



EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the
HEAVENLY REST
God's Love. For All

Lay Reader

EPIPHANY • VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1 • ABILENE, TEXAS

From The Rector



Annual Meeting Preparation

– David Romanik

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the Parish, Book of Common Prayer 1979, pg. 817

On Sunday, February 4 at 12:00, the people of this parish will gather in the Nave for our Annual Meeting. This will be an opportunity to reflect on the past year, review the parish budget for 2024, and elect members of the Vestry and delegates to Diocesan Convention.

This year's Annual Meeting will include a keynote address by Jay Moore, Abilene historian and Heavenly Rest parishioner. Jay will reflect on the life, ministry, and enduring legacy of the Reverend Willis P. Gerhart, who served as rector of this parish from 1920 to 1958.

Lunch will be provided in Gerhart Hall following the meeting. Activities for children will be available during the meeting.

Please plan to join us for this time when we reflect on where we've been and look forward to the promises of the coming year.

Bylaws Revision

Heavenly Rest's current bylaws were adopted in 1996. While they have served us well, they are from a time when the world looked very different. In addition to the myriad technological changes that have occurred over the past 28 years, the leadership structures of the parish have evolved over the past decades, meaning that our current bylaws have become outdated.

Over the last several years, the Administration Committee of the Vestry, in consultation with the chancellors of the parish, have drafted new bylaws that are more reflective of our current structures, and also more adaptable to the future needs of the parish. The proposed bylaws may be reviewed on the Heavenly Rest website. The discussion and adoption of the new bylaws will be on the agenda for the Annual Meeting on February 4th.

Nominees for Vestry and Diocesan Convention

The Nominating Committee convened late last year to nominate candidates to serve as members of the Vestry and delegates to Diocesan Convention. The Vestry is the governing body of the parish, and is responsible for supervising the parish budget, as well as discussing and making decisions about strategic priorities. Diocesan Convention meets annually to conduct the business of the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas, of which Heavenly Rest is a part. Nominees will be up for election at the Annual Parish Meeting on **February 4**.

The following persons have been nominated for three year terms on Vestry: **David Christianson, Michael Christie, Sharon Lawler, and Diane Stearns**. **Harry Hurt** has been nominated for a one year term. Five members of Vestry will be elected at the Annual Meeting. More information about these nominees may be found elsewhere in the Lay Reader.

The following persons have been nominated to serve as delegates to Diocesan Convention in October of 2024: **Michael Christie, Kathy Drury, Jim Fitzhugh, Tyler Gurley, Lee Hampton, Sue McWilliams, Karrie Partin, Mary Reyes, Josh Stearns, Jan Walker, Rick Willis, and Bijoux Mashauri**. Eight delegates will be elected at the Annual Meeting. Those not elected will serve as alternates.

Vestry Nominees

David Christianson (three year term) - David Christianson and his late wife, Kayla, began attending Heavenly Rest in 2018. They were confirmed in 2019. David has an MA in Communication and an MED in Early Childhood Education. He works at McMurry University in educational development. He also has experience with marketing and video production. David is a member of the Abilene Southwest Rotary Club and is on the Board of Trustees for Alliance for Women and Children. At Heavenly Rest, he serves as a Eucharistic Minister, as a mentor for Exploring Spiritual Treasure, as a member of the Stream Team to stream each Sunday's services, and has been a delegate to the Diocesan Convention. When asked what brought him to the Heavenly Rest, David mentioned the emphasis on love of one's neighbor and communion with all. "The line in our service pamphlet that indicates all baptized Christians are invited to participate in the Eucharist showed me that this group of people cared more about love than right belief, and I think if I'm going to err, I need to err on the side of love."

Michael Christie (three year term) - Michael Christie, his wife Molly, and their son Augustus (Gus) began attending Heavenly Rest in 2021 after moving to Abilene from Austin. Michael has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Schreiner University and over 20 years of experience in the homebuilding industry as well as the photovoltaic industry where he currently works as Service and O&M Manager for Spear C&I. Michael is a member of the Chambers of Commerce in Abilene and several other nearby communities. He is currently Head Usher and also serves as a Eucharistic Visitor. Michael and his family were members of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Austin where Molly and Michael were married in 2009, and Gus was baptized there in 2014. When asked why the Christies joined Heavenly Rest, Michael recounted how they came to Abilene to see if they would want to move here. "It was Pentecost and the first time back in the church after the pandemic. The welcome we received, the sight of the holy spirit dove being expertly swung above our heads, and the beauty of the building really did it for us. We moved to Abilene about a month later and have attended ever since."

