

THE MESSENGER

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



RENEWAL! SABBATICAL! WHAT'S GOING ON?

By Fr. David *(who will refer to himself in the third person)*

Over the last few months, you have heard about—and helped initiate—a process of “renewal” at St. Michael. This process is in its infancy right now, but will begin in earnest near the end of this year. This timing, especially the delayed start, is related to a renewal grant that the parish applied for in March. You first heard about this grant at the beginning of the year when a small group appointed by the vestry worked together to create the grant application. You were asked to participate in a small survey to serve as the initiation of a conversation within the parish. That conversation will pick up speed in the last quarter of this year once we have learned the fate of our grant application in late August.

Our renewal process within our parish proceeds as we enter 2027 regardless of whether we are awarded one of these grants.

About the grant . . . The grant is funded through the Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS), a seminary within the Disciples of

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FR. DAVID'S MESSAGE TO THE PARISH, cont'd.

Christ denomination and located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 2026, the program expects to award 195 grants of up to \$60,000 each.

That may seem like a lot of grants, but the program leaders stress that they expect to receive far more applications. The grants are applied for by a member of the clergy (in our case, Fr. David) and congregational leadership (in our case, the vestry). The grants are awarded to the congregation to be used for two purposes: a renewing sabbatical for the priest and a time of renewal for the parish, especially while the priest is away on sabbatical. Of the monies awarded, at least \$40,000 is available for the priest's sabbatical time for travel, study, and rest. Up to \$20,000 is available for the parish's use during the sabbatical period to provide clergy coverage and to fund renewal activities, materials, and/or outside leadership. The expectation is that these monies would be used in 2027.

If St. Michael's receives a grant in August, then we would know whether we were going to follow Plan A or Plan B of the renewal process in 2027. We would initiate some "tilling of the soil" work at the close of this year. The details of Plan A and Plan B will be developed in the coming months; you may be approached to be a part of this process, perhaps even a leader. Your input is welcomed throughout this renewal process.

As for the sabbatical for Fr. David, it had to be worked out in significant detail for the grant application. The sabbatical would begin in mid-July and extend through the end of November in 2027—again, please note, do not forget, may it forever be emblazoned on your mind, the sabbatical period is for the latter half of 2027, not this year! So, we have plenty of time to make plans. The four-and-a-half months of leave would be time for the renewal of ministry for both Fr. David and the parish. We would then, at the conclusion of the sabbatical period, begin Advent in 2027 with a celebration to punctuate that renewal time and to begin our renewed ministry together. As a helpful side note, sabbatical leaves are common for clergy after serving

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STEWARDSHIP: RAISE YOUR COFFEE CUPS IN GRATITUDE!

By Carol Zoellner

Spencer Hall is central to our fellowship life and hospitality where we come together with new and old friends. Whether it's Sunday morning coffee, monthly brunches, funeral gatherings or special events, the shared cup of coffee often becomes an opportunity for connection.

Recently, the Kitchen Angels teamed up with Margie Braun to replace the dwindling supply of coffee mugs in Spencer Hall. Over time, the matching coffee mugs had been chipped, broken and disappeared. The new mugs include an updated, modern shape and incorporate the St. Michael and All Angels logo into the design.

Please join us in thanking the Kitchen Angels and Margie Braun for their thoughtful generosity.

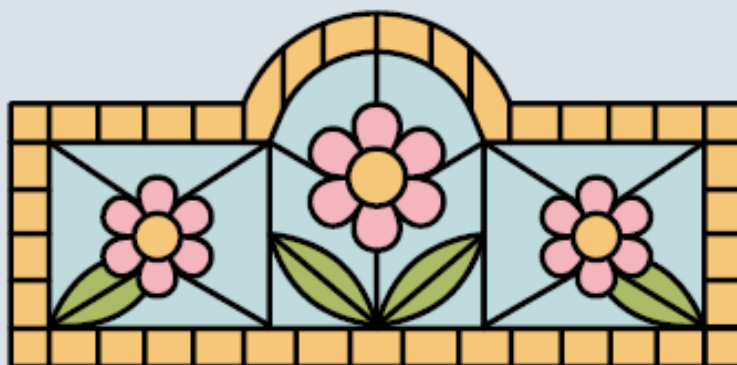


STEWARDSHIP: A GIFT OF WINDOWS

We are grateful to share news of a meaningful improvement to our church home. Thanks to a gift from the estate of Lynne Stark, along with a supplemental gift from her son and daughter-in-law, Win and Carol Zoellner, the windows outside the church office are being replaced! Win knew that Lynne had included St. Michael and All Angels in her estate plans and that she hoped her gift would support a tangible improvement.

