

THE MESSENGER

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE  
IN JOHNSON COUNTY

In May, STMAA was well represented at the Nehemiah Assembly, the culminating event of the Good Faith Network’s yearlong efforts. Sara O’Connell provides on update on page 9.



WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE  
OUR 2024 HIGH SCHOOL GRADS?

For news of our 2024 high school graduates, where they are and what they’re doing this summer and beyond, turn to page 3.

EXPERIENCING GOD  
PROGRAMMING THIS SUMMER



For a list of faith and arts-related programs this summer you’re invited to, turn to page 7.

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## INTER-PARISH IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE

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On June 1, STMAA parishioners and others involved in the community dedicated to immigration issues met at St. Thomas in Overland Park. There were so many attendees that they had to engage overflow seating.



The two individuals at left were the featured speakers--immigration attorneys Roger McCrummon, who also has a Masters of Divinity from Princeton, and Claire Murphy Shaw, Executive Director of Asylum KC.





## FOLLOWING UP ON OUR 2024 HIGH SCHOOL GRADS

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Thank you to the many St. Michael's parishioners for taking the time to write notes to our STMAA 2024 High School graduates!

The notes made their care packages extra special and personal to each one of them. We sent out 9 care packages with notes in them. Thank you to Tracy Henry for her contribution towards snacks for the care packages in addition to writing so many notes!

### **Who are the 2024 High School Graduates who received care packages from STMAA?**

*by Beth Lee*

#### **Simon Cox**

"Last fall I spent 3 months traveling the world as part of the Education First (EF) gap year program, going all over Europe, Australia, and Thailand. Over those few months I grew more than I could have imagined. Right now, I'm in Barcelona studying Spanish at the EF Language School. I'll be here until the end of April, continuing to narrow down what I want to major in, and where I want to go to university! I have a ton of unis in Europe to pick from. Right now I'm thinking a combination of Sociology and Business, but I wouldn't say I'm too close to deciding. I've also started to pick up surfing, and pretty soon I'll get to spend a few days in Portugal doing nothing but that!!"





## UPDATE ON OUR CLASS OF 2024 GRADS

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### Kai Hayes

"I'm at KU, and I'm living in the Krehbiel Scholarship Hall. I'm majoring in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology. I also play percussion in the university band, and I will audition for the marching band drumline next year. I go almost every week to Canterbury house, the Episcopal campus ministry."



### Luci Knopik

"I am currently attending Kansas State University and planning to major in human development and family science with a minor in public health. I am in the sorority Gamma Phi Beta, as well as a part of the women's lacrosse team. I work at a new coffee shop on campus and am excited to work with the Staley School of Leadership next year as a Strengths Peer Coach. Go Cats!"



### Nathan Kidwell

Nathan is attending Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, FL. He is majoring in Aerospace Engineering and playing Division 3 Lacrosse. He gets around campus on a skateboard and is looking forward to spending this summer back in Kansas. Mary, Nathan's mom, reported that Nathan appreciated and enjoyed his care package.





## STMAA'S CLASS OF 2024

### Jenae Lee

"I'm studying nursing with a minor in leadership at Washburn University. I've been very busy with schoolwork but have been successful in my classes. I go to the gym when I can, and I joined Delta Gamma sorority which has been exciting. I'm very excited for summer to relax and be with my family (and my poodle) and friends and to work as a CNA." When Jenae received her care package, she called and said, "It means a lot to me that so many people reached out to me, and it was a wonderful surprise!"



### Jack Seal

Jack is super involved at K-State majoring in finance. He is in the Menards business scholars program and the honors college. Last fall he was one of 4 freshmen selected to join the finance scholars program. This program has given him in-depth learning, mentorship, and great travel opportunities, including Chicago, Houston, and Kansas City. He participated in Model UN and attended a competition/conference in Chicago. He enjoyed attending K-State football games and watching basketball and baseball with friends. He joined Kappa Sigma fraternity and is now its treasurer. He seems to be making lots of friends and is making Manhattan home. Jack's mom Annie reported that Jack enjoyed his entire care package and was excited to show her all the nice notes when they packed up his room to move home.



### Owen Sluga

Owen is currently working at a Thai restaurant full time and traveling. His travel plans included the entire month of May exploring Canada. He is living at home with his mother while he figures out what he wants to do with his life. He climbs a lot in his free time.