Harry Hurt (one year term) - Harry Hurt and his wife Debbie moved to Abilene in 2018 from Maryland, having been members of St. John's in Ellicott City. He received his doctorate in Materials Science from USC and spent the next 20 years doing weapons development and testing for the US Navy at China Lake and at the Office of Naval Research. Leaving government service in 2000, Harry joined the staff at Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory where, in a distinguished career, he led high technology programs supporting the nation's warfighters. Tired of commuting to DC from Abilene, Harry finally retired in 2020 and is now living a much less stressful existence. Activities include running the cotton farm in Big Spring, taking Zoey the therapy dog to nursing facilities including the monthly visits by the Church to Lyndale and musical activities - mainly Renaissance performance on the Viola da Gamba. Harry and Debbie are very active at Heavenly Rest and have been very proactive in getting proper medical attention for adults and children from the afternoon congregation. They have 5 godchildren from the group with one more in queue. Harry has served as Junior Warden for the past year, and the Vestry intends for him to continue in that role in 2024.

Sharon Lawler (three year term) - Sharon and her husband, Gerry, first visited Church of the Heavenly Rest in the summer of 2016 and immediately felt at home. They have often remarked that "We were born Episcopalians. We just didn't know it until we were in our 60's!" They went through Exploring Spiritual Treasure (EST) with Bishop Payne and were confirmed in January 2018. Sharon and Gerry volunteered as EST mentors for the next two years. "When COVID hit in the Spring of 2019 and our ability to attend church in person was taken away, it was a difficult time for all of us. I had been diagnosed with a serious lung infection in 2018 so Gerry and I quarantined for 13 months unable to even see our only grandchild. Heavenly Rest continued to be a presence in our lives through social media and Zoom. It was a lifeline for us. My health has greatly improved, and I can now more fully participate in the life of the Church. I am looking forward to serving on the Vestry." Sharon is a retired Registered Nurse and has experience working with non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations as well. She feels that Vestry is a meaningful way for her to share her "spiritual treasure."

Diane Stearns (three year term) - A "Cradle Episcopalian" and "PK" (priest's kid), Diane has attended Heavenly Rest since 1995, when her father became associate rector. She was confirmed by Bishop Ohl in 1998. She credits the loving congregation of Heavenly Rest for helping raise her. Throughout her years at Heavenly Rest, she has served as an acolyte, a member of EYC, Canterbury Bells, hospitality crew, oblation bearer, and Sunday School teacher. She attended Texas Tech University where she received a BA in Sociology, and shortly thereafter pursued a teaching certificate. She and her husband Josh returned to Abilene in 2006, and have two sons: Jimmy, 16 and Max, 13. Diane served on the board of St. John's Episcopal School for many years and eventually accepted the position to teach Godly Play. Currently, her professional title is Mom. Throughout the years Diane has volunteered for SJES, Future Fund, Hendrick Home for Children, Jr League of Abilene, Cancer Services Network, American Heart Association, and Wylie ISD. Diane enjoys reading, hosting, painting, and watching her boys play baseball and golf. She loves Heavenly Rest for its generosity of grace and unconditional love for all.



Follow us online!
@heavenlyrestabilene

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Most Reverend Michael Curry, *Presiding Bishop*

THE DIOCESE OF NORTHWEST TEXAS

The Right Reverend J. Scott Mayer, *Bishop*

PARISH STAFF

The Reverend David Romanik, *Rector*

The Reverend Corrie Cabes, *Associate Rector*

The Reverend Amanda Watson, *Assistant Rector for Community Life*

The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*

The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Deacon*

The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*

Bikole Mulanda, *Swahili Minister*

Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*

Shelly Reed, *Children's Music Assistant*

Carol Ann Weston, *Director of Family Ministries*

Luke Mendez, *Coordinator for Youth and Children's Ministry*

Steve Gibbs, *Parish Coordinator*

LeighAnna Morris, *Parish Accountant*

Austin Hackel, *Communications Coordinator*

Robert Becerra, *Sexton*

Adrian Smith, *Assistant Sexton*

Dorothy Guerra, *Housekeeper*

Anne Jones, *Nursery Manager*

Office • (325) 677-2091

Your Lay Reader for
Epiphany 2024
has arrived!

Return Service Requested

602 Meander Street
Abilene, Texas 79602-1027
God's Love, For All.
HEAVENLY REST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the

Non-Profit
Organization
PAID
U.S. Postage
Abilene, TX
Permit #249