

JANUARY 2025



# The Evangel

Two white doves are depicted in flight, one above the letter 'E' and one above the letter 'l' in the word 'Evangel'.

FR. BAILEY

Welcome Pastor Laura

I am thrilled to announce a new staff addition whom I consider to be an early Christmas gift for our community. The Rev. Laura Henrik will join us beginning Sunday, January 5 as our Sunday Associate for Liturgy and Christian Education! You may remember Pastor Laura (as she prefers to be called) serving as a guest preacher with us one Sunday in November. She is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), like our own Pastor Steve Damos. She currently teaches at the Episcopal School of Knoxville (ESK) in addition to serving as their interim chaplain.

Sara and I have known Laura for a couple of years but have grown in friendship with her this fall as she has served in the chaplaincy role at ESK (which is where Sara teaches and James Henry attends). She possesses an incredible gift for preaching and for teaching the faith to children of all ages. As she and I spoke surrounding that invitation to preach here at St. Stephen's in November, we discerned a mutual fit for something beyond occasional supply work. I truly value having two voices that are regularly heard from our pulpit and altar, and above that, I miss having a colleague like I had with Fr. Ashton with whom I could share ideas and vision for growth in ministry. Pastor Laura, for her part, is not looking for a full-time congregational role, but she was desiring a community where she could serve regularly on Sundays and participate in helping to shape faith formation, especially for kids. With our rapidly growing number of families, it was clear to both of us that this would be a great relationship for all involved.

The Vestry and I have made the decision not to call a full-time assistant for 2025 for a variety of reasons. At the same time, we recognize the need and desire to have another clergy person who can help us keep our positive momentum we have achieved this year. To be clear, Pastor Laura will be here only on Sundays and will not be involved in pastoral visitations. However her time commitment to us will be regular and consistent, and I have no doubt she will make a great impact on our worship, formation, and fellowship. Regardless of the future addition of a curate, we hope Pastor Laura will remain a part of our ministry going forward for quite some time.

Remember, her first Sunday with us will be January 5. We look forward to welcoming her, her husband Davin, and their two children Eliana and Everett.

**Wear your name tags!**

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The Rev. Laura Henrik  
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## WHAT IS EPIPHANY?

Epiphany, (from Greek epiphaneia, “manifestation”), is a Christian holiday commemorating the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, and the manifestation of his divinity, as it occurred at his baptism in the Jordan River and at his first miracle, at Cana in Galilee. Epiphany is one of the three principal and oldest festival days of the Christian church (the other two are Easter and Christmas). Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and other Western churches observe the feast on January 6, while some Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Theophany on January 19, since their Christmas Eve falls on January 6.

The festival originated in the Eastern church, where it at first included a commemoration of Christ’s birth. In Rome, by 354 Christ’s birth was being celebrated on December 25 (Christmas), and later in the 4th century the church in Rome began celebrating Epiphany on January 6. In the Western church the festival primarily commemorates the visit by the Magi to the infant Jesus, which is seen as evidence that Christ, the Jewish Messiah, came also for the salvation of Gentiles. In the East it primarily commemorates the baptism of Jesus and celebrates the revelation that the incarnate Christ was both fully God and fully man.

In the West the evening preceding Epiphany is called Twelfth Night. The time between December 25 and January 6 is known as the Twelve Days of Christmas. Epiphany is celebrated with special pastries in many countries, and children often receive small gifts in their shoes in honor of the Magi’s gifts to the infant Jesus. The holiday also has a number of traditions involving water as a reflection of Jesus’ baptism, including the blessing of houses with holy water.

From: *The Encyclopedia Britannica*



*The Adoration of the Magi*

## ST. STEPHEN’S CELEBRATION OF EPIPHANY

This week we will be celebrating the Feast of Epiphany at our Tuesday Healing Service at 11:30 AM on January 7th (Epiphany is actually the 6th, but we can do it a day late!). Epiphany is a feast day in equal importance to Christmas but receives far less celebration. Our Healing Service, while an offering during the work week, is a special service in which we always make special prayers for those in need of physical, emotional, or spiritual healing. If you are able, we would love to have you join us for this special celebration.

# CHALKING THE DOOR: AN EPIPHANY TRADITION

“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.

This practice resonates with God’s instructions to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 6. In verses 4 – 9, Moses says, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (NRSVUE). Chalking the door is a tangible way to honor God in our lives.

## The Symbols

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.

## FR. BAILEY OFFERS 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@ststephens.org](mailto:rector@ststephens.org) to schedule a time for the blessing.

## CHURCH WOMEN UNITED

Church Women United thanks St. Stephen’s parishioners for donating \$1860.00 to the Blankets+ Campaign benefiting people displaced by disasters and violence.

# JANUARY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

## Brysson's Closet

The loose offerings on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays in January will be designated for Brysson's Closet Food Pantry.

Some of you may be unfamiliar with Brysson's Closet, located in the old Anderson's Hilltop Market at the corner of West Outer Drive and Illinois Avenue. In the back of the Brysson's Closet Thrift Store is a small food bank that serves over 100 individuals a month from Anderson, Roane, and Morgan Counties. The folks who come to Brysson's are some of the poorest of the poor. After meeting with a caring worker, essential food items as well as pet food (if needed) and hygiene/cleaning items are given to the family. Brysson's Closet is a non-profit totally supported by donations.

All donations will be used by several Outreach members to purchase food, hygiene items, pet food, and cleaning supplies. These will then be taken to the Brysson's Closet Food Pantry for distribution.

We hope you will support this wonderful ministry. If donating by check, please designate in the left hand corner: Brysson's Food Pantry.

## Ecumenical Storehouse

St. Stephen's members will work at the Storehouse the last three weeks of January. Contact Kathie Shearer or Suzanne Bailey for more information or to volunteer your time. There are several jobs to fill.

### **What is the Ecumenical Storehouse?**

The Storehouse was established in 1984 and is operated by all volunteers on a rotating basis by 11 congregations. The Storehouse accepts, stores, and distributes almost every type of household good - essentially everything a person would need to set up a small living quarters, except food and clothes. Most of the clients served by the Ecumenical Storehouse live in Anderson County, but clients also come from Roane, Campbell, Morgan, Scott and other area counties. Knox County residents needing help should contact Knox Furniture Ministry or Angelic Ministries, similar ministries to the Storehouse but located in Knoxville.

Many of the clients are from among the vast number of Appalachian poor in the area; others have lost everything in a fire or storm; still others find themselves in abusive situations and need emergency assistance to establish a new home. All are in need, and they have nowhere else to turn for the service the Storehouse provides.

Clients must be referred by a government or social services agency with knowledge of their situation. Clients are served regardless of race, faith, gender, or handicap.

In 2022 the Storehouse ministered through the distribution of about \$179,000 of used household goods to 288 families with 793 members, including 361 children, during 356 visits to the Storehouse. Based on the early data for 2023, we expect this to rise about 20% for 2023, as Covid restrictions ease and more clients come to the Storehouse for help. While helping those in need, this ministry has also kept thousands of pounds of re-useable household goods out of dumps, making it a very 'green' operation.

The Ecumenical Storehouse, Inc., is a member of the United Way of Anderson County and receives funds from that organization, grants from other agencies, and donations of household goods and funds from local churches and individuals.