

AUGUST 2025



WARDEN'S CORNER

August

As many of you know, I am a teacher by trade. The end of summer break always brought mixed feelings; I would inevitably regret that our time off was so brief, yet I looked forward to returning to the classroom, and I anticipated welcoming my students—both old and new.

The return to the Christian Education classroom is no different. We are preparing to open our classrooms for the start of another season of Christian Formation. We anticipate welcoming back our children and their families to a year of learning, fellowship, and faith. We want to help our young people grow their relationship with God and each other, and we want to offer our adults meaningful opportunities to do the same.

To make this ministry a success requires several key ingredients: we need curious students, we need the support and trust of our families, and we need the time and passion of our volunteers. I think that our Christian Formation team has developed a wonderful “teaching team” plan! Offering the congregation the option to lead a 4-5 week block of classes makes the commitment less daunting, and opens up the opportunity to more of us to serve our church community.

I hope each of you will prayerfully consider how you fit into this ministry. Are you a potential student? Could you volunteer for a block of a class? As for myself, once my term as your Senior Warden expires, I want to co-teach a block!

Please plan to join us on Sunday, August 10, as we begin the year by blessing the backpacks and celebrating with food, fun and fellowship! I pray that this new year will be filled with much joy, some laughter, and God's abundant gr

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CHURCH MICE

The idiom “quiet as a church mouse” is widely used in English language to describe someone or something that is extremely quiet. This phrase has been around for centuries and has become an integral part of the English language.

The origins of this idiom are not entirely clear, but it is believed to have originated in Europe during the Middle Ages. During this time period, churches were often built with wooden floors and ceilings, which made them particularly susceptible to noise. In order to avoid disturbing others during services or prayer, mice living in the church would learn to be extremely quiet.

Over time, people began using the phrase “quiet as a church mouse” as a way of describing anything that was exceptionally silent. Today, this idiom is still commonly used in English-speaking countries around the world.



St. Stephen's has several "Church Mice" who go about various activities very quietly. You may have noticed the building is much brighter than it has been. Some busy Church Mice have been replacing the old light fixtures with LED fixtures. This job is more than simply exchanging old bulbs with new. In many places the housing has had to be replaced and new cases built.

In addition, the church will benefit from the new lighting monetarily. TVA will pay us \$4.00 for every fluorescent bulb we replace with the LED fixtures. We have 240 bulbs that are in the process of being replaced. The new fixtures will also result in lower electric bills as the LED fixtures are more energy efficient.

Put yourself in the shoes of a visitor entering the building through the portico doors for a funeral. Where is the service to be held and how do I get there? Thanks to another Church Mouse we now have new signage to help visitors find their way all around the building.

St. Stephen's is blessed to have many quiet "Church Mice." There are many more than reported above. Stay tuned.

MINISTRY UPDATES

What We Did at Camp this Year

This summer was the ninth year since St. Stephen's began the "Reading Camp". We are able to use the Clearfork Community Institute building and grounds owned by Blue Diamond Coal Company. This was formerly the Eagan School. The "Camp" is our collaboration with some progressive minded and caring community leaders to provide a platform for close interaction and potentially educational experience for less advantaged children from the area. Initially we were drawing from two elementary schools with the request of the respective principals: White Oak Elementary in Campbell County and Clairfield Elementary in Clairborne County. Over time, we have reached out further to include children now in surrounding areas including Kentucky.

Each year, the community leaders with whom we work feed back to us what they think the children need. There was a shift this year towards more reliance on the community for program planning, execution, and administration. A theme of S.T.E.M. was requested this year with a leaning toward career interests.



Highlights of each day follow:

1. Monday, after an opening "circle time" with Fr Norman, craft activities centered around astronomy, stars, planets, and constellations.

2. Tuesday, following a failed art exercise, engineering concepts were introduced via a couple of disciplines using electric circuits and binary coding in the morning and structures in the afternoon using bridge kits.

3. Wednesday, Scottie McDaniel joined us from the UT Department of Design with four graduate and undergraduate students. After some classroom work. She challenged the campers to arrive at their own landscaping design/plan which was then discussed.

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MINISTRY DUPDATES (CONT.)

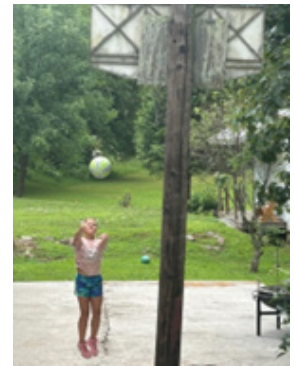
4. Thursday, Ashley Hembre of Campbell County Health Extension presented in the morning using video. Campers took notes at several “booths” during the afternoon session with career interest in mind.

5. Friday, as usual was spent at the Kentucky Splash park in Williamsburg. Parents provided transportation.

Each day included a group reading time relevant to the planned theme, a hot breakfast and lunch, and outside games.

Camper attendance was reduced this year due to an apparent family issue with the largest clan group.

