

THE MESSENGER

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLESSED BE THE BEASTS, TOO

Fr. David Lynch (pictured at right and below) blessed the animals on October 11th. This annual tradition at STMAA is where parishioners bring their pets on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, known for his love of all creatures.

Most churches hold their annual "Blessing of the Animals" ceremonies on that same day, and though the tradition became particularly popular in the 20th century, it draws on much older Christian ideas about stewardship of creation.



IN THIS ISSUE

YOUTH MUSIC MINISTRY.....	2
ART EXHIBIT PREVIEW.....	4
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?.....	7
HAITI FUNDRAISER.....	8
NURSERY BRUNCH.....	9
YOUTH UPLIFT PROJECT.....	10
GOOD FAITH NETWORK NEWS.....	11
UPCOMING EVENTS.....	13

A MINISTRY OF MUSIC FOR OUR YOUNGEST CHRISTIANS

There are big things happening in Children's Choir at St. Michael's, during year two under the direction of Claire Binek with the help of her husband Justin Binek on keyboards.

"One of the challenges of choosing good children's music", said Claire, "is that much of the high quality music has been written from a fundamentalist point of view. We want music that reflects our values and perspectives as Episcopalians. It is essential to find songs that help children develop their connection to God as much as each other. Good music helps them not just feel, but feel comfortable asking important questions."

Using her experience as the Children's Choir Director at Fort Worth United Methodist Church, she sees this as an opportunity for a ministry rather than just a chance to sing.

"People might be surprised to learn that we spend about half our time singing", she said. She went on to explain that the children participate in music reading games, learning hand signs for pitch accuracy, do voice exploration (such as singing roller coaster fashion) and using Solfège hand signs.



MUSIC MINISTRY, cont'd.

"This year," she added, "we are branching out with percussion instruments, hand bells and body percussion."

These young singers also benefit from a second year with a skilled accompanist in Justin Binek, who also helps with the selection of music. "We're looking for works that not only are theologically sound, but are diverse in terms of musical styles."

Claire holds a Masters in Music from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. She is the choir teacher at Chisholm Trail Middle School in Olathe. Justin has a DMA in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. He is an Associate Professor of Music Theory and Commercial Music at Kansas City Kansas Community College.

If you know of a youngster in grades Pre-K through 4th grade who would like to learn more about music in a fun way, please encourage their adults to call or text Claire at 215-307-5253.

Children's music meets every second and fourth Sunday from 9:00 to 9:50 a.m. in the lower level of St. Michael's. Children do not have to be church members to participate. All are welcome!

UPCOMING EXHIBIT SHOWCASES ART OF GREG LARSON

By Asher Bloete Menke

Looking ahead to this coming month's art exhibit featuring the work of parishioner Greg Larson, the Messenger caught up with the artist to ask him about his work and the role that God and faith have in it. Below is that Q&A. Watch for his watercolors hanging in Spencer Hall this November.

What drew you to watercolor specifically, rather than other painting mediums?

It is very rewarding to work in a difficult medium, where the mixing of colors on the page is unpredictable, but the outcome can bring many happy surprises.

Are there moments where you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in the process, or what role does your faith play in this for you?

I spend a lot of time selecting a photo or portion of a photo that I've taken on my travels. My goal is to share the beauty of God's world, in (cont.)



SPENCER HALL ART EXHIBIT PREVIEW (cont'd.)

the landscapes and the man-made elements. The buildings, bridges, and vehicles all have a sculptural quality to them, and they contrast to the natural surroundings.

How has your style or technique evolved over the years?

I have a strong impressionist/realist style. I've been told by several people that my work is "precise" and detailed."

Watercolor isn't easy to know how it's going to come out. How do you work with accidents and unplanned moments like that?

A successful watercolor requires much planning and organizing. There are times that I do have to start over when mistakes or unplanned results cannot be overcome, but that is rare. As I gain more experience, I begin to feel how much water and pigment to put on the brush.

Who or what artists have influenced your work?

My grandmother was a watercolor artist, and I was always fascinated with her paintings, and she encouraged me to sketch and paint. Also, I befriended J.R. Hamil before he passed away, and he was a good mentor.

Is the church featured in your paintings at all?

