeting to order immediately following the 10AM service.

In her opening remarks Judith indicated that the Annual Report was emailed to all members of the parish. Hard copies would only be available by making a request to the Church Office. She thanked all the committee chairs for their reports; Betsy Ellis for collecting all the reports into the content; and Nancy Carow for putting it into its final format. She also thanked the men who prepared breakfast before the service.

Minutes from the October 3, 2021, Annual Meeting were accepted as submitted and unanimously approved. (Courtney Manrod/Barbara Steele)

#### **Introduction of Vestry Candidates: Judith Delaney**

Judith explained that the purpose of the Vestry is to attend to the temporal activities of the parish. The candidates for vestry were asked to stand as their names were called: Leah Bailey, Emily Doane, Cleon Hartman, Ashley Hillis, and Courtney Manrod. Because the date of the annual meeting was changed, Leah Bailey and Emily Doane were not present due to prior commitments.

#### **Election of Vestry Members: Judith Delaney**

2022 Vestry members whose terms will end on December 31, 2022: Bonnie Bautz, Liz Herbes, Sandi Robertson and Judith Delaney. Judith thanked the others rotating off of Vestry for their service.

She stated that 4 new members would be elected to a 3-year term during the meeting. If a vacancy on the Vestry occurred during the coming year, the person who was not elected today would complete the remainder of 2023.

Outgoing Vestry members distributed ballots to parishioners who were eligible to vote (confirmed communicants of St. Stephen's, in good standing and 16 years of age or older). On the first ballot, Leah Bailey, Cleon Hartman, Ashley Hillis and Courtney Manrod were elected as the new Vestry members.

Judith stated that it is time to update the Parish Directory. Forms were distributed to the congregation to update their directory information. She indicated that this could also be done on the website.

**Assistant Rector's Report: Fr. Ashton Sims**

Fr Ashton heartfully reflected on St. Stephen's current status given the unplanned, extended absences of both Fr. Bailey and Elizabeth Pack. He expressed his gratitude to the Vestry and devoted volunteers who have stepped in to fulfill the many open roles and keep the church going. He asked that everyone continue to pray for Fr. Bailey's and Elizabeth's swift recovery and returns. He reminded the Parish that we are not alone. The Diocese cares about this place and has supported us with a supply priest and now with a Vicar through mid-January. He asked for feedback so that nothing falls through the gaps in the interim.

**Vicar's Report: Fr. Charles Fels**

Fr Fels has been with us for a few days. His wife, Susan, attended with him today. He was called by Bishop Brian to be temporary Vicar. He knows Fr. Bailey from seminary when Fr. Bailey was the youngest and Fr. Fels the oldest seminarian in their class. Fr. Fels noted he is St. Stephen's voluntary Vicar and that his term will be until January 15, 2023, or until Fr. Bailey returns.

**Finance Report: Tom Clary**

Tom reported that despite this year's challenges, we have been able to stay on budget. Interest earned from the Endowment Fund was added to the General Fund income, helping offset our costs. Each year the Vestry is responsible for developing a balanced budget based on pledges and cash reserves (that are principally comprised of interest earned on the Endowment Fund). Cash reserves may not be available when the 2023 budget is developed which may result in some belt-tightening. Tom noted that, in contrast to other parishes, St. Stephen's has no long-term debt.

**Stewardship Report: John and Olivia Cox**

The status of the pledge drive is that it is running slightly ahead of last year at the same time in the drive. To date, 80 pledges have been received with 39 outstanding pledges. Judith commented that the pledges provide the Vestry with the information to make a budget for the coming year. Pledges are voluntary and circumstances may require a reduction in a pledge during the year. Keeping this in mind, making even a small pledge will help with the budgeting process.

**Music Report: Simon Ballintoy**

This is Simon's seventh year here. His focus is that the choir is part of the worship service and not a performance. He embraces mistakes. He is always looking for new choir members. The choir is going on tour this summer to worship with those at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

Questions and Comments: Judith Delaney

No comments or questions were submitted from the floor.

The 2022 Annual Parish Meeting was adjourned by Judith Delaney at 11:40AM.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Ellis, Vestry Secretary*

## PRIEST-IN-CHARGE REPORT

Eventful is a word I've used often to describe my experiences over the past year. Dealing with unexpected and unexplained health issues, reintegrating back into the life of this amazing parish, and setting the compass forward for our mission and ministry have all presented their assortment of challenges. And yet, as I write this, I'm delighted to be back doing this work and thankful for the opportunity my illness has brought me to truly value and cherish what really matters – relationships with you and all of my loved ones, sacred moments literally full of life and death that I've spent with many of you, and the ability to have this community continue to shape and form my identity as a child of God and a disciple of Jesus (and allow me to offer my gifts to help you in your formation).

First, I cannot begin without acknowledging the outstanding work of your parish staff – Fr. Ashton Sims, Simon Ballintoy, Sherry Burchfield, Larry Hopson, and Rachel Durfee – during my absence. I continue to be grateful as well for the wonderful ministries of Frs. Charles Fels and Howard Hess in serving you with deep compassion and faithfulness in their stints acting in my stead. I am deeply thankful for the work and healing of our Parish Secretary Elizabeth Pack who, in being out for a longer period than I was, has also experienced the challenges and thrills of returning to serve in this busy and Spirit-filled place. The leadership of your Vestry, particularly your wardens (Judith Delaney and Barbara Steele from last year, Courtney Manrod and Leah Bailey this year) and others who stepped up in a major way to fill the breach, must also be acknowledged and thanked as a great gift to God and the service of God's people at St. Stephen's.

I joke that part of the “eventful” elements of my life recently has involved the loss of some of my filters! Whether it's neurological damage or simply the violent thrust into middle age I've experienced, I tend to speak more plainly and less guardedly than I have in the past. As I've learned to harness this ability, it has come at a time in our parish where speaking with honesty and hopefulness yoked together have become critically important. This is especially true as our parish life is indeed eventful and abundant these days.