Seven adults were involved at least one day from Oak Ridge including Alan (we couldn't do without him) Owen from FUMC. Four community leaders, whom we usually work with were keeping things “on track” augmented by 2 recent HS graduates who were tasked to assist the youngest campers.



Many thanks to our other adult helpers were Jo Kelley, Carol King, Bill Lawrence, Fay Martin, Chritina Brookman, Tonia Brookman, April Jarocki, and Jackie Waldrop.

The week went swell with no “off-normal” events. Many thanks to all the parishioners who chipped in to make this ministry happen.



MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

Evangelism

St. Stephen's Evangelism Committee has been hard at work this summer—serving with joy, supporting important causes, and planning for a meaningful and festive fall season!

A Lemonade Stand with a Purpose

On Sunday, July 20th, the Evangelism Committee teamed up with the Outreach Committee to participate in the Isaiah 117 House National Lemonade Stand Challenge. With cheerful hearts and lots of lemonade, our congregation raised \$127.00 in donations to support children entering the foster care system. Thank you to everyone who gave, sipped, and served—it was truly a sweet treat for a sweet **cause!**

Introducing: The Calm Room

Coming soon to Room 209—St. Stephen's very own Calm Room. This space is being thoughtfully designed as a peaceful retreat for adults and children alike who may need a quiet moment to reset, decompress, or self-regulate during services or events. Featuring sensory elements and soothing decor, the Calm Room will serve as a supportive sanctuary for anyone feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated.

Whether for those with special needs or anyone navigating a tough day, this innovative addition reflects our commitment to being an inclusive, compassionate, and welcoming church home. Stay tuned for more details and a ribbon-cutting announcement!

Mark Your Calendars: Halloween Fun!

Get ready for some spooky (but friendly!) fun as St. Stephen's participates in the Oak Ridge Annual Halloween Party at A.K. Bissell Park on October 23rd from 5:30–8:00 PM. Our Evangelism Committee will be hosting a booth and handing out candy to the community. We need your help! Volunteers are needed to donate candy and pass it out at the event.

Want to get involved? Please contact Brittany Shassere at brittany.shassere@knoxschools.org.

Christmas Cheer Is Just Around the Corner

Ho ho ho! Is that Santa Claus in a bass boat? No—wait—it's Father Bailey bringing the Christmas spirit to the Oak Ridge Christmas Parade on December 13th at 6:00 PM! St. Stephen's will not only have a festive float but will also set up a tent to hand out hot chocolate to parade-goers.

This joyous event is a collaboration between the Evangelism Committee, Christian Education, and the Communications Committee. Volunteers are needed to: Help decorate the float, donate candy, pass out hot chocolate or walk in the parade. Interested in spreading some holiday cheer? Please reach out to Ashley Hillis, Bill Lawrence, or Brittany Shassere to sign up.

St. Stephen's continues to be a light in the community—not just on Sunday mornings, but all year long. Whether through hospitality, outreach, or joyful celebration, our church is a place where love lives and serves.

Let's keep the spirit alive—see you at these wonderful events!

MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

Ecumenical Storehouse

August Loose Offering Recipient

The recipient of the loose offering in August is Ecumenical Storehouse, a non-profit organization that helps the underprivileged by providing items needed for a home, except food and clothes. The Storehouse accepts, stores, and distributes almost every type of household good -- essentially everything a person would need to set up a small living quarter. Most of the clients served by the Ecumenical Storehouse live in Anderson County, but clients also come from Roane, Campbell, Morgan, Scott, and other area counties.

Many of the clients are from among the vast number of Appalachian poor in the area; others have lost everything in a fire or storm; still others find themselves in abusive situations and need emergency assistance to establish a new home. All are in need, and they have nowhere else to turn for the service the Storehouse provides.

Clients must be referred by a church, a government or social services agency with knowledge of their situation. In 2024 the Storehouse served 300 clients and has already served over 150 this year. While helping those in need, this ministry has also kept thousands of pounds of re-useable household goods out of dumps, making it a very 'green' operation.

The Storehouse was established in 1984, and is operated entirely by volunteers from 11 congregations on a rotating basis. The Storehouse is a member of the United Way of Anderson County and receives funds from that organization, grants from other agencies, and donations of household goods and funds from local churches and individuals.

St. Stephen's parishioners can help this wonderful organization to continue its meaningful ministry by:

- Donating funds to help with ongoing expenses such as rent, utilities, insurance, and maintenance of the truck used to pick up furniture;
- Volunteering in the month of August (St. Stephen's month) to help with the loading and unloading of donated items, or work with the clients to pick out the items they need.

If interested in helping, please contact Kathie Shearer at 865-660-0681

LOOKING AHEAD



August 10
Blessing of Backpacks
followed by Kid Friendly reception in Parish Hall.

August 24
Parish Potluck Breakfast
9:00-10:15 a.m.



August 31: Last Lemonade in the Grove. See you next summer.

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September 7: Ice Cream in the Grove 11:45

September 14: Newcomers' Luncheon

September 28: Aloha to Summer Potluck