

FEBRUARY 2025



# The Evangel

## THE WARDEN'S CORNER

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### “The Vestry Is In”

Have you ever wondered where the terms Vestry and Warden originated? Vestry comes from the room where church officials would originally meet with their Rector, which was his office and the room where he put on his vestments! Warden is from old French and means “guardian” or “keeper”, which signifies their role as the primary lay representative responsible for overseeing the well-being and smooth operation of the parish.

Your wardens and vestry want to be visible representatives of your parish. In order to be more connected with you, we are setting aside one Sunday a month as “The Vestry Is In” Sunday. Each month, a different vestry member will be present at both services and their coffee hours, chatting with people, and getting a feel for likes/dislikes/concerns, etc. Taking the “pulse” of the congregation, so to speak! They will then report back to Fr. Bailey, Jr. Warden Ben Shassere, or me. This information will inform our agenda for the upcoming Vestry Meeting.

I was the vestry representative on January 12th, Courtney Manrod on February 9th, and you should look for Ben Shassere on March 9th.

Leah Bailey, Senior Warden

## THE MARYLAND STAR BOYCHOIR

On Sunday, February 16th, the Young Men's Chorus of The Maryland State Boychoir will join us for the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist and offer special music. We look forward to having them with us to enhance our worship.

More about the choir is found on page 3.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE CHAIR



Dear Parish Family, the following is an update of St. Stephen's General Fund at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025, including a snapshot of this year's operating budget.

St. Stephen's concluded 2024 with a minor deficit (\$125) in the General Fund, effectively "breaking even" for the year and constituting a successful outcome. At the beginning of 2024, St. Stephen's projected expenses were approximately \$127,000 higher than expected pledge income. With consternation and compassion, the Finance Committee proposed, and Vestry adopted the 2024 budget with this gap (a.k.a., challenge) to honor existing personnel

commitments, and knowing limited legacy resources existed to help pay our bills. Through the course of the year, generosity in giving, cost saving diligence, purposeful use of legacy funds and, especially, God's grace aligned to relieve what seemed to be an almost dire situation. St. Stephen's met the 2024 General Fund challenge, accommodating a handful of unplanned yet substantial building repairs in the process.

Turning to 2025, Vestry approved a 2025 General Fund budget in January. The 2025 General Fund budget is starting with a less dire yet similar situation to last year. The challenge this year: planned expenses are \$53,400 greater than expected pledge income. Although more limited than in prior years, legacy resources are available to help defray some operating costs in 2025. We are evaluating how to increase and diversify our income, actively manage expenses and restore financial reserves. By actively managing our situation and with God's grace, we fully expect another successful outcome this year.

At present only one income source is available to fund our operating budget - that is income from you, through your pledges, loose offerings and other gifts. The Finance Committee is looking at how to spread this responsibility. While we are in the early stages of figuring this out, some actions to diversify and increase income streams to fund both operations and capital needs are underway.

Use of loose offering monies to support our Outreach program is one example of income diversification. The General Fund 2025 allocation to Outreach activities is level between 2024 and 2025 (\$5,000 for each year). This allocation supplements the Loose Offering support for Outreach (which was ~ \$15,000 in 2024).

We are pursuing actions to segregate non-recurring maintenance expenses from the General Fund and to restore their separate funding. St. Stephen's fiscal policies requires a Capital Revolving Fund to house "an appropriate amount of money...to provide for capital expenditures and extraordinary maintenance expenses that are of a non-recurring nature, so that the general Parish program budget (i.e., the General Fund) is protected from unanticipated expenditures of the type cited." This fund has been depleted in years past. Significant funds need to be raised to restore the Capital Revolving Fund to address unplanned capital repair and maintenance.

The Finance Committee is working to establish a sustainable budget for St. Stephen's, wherein income matches expenses, while supporting church growth. We are profoundly grateful for your love and support for St. Stephen's. You do, in deed, make all the difference.