I'm going to speak more about the good things in our parish later, but for now, I can say with confidence that our parish is growing in terms of membership, financial giving, and participation. We are on the right path; the Spirit is moving among us; and we are seeing transformation in many places at St. Stephen's.

What I can also say is that this is not happening fast enough. St. Stephen's, like many other mainline churches nationally and here locally in Oak Ridge, is at a crossroads. Keep in mind, crossroads are not ominous places. Sara and I lived for three years in the Mississippi Delta very close to the place where blues legend Robert Johnson is reputed to have sold his soul to the devil in exchange for becoming the finest blues guitar player in the world. Our eternal souls are not in danger of being consumed like Robert Johnson's, but they are in demand. For us, the crossroads is an opportunity to decide how badly we want to invest in our future. What I mean is that we stand as a parish at an enviable spot where we possess numbers, resources, talent, enthusiasm, a love of tradition, and an openness to new ideas. Also in this spot, we are a primarily older congregation who struggles with fully deploying our resources and equipping our talent for new ministry. Many of us are so busy that our enthusiasm for church can easily wane. And our love for tradition can sometimes come across as a love of doing things the way we've always done them at the neglect of seeing new opportunities in front of us and even some sneering at the concept of innovation in ministry.

The problem is simple – St. Stephen's needs to boost its growth. You will read (and hear at the meeting) the calls to boost and diversify our financial growth and to implement a strategic plan for upkeep and upgrades to our facilities and grounds. My job as your priest-in-charge is to focus on the individual and communal spiritual, cultural growth of St. Stephen's. We have a strong age mix in which older members who are “retiring” from leadership roles have the ability and the responsibility to raise up new leaders, sharing with them their gifts but also encouraging them to forge

ahead with the creativity and fresh perspective new people bring. This is a critical piece of enhancing our growth.

Sometimes our culture as a parish (and Oak Ridge itself) communicates implicitly to people who are new that there is a “right way” to do things. The culture itself is not so much the problem; what causes problems is when we simply assume people know “the right way,” make no effort to communicate it to them, and speak harshly to them when they do something that is out of line with this “right way.” We are a people who pride ourselves on our rich history as a parish and a town, as we rightfully should. The hard work of growth – and of ministry in general – is intentionally sharing and teaching these traditions while making every effort to intentionally listen to the stories of people who are bringing new life and energy into our community.

This becomes a way of accepting and implementing change in a positive and forward way. Change is a word that none of us like, including me. The last several years in the life of St. Stephen’s have reminded us of the impact of change whether we like it or not. The long search for a new rector, the sudden retirement of a beloved assistant in Fr. David, the impact of COVID on the world and us specifically, and the health issues that forced Elizabeth and me out for a substantial period are very recent reminders that change – and the need to adapt - happens. Growth happens when we identify and highlight our traditions, note the areas in which we need to grow, and develop a culture that is proactive in managing the changes that come our way instead of reacting to them.

So what are THE answers to accelerating our growth? If I knew, I would have already waved my magic wand! But I know this church has all the tools to achieve this growth. Our outreach, Christian education, pastoral care, and worship – core ministries that make up the heart of any church – are particularly strong. Our building and grounds team is developing a master plan for some needed improvements to our facilities and to beautify our grounds. We are growing in numbers of children and the bubbly energy and enthusiasm they bring to our life together. We have people that, when the church or an individual in the church has a need, they step up time after time to help fill that need. And, as I get to witness every day, our staff possesses the skills and the love of this church in working tirelessly to lead our ministry where needed and to support it in many other places.

The tools are in place, so how do we implement them? After I returned from my leave, we experimented with having a couple of sessions to give review of Vestry meetings and talk about upcoming opportunities the Vestry is exploring. I am willing to make the commitment to not only continue these conversations in 2024 but to have occasional parish gatherings where we may dive deeper into an intentional exploration of where God is calling us (similar to the conversation we had in April at my welcome-back reception) and addressing particular needs, concerns, or dreams of the congregation. Your Vestry is entrusted to making decisions, but it is vitally important that we create intentional times to listen to one another.

Two other important areas with vast potential to enhance our growth are communications and evangelism. With technology the way it is, communications seemingly change overnight. Our goal is to enhance and improve the methods we already use (e-mail, social media) while developing new means that allow us to reach more people with more targeted information in a more efficient way (e.g., Microsoft chat rooms for internal communications, ministry apps for phones, etc). Evangelism is the intentional (see, there is that word again!) and proactive means by which we bring the good news of God to other people. It doesn’t always mean getting people in church, although it can and should to some extent. Rather, how do we tell people about what God is doing at St. Stephen’s? What do we tell them? And who does it? I can answer that last question – it’s all of us. These two areas will be vitally important to get your input so that we can create ways in which we are given better tools and increased enthusiasm on how we speak with each other and with those beyond our walls.

All of this growth requires an absolutely essential ingredient – participation. Participation means coming on Sundays. The heart of our church is our time together on Sundays. COVID made it so easy to get out of these habits, but for our own discipline in finding God and sharing God with others, our worship is the foundation of everything else. Participation means asking yourself, How can I help? If you've offered to help but no one has followed up, please let me know. A significant part of my job is to make sure people are put in touch with the right leaders to engage in their ministries. As such, if you are involved in a ministry, always be on the lookout for someone who might be willing to help. Don't hesitate to ask people. Even if they tell you no, you've extended an invitation that makes them feel that someone has noticed them.