Lynne deeply loved the church building and appreciated the ongoing efforts to maintain it while preserving its historic character. As a lifelong member, Win was aware that the windows outside the church office had not yet been replaced and were especially drafty during the winter months. He and Carol suggested funding their replacement, and Lynne readily agreed. Win and Carol also committed to contributing any additional amount needed to ensure the project could be completed.

The new windows are being custom built to fit the existing arched openings, preserving the architectural character of the building while renewing it for years to come. Their design and materials will match the other hallway windows, creating a more unified and welcoming appearance. In addition to improving the overall look, the new windows will increase energy efficiency. We give heartfelt thanks to Lynne, Win, and Carol for their generosity and their commitment to this church community. Their gift will be experienced each day.



PARISH YOUTH OUT IN THE WORLD

This month we received “youth alumni” updates from Olivia Allen and Sophie Wetzler, as we check in on where in the world our young people are now.



OLIVIA ALLEN

Things are great down here! My husband, Jacob, and I are still living in Fort Worth (pictured at left in Santa Elena Canyon). We have a cute house we share with our dogs, cats, and axolotl! Jacob's currently about halfway through his Master's in Curriculum and Instruction and is still teaching middle school science. After 7 years in the classroom, I chose to begin working for a small ed tech startup, The Social Institute, last May. I wish I could make it back up to KC more often than I get to – I certainly miss the STMAA community and I'm so thankful to still have those connections even though it's been so long. When I'm back in town I attend Trinity Episcopal in Lawrence, where my mom is rector.

SOPHIE WETZLER

After graduating from SME and having served as an STMAA acolyte, Sophie completed her Master's in Accounting degree at KU in 2018. She started her career working at a Big Four accounting firm and now she dedicates her practice to helping growing business owners with their accounting and bookkeeping needs. She lives in the KC metro area with her husband, Dante Pennipede, and they now have a four-month old son as well!



PARISHIONERS TAKE PART IN AIDS WALK KC 2026



Pictured above: Natalie DeArmey, Addrianne Conway, Craig Aikman, Dee Norris, and Jaime Keltner (photographer: Jeff Keltner) Not pictured: Crystal and Lincoln Danko.

Together, STMAA parishioners raised \$725 dollars for the KC AIDS Foundation as part of this annual fundraising effort. The weather and atmosphere were beautiful. EEI members and those who attended AIDS Walk KC 2026 reported that it was a great experience and memorial for those who have lost the fight to AIDS.



HAITI UPDATE: EMPOWERING ST. PAUL'S GIRLS

By Lisa Welker

Being Haitian is difficult—and being a Haitian female is even more difficult. The average literacy rate for Haitian females is 57%, leaving around 2.4 million women and girls in Haiti unable to read or write. Of those who do attend primary school, only 20% advance to secondary education.

The reasons vary, yet evidence shows that school attendance and attainment for girls and young women are heavily influenced by their unique needs related to menstruation. Global research shows that when girls complete school, maternal deaths decrease by two-thirds, infant mortality drops by more than 50%, early marriage decreases by two-thirds, and growth stunting from malnutrition is reduced sixfold. Educated women are also twice as likely to send their own children to school.

Keeping girls in school is essential—for the students themselves, their future children, and their communities. One organization, Days for Girls International (DfG), founded in 2007, is helping advance this goal by preparing and distributing sustainable menstrual health solutions to girls who would otherwise miss school during their monthly periods. As of 2025, more than 3.5 million women, girls, and people with periods across 145 countries have been reached. In addition to providing sustainable, washable menstrual kits, DfG offers comprehensive health education.

Menstruation stigma is being challenged by training leaders and engaging communities—including boys and men—to dispel myths and advocate for change. Sexual health and gender-based violence, which threaten young women's agency, are addressed through age-appropriate and culturally appropriate methods. The mental health of those attending education sessions is also believed to be greatly improved.

HAITI UPDATE, *cont'd.*



We at St. Michael's can be proud that, for the second time, kits and education were provided to our students. Five years ago, 75 kits were distributed. This time, 155 kits were sent—essentially enough for all of our female students from 5th grade through high school.

On Friday, April 17, 2026, Dani Jolivert, a DfG-trained young woman from Maison de Naissance (the birthing center), provided an afternoon of health and empowerment education and distributed the 155 kits, along with care instructions which allow each sustainable kit to last 5-10 years.

The kits were obtained from the Shawnee Chapter of Days for Girls, having been sewn and assembled by a team of volunteers. Secure shipping was completed through FedEx and IBC Airways, and customs fees were required in Haiti.

The total cost to ship the kits was \$973.79. Parish members generously covered this cost—thank you for helping keep our female students in school!

HAITI UPDATE, cont'd.

Our future goal is to keep up with new female students reaching 5th grade (as well as new refugees from violence-ridden Port-au-Prince) by sending 50–100 kits every 2–3 years.

Anyone interested in learning more about our Haiti Ministry or becoming involved with a local chapter of DfG (no sewing skills required) may contact Lisa Welker at lisawelker123@gmail.com.



