

DECEMBER 2025



FATHER BAILEY

Advent and Christmas schedule 2025

*** means Nursery is provided for that service

Sunday, December 7: ADVENT 2

8:00 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 AM – Christmas Pageant Rite II ***

Sunday, December 14: ADVENT 3

8:00 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite II ***

BLUE CHRISTMAS – Thursday, December 18

7:00 PM – Blue Christmas Liturgy

Sunday, December 21: ADVENT 4

8:00 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite II ***

4:00 PM – LESSONS AND CAROLS

PARISH DINNER following Lessons and Carols

CHRISTMAS EVE – Wednesday, December 24

4:00 PM - Family Eucharist ***

Special Musical Guests *THE MISSING GOATS*

8:00 PM – Carols/Choral Eucharist

(Incense will be used at this service)

CHRISTMAS DAY – Thursday, December 25

10:00 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite II

Sunday, December 28: COMMEMORATION OF ST. STEPHEN

8:00 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 AM – Holy Eucharist Rite II

The Rev. Bailey Norman

RECTOR

rector@ststephensor.org

The Rev. Laura Henrik

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Damos

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Simon Ballintoy

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

music@ststephensor.org

INTERIM PARISH

ADMINISTRATOR

secretary@ststephensor.org

Rachel Durfee

PARISH ACCOUNTANT

rachel@ststephensor.org

Larry Hopson

SEXTON

sexton@ststephensor.org

Leah Bailey

SENIOR WARDEN

Ben Shassere

JUNIOR WARDEN

St. Stephen's Episcopal
Church

212 N. Tulane Avenue

Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Tel: 865.483.8497

www.ststephensor.org

THE LORD IS COMING AMONG US

As we enter this Advent and Christmas season, I invite you to reflect on these wise words from Henri Nouwen. Write down your thoughts, dwell on this quote in your daily prayers, engage in conversation about this quote with me or with others who are part of your spiritual journey – *Bailey*

“The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord.”

ST. STEPHEN'S NEW MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Over the past year, St. Stephen's Vestry and many of you have engaged in conversation about revamping our former mission statement which was, "Where God is seen, love is felt, lives are changed." This is a good statement that has served us well for over 20 years, but your Vestry felt it was time for a fresh expression of who St. Stephen's is AND what it is we want to say about our parish to others beyond our walls.

I invite your feedback on the new mission and vision statements. For those who are not familiar with these statements, a mission statement is essentially an "elevator speech" that you can share with someone who is not familiar with our community that tells them a lot in a succinct way. A vision statement gives an outline of how we are going to fulfill that mission statement.

While these statements have not been officially adopted, I put them forth to you for your feedback. I encourage you to speak with me at church, send me an e-mail at rector@ststephensor.org, or call me if you have any critiques or feedback you wish to offer. I also encourage you to reach out to any of your Vestry to offer your feedback. Otherwise, the Vestry is in line to adopt these statements no later than our January Vestry meeting. Please let us know! – *Bailey*

Mission Statement - Be a community that welcomes all to love God, one another, and the world.

Vision Statement - St. Stephen's strives to EQUIP all who are among us to CLAIM the story of God's love in their lives, to faithfully LISTEN to the stories of others, and to joyfully PROCLAIM God's story in us with the people of the world.

WARDEN'S CORNER

God Is Hard At Work Here

This summer, while visiting my daughter Lauren's family in South Carolina, I sat in the congregation with my grandson James while his mom and big sister Lena served as acolytes. Their church is located in downtown Columbia, and has a homeless ministry. On that Sunday, I witnessed the Baptism of a homeless man—I'll call him TC—who had been attending services for many months.

When it came time for his Baptism, TC came forward with his sponsors. At the first scoop of water on his head, he took a deep, shuddering breath, followed by a slow exhale. With the second scoop, another deep, shuddering breath followed by a slow exhale.

By the final scoop, he was visibly trembling as he took one more deep shuddering breath and exhaled. I leaned down and whispered, "He feels it, James". James looked up, and solemnly said, "Everywhere." It was truly the single most powerful Baptism that I have ever witnessed.

As I was telling this story to one of my church friends, she smiled and told me, "God was really hard at work that day." That phrase made me wonder...Isn't God always hard at work?

On the seventh day, God rested, but I don't think God has taken another day off. I picture God fixing what is broken, bringing hope to the hopeless, and shining a light in the darkness. We help God work when we reach out to our brothers and sisters in need, when we feed the hungry, and when we point out that even in the darkest of times, there is a door. Yes, God IS hard at work here, but we can help!



CLAWS FOR A CAUSE

500 LOBSTERS AND A LOT OF VOLUNTEERS!

After a year of planning, St. Stephen's held their first "Claws for a Cause!" on November 8th. Despite a government shut-down, our lobsters arrived November 7th at McGhee-Tyson 10 minutes early! After loading 635 pounds of lobster (20 boxes) into the refrigerator trailer, we were on our way back to St. Stephen's with our precious cargo in tow. We were told to anticipate a potential 10% mortality rate, but had only 7 that didn't survive the trip.

Earlier in the week, a team of volunteers portioned out sides, sliced lemons and melted a whole lot of butter. The Daughters of the King delivered delicious pre-packaged desserts. The cooking crew set up their pots, propane tanks, and coolers Saturday morning and began boiling water at 2:30.