Finally, many of you have asked about the status of my call to serve as your Rector. In reviewing this report, a good friend in the parish said to me, "All of these things are good that you are asking us to consider. But we need to know that you'll be here for a while to guide us." This upcoming Tuesday, Nov. 14, Canon Michelle Bolt will be with our Vestry to hit the "un-pause" button on this process of calling me as your Rector that was halted while I was out. I can't predict my health future (although everything looks good at this point!), but the hopeful call as Rector will put an exclamation point on the fact that you and I hope to be serving in ministry together for a long time. Despite the challenges we face, I face them knowing that we have a tremendous group of people determined in faith to grow together and see a future forward where God continues to do amazing things for generations more in this wonderful place we call St. Stephen's.

*Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Bailey Norman*

## CURATE'S REPORT

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been another interesting year living, praying, and working with you all at St. Stephen's. None of us could have predicted the number of prolonged absences of staff due to illness. However, I believe that we have all come out on the other side a stronger parish. I find that it is situations like these, in which the true character of a community rises to the surface, and what I have seen is a compassionate church that at its heart cares for its clergy, staff, and parishioners. And I also wish to extend my thanksgiving to each one of you for the support and prayer that you offered Anna and I personally, as we all navigated the seven months Bailey was away. I feel that I am a stronger and more capable priest due to that support. As John Donne once wrote, "No man is an island." And just to carry that a bit further I don't believe that Donne's words apply to our last year alone, but also to our future as a parish.

To echo what Bailey said in his report, St. Stephen's is indeed at a crossroads. Now, that may sound alarming to some, but the heart of what being at a crossroads means is that we are being presented with an opportunity. We are all being presented with an opportunity to have a part in shaping the future of this church, with God's help, and by all I really do mean all. At St. Paul once wrote to the church in Corinth, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," (1 Cor. 12:12, 26-27).

Your leaders, lay and ordained, have a vision for St. Stephen's. A vision that this church continues to be a place where all can come to know the love of God in Jesus Christ. There are, of course, many ways in which this vision can be carried out, but what remains universal is the fact that each and every one of us are indispensable in making St. Stephen's the vibrant church that we wish for it to be. We are all members of Christ's body and as such we all have a part to play. In today's day and age, we simply do not have the luxury of saying, to quote St. Paul again, "Because I am



not a hand, I do not belong to the body.” In other words, when it comes to the crossroads, to the opportunities that are presented to us, there is no “you” or “I,” but only “we.” And by careful discernment and cooperation with God’s grace, I truly believe that we can answer his call.

*Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Ashton Sims*

## SENIOR WARDEN’S REPORT

The past 12 months have been an abundant time for St. Stephen’s. The year has been rich in terms of both experiences and opportunities that called and shaped who we, individually and collectively, are today and who we will be tomorrow. As St. Stephen’s does, we faithfully responded to many and varied circumstances throughout 2023, knowing that everything we do here matters. In a very uncertain world, we diligently worked to fortify St. Stephen’s so that it remains a secure foothold in service to the Lord.

To guide us along our way and help ensure St. Stephen’s best fulfills its mission and ministry, we examined and are refining Parish goals and associated implementing actions. Goals address the ability of St. Stephen’s to sustain effective service. They include remaining a two-priest parish; developing skills needed to remain a vibrant Parish; proactively managing resources; and cultivating effective work processes. To accomplish these goals, we need the commitment and participation from all in the Parish, individually and collectively.

As you read through this 2023 Annual Report, you will see the extensive breadth and depth of our ministry and mission. Additionally, as you read, please know that which St. Stephen’s has accomplished this year is a direct result of your devotion and engagement. Thank you, we couldn’t do it without you.

With most sincere gratitude and appreciation to each, and all, of you for what you have done and for what you will do in support of St. Stephen’s ministry and mission,

*Respectfully submitted,  
Courtney Manrod, Senior Warden*

## LITURGICS

### ACOLYTES

The St. Stephen’s Acolyte team has been growing! We have expanded our roster with seven new young acolytes, and we are always looking to add more! Annual training is scheduled for Saturday, November 4, but Acolyte Masters Sandi Robertson and Teddy Dantzler can schedule training for any parishioner interested in joining this ministry. Robes have been cleaned and sorted and labeled by size, as our acolytes are growing as fast as our roster!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sandi Robertson, Acolyte Master*

### ALTAR GUILD

The Altar Guild is often referred to as the “stealth ministry.” The members of the Altar Guild support all services with their work (mostly behind the scenes) to ensure that everything is in order wherever and however worship takes place. Our members prepare for and clean up after every service - small or large - having special duties for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Flexibility has been and continues to be our watchword.

In the early summer of 2023, the altar guild membership experienced a loss with the move of Thelma McGrory, a dedicated altar guild member who served for many years in various capacities. Our membership has been blessed with the welcome addition of Julie Webber. Barbara Neill continues to serve as the flower chair. She coordinates with

the florist to make sure our worship is enhanced with arrangements appropriate to the liturgical season. Judie Liby, Bonnie Nestor and Beth Stickle faithfully have laundered the altar linens. There are currently fifteen serving on our weekly groups.

Serving the Lord as members of the Altar Guild is truly a privilege for which we are all most grateful. New members are always welcome.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Roni Boyd*

## MUSIC MINISTRY

We are blessed with wonderful talented and dedicated musicians in our parish who offer music to enrich our services, liturgy and the life and community of St Stephen's and beyond.

We should be proud of the work of our choir in this post-covid time. Many church's music programs have continued to struggle getting back to a new normal. Our choir continues to lead worship on a weekly basis, singing a variety of challenging music and leading our hymns. Coming out of a pandemic and launching into an international tour is something that our parish and local community should be proud of!

Our trip to London in July 2023 etched a significant milestone on our parish history. A total of 58 travelers came together from various parts of the world to offer five worship services in some of the world's most historic churches. (St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and St George's Chapel). Our choir was supported by a number of former parishioners and friends of the parish. Sarah Reynolds was hired as our 'Blue Badge Guide for the entire trip, and she put together our itinerary, which included visits to Oxford, Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals, Stonehenge and Canterbury. Special thanks should be given to Emma Whitten who was organist for the trip. Below is a copy of a letter from The Reverend Robert Kozak, Succentor of St Paul's Cathedral, dated September 4, 2023.