As a retired architect, I love to get lost in details of old churches and buildings. I've painted adobe churches in New Mexico and cathedrals in France. They are all beautiful.

As an artist, how do you know when a painting is finished?

I believe every square inch of a watercolor is important. Once I complete a painting, I let it be for a day or two, then go back and decide what items to add or adjust. Watercolor is unforgiving, so the last minute touch-ups are usually small areas of layered, darker color.



UPCOMING ART EXHIBIT, conclusion

What's the biggest challenge you face as a watercolor artist, and how have you learned to overcome it or work within those constraints?

As I start a painting with the watercolor washes, the base appears very weak. There are times when I just don't think the end product will be appealing. I have learned to have faith that the additional layering will make things "pop," and the outcome will be good. Also, the foreground is very important. It is not the focus, but it is important to the overall painting.

How important is the role of failure or unsuccessful paintings in this?

My first framed painting was a windmill in the Netherlands. It was my fifth attempt to paint it. The determination to learn the medium and learn from the mistakes has been a very rewarding experience for me.

Is there often a spiritual connection that you want viewers to feel?

My goal is to have the viewer feel they are "in the painting" with me. The rewarding experience for me is to spend hours painting views that God has blessed us with.

Looking ahead, what artistic goals or directions are you exploring, and what are you hoping to one day master?

I paint for the sheer joy of sharing what I see. Yes, I do sell some originals and prints, but that is not the main goal. I am most excited when paintings are selected for quality national and regional shows.

Where are your favorite venues that you've exhibited your work?

The Buttonwood Art Space in Kansas City, MO, is my "go-to" gallery. I have won awards there and I almost always get items picked for upcoming exhibits.

Some of my paintings have also been selected for National Watercolor Exhibitions at Mark Arts gallery in Wichita and at the Heartland Artist Exhibit in Merriam. The Folly Theatre art benefit and numerous shows at Prairie Village City Hall have been good venues.

STMAA YOUTH OUT IN THE WORLD

By Asher Bloete Menke

A lot of us who come back to STMAA after being gone a few months (or years) are often asked, “What ever happened to so-and-so?” It’s usually a classmate from our Sunday school class, or someone connected in some other way to us during “youth stuff.”

So, a few of us have talked about sharing some of these updates so that the people back in Mission, Kan., know where we are and what we’re up to. We plan on featuring two every month, now that many people have sent us theirs. Updates from Emma Vaughters and Laura Kidwell will kick us off because they were the first ones to send round theirs this summer.



EMMA VAUGHTERS Hi everyone, Emma here! Since graduating from Tulane in 2021, I've been living and working in New York City. I specialize in digital marketing, and for the past year, have been working towards opening my own agency with an old friend from KC! In my free time I enjoy traveling, (my most recent trip was to France), finding great places to eat, spending afternoons in Central Park, and crafting (mostly scrapbooking). I return to Kansas City a few times a year to visit my family and our adorable dog, Ruby.

YOUTH (CONT.) & HAITI



LAURA KIDWELL Laura is celebrating a major milestone as she has graduated magna cum laude from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She's excited to kick off her nursing career in Arizona, starting in a MedSurg unit. Laura balances her passion for healthcare with her love for the outdoors—whether she's hiking scenic trails or playing with her energetic dog, Luna.

She's excited for new adventures, from traveling and exploring to spending quality time with family and friends.

We hope to share two of these updates each month, and we want to hear from you! If you're out of town and you've got some news to share, please contact Asher (or his parents) via the contact info in Realm.

HAITI FUNDRAISER IN OCTOBER

Last month Spencer Hall hosted another Haiti fundraiser for our school in Torbeck. This fall's round of fundraising helped fund school supplies that couldn't otherwise have been afforded, and also supplied the funds for food for several of our Haiti families. The committee gave a brief presentation during the coffee hour to show what challenges currently exist in the country.

Since our ministry in that area was launched in 1984, STMAA has supported the community, school and church in Torbeck. By giving to this ministry, which parishioners can continue to do online at STMAA.com, we invest in Torbeck's survival.

