



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

Lay Reader

EPIPHANY · VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1 · ABILENE, TEXAS

From The Rector



The True Meaning of the Epiphany

David Romanik

One could make the argument that the Feast of the Epiphany is one of the most important observances in the church calendar, right up there with Christmas and Easter. This is, by no means, a self-evident point. In part, this is because people tend to think of the story at the heart of the Epiphany as the tail end of the Christmas pageant, when everyone is antsy and ready to sing "Silent Night." Moreover, when we consider the story of the wise men and their journey to Bethlehem, we tend to focus on the signs and symbols

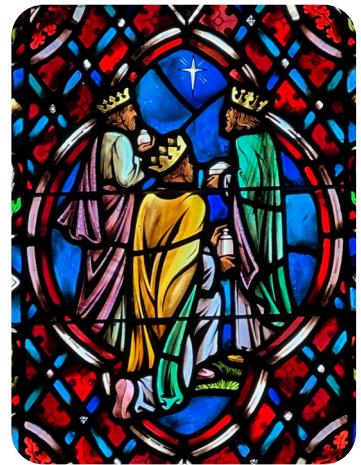
the evangelist describes: the star in the heavens, the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We are preoccupied with the tableau: what did these wise men look like? How many were there? Indeed, one of the major discussions before Heavenly Rest's Christmas pageant every year is "what will the magi wear?"

When we look past the tableau, however, we begin to notice something essential and surprising about the magi: their willingness to embrace the possibility of change. In the first place, the wise men examine the heavens and determine that something in the world has shifted. They look at the world around them and conclude that things are not the way they have always been. Already, this is an unusual perspective, especially in the context of the Roman Empire. Empire requires a sense of radical stability: the pervasive notion that things are the way they are and will remain that way. The power of empire depends on the collective belief that things will not change, that the whims and proclivities of far off rulers are more important than anything that we experience. The wise men clearly did not get this memo. Why else would they somewhat naively present themselves to the jealous and paranoid client king of Judea, announcing to him that something new has occurred in this world of radical stability?

Few things embody the willingness of the wise men to embrace the possibility of change than what occurs after they encounter the Christ child. The evangelist tells us that, having been warned in a dream about Herod's murderous designs, the wise men "left for their own country by another road." Since we have heard this story before, there is an implicit logic to this course of action. Of course they went home by another road: that's what the wise men do after their appearance in the gospels. Yet it is worth taking a moment to consider how perilous it would have been for the wise men to find another route home. In the first place, travel was a risky enterprise in the first century: it was prudent to stick to familiar and well-traveled roads. By finding another route home, the wise men gave up whatever safety they might have enjoyed by traveling a road that was familiar to them. Furthermore, by ignoring Herod's request, the wise men exposed themselves to the wrath of a paranoid and violent ruler. Who knows how Herod would react when he discovered he had been double-crossed? Nevertheless, despite the danger and uncertainty, the wise men acknowledge that something in the world has changed, and they respond accordingly.

We are in that period of the year when many people are fulfilling, or attempting to fulfill new year's resolutions. On its face, the practice of making resolutions for the new year feels like a way of embracing change. On a deeper level, however, most resolutions tend to be about returning to some idealized state. This is a very human impulse. Our response to moments of transformation is to try and get back to the place we once were. After a traumatic event, our barometer for progress is usually "have things gotten back to normal?" By contrast, Epiphany challenges us to accept change on its own terms, to acknowledge that sometimes you have to find another way forward. The Epiphany reminds us that the disclosure of God in Jesus Christ displaces all our other priorities; it disrupts our routine; it reveals that God is up to something new. Moreover, it means that we must be prepared to embrace that which is new. It means that we cannot sleepwalk through life. It means we cannot close our eyes to human suffering or things that make us uncomfortable. It means we must be awake and attentive to the reality of God's presence in and among us.

Accepting change is difficult. We would much rather pretend that things are the way they have always been. The Epiphany, however, challenges us to follow the example of the wise men: to recognize when things have changed and respond accordingly. We are called to open our hearts to the possibility that God has done and is doing something new in our lives and in the life of the world.