*Dear Mr Ballintoy,*

*Thank you for bringing the choir to St Paul's Cathedral to sing at the service of Evensong on Monday, 10th July. We were delighted to welcome the members of the Choir of St Stephen's Episcopal Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and are grateful for the contribution you made to our choral worship. Your music choices were excellent and beautifully sung. I particularly enjoyed your beautiful rendition of Moses Hogan's Hear my prayer. Please also extend our thanks to your organist, Emma Whitten, for accompanying the service. We hope the choir and any supporting friends in the congregation had an enjoyable visit. We would be delighted to welcome you again in the near future. To arrange your next visit, please be in touch by writing to Mrs Gemma Winpenny at [visitingchoirs@stpaulscathedral.org.uk](mailto:visitingchoirs@stpaulscathedral.org.uk).*

*With my warm wishes and prayers,*

*Father Robert Kozak, Succentor.*

*The Chapter House, St Paul's Churchyard, London, EC4M 8AD*

In addition to welcoming some familiar faces to our choir for the trip, we also welcomed some permanent voices to the choir; Bonnie Bautz, Jayne Drier, Jeff Robertson. But we also had some losses. Tenor Johnny Goshen, one of our three paid singers, moved to Rochester, NY. Cheryl Scappaticci also stepped down from her paid singing position. Ashton Ardnt remains as our only paid baritone. It is hoped that we will find a replacement tenor. In previous years we have had a particular need for female voices, but currently we are in need of tenors and basses. Our choir is not

auditioned, and we welcome anyone with musical inclination. Thank you to all our choir members for offering their time and talents on a weekly basis to enhance our worship through the gift of music.

Our parish choir offered a service of Nine Lessons and Carols in 2022, in addition to supporting other services such as Blue Christmas, Christmas Eve and the many services of Holy Week and Easter. Cathy Whitten and Simon Ballintoy have started a new tradition of offering piano duets on Christmas Day, not to be missed! Choral Evensong was offered in September 2023, and it is hoped that we will offer another service of evensong in the Spring. We purchased new choir robes and cottas from CM Almy using funds from our Music Memorial.

Finally, I would encourage our parishioners to attend our special offerings of music throughout the year and extend invitations to those in our local community. An immense amount of preparation goes into offering these services, which are not performances, but worship experiences. I offer my thanks to the clergy, vestry, and parish for their support in making our London trip come to fruition. Additionally, I thank you for your prayers and support as I began and continue to navigate a new path as the spouse of a seminarian.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Simon Ballintoy, Director of Music*

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY

Our mission is to encourage spiritual growth in our children through:

- the History and Tradition of the Episcopal church
- Sharing God's Love through ministry
- Participation in the church liturgy
- Study of scripture
- Caring participation in the church community

## CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

Each Sunday during the sermon the gospel reading is presented in Children's Chapel at an age-appropriate level.

Current Student Registration has more than doubled. Sunday School classes currently offered include:

- 1) Catechesis: grades: pre-K, K,  
The Curriculum for this group is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
- 2) Primary Level: grades 1-3  
The curriculum for this group is the Episcopal Children's Curriculum from Virginia Theological Seminary.
- 3) Intermediate Level-1: grades 4-6  
The curriculum for this group is Episcopal Children's Curriculum from Virginia Theological Seminary.
- 4) Intermediate Level-2: grades 6-8  
The curriculum for this group is Episcopal Children's Curriculum from Virginia Theological Seminary.

## NURSERY

We provide a Nursery with qualified staff to care for infants and toddlers up to age 3.

### RECENT UPDATES FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION INCLUDE:

- Installation of Goaliath 60” Ignite In-ground Basketball goal
- Addition of room 209 for classroom use
- Preparation of Family Quiet area in room #209
- Vizio 40-inch Smart TV for each classroom
- Baby Welcoming Celebration
- Pontoon Boat Outing to Norris Lace

### WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO:

- 2023 Advent Fair
- 2023 Christmas Pageant
- Development of an easy access CE Teaching Materials Library
- Continued development of Information Technology to support student learning.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sherry Burchfield, Christian Education*

## ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Tuesday Bible Study group is currently finishing a guided study of PRAYER, developed by Rev. Tim Keller. Earlier this year, the group completed studies of the Book of Psalms and the Parables of Jesus. The group meets on most Tuesday morning from 10 to 11 a.m. in the Pollard Library, allowing participants to attend the Tuesday Holy Eucharist / Healing Service.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Rousey*

## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

The Contemplative Prayer Group is a group of 4 to 8 persons who meet weekly to practice silent meditative prayer in a communal setting. Some of us have been trained in, and use, the method of Centering Prayer developed and popularized by Fr. Thomas Keating. Others of us practice other contemplative prayer forms, including following the breath. The only requirement is the willingness to sit quietly for 20 minutes, in an attitude of openness and receptivity to the action of God within.

Our format consists of an opening prayer, followed by the 20-minute period of silent prayer. After our period of silence one of us says the Lord’s Prayer. We invite anyone present to share a thought that has spoken to them during the week, which we might discuss for a few minutes, and then we close with a final prayer. Generally we are done by 4:45 pm.

The group meets on Thursdays at 4:00 pm. Since March 2020 we have met online via Zoom. During the past year we have been joined by several parishioners from middle Tennessee. During their stays at St. Stephen's, both Frs. Charles Fels and Howard Hess joined us in our weekly sitting.