## THE STMAA CLASS OF 2024

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### Henry Stratemeier

"I am a freshman at KU studying Business Administration. I am a member of the KU marching Jayhawks and the university basketball band. Recently I joined an intramural soccer team."

According to Stephanie, Henry's mom, Henry mentioned he got his care package this week and he not only enjoys the snacks but was happy with all the well wishes and prayers he received!



**We are all so proud of these young adults! We look forward to reconnecting with them when we see them at St. Michael's or out in the community.**

**Thank you, St. Michael's parishioners, for all that you do for the Youth! The relationships that these young adults have developed with all of you has helped them grow in their faith throughout the years at St. Michael's and you are so appreciated! If you are interested in joining this ministry and writing notes to the 2025 High School Graduates for their packages, please text or call Beth Lee at 816-582-8707.**

## SPECIAL SUMMER PROGRAMS

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***You are invited to join Experiencing God for a change of pace***

**Thursday, July 17th**

**God in the Visual Arts: All Art in Germany Is Not German Art**



Dr. Sue Pingleton, a retired pulmonologist and art aficionado, presents a review of art found in eight museums in Berlin, Dresden, and Munich. Sue will sketch an overview of German art across multiple timelines and artistic styles, with an emphasis on God speaking through art. Sue's interests include art and art history. She is active in KC/Arts, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the art committee at KU Med.

**Thursday, July 31st**

**De-Weaponizing the Bible:**

**Interpretation, Inclusion, and Infinite Love of God for LGBTQIA+ Persons**

Dr. Richard Liantonio, campus librarian at Saint Paul School of Theology, will guide us to experience God through faithful reading and interpretation of the Bible. He will focus on God's love, welcome, and affirmation of LGBTQIA+ person, with a special lens on ways the Bible has been weaponized against people on the margins.



**Thursday, August 7th**

**Poet, Prophet, Pop Star: The Cultural Significance of Bob Dylan**



The Reverend Dr. Don Compier, retired dean of the Bishop Kemper School of Ministry and author of *Listening to Popular Music: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, will help us experience God through music. Christian faith shapes what we hear when listening to music and contributes to our spiritual formation. His presentation highlights the intersection of the sacred and the secular in contemporary Western culture.

***All gatherings in the Bingham Room at 10:00 a.m.***



## SENIOR MEN'S LUNCH GROUP

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Cecil Allen continues to organize the "senior men's lunch group." If you would like to meet up with the group, you're always welcome - traditionally the guideline for membership has been "men fiftyish and over." A different Johnson County restaurant is visited each time; always the second Tuesday of the month, at 11:30 am.

To RSVP for the July rendezvous, email Cecil at [ca1372@aol.com](mailto:ca1372@aol.com).

Members attending last month: Cecil Allen, Bob Skaggs, Jim Stankiewicz, Art Menke, Monte Giddings, Jim Cummins, Steve McCormick, John Shelton, and Ed Minges.





# NEHEMIAH ASSEMBLY REPORT

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## GOOD FAITH NETWORK - ADVOCACY IN ACTION

By Sara O'Connell

The Good Faith Network held the Nehemiah Action, its annual event, on May 6th. Over 1400 people were in attendance—including an impressive number of people from STMAA—showing their support in asking our community and legislative leaders to address issues of mental health, homelessness and affordable housing, and elder care.

Now for the good news! GFN first asked for a crisis stabilization center at its 2022 Nehemiah Action. At that time, the County informed GFN that such a center might open in 2029. After persistent advocacy, on April 24th, 2025, the Board of County Commissioners approved staffing for an Adult Crisis Stabilization Center.

The Recovery Place, at 64th and Nieman Road, is a 12-bed short-term stabilization center expected to open later this year. Eldercare became GFN's newest advocacy focus this year. Kansas ranks #47 in the US for the percentage of low-care residents in nursing homes. This means that many of our elderly who would prefer to live independently are instead placed in institutional settings.

Research in this area led the team to CAPABLE—Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders. CAPABLE was developed by Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and is now in 35 locations, including Topeka and Denver. The program involves home visits from a team—an occupational



therapist, a registered nurse, and a handy-worker. Together with the client, goals and action plans are made to help the client live independently with improved function and safety. Long-term results have shown that clients are happier and medical costs are reduced.