New Year, New You

Ashley Powers

As 2026 begins and we celebrate the new year, the adage of “New Year, New You” is reborn. In the secular world it is usually a motto to make us think about all the ways we have fallen short, the goals we didn’t achieve, and the push for this year to be different. Resolutions are made and by the middle of February are unkept or severely modified. Then, as we are swept up in the current of life we can begrudgingly expect to “start over” again next year.

Despite this, the desire for us to start over isn’t all bad. It points to our longing for more from ourselves and our lives. It draws us further in life than if we didn’t care at all. It also speaks to our need for growth, forgiveness, connection, and purpose. “New Year, New You,” in all its flaws, is a wish we make to experience renewal after all the hardship and brokenness of the past year. We want to be new, because maybe that person will be able to handle what will inevitably come.

The church is home to renewal. On an individual level we are invited to participate in the rites of Baptism and Reconciliation of a Penitent. As a community we confess our sins and renew our faith before every Eucharist. Each Sunday we have the opportunity to confess our shortcomings, speak aloud our hopes for renewal, and receive the absolution and blessing of the Lord to make it so. Unlike new year resolutions, the renewal we receive in the sacraments is steeped in the mercy of God who calls us His children as we are, while desiring us to grow in Christ and faith rather than the individualistic and unsustainable goals of the world.

As we welcome the New Year, the church offers another opportunity for renewal in the service of Confirmation with options for Reception and Reaffirmation. Confirmation, as the Book of Common Prayer (p. 860) states, is the “rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop.” Confirmation is for those who have been baptized but never Confirmed. Reception is for those who have been baptized and confirmed in a denomination other than the Episcopal Church. Reaffirmation is for those who have been baptized, confirmed in the Episcopal Church, and who wish to reaffirm their commitment to God.

At its core, this service gives each of us the opportunity to publicly confirm our faith, renew our baptismal vows, and begin again our ministry to God and the world. Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation is a service that does not “make you new” but reminds you that in your baptism, Christ has already made you new. Yet, the opportunity to speak it aloud before God and the gathered Body of Christ, bestows upon those present the grace to remember and begin again. It is what “New Year, New You” strives for, but could never be.

In the secular world, the need to renew and start over is preceded by guilt and shame for “failing.” But in Christ, as seen in services like Confirmation, renewal is cause for celebration because we serve a God of resurrection that always rejoices in our returning.

If you have any further questions or are interested in participating in Confirmation this year through Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation, please contact Mother Ashley as soon as possible! This year it will take place on Sunday, February 8th at 10:30.

Collect for Confirmation

Grant, Almighty God, that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, may be renewed in your Holy Spirit, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Where is God?

Amanda Watson

How do we prepare for the coming of God? What would you do if you received a text from God saying, "Coming to see you- will be there about 10:30 this morning?" Would you clean the house, take a shower and maybe make sure there is coffee and food?

In the midst of this preparing for God's unexpected arrival, what would you do if a pregnant young girl and her husband show up on your doorstep? Do you welcome them in? There is still so much to do because God is coming to my house. What do I do with these people?

This young couple just want a place to stay. I could call a local agency, or a church or the police—people that take care of people. Yet, she looks so very frail. There is not time to deal with this. God is coming. God is coming to my house and it has to be perfect.

After calling everyone I know, no one can help. It is Christmas Eve. Everyone is getting ready to go to church, finishing that last wrapping and cooking. Why in the world did this have to happen to me? What is the world do I do? God is coming.

This is just too much for me to handle. Why do people get themselves in this situation (the pregnancy, the looking for a place to stay)? Where is their family? You know people cannot just wander the streets assuming other people will take care of them. Don't they know that we have responsibilities? This couple needs to find those agencies with people that know how to help people.

I do my part. I pay my taxes, I give to charities, I give to my church. I just cannot deal with these people right now. Perhaps they could come at a more appropriate and convenient time. God is coming!