We welcome anyone who presently maintains a practice of silent contemplative prayer, or who would like to consider developing one, to join us – just ask the coordinators, Steve and Liz Herbes, to send you the link. No prior experience in a contemplative prayer practice is needed!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Herbes*

## EPISCOPAL YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (EYF)

St. Stephen's EYF program is open to all youth from sixth through twelfth grades. EYF met most Sunday afternoons following lunch and Sunday school during the school calendar year. This past year, we participated in a range of activities. When the weather was nice, we frequently hiked at the UT Arboretum or other nearby trail. On occasion we would swim in a nearby recreational lake and we went on a pontoon excursion on Norris Lake last fall. During colder months, we planned an activity at the church or bowled. Youth leaders during CY 2022-23 were Craig Brent and Rachel Kirk.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Craig Brent, Leader*

## MEN'S STUDY GROUP

The Men's Group continues to meet every Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., in the Pollard Room. We have covered a number of books by Richard Rohr and others. We also discuss selected books from the Bible. Presently we are studying Martin Luther King's 1963 letter from the Birmingham jail. Our plan is to next do an in depth study of St. Augustine. Discussion is open, unstructured, and can be very lively but is always informative. Please join us!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Anderson, Leader*

## FINANCE

Each year the Finance Committee submits for approval by the Vestry a budget that provides for the ongoing expenses of supporting our Parish staff, maintaining our physical facility and supporting our many ministries. The Committee takes into account pledge commitments from the Fall Stewardship Campaign as well as expected revenue from other sources such as investments and then develops a balanced budget. We did make some changes this year as we began a transition process where, instead of funding directly from pledges, our Outreach ministry will be funded by direct donations and the weekly loose offering.

As St Stephen's continues to grow in membership and activities, we continue to be challenged to meet the financial requirements needed to sustain our missions. We are now supporting two full time clergy and, as with most organizations, our current operation and personnel expenses are increasing significantly. In this year's budget, we needed to use interest earned on our two Endowment investment accounts to achieve a balanced budget. The hope was, that as in years past, that increased giving over and above what was pledged would offset this need and minimize what we would be required to utilize from these investment accounts. Although we are staying on budget year to date, we have recently had to use \$20,000 of these funds. If we don't see the traditional increase in giving over and above what was pledged, we will need to further deplete the investment income funds by the end of the year. If this occurs, it will significantly impact our budgeting for the 2024 year and ability to support continued growth.

## FINANCIAL STATUS

The Financial Report is included as a separate attachment online on the St. Stephen's website. There are 25 printed copies of the Financial Report provided.

*Respectfully submitted*  
*Tom Clary, Finance Committee Chair*

## COUNTERS

We have enjoyed the assistance from Rachel Durfee keeping us on an even keel. We have handled various changes to our ministries and the accounting involved with them. On-line donations have increased and made our work a bit lighter. We do need a couple of counters to replace some vacancies and keep the need for counting to once a month.

If possible please restrain from folding your donations of checks and money. We understand when donations are placed in the small donation envelopes.

Thanks from the Counter crew.

*Respectfully submitted*  
*Roger Johnson*

## MEMORIAL GARDEN

The ashes of five beloved members of the St. Stephen's community were interred in the Memorial Garden during 2023.

St. Stephen's Memorial Garden provides a final resting place for the ashes of St. Stephen's members. The Garden has 434 spaces for interment, and additional space is available for scattering. The ashes of 242 parishioners already interred or scattered provide a profound sense of love and peace. The garden invites visitors to sit and meditate on several benches. Beauty is seen throughout in flowers, plantings, and memories, especially during the spring and summer growing season.

The garden operates financially independent from the church General Fund. Funds from users provide for perpetual care and maintenance. Some of these funds were used to repair and refurbish the block wall, as well as putting on fresh coats of paint. Brent Sigmon and Nancy Carow, along with others, continue to make the Memorial Garden a place of eternal love and beauty.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Jim Rousey, Memorial Garden Committee Chair*

## BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

- A work order form was posted to the church website that generates an email to [facilities@ststephensor.org](mailto:facilities@ststephensor.org).
- Met with Mike Corcoran, Facilities Manager at FUMC to walk down our facilities
- Repaired three leaking toilets, resulting in a 3,000+ gallon water savings in one month.
- Reported the upper parking lot light out; bulb replaced by the City of Oak Ridge.
- Painted children's bathroom with a professional mural, fixtures and ceiling tile replaced.
- Installed motion-sensing light in the first floor utility room.

- Collected surplus IT equipment for evaluation, donation/disposal.
- Repaired Pollard Room chairs by craftsman Michael Trank.
- Collected copies of some existing contracts.
- Inventoried signage inside and outside; estimate sought from Val-U-Signs for replacement of exterior metal signs.
- Jet cleaned the sewer line (Kingston Sewer), and removed two large trees and 14 stumps (Blank's Tree Service). We are continuing to clear undergrowth on the property.
- Participated in several property "walk downs" with church leadership and Parish members.
- Removed combustible materials from the church.
- Installed two Ring doorbell cameras and a tablet for the secretary's office for security purposes.
- Replaced two office lights with enclosed LED panels; two more units purchased.
- Proposed lawncare be assumed by the church to save \$5,000 annually; mowers were to be donated.
- Estimates are in hand for the following:
  - TK Elevator Corporation to perform elevator maintenance, upgrade, and replacement;
  - Volunteer Mechanical for repair, maintenance and replacement of HVAC system;
  - Knoxville Clean and Dude's Pressure Washing to treat the roof, church, and sidewalks;
  - Danny Davis Electrical Contractors to re-lamp inside and outside the church;
  - Oak Ridge Locksmith to rekey all locks in the church and adding high-security locks on all exterior doors; CSI Southeast and Knox Integrated Systems for key card access system;
  - Marlow's Painting for sealing church windows;
  - Cedrick Davis and Tyrone Wells for a cement pad to relocate the dumpster.
- Planning to add thermostats to Trane units (fan coils) in the church.
- Evaluating and replacing interior and exterior lighting for safety, security, automation, and aesthetics.
- Making an appeal to the congregation for relevant skills that might be useful to help the church with building and grounds projects.
- Replaced malfunctioning lamp in rear parking lot lamppost with FUMC support via their lift.