Mother Nature blessed us with perfect weather, and the lighted tent in the Grove looked spectacular thanks to the efforts of the set-up crew. The assembly line crew was in place in the kitchen, and traffic control was in place on Vienna Rd. for those picking up their orders. The greeters, expeditors, and money handlers were briefed, and we began serving at 4:30. The clean-up crew finished the last of the dishes at 10:00pm.

I would estimate that we had over 70 volunteers that contributed to the success of this effort. They ranged from 6-year olds to 86-year olds, new faces and familiar faces, locals and those who traveled hours by plane to be a part of this event. The sense of community and pride was clearly evident among them all.

We have received notes, emails, and phone calls, and have heard nothing but wonderful comments from those who came (except maybe about the traffic!). The lobsters were absolutely delicious. Everyone had a great time, and asked that we please do this again.

The event was designed to raise money for Grace Point in Roane County and the Family Resource Center and the Blossom Center in Oak Ridge. There are a few outstanding bills remaining, and donations continue to come in, but I believe that we will have a profit of approximately \$3000 for these organizations that support the children and youth in the area.

Thank you, thank you, thank you St. Stephen's for all of your support and prayers. We could not have made this happen without you.

After a de-briefing earlier this week, it was decided that we will do this again! Watch for a "Save the Date" card for the 2nd Annual "Claws for a Cause"!

Leah Bailey, Chairman

Claws for a Cause



ADVENT



Hey, Stan, “Happy New Year.”

“Sue, don’t you know this is December not January?”

“Stan, it’s the church’s New Year. It’s Advent.”

“Okay, I get it but why now and not January?”, said Stan.

“I wondered that, too. This is what I found when I looked it up.”

Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. Advent was chosen to begin the year as a representative of the time in history that Christ was not known to us. With his birth, the beginning of our faith was founded. The liturgical year ends with the feast of Christ the King, his reign over the universe.

Around the ninth century in the Western Church, the season of Advent was solidifying its position as the beginning of the liturgical year. However, its origins as a period of preparation can be traced back to the late fourth century in places like France and Spain, initially as a time for those preparing for baptism around the feast of Epiphany.

In the 5th to 6th centuries the Advent season became more established across the church, with leaders like Pope Gregory I developing its structure and prayers.

By the 9th century, Advent was formally recognized as the beginning of the Church calendar in the West, with the first Sunday in Advent marking the new year. The focus was on preparation for both Christ’s birth and his second coming.

“Thanks, Sue. Now we know,” said Stan. “Happy New Year!”

EVANGELISM ACTIVITY

St. Stephen's Evangelism Committee sponsored a tree this year in the Fantasy of Trees. The tree was decorated traditionally in Gold, Greens, and Reds by Santa's elves Caleb and Molly Justice. We hope the lucky family who bought our tree enjoys it for many years to come! The money from the sale of the trees supports Children's Hospital.



December Loose Offering Compassion Closet

The Compassion Closet is a 501c3 non-profit, volunteer led and 100% donor funded organization. Founded in Knoxville in 2013, by a couple who had been helped as new foster parents, it has grown to 5 locations including the one in Oak Ridge which serves Anderson County children.

Children come into foster care following removal by TN Department of Children's Service (DCS) due to abuse, neglect and abandonment and must be placed immediately in foster or relative homes. Most of these placements are made with only a few hours notice to the foster or kinship homes; and, as a result, the homes have no time to prepare for the basics necessities for the children.

Compassion Closet is available for these foster parents or relatives to come and get cribs, beds, diapers, clothing, car seats, infant carriers etc to provide immediately for these children's needs.

The Oak Ridge office strives to be able to meet these needs by maintaining these items at all times. It serves 40-50 families, averaging 100 children from newborns to seventeen-year-olds. each month. They have volunteers who sort donated items and place in bins sized for all children. This office also has age appropriate toys and books;

The Oak Ridge office accepts gently used clothing and furniture for children but always needs monetary donations to purchase items not donated such as cribs and twin beds, bedding, car seats and infant carriers.



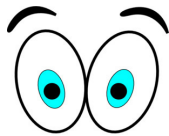
The Compassion Tree

As we have done for the last two years, the Compassion Tree is up in the parish hall with tags for Christmas gifts and/or necessities to be pulled by parishioners for the Compassion Closet foster children. After purchases are made, gifts should be brought back unwrapped and placed under the Compassion Tree by December 21st. Outreach volunteers will deliver them to the Compassion Closet the following day.

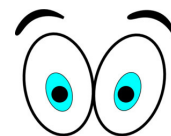
Anyone wishing to make financial donations in lieu of pulling tag(s) can certainly make a donation through the Loose Offerings on December 7th, 14th and 21st or leave a check with the office indicating on the memo "Compassion Tree." Those donations will be used by Compassion Closet for purchase of larger necessities such as twin and crib beds, bedding, car seats and strollers, etc. for the care of the children.

Please leave gift cards in the office. They often are lost if left under the tree.





Looking Ahead



December 7 and 14

**Cookies, cookies and
more cookies after**

**December 18
Blue Christmas**

December 21

4:00 p.m

**Lessons and Carols
Dinner following**



Christmas Services

Dec. 24: 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Dec. 25: 10 a.m.



**December 28
Commemoration of St. Stephen**