Maybe I could put them in my garage. It is cold but I could put some blankets out there. It is only for a night—perhaps I can get some help tomorrow. But I am really worried. They cannot touch anything all our tools and gardening equipment are stored in the garage. I really need those things to keep my house and yard pretty. God is coming!

Ok I've got it! I will find a local hotel and pay for a night. That raises another problem. I cannot get one of those expensive rooms; has to be something cheap, I have spent all my money on Christmas gifts and decorating my house. So that's it. I will get them a room. Better than them staying in my garage. And, of course, they have don't have transportation. I will have to take them to a hotel. Don't these people know that I am stretched; God is coming.

So, I waited all night, sitting in my beautiful house. We opened gifts the next morning. But no God. God did not come. Isn't that just like God. God who created the entire world, could not find the time to come visit me. And, how rude! He texted that he was coming and did not show! Isn't that just like God—where was God when I needed God?

I wonder about that young couple for whom I went out of my way at a very busy time to take to hotel for the night. Did they go on their way? I hope that they are better prepared. That young father needs to get a job and take care of his family. And not be dependent on other people. My husband and I both have jobs. We take care of our family. Why can't others do the same?

I wonder did that young girl have that baby? You know a new baby. I love babies. They are so sweet and innocent. So loving and trusting. Sort of makes one think about new life; new beginnings, being clean no regrets, no guilt, no shame, just goodness.

But, darn it! Where is God?

I wonder whatever happened to that young couple?



Season of New Beginnings

Joe Biles

I suspect many of us in the church have internalized some version of a message that says, "God loves you just the way you are, but you don't have to settle for it!" Our mass media culture commodifies a particular vision of what success looks like: *How's your 401(k) doing? Your credit score? Your BMI? Your GPA?* The beginning of the New Year often adds to our status anxiety, confronting us with a nagging feeling that we should probably dust off that gym membership a few days before the calendar actually rolls over—even as the voice in the back of our mind tells us this new resolve won't last.

The tension between the gift of grace and the impetus to improve has strained greater theological minds than mine. I don't have any magic formula that can improve upon what St. Paul taught—that "those whom [God] justified he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30), and "the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it" (Phil. 1:6). But for most of us, confidence in our ultimate spiritual redemption does not cleanse us from anxiety about the here and now. It's legitimate to care about our health, our work, and those we love. And it's not always easy to simply strive for excellence in [insert your own endeavor here] in planning and execution, while giving ourselves grace about outcomes.

Yet, as I've grown older, I've come to appreciate more and more the beauty of simply beginning. I have failed at most New Year's Resolutions I've adopted—and there is nevertheless a profound theological assertion embedded in the act of making them. Each new attempt at personal growth affirms the goodness of this created order, the people in it, and the possibility of change and renewal. Even when I fall short of a goal, I nearly always learn something about myself in the process. And it's inspiring seeing my neighbors do the same—whether it's "Dry January," a fitness or educational goal, or a spiritual discipline.

Can the "New Year, New You" mentality be gimmicky? Commercial? Even heretical? (Google "Pelagianism.") Sure. At its worst it can represent a funhouse mirror version of themes of the Christian liturgical year: a domesticated, spiritually shallow version of Lent, with no Holy Week at the end.

Reframe the exercise, and the picture changes. When we shift our mindset away from earning our self-worth or redeeming something we lack—and toward doxological gratitude for the life we've been given—we find the spiritual insight at the heart of this season of new beginnings. As long as we draw breath, there are new possibilities. Indeed, even after.

Whether it's a New Year's Resolution or a Lenten devotion, we will all face a time when we fall short and our best-laid plans for optimal human performance collide with the reality of our very human capacity. The important thing is to simply begin again. As Bishop Mayer has said, "The dynamic of the Christian life isn't success and failure—it's death and resurrection."

I pray that this season may lead all of us to greater awareness of the immeasurable gift of new beginnings and new possibilities we receive each and every morning.