*Respectfully submitted*  
*Cleon Hartman*

## OUTREACH

During 2023, St. Stephen's Episcopal was very busy in both sustaining and developing outreach initiatives on local and international levels. This being the first year of transitioning from a designated budget from the Vestry to funding from plate offering, the Outreach Committee needed to look at how to communicate which charitable organizations and in-house ministries are being funded.

### CLEARFORK

A theme of The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe was selected for the camp theme for 2023. An amazing group of volunteers went to provide a wonderful time for this group of kids in need of summer enrichment opportunities and fun. One challenge that presented itself was the lack of volunteers available to serve this year. A suggestion was made to reach out to University of the Cumberland, a Christian university close to the Clearfork area, to recruit summer volunteers from their teacher preparation program. This will help to provide additional volunteers, as well as additional activity ideas. A Christmas event is being planned for December 2, 2023 for the Clearfork children and their families.

### HAITI

\$2000 per month was provided for needed medications and support for the provider and nurse. The clinic is open one day per week. In April, it was reported that scabies were becoming a public health issue in the community and resources were needed for treatment and eradication. Also, the transfer of funds became an issue since international banks were leaving Haiti and in-country banks did not have ample funds to change wired funds into currency for the clinic. There were also concerns about the ability to communicate with the clinic due to the change in clinic personnel; therefore, funds were not transferred from June until September until the lines of communication could be restored.

### TORCH

This non-profit was selected to be supported as our June recipient. This non-profit assists families in Anderson County who are experiencing homelessness. Additionally, \$600 was provided to help stock the kitchens of the six new TORCH housing units.

### WALK-OVER-WEDNESDAYS (WOW)

The spring semester was well-attended by our Oak Ridge High School participants. About 40 students were being served each week. In May, over 50 students attended the last lunch and a cake was provided to celebrate the graduating seniors. On August 16, this program resumed for the new academic year.

### BRYSSON'S CLOSET

This non-profit was selected for May's plate offering. Brysson's Closet provides a food pantry for individuals in need and the donation from St. Stephen's was designated specifically for the food pantry. They also sell used clothing and household items for a minimal charge, which is used to help members of the community with utilities and other needs.

### BLESSINGS BOX

Our newest outreach ministry, the Blessings Box has been a successful outreach for people in need of food in our community. The Blessings Box ministry was the recipient of our July plate offering. Additionally, Suzanne Norman provides weekly communication to the parish to let everyone know what items are needed for the upcoming week. She strategically places items into the Blessings Box to ensure that there is a good variety of items, both food and non-



food essentials. Michael Trunk constructed the box for this program. This resource continues to be used on a daily-basis by those who need it.

### ECUMENICAL STOREHOUSE

Over the year, the Outreach Committee discussed the past history of support for Ecumenial Storehouse and our ability to continue being part of this program. Several committee members spent time working at the location as part of discernment for serving in this ministry. By September, we had a team that had committed to being part of the St. Stephen's team, including Olvia Cox who can provide bilingual assistance for Spanish-speaking members of our community.

### RIO GRANDE BORDERLANDS MINISTRIES

During Lent 2023, the children's ministries created a mite box initiative to raise funds for Rio Grande Borderlands Ministries. Afterwards, there was much interest in learning more about this ministry; therefore, a Talk with Father Mike Wallens evening was planned to learn more about this ministry. During this Zoom presentation, our parish learned more about this ministry while enjoying a Tex-Mex potluck dinner.

### COMPASSION CLOSET

Compassion Closet provides quick-turn assistance to children in foster care. When removed from their family, children are in need of clothing, shoes, personal care items, and other items. This helps to support both the children/youth, as well as the foster parents. Over \$1000 was collected for this organization in August.

### ADFAC SCHOOL SUPPLIES PROGRAM

Volunteers helped to pack backpacks for North Clinton Elementary School on July 6th. These were packed and delivered to the school in preparation for the 2023-2024 school year.

### EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

The March plate offering was sent to Episcopal Relief and Development for earthquake relief in Syria and Turkey.

### DISABILITY FAIR

St. Stephen's provided 50 sandwiches for the box lunches.

### FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The loose offering for September went to support the Oak Ridge Schools Family Resource Center. This program assists students in need of clothing, food, and school supplies.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Emily Doane*

### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee assists the Priest-in-Charge by recommending, monitoring and managing the personnel policies for both clerical and lay staff to ensure fair and proper management of personnel issues. Committee members also assist the Rector in hiring new staff members, and in developing a Letter of Agreement for each new staff person.

In 2023, the committee worked to make arrangements for Fr. Bailey's return after a period of leave, and also for the return of parish secretary Elizabeth Pack after her absence. Both of these circumstances were managed in coordination with the Diocese, with a focus on policy compliance both on the Diocesan level and within St. Stephens. We are truly blessed to have both Bailey and Elizabeth back with us.

The committee has also undertaken a review of policies and procedures related to personnel management, with the goal of improving documentation and organizational record-keeping. These initiatives will carry on into 2024, as we work toward continual improvement in the personnel management practices of the church.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Adam Cavender*

## PARISH LIFE

The goal of the Parish Life Committee is to provide the congregation with opportunities to come together for fellowship and fun. After the Covid years, this year we offered many and varied opportunities—from baseball games to BBQ—for us to come together as a parish.