Sincerely,

Courtney Manrod, Chair  
Finance Committee

# THE MARYLAND STAR BOYCHOIR

The Maryland State Boychoir is a diverse group of talented boys who love to sing. Qualified applicants are accepted regardless of their families' financial means and are not discriminated against on any basis. Prior musical training is not expected, but an audition is required. Auditions are held in the fall, winter and spring for potential members who are not required to have prior music training. A qualified applicant is any boy who loves to sing, is committed to the organization, and can sing in tune with a pleasant voice.

Founded in 1987 by Frank Cimino with just 14 boys, the mission of the Maryland Star Boy Choir has remained clear: to foster the boychoir tradition by offering talented boys opportunities to sing and build self-esteem, self-discipline and character. Thirty eight years later, the Boychoir still embraces that goal.

The Maryland State Boychoir (MSB), Maryland's "Official Goodwill Ambassadors," is comprised of approximately 130 choristers, ages 7 to 20, who represent a wide range of ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. They come from nine Maryland counties, Baltimore City, and the D.C. suburbs.

In order to meet the needs of an ever-growing number of teenagers, the Young Men's Chorus program was created solely for changed voices. Members are drawn from the Concert Choir and Tour Choir, and rehearse in addition to their regular schedules. This group presents a variety of music intended to challenge the musicianship of teenage boys.

More information about the Boychoir can be found at: <https://www.marylandstateboychoir.org/about-us>

## FR. BAILEY CONTINUES TO OFFER HOUSE BLESSINGS FOR EPIPHANY

During the season of Epiphany, it is very appropriate for the church to offer house blessings. House blessings go back to the ancient church in which the church actually met in people's homes before special places were consecrated for worship. Fr Bailey is delighted to come out and offer this blessing, both for the blessing itself and the opportunity to have fellowship with you in your home. It is appropriate for anyone, but it is especially fun for families with kids as we can include them in part of the service. If you are interested, please contact the church office or Fr Bailey directly at [rector@ststephensor.org](mailto:rector@ststephensor.org) to schedule a time for the blessing.

"Chalking the Door" is a short liturgy for marking our homes with sacred symbols and asking God's blessing upon those who live, work, or visit throughout the coming year. In this service, we mark our front or main entrance doors with chalk as a sign that we are inviting God's presence into the places, relationships, and situations that we call home.

A common way of chalking the door is to write these symbols along the doorframe (updating the last two digits with each new year):

20 + C + M + B + 25

The first and last numbers comprise the four digits of the current year (2024, 2025, etc.). The letters "C," "M," and "B" come from the three traditional names for the unnamed Magi in Matthew 2: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar (also spelled "Balthazar"). Some also suggest that the letters can represent "Christus Mansionem Benedicat," which means "May Christ bless this dwelling!" A cross is placed between each set of numbers and letters.

# FEBRUARY OUTREACH

## FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The Family Resource Center is recipient of loose offering in February

The Family Resource Center of Oak Ridge (FRC) was founded in 1993 by the Tennessee Department of Education, as one of 13 Centers in the state. It has an office at Willowbrook and one at Glenwood Elementary Schools. Its mission is to break down barriers to a child's educational success and to eliminate problems that keep families from becoming fully functioning and independent members of their community. Below is some information about this important ministry to the at-risk children and their families.

- FRC provides emergency assistance with utilities, rent, gas to get to work, medication, rides, clothes, shoes, and short hotel stays (for families that have lost their residence).
- FRC provides important case management services (home visits, collaborating with community mental behavioral health providers and acting as a family advocate).
- FRC provides children's programs: Food for Kids, school supplies assistance and children's clothing closet.
- FRC provides adult programs: Parenting programs, job skills/resume assistance and budget classes.
- Last year FRC served 392 unduplicated families and 902 children, and networked with over 200 professional, medical, and social services providers.
- There is one full time staff member, Jo Bruce, ED, who has been the director since FRC inception. There is also one part-time assistant.
- All donations will be used for direct assistance for the clients. Staff salaries and benefits are paid by the Tennessee Department of Education.

## TOGETHER PODEMOS-TOGETHER WE CAN

Imagine you have moved to a new country. You may know the language or have studied a couple of years of it in high school. But.... what don't you know? You don't want to get into trouble because you don't know the rules of this new country. What are the traffic rules, how do they differ from what you're accustomed, or are there any traffic rules? How do you find medical care? Where is a grocery store? If you have children, how do they go to school?