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Ps. 150:6)



The Christmas Pageant - a Story of God's Love for All

Carol Ann Weston

The sheep are bleating, cats meowing, donkeys braying, cows mooing, a toddler crying, angel wings fluttering, wise people following, stars shining, shepherds herding, adults guiding, and an infant is sleeping. Add Scripture, Christmas carols, and an audience and you have a recipe for what is often called "holy chaos". In the midst, the miracle of God's coming into the world as a child is revealed through our annual Christmas Pageant.

This child grew up to be a man who loved and welcomed all. So, we also welcome all - to our community of believers, to worship, to our pageant. From the youngest child to the oldest teen, all are invited to choose a part and help tell the story. Even, no, especially the child who changes costumes twice because they can't decide, the guest who comes at the last minute and is invited upstairs to quickly choose, the toddler who wanders up and down the steps or runs for a parent, and those who giggle throughout because they're just having fun. The message of this wonderful and (not just spiritually) moving production is that all are called by Christ.....who they are, as they are.

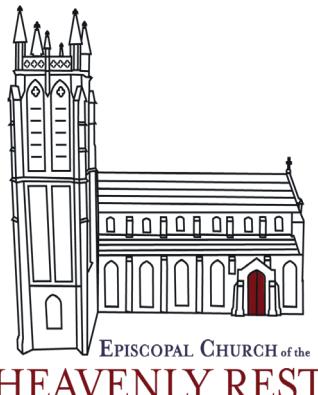
Once again, our pageant has captured the holy chaos, the miracle, the surprise, the mystery, and the joy of our Savior's birth so long ago. It reminds us of why Christmas still inspires such wonder and that God often chooses the youngest among us to carry the biggest messages.



Organ Dedication Updates

Thomas Pavlechko

As you have heard and enjoyed during Advent and Christmas, the sounds of our organ are again filling the Nave. Most of our rebuilt organ was reinstalled by the Kegg Pipe Organ Company in November. However, due to emergency brain surgery of the company's owner, there is more to finish. Additionally, there are typical mechanical issues that occur with new organ installations that will be addressed. The detailed tonal finishing of all the pipes is the primary work that is still to be completed, hopefully by February. As such, the organ dedication is moving to Sunday, May 3 at 6:00 p.m. So take the January Dedication date off of your calendar, and look forward to a completed pipe organ to be dedicated and celebrated in May!



Nominees for Vestry and Diocesan Convention

The Nominating Committee convened 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. The delegates elected at this year's annual meeting will also participate in the electing Convention for the next Bishop of Northwest Texas in January of 2027. Nominees for Vestry and the parish's Diocesan delegation will be up for election at the Annual Parish Meeting on February 1.

The following persons have been nominated for three year terms on Vestry: Dan Harbaugh, Gretchen Henson, Jay Moore, and Dustin Rainwater. Kate Haney has been nominated for a one year term. Five members of Vestry will be elected at the Annual Meeting.

The following persons have been nominated to serve as delegates to the 68th Diocesan Convention in October of 2026 and the Special Electing Convention in January of 2027: Yvonne Batts, Melody Brown, Connie Collier, Judy Godfrey, Lisa Goolsby, Debbie Hurt, Harry Hurt, Bijoux Mashauri, Jay Moore, Dustin Rainwater, Shelly Reed, Bill Young, and Terry Young. Eight delegates will be elected at the Annual Meeting. Those not elected will serve as alternates.

We are grateful to all of these individuals for their willingness to serve! More information about the nominees may be found elsewhere in the Lay Reader.

A Prayer for the Parish

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.

From the Book of Common Prayer, page 817

Vestry Nominees



Kate Haney has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 46 years. She has been an acolyte, served on the stewardship and search committees. She is currently a member of the Vestry, where she serves as Senior Warden. Kate is a Realtor in the Abilene area. She has two children, Caroline and Tom. Kate can often be found watching her kids compete in sports and FFA. When asked what she appreciates about Heavenly Rest, Kate said, "I love the congregation. The warmth of and love you feel when you step onto the grounds. It feels like home. Comfort. I also am so impressed in the many ways you can be involved and grow spiritually." Kate has been nominated for a one year term.