Beginning with our Mardi Gras Family Fete in February through Lessons and Carols in December, there will have been 14 events. In addition, Parish Life partnered with Christian Education for the Lenten and Advent Fairs and for the Celebrate our Children/Blessing of the Backpacks event. We bid farewell to our two Vicars with a potluck, and a Cake and Coffee event. Parish Life has partnered with the Outreach and Liturgics Committees, and with the Music Department. Additionally, the Lenten Soup Suppers, Lemonade in the Grove, and Sunday snacks for our children are all part of Parish Life!

We look forward to another year of fun and fellowship...come join us!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Leah Bailey, Committee Chair*

## EVANGELISM

### BREAD UPON THE WATERS

*"Welcome to Christ's Table – Food for the Journey" ~ Vision Statement*

The Bread Upon The Waters ministry program is now in its 19th year. There are currently ten parishioners participating in the program as Greeters and Friendly Faces including three Junior Greeters. The goal of this ministry is to show the Face of God to newcomers and visitors as we welcome them on Sunday mornings and then a brief visit to their home usually that afternoon. At that time a loaf of Bread, a packet of information and a key chain with a QR code link to a brief video of the parish are given. Then begins a very intense four to six week period where we stay in touch with the newcomer looking first for needs and then passions and talents as we try to help them find their special place within the parish.

One of the unique features of this ministry is that we "measure" what we do. Through September we have greeted seventeen families and have a success rate of 77% (that is families listed as either active or member). This compares with a national average of 12% to 15%. God has richly blessed St. Stephens and this ministry.

St. Stephens is growing in grace as we reach out to those seeking the Peace and Love of Jesus Christ in their lives. The "Bread" ministry and those who have dedicated their time, energy and talent to its success, is committed to the

teaching of our Lord when He commissioned us to.

*“Go Therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” Matt 28:19*

*Respectfully submitted,  
Michael Trank, Team Leader*

## GIFTS AND MEMORIALS

October 2022 – September 2023 (Information Current as of 09/30/2023)

### MEMORIALS:

These gifts were received in the last year.

#### IN MEMORY OF:

Adolf King  
Mary Ann King  
Harold Davis  
Glenna Derby  
Victoria Medaglia  
Mary Lou Murphy  
William Ragland

#### FOR:

Undesignated  
Undesignated  
Undesignated  
Undesignated  
Undesignated  
Choral Music  
Undesignated

The total value of these memorial gifts is \$ 2,740.00

### GIFTS:

Below is a list of gifts given to St. Stephen's in the past year:

#### GIVEN BY:

Martin and Dorothy Skinner  
Tom and Deborah Clary  
Cleon and Heather Hartman  
Anonymous  
Jim Anderson  
Cameron Ellis  
Beth Lutz  
Ron and Merry Keyser

#### FOR:

Undesignated bequest  
Building Maintenance and mural  
Pollard upgrade and mural  
Curate support  
Curate support/Special needs  
Christian Education  
Buildings and Grounds  
Undesignated

The total value of these gifts is \$21,837.74

There were also many additional gifts directly to the new Outreach initiatives, the Choir trip to London, for Haiti projects, the Wednesday Lunch Program (WOW), and other initiatives.

Expenditures from Gifts and Memorials in this period:

Additional IT/Communications system maintenance and upgrades, curate support, and altar items.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Neill, Records*

## COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY

### E-NEWS

The St. Stephen's E-News is an electronic newsletter published weekly. Every week the E-News highlights upcoming activities in our Parish as well as the East Tennessee Diocese. It also features topics explored in Christian Formation (book and bible studies, video series, and small group theology), as well as upcoming parish events in the immediate future (one to two weeks in advance), deadline reminders (Vestry nominations, Annual Meeting, Parish Retreat, etc.), and projects involving buildings and grounds improvements. Typically, a one-to-two-page publication, the focus of the E-News is to be a single, centralized place for information about current and future events. This publication is posted on the St. Stephen's website every week, and a link is sent to 308 emails and 6 are mailed to members without email access.

### THE EVANGEL

The Evangel is an historic newsletter of St. Stephen's. After an 18-month hiatus, we are proud to be able in October 2023 to renew the tradition of providing valuable articles that are relevant to our times and circumstances in a rapidly changing world. It contains resources on ways for parishioners to celebrate specific liturgical seasons, articles on prayer and faith, and occasional theological commentaries on our ministries. The Evangel is emailed and also printed and mailed to several households, and copies are placed in the narthex and hospitality areas of St. Stephen's.

### WEBSITE & INTERNET TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Our website is updated on a weekly basis. Visitors to our website can learn more about us, our programs, how to contact us, where to find us, and when we offer worship services directly from the homepage. We provide access to our Sunday service bulletins, announcements, E-News, and Evangel newsletters. The website posts minutes of Vestry meetings as soon as they are approved along with the monthly financial update. Currently we own two domains: [www.ststephensor.org](http://www.ststephensor.org) and [www.ststephensor.com](http://www.ststephensor.com). Internet technology support and network management is currently handled by Hyperion Networks.

### SOCIAL MEDIA & STREAMING

St. Stephen's currently maintains active accounts on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These accounts are maintained by members of the Communications Committee. Each Sunday one service is streamed to YouTube and is available for viewing up to two weeks after the service. As of October 26, 2023, our YouTube channel has had 10,456 views in the past year, and has a total of 45 subscribers. We have an average of 18 viewers on Sunday.

Current Committee members are Karen Yearwood, Team Lead, Jamie LaRose-Website, Ashley Hillis-Social Media, Jen Davis-Publications Editor, Lew Felton-IT, Elizabeth Pack, Rev. Bailey Norman, and Rev. Ashton Sims. Live Streaming is headed up by Brent Sigmon with the assistance of Daryl Yearwood and Matthew Doane.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Yearwood*

## SERVICE MINISTRIES

### DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

The Daughters of the King is a lay order of women of the church who pledge themselves to a life-long ministry of prayer, service, and evangelism. We pray daily for the parish and the clergy and are an integral part of St. Stephen's spiritual life. Daughters maintain a confidential prayer list which is regularly updated by email when there is an urgent need for prayer. Requests to be placed on the prayer list may be made by calling or emailing the church or by filling out a pew "Request for Prayer" card.