It really would be difficult assimilating into a new country if your language skills were basically nonexistent. Together Podemos was founded to help our Spanish speaking neighbors assimilate into our community and become good neighbors. It is a local non-profit organization that provides equitable access to information, education and resources available in the area, for the hispanic community. There is a Board of Directors and a small staff.

Recently workshops have been offered on English as a Second Language (ESL), personal finance and SNAP. A safe driving workshop is under development with the Oak Ridge Police Department. Another workshop in the planning stages will provide support of a Mitigation Plan for families in case of separation. Families will be helped to fill out power of attorney and travel consent forms.

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# ST. VALENTINE



St. Valentine (died 3rd century, Rome; feast day February 14) was the name of one or two legendary Christian martyrs whose lives seem to have a historical basis. Although the Roman Catholic Church continues to recognize St. Valentine as a saint of the church, he was removed from the General Roman Calendar in 1969 because of the lack of reliable information about him. He is the patron saint of lovers, people with epilepsy, and beekeepers.

St. St. Valentine healing a man with epilepsy

Engraving by Cibera, 1853.

By some accounts, St. Valentine was a Roman priest and physician who was martyred during the persecution of Christians by the emperor Claudius II Gothicus about 270. He was buried on the Via Flaminia, and Pope Julius I reportedly built a basilica over his grave. Other narratives identify him as the bishop of Terni, Italy, who was martyred, apparently also in Rome, and whose relics were later taken to Terni. It is possible these are different versions of the same original account and refer to only one person. Numerous churches around the world claim to be in possession of his relics. These include his skull on display in a glass reliquary at the Basilica di Santa Maria in Cosmedin in Rome, a shoulder blade housed at the Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul in Prague (after having been discovered in the church's basement in 2002), a vessel tinged with his blood in addition to sundry other artifacts at the Whitefriar Street Church in Dublin, and relics kept inside a wax effigy of the saint situated in front of the altar of Old St. Ferdinand Shrine in Florissant, Missouri.

According to legend, St. Valentine signed a letter “from your Valentine” to his jailer’s daughter, whom he had befriended and healed from blindness. Another common legend states that he defied the emperor’s orders and secretly married couples to spare the husbands from being conscripted to serve in war.

greeting card American valentine card, c. 1910.

Valentine’s Day as a lovers’ festival dates at least from the 14th century.

Article taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica



# LOOKING AHEAD

## THE MARYLAND STAR BOY CHOIR

On February 16th The Young Men's Chorus of The Maryland State Boy Choir will join us for breakfast and the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist. They will offer special music at that service.

## PARISH BREAKFAST

In lieu of the Monthly Parish Potluck, we will be having a Parish Breakfast on February 16th from 9:00 to 10:15. Scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon and biscuits along with beverages will be provided. Please plan to bring a favorite breakfast dish, fruit salad, or some pastries to round out the meal.

## SWEETHEART DANCE

On February 16 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. grab your dancing shoes and join us for St. Stephen's First Annual Sweetheart Dance. All ages are welcome to enjoy this fun-filled evening of fellowship, dancing, and refreshments. The dance music will include all different decades and dance styles. Invite your friends and bring your children.

## LOOKING EVEN FURTHER AHEAD

March 1

### *Laissez les bons temps rouler!*

Parish Hall 5:30 – 8:00.. enjoy gumbo jambalaya, etoufee, Kings Cake and other Creole/Cajun delights. You are invited to bring your favorite New Orleans style dish as well. There will be an online sign up to ensure plenty of gumbo.

## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

We will be serving our traditional pancakes on March 4th from 5:30 to 7:00 in the Parish Hall. Donations will be accepted to benefit the Blessing Box. Burning of the Palms will take place on the front patio following the supper.

## LENTEN SIMPLE SOUP SUPPERS

Beginning on March 12th from 5:30 to 6:30 we will again sponsor our FREE simple soup suppers which will consist of two soup choices—one of which will be vegetarian, bread and/or crackers, fruit, and a beverage. Please plan to join us for some delicious soup and great fellowship. A Lenten Study will follow supper. Please check your E-News and bulletins for further details.