Dan Harbaugh and his family began attending Heavenly Rest three years ago. He is a layreader and a ringer in the Canterbury Handbell Choir. Dan serves as the Associate Director of Bands/ Director of Athletic Bands at Abilene Christian University. He directs the Big Purple Marching Band, Basketball Band, Concert Band, teaches courses within the Music Education curriculum, and is the University Supervisor for all Instrumental Music Education Clinical Teachers. Dan is married to Amanda, who works actively with VBS, among other things, and they have two children, Charlotte and William. When asked what he appreciates about Heavenly Rest, Dan said, "I love how welcoming and open we are with each other, how service-minded the parishioners are, and, of course, the music. Heavenly Rest is a place that welcomes people and values all parts of our past." Dan has been nominated for a three year term.

Gretchen Henson has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 22 years. A former elementary school teacher, she has been a volunteer for Vacation Bible School on several occasions and has taught Sunday school for over 12 years. Gretchen is married to Jay, and they have two grown children, Molly and John. Molly and her husband Noah are parents to Gretchen's grandsons Henson and Andy. When asked about this parish, Gretchen said, "I love Heavenly Rest because it feels like home." Gretchen has been nominated for a three year term.

Jay Moore has been a member of Heavenly Rest since 2022. He serves as an usher, volunteers in the parish archives, and serves on the Board of St. John's Episcopal School. A retired teacher, Jay spends his time documenting our city's history and is the Director of the Stone Owl Institute. He is married to Laura, with whom he has three daughters: Madison, London, and Annelise. When asked what he appreciates about Heavenly Rest, Jay said, "I love the spirit of the people, the services, the history, the architecture and the short walk to church." Jay has been nominated for a three year term.

Dustin Rainwater has been a member at Heavenly Rest for about 5 years. He is a lay reader, usher, and mentor for Exploring Spiritual Treasure (EST). He volunteers for Breakfast on Beech Street (BOBS), and has served as a delegate to Diocesan Convention. Dustin currently works as a Project Manager at Thompson & Horton LLP, a firm specializing in education law. Though, as he puts it, it's "just him" under his roof, Dustin's parents live in Abilene, for which he is grateful: their example continues to shape how he treats others. Dustin also has a brother who lives in Houston with two endearing nieces. When asked about the parish, Dustin said, "What I love about Heavenly Rest is its welcoming nature that transcends all differences. It doesn't matter where someone comes from, what they believe, or their background; we strive to extend God's love to everyone in our community." Dustin has been nominated for a three year term.

Nominees for Diocesan Delegate

Yvonne Batts has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 36 years. She was elected to Vestry twice, serving as both Senior Warden and Junior Warden. She is a Eucharistic Minister, a member of the Altar Guild of both the church and St. John's Episcopal School, a sound volunteer, and has served on the stewardship committee on multiple occasions. On a Diocesan level, Yvonne was co-chair of the host committee for the 66th Diocesan Convention at Heavenly Rest, and has served as a Diocesan delegate and a member of the Diocesan Executive Council.

Melody Brown has been a member of Heavenly Rest since 2021. She is a lay reader and Eucharistic Visitor. She is a ringer in the Canterbury Handbell Choir, and is involved with Episcopal Young Adults, Episcopal Church Women, Education for Ministry, and Contemplative Prayer.

Connie Collier has been a member of Heavenly Rest for approximately 50 years. She is a Eucharistic Minister, and is involved with Altar Guild, Breakfast on Beech Street (BOBS), and Daughters of the King. Connie has served on Vestry, where she was the Ministry Chair, and has also served as a Diocesan delegate.

Judy Godfrey has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 28 years. She was elected to Vestry twice, and served as Senior Warden for 3 years. She has been a greeter and an usher, and is involved in Soup Sisters. She chaired the committee that transformed the old Parish Hall into the Julia Jones Matthews Sacred Music Center, and also led the restoration of the church's stained glass windows six years ago. She has been a ringer in the Canterbury Handbell Choir for the entirety of her time in the parish. In the wider Church, Judy has served on the Board of Directors for the Episcopal Church Foundation for three years.