The St. Agnes Chapter provides receptions following funeral services for bereaved families upon request. As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, we transitioned to all in-person receptions in the Parish Hall. We provided a total of eight funeral receptions this past year. In April the Daughters provided an Afternoon Tea for all women of the parish which was well received and attended.

The chapter currently has thirty one members. We lost long-time Daughter and parishioner Mary Lou Murphy in August. There are plans to begin a Discernment Class for membership early in 2024, open to any woman of the parish, which will be an opportunity for both spiritual growth and preparation for possible admission into the Order of the Daughters of the King.

The officers are: Elizabeth Stickle and Nancy Caldwell, co-presidents; Betsy Ellis, secretary; and Susan Meredith, treasurer. The Rev. Bailey Norman serves as Chaplain.

The regular chapter meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month from 11:45 am to 1:00 pm in St. Alban's Chapel. This meeting time hopefully will meet our goal to include wider demographic of women in the parish. The theme for our meetings this year is servanthood through ministry with presentations from Daughters about various ministries within the parish. In addition to monthly meetings, plans for the coming year include a pre-Advent Quiet Day, led by Fr. Ashton Sims, scheduled for November, 2023 and a Lenten Quiet Day to be scheduled sometime in February or March. The St. Agnes Chapter has also begun conversations with Parish Life to consider events sponsored by both ministries to promote fellowship among women of the parish.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Stickle & Nancy Caldwell, Co-Presidents*

### HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

The Hospitality Committee is a group of people who sit at a desk near the drive through entrance to St. Stephen's. Currently, we have eight people who sit at the desk on alternate weekdays from Monday through Thursdays. Some sit from 9 - 2 and some sit from 10 - 1 or 10 - 2. Our job is to answer the door, greet visitors and new people, answer the phone and do any jobs Elizabeth might find for us to do.

We would like to have more members so that, ideally, we would have someone at the desk from 9 - 3 each day, splitting hours from 9 - 12, and 12 - 3. If this is a service you might be interested in, please call or email me for more information.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Steele*

## PASTORAL CARE

We have held several meetings, relaunched in-person Eucharistic visits, and are planning to launch a companionship training for those who would like to make in-person pastoral visits with parishioners who request them. Training will begin after the new calendar year.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Jamey Kennedy, Chair*

## EUCCHARISTIC VISITORS

The Eucharistic Visitor ministry at St. Stephen's consists of persons licensed by the Bishop to carry the Eucharistic elements to parishioners who, for reasons of illness or other reasons, are unable to attend our Sunday liturgy. The Eucharistic Visitor ministry provides a sacramental dimension to St. Stephen's lay pastoral care through the carrying of the bread and wine directly from the altar each Sunday to our fellow members of the Body of Christ. This has been an important ministry for the past 32 years, and as St. Stephen's is an "aging" parish, it has become ever more important.

The Eucharistic Visitors use an abbreviated service of Holy Communion to enable those to whom they minister to experience both participation in our worship and connection with the St. Stephen's parish family. On April 30, 2023, the Eucharistic Visitors resumed in-person visits. From April 30, 2023 through October 22, 2023, 155 communions were served.

St. Stephen's currently has 9 active Eucharistic Visitors:

Adam Ballintoy\*, Brian Bovee, Judith Delaney, Cameron Ellis, Carol Gardner, Katherine Grubb, Carol King, Courtney Manrod\*, and Pat Swinney.

Gary Grubb and Mary Ellen Klots have retired from service.

\*Temporarily off rotation

*Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Gardner*

## ST. THERESE'S FLOWER GUILD

St. Therese Flower Ministry's mission is to take the flowers on the altar after the Sunday and Tuesday services, and to make small flower arrangements in vases to take to shut-ins, people in nursing homes or anyone who is celebrating a special occasion (birthday, anniversary, etc.). Seven dedicated volunteers take turns making the arrangements, and they, the clergy, and other parishioners deliver them. Anyone in the parish is invited to take an arrangement to someone, or to enjoy it in their home. These arrangements are available on the counter in the ramp room. Over 200 flower arrangements were made and delivered this past year.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Herbes*

## ADDENDUM

Proposed changes to St. Stephen's Bylaws for vote at 11/12/23 Annual Parish meeting.

### ARTICLE I - VESTRY

#### Section 10.

There shall be elected at each regular annual Parish Meeting three (3) delegates and three (3) alternates to represent St. Stephen's at the upcoming annual Diocesan Convention. Additional delegates and alternates may also be voted upon as the Convention may permit.

#### Section 11.

At the annual Parish Meeting, if the number of nominees does not exceed the number of open Convention delegate/alternate positions, then a motion to accept this slate by acclamation is acceptable. If there are more nominees than open Convention delegate/alternate positions, then a ballot bearing the names of all nominees shall be given to each qualified voter present. A ballot bearing the names of all delegate nominees shall be given to each qualified voter present. A voter shall not mark more than one name for each position to be filled. Delegates and alternates will be determined by the number of votes each nominee receives. Delegates will be the three nominees who each receive the highest number of votes. Alternates will be the three nominees who each receive the next, successive highest number of votes. In the event there is a tie in the amount of votes, the Rector will determine the delegates/alternates, as applicable.

### ARTICLE III - PARISH MEETINGS

Section 2. At the annual Parish Meeting the congregation shall elect the Vestry and the Diocesan Convention delegates and alternates in the manners hereinbefore provided. The Rector and Treasurer (or principal Financial Officer) shall make reports to the congregation. The congregation shall take such other action as may properly come before the meeting.