NURSERY BRUNCH

ANNUAL NURSERY BRUNCH CELEBRATES “STMAA DOWNSTAIRS”

On October 5th we celebrated our nursery, with kids’ activities and food for all in Spencer Hall. The brunch was well attended, and nursery director Donna Kirkwood reported that she received generous donations.

The nursery has continued to be a strong resource for our parish, allowing parishioners of all ages to partake in the Eucharist at their own pace and giving parents a chance to worship while knowing their young children are in a safe, supervised environment.

The nursery thus allows the families to fully engage in worship and spiritual growth without distraction. This enables meaningful participation in sermons, prayers, and community fellowship.

It’s also been a blessing for children too. The nursery provides age-appropriate activities and early exposure to faith-based learning in a nurturing setting. Thanks to all whose continued support of our nursery is an important part in aiding the worship of our families.



YOUTH SERVICE PROJECT FOR UPLIFT



Thanks to the continuation of our all-star Youth leaders Addrianne Conway and Jillian Carroll, this fall the youth have begun a campaign of activities that will be done alongside other generations of parishioners. The first of these in the fall semester was when we gathered to make 3 large pans of casserole to be baked and delivered for Uplift.

Uplift Organization is a mobile street outreach for the homeless of Kansas City. Three nights a week, Uplift volunteers take four Sprinter vans loaded with food, clothing, and other essential supplies out to the homeless. They meet them at parks, under bridges, at their camps, or wherever they are. Each night they estimate that up to 400 people are served.

Addrianne Conway and Jillian Carroll will be coordinating future youth-themed activities during the school year; thanks to Addrianne for captaining the Uplift group for this activity, and thanks to Bob Henry for delivering the casserole dishes to Uplift to serve to the homeless.

GOOD FAITH NETWORK UPDATE

GOOD NEWS FROM THE GOOD FAITH NETWORK'S COMMUNITY PROBLEMS ASSEMBLY

By Kate Capps

Our advocacy efforts are bearing fruit! GFN has been advocating for justice in the following areas:

Mental Health Crisis

Johnson County is opening its mental health crisis center in November! See the invitation below.

Elder Care

Working with the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services has resulted in a partnership with CAPABLE (Community Aging in Place—Advancing Better Living for Elders) and Midland Care. This partnership will assist Johnson County seniors in adapting their homes so that they can continue to live there safely and independently. CAPABLE already has a successful program in Clay & Platte Counties in Missouri.



GOOD FAITH NETWORK UPDATE (cont.)

Affordable Housing/Homelessness

This has been our advocacy issue since the inception of GFN.

Johnson County has an escalating emergency in housing:

- Homelessness has increased 41% in the last five years
- Average rent is \$1760/month, which requires a salary of \$70,000+/year
- Home prices have doubled since 2007
- There is a 75% loss of starter homes countywide
- A single parent with two children needs to earn \$95,000/year to live here—an increase of \$14,000 from 2 years ago
- What is a viable solution? An Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)
- Johnson County and local human service agencies have recommended an AHTF repeatedly since 2008 (most recently in 2023)
- 49 of the 50 states have communities with AHTFs
- Every dollar of an AHTF brings \$14 into the community

If advocating for an AHTF sounds like a way to address the affordable housing crisis in our county, please support GFN's efforts by attending the Nehemiah Assembly on April 28, 2026. Put it on your calendar. Your presence will help convince the county commissioners that it is time for them to act.

SAVE THE DATES! UPCOMING EVENTS

COMING SOON

- November 6 Men's Turkey Fry, 6:30PM
- November 13 Reception for Greg Larson, 6-8:00PM
- November 16 Youth Bake Sale (after the service)
- November 27 Thanksgiving Day Service, 10:00AM

ADVENT TO EPIPHANY

- November 30 First Sunday of Advent
- December 6 Bishop's Final Walkabout &
Bible Study, 10-noon
- December 7 Blessing of the Pledges

Advent Fest, 4-6:00PM

Lessons & Carols Service, 4-6:00PM
- December 14 Farewell Party for Deacon Suzi
(after the service)
- December 19 Men's Christmas Gathering, 2-6:00PM
- December 24 Christmas Eve Services, 4 & 10:00PM
- December 25 Christmas Day Service, 10:00AM
- December 24 - January 2 Church Office Closed