ART EXHIBIT IN SPENCER HALL

By Tracy Swirk

It is such an honor to have been invited to show my artwork at your beautiful church!! Its one of the very few times I have taken my pieces out of my studio in 30+ years and I am grateful for the opportunity to share it here.

I believe my process can be categorized as "Found Item Assemblage" but I call it "Peace by Pieces." I love to create whimsical compositions using mostly second-hand or discarded items. Re-purposing interesting and unusual elements (many scrapped or broken) into cheerful little pieces of art work is the heart of what I do.

For example, a smashed bottle cap, a broken pencil, an old door knob, or a once-treasured trinket which now sits on a thrift store shelf can all become center stage in a fun new piece of artwork. Re-loved and re-imagined. I believe art should make you feel happy while also sparking curiosity.

My love for creating came from years of joyous treasure hunting alongside my mother, exploring thrift stores and garage sales in search of the unexpected.

She taught me to appreciate this fun way to live sustainably. From my father I learned how things work: how to build, fix, and use an array of tools. These invaluable lessons have deeply influenced and shaped my work.



ART EXHIBITED IN SPENCER HALL, cont'd.

Each piece begins by using either an item already in my collection or by treasure hunting in search of interesting and unusual elements. Beginning with a center piece and working around it, using things that somehow come together to tell a story. Then I decide what the background color will be and either paint it using a fun texture or possibly finding an already patterned canvas. Then very carefully wire or screw the elements securely onto it. Creating a picture using stuff! No rules. No expectations. Just what feels right to my soul with the end goal being a whimsical sense of happiness and joy. Found treasures living in harmony! Sometimes the end piece is far from where it began! One item can change everything. It's a very fun and exciting medium to work in!

My pieces are never made with the purpose of selling. It's all done for the love of the process. I learn and grow with each project. My studio has its own eco system where my creativity thrives. It's a collage all on its own! When fully immersed in the process, becoming one with the work and losing track of time itself is what I call "peace by pieces." Finding peace through creating with pieces.



My hope is that people will find a sense of happiness when looking at my work. I hope it gives them a sense of delight and surprise to discover all the elements used to make up each piece. I also hope they appreciate the re-purposing aspect of it. Our mother Earth has become so burdened by excess that to re-use and re-purpose, wherever possible, will make a lasting difference.

SAVE THE DATES

*The Experiencing God study group
invites everyone to their series of
special summer programs*

**June 18 *The Music of Leonard Cohen*
Father Don Compier**

**July 16 *Can Beauty Exist in a World at War?*
Linda Brown**

**August 6 *The Art of Happiness*
Dr. Sue Pingleton**

*Look for details in the weekly newsletter.
All programs in the Bingham Room
at 10 a.m.*

HOLY WEEK PHOTOS



RICH LABELLE IS UNITED WAY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Our own Rich LaBelle was honored in April as Volunteer of the Year by United Way. Rich serves with HopeBUILDERS and Happy Bottoms. Rich is also a key member of our parish's Carpenter Ants ministry.

Rich has been involved in everything from client visits, to ordering materials, recruiting and coordinating with volunteers, and overseeing project builds. Not only has he given thousands of hours of his volunteer time, he also pledges financially to the causes and organizations he cares about.

His nominator said, "His impact is both deep and measurable. What sets Rich apart is the way he shows up. He brings positivity, energy and a sense of fun to every space he enters. He builds community, strengthens organizations and inspires others to give back."

Thank you for your voluntarism, Rich, and your leadership in our community!



for 5-7 years. It is typical for clergy “letters of agreement” to stipulate a sabbatical after 5 years of ministry in a parish. Fr. David will have been serving St. Michael’s as rector for 7 years by the time we hear the response to our grant application. To be clear, however, there are clergy who do not get the opportunity for sabbatical leaves, so this grant opportunity is a blessing for Fr. David and the parish!

There are two ramifications if we are not awarded a grant this August. First, the parish will move forward with the Plan B approach to renewal in 2027. Fr. David will not take a sabbatical that year. Rather, we will reapply for a grant in March of 2027 to be awarded for 2028. This is Fr. David’s preference, given that sabbaticals only come every 5-7 years and these clergy renewal grants can only be received once in a priest’s career. The grant program encourages parishes to reapply, even stressing that the parish might not need to change anything about their application. There are only so many grants the program can award each year.

Hopefully, this article clears up some questions that you have regarding the renewal process that is coming, including the sabbatical component. Undoubtedly, other questions may have arisen. The conversation will continue! For example . . . The central question that the grant application asks of both the priest and the parish leadership is: “What makes your heart sing?” In next month’s *Messenger*, Fr. David will describe how he wrestled with that question for the grant application. It’s the question that the whole parish will ultimately engage.