Lisa Goolsby joined Heavenly Rest in 2013. She has served on the Vestry, and has previously been elected as a Diocesan delegate. She is an Acolyte Mentor, and is involved in Breakfast on Beech Street (BOBS), Children and Families Committee, Rally Night Planning Team, and Heavenly Neighbors Committee.

Debbie Hurt has been a member of Heavenly Rest since 2018, having moved here from St. John's in Ellicott City, Maryland. She has been involved in Hands On Outreach, Soup Sisters, the Quilt and Prayer Shawl Ministry, and the Columbarium Watering Committee. She also served as a delegate to Diocesan Convention in 2023.

Harry Hurt and his wife Debbie have been members of Heavenly Rest since 2018. Harry has been on Vestry for five years, and has served as Junior Warden for the last three. He rings with the Canterbury Bell Choir, and served as a delegate to Diocesan Convention in 2023.

Bijoux Mashauri has been a member of Heavenly Rest for over ten years. She is a lay reader, a Eucharistic Minister, and an officiant for our 1:00 service. She has served as a delegate to Diocesan Convention twice.

Jay Moore has been a member of Heavenly Rest since 2022. He serves as an usher, volunteers in the parish archives, and serves on the Board of St. John's Episcopal School.

Dustin Rainwater has been a member at Heavenly Rest for about 5 years. He is a lay reader, usher, and mentor for Exploring Spiritual Treasure (EST). He volunteers for Breakfast on Beech Street (BOBS), and has served as a delegate to Diocesan Convention.

2026 will be **Shelly Reed**'s 30th year at Heavenly Rest. She has served in almost every music ministry as a director and a member. She has also been involved in Friday Food Distribution, Church Summer Camps, and advisory committees to the Organist & Director of Music.

Bill Young has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 41 years. Currently, he serves as a lay reader and Eucharistic Visitor, livestreams worship as part of the stream team, volunteers for Hands On Outreach, and participates in the One Parish/Parokia Moja Committee. In the past, he has been involved in the Kitchen Crew, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Centering Prayer, Stewardship Canvassing Team, Holy Orders Discernment Committees, Sunday School, and Cursillo. Bill served a term on the Vestry and was Junior Warden during that time.

Terry Young has been a member of Heavenly Rest for 35 years. She has served on the Vestry, and currently serves as the scribe for Vestry meetings. She is a Sunday School teacher and coordinates the Eucharistic Minister schedule. Terry has also been involved in St. Margaret's Guild, BOBS, and the Kitchen Crew.

Faith in Times of Crisis

In the Parable of the Sower, which appears in the gospels according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus describes the ways that faith can be precarious. He notes that some receive the word, but are lured away by the temptations of wealth and worldly glory. Others lose interest immediately, distracted by the cares and occupations of daily life. Still others fall away in the face of trouble and persecution. The point that Jesus makes is clear: faith can disintegrate during times of suffering and uncertainty. At the same time, our tradition teaches us that faith can survive and even flourish during times of crisis. Many of the great figures from Christian history have endured unspeakable horrors by embracing and clinging to their faith in God. On Wednesday nights during the season after the Epiphany, we will explore stories of “Faith in Times of Crisis,” drawing inspiration from our ancestors in the faith, as well as contemporary examples of those whose faith shapes the way they approach some of the greatest challenges this world has to offer. Join us for supper at 6:00 and the program at 6:30.

Wednesdays this Spring

Job's Witness: How Suffering Changes the Way we Speak of God (January 14)

The book of Job is one of the most challenging texts of Scripture. Among other things, it explores what faithfulness looks like in the face of suffering and uncertainty. Join Amy McLaughlin-Sheasby, an ACU assistant professor of religion, as she discusses her new book on Job, which, in her words, “explores the ways in which radical suffering transforms theological imagination, and thereby the way we speak about God.”