## NEHEMIAH ASSEMBLY REPORT (CONT.)

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### The Ongoing Issue—Ending Homelessness

After GFN's presentation to the state, a commitment was made to partially fund a pilot program in Johnson County. GFN is now engaged in identifying funding to close the gap with hopes of starting the program this fall. Homelessness and affordable housing are widely discussed issues for many cities and are demanding urgent attention. Since its founding GFN has persistently advocated for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). In 2008, the County began studying the issue and continues to do so. We are the largest city in the state of Kansas without an AHTF.

Those with this funding for affordable housing include Lawrence, Topeka, Wichita, and KCK as well as KCMO. Lawrence has been able to build over 500 affordable housing units over a period of 5 years with its AHTF! Despite the increasing need, despite success in multiple communities and across many states, this remains an issue in our county.

The Board of County Commissioners would commit to no public dollars for the funding of affordable housing. The need was, however, poignantly acknowledged by Chairman Mike Kelly when he announced to those in attendance that help was urgently needed to move 600-700 people out of Aspen Place apartments within the next 48 hours—the low-income facility had just been condemned. The County has no system in place to address this type of situation. GFN will continue to seek solutions and advocate for their implementation.





# GIVING AND RECEIVING, RECEIVING, RECEIVING

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## REFLECTIONS ON VESTRY SERVICE

By Margareta Smith Knopik



In the spring of 2022, I was elected to a 3-year term on the Vestry at St. Michael's. Having served as a member, then Treasurer, and finally, as Senior Warden at our little church in Montana, I thought I knew what to expect. In some ways, of course, I was right—the vestry is the business arm of an Episcopal parish. According to the *Vestry Resource Guide* (2019), vestry members are charged with “specific responsibilities by the canons of The Episcopal Church” and “share leadership responsibilities with the rector.” Think of this definition of vestry as a noun.

The verb is where the action is--and what I experienced before in Montana and then at St. Michael's couldn't have been more different. Where I was expecting a regular meeting every 3rd Tuesday night, what I experienced was generosity of time and respect for each other. The team members I had the privilege of working with over the past three years were all forthcoming with opinions, focused on the tasks at hand, and committed to meeting challenges head on.

For example, during my first term, we were beginning to recover from the impact of Covid-19, especially in terms of attendance. It is difficult to reestablish habits, but attendance slowly began to increase and continues to do so. But, as my business administration professors always emphasized, the concept of “management by walking around” (i.e., paying attention) is essential. The Vestry members strongly felt that visibility within the day-to-day life of the church as well as transparency about ongoing challenges such as physical plant needs and financial sustainability were non-negotiable and these values continue to be integral to the foundation of your vestry.



## REFLECTIONS ON VESTRY SERVICE (CONT.)

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Now for the adjectives and adverbs! Without a doubt, the monthly conversations and decisions about issues that needed to be addressed opened our eyes, forcing innovation and collaboration, and everyone was encouraged to bring their own interests, talents, and skills to the table as we searched for solutions. However, the most rewarding results of serving on the Vestry were the relationships formed and friendships made. Father Cox pushed us to be our best (or at least better) selves, which often included religious development (reading assignments and discussions) and encouragement to step out of our comfort zones, taking on tasks that we normally would shy away from. (It honestly was surprisingly scary the first time I delivered announcements.)

Looking back over the past three years, serving on the Vestry helped me grow not only as an Episcopalian but also as a person. One aspect of defining “church” is its role as a community, where we come together to learn about and strengthen faith, support one another, share joys and sorrows, and serve where we are called (and needed). Community fosters a sense of belonging and purpose and reminds us that we are a part of something larger than ourselves and the Vestry is absolutely a reflection of our parish.

As written in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Being a member of Saint Michael’s Vestry is a gift that keeps on giving (note my current role) and if you have the opportunity (or calling) to serve, grab hold!





### *Saint Michael's Seeks Vestry Clerk*

And last but not least, our vestry is still in need of a clerk. Susan Wilcox served admirably in this capacity for many years, and it is time to pass the baton.

The clerk records minutes of the vestry meetings at their monthly meetings (held in the evening). These minutes are approved by the vestry and kept in the permanent records of the parish. While not a member of the vestry, this is a great opportunity to learn how a parish operates. Like all those who serve, the clerk is a volunteer.

If you feel called to serve the church in this capacity, please reach out to Will Henderson, Senior Warden,  
or to Father David.