Awe, Science, Religion, and Eudaemonia (January 21)

Recent research reveals that the experience of awe makes us feel small but also deeply connected. Indeed, the experience of awe is something all the world’s great religions have in common. Awe makes us better people, with greater life happiness, generosity, and purpose (eudaemonia). Join JD Stillwater, scholar and science ambassador, as he explores awe’s positive effects on our bodies and minds, how science can help us experience awe, the sibling rivalry between awe and horror, and the use (and misuse) of awe in education, politics, and war. This presentation is offered in collaboration with the Abilene Interfaith Council.

“With Undivided Hearts”: Bonhoeffer and the Cost of Discipleship (January 28)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor and scholar who was martyred for his resistance to Nazi tyranny. As a founding director of a seminary for the Confessing Church, he also had a deep regard for the complexities and challenges of community life. His example is profoundly relevant today, as we consider what it means to live in community, with all its joys and frustrations. Join the Reverend Cole Jodon, Bonhoeffer scholar and rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd in San Angelo, as he discusses the life and witness of this remarkable person of faith.

The Witness and Work of the Novi Community (February 4)

It is often children in war-torn communities who are most afflicted by their circumstances: deprived of basic needs for positive development, such as safety, education, and nutrition. The Novi Community seeks to help children in these places develop emotional regulation and resilience through trauma informed methods and other forms of support. Join Steve Gumaer, who founded Novi with his wife Oddny, as he discusses this work and its inspiration.

Episcopal Young Adults

Melody Brown

Since 2021, the Episcopal Young Adults (EYA) here at Heavenly Rest have been creating a space focused on prayer, presence, and shared life. It is a steady place to land, especially at the end of a busy week.

Most Sundays at 7 pm, EYA comes together in the chapel for Evening Prayer. Led by members of EYA, the service is open to the whole congregation and welcomes anyone seeking a quiet place to pray, breathe, and reset before the week ahead.

Simple, reverent, and accessible, the service follows the steady rhythm of common prayer. It is a “come as you are” gathering without any pressure to perform or have all the answers. There’s space to sit, listen, pray, or simply be present.

What makes this special isn’t just the service itself - it’s also what happens afterward. EYA members gather in Gerhart Hall with a shared meal, extending worship into fellowship. The table is relaxed and welcoming, creating space for conversation, laughter, and connection. Whether someone has been part of Heavenly Rest for years or is walking through the doors for the first time, it is a place to be known and to belong.

EYA provides a welcoming space where young adults can grow at their own pace. Here, faith is lived together, rooted in prayer, strengthened by community, and sustained by God’s presence.

To learn more about EYA, please contact Melody Brown at mbrown@heavenlyrestabilene.org or follow EYA on Instagram @heavenlyrest_eya!



Epiphany

Doug Thomas

The world was awakened by the birth of the Son.
The warmth of His love brought the call to be one
with those who are different,
and those who have none.

By suffering together with friends and with foes;
we who are many,
diverse and discreet,
find in His passion a new way to meet.

Rejoicing together His presence we sing.
Uniting together His kingdom we bring.





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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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THE DIOCESE OF NORTHWEST TEXAS

The Right Reverend J. Scott Mayer, *Bishop*

PARISH STAFF

The Reverend David Romanik, *Rector*

The Reverend Ashley Powers, *Associate Rector*

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

The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Assisting Priest*

The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*

The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*

The Reverend Joe Biles, *Deacon and Pastoral Assistant*

Bikole Mulanda, *Swahili Minister*

Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*

Elizabeth Knauer, *Music Assistant, Choristers*

Laura Dickson, *Music Assistant, Children's Choir*

Carol Ann Weston, *Director of Family Ministries*

Jen Rogers, *Director of Communications and Stewardship*

Lydia Hurt, *Parish Manager*

Brenda Fisher, *Parish Accountant*

Robert Becerra, *Sexton*

Dorothy Guerra, *Housekeeper*

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