

The Evangel

St. Stephen's United Methodist Church
June 23, 2017
Volume 22, No. 13

Sunday, June 25:

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Celebration Service
8:30 am

Sunday School
9:40 am

Traditional Worship
11:00 am

Sunday, July 2:

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
We welcome our new pastor,
Rev. Nathan Lonsdale Bledsoe

Celebration Service
8:30 am

Sunday School
9:40 am

Traditional Worship
11:00 am

Welcome Fellowship Luncheon
12:00 pm



OUR MISSION
is to know God and
make God known!



The church office will be closed Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. The office will be open regular hours on Monday, July 3. We hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable 4th!

A Message from the Pastor



I'm Using Words Because Now It Is Necessary

I write this final newsletter article, much as I began the first one five years ago: with excited expectation for what God is going to do in our lives together. Soon, I will no longer be your pastor; I will be a missionary sent by our bishop to a new mission field with new needs and new possibilities. Nathan will come to serve as your new pastor in less than two weeks, and he will bring new ideas and observe new needs and possibilities in the mission field that St. Stephen's now anchors.

Though you and I will be separated by distance and ministry, we will always be connected by the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit both generally through the priesthood of all believers and specifically through our United Methodist connection and the Texas Annual Conference! That is why I still have excited expectations for what God will be doing in our lives together!

Please know that Ginger, Jennings and I will miss you all so much. We are so grateful for the love, care, and ministry that you have shared with us over the last five years --and for the cards, gifts, hugs, well-wishes, and luncheon over the last two months! (And we especially are thankful for the love you have showed to Jennings over the last two years. You welcomed him like family and have been a blessing to him and so many others.) Keep sharing that spirit of hospitality as you receive Nathan and Sarah and all the future guests and members of St. Stephen's! Please know that you will be in our thoughts and prayers. We look forward to hearing about the wonderful ministries that St. Stephen's will be doing over the coming months and years!

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. . . . May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
(2 Corinthians 13:11, 14)

Grace and peace,
Kevin

Pastor Appreciation Luncheon



St. Stephen's members, guests and friends filled our fellowship hall at a luncheon held in honor of Pastor Kevin and his family on Sunday, June 11. Our church family shared love and special memories from Kevin's 5 years of service here at St. Stephen's. Several members took the microphone to share how they had been touched and blessed by Kevin's ministry. We will miss Kevin, Ginger and Jennings, but we are excited about the wonderful things God has planned for them in Carthage; and what awesome plans He has for St. Stephen's as we welcome our new pastor! (Please visit St. Stephen's United Methodist Church's Facebook page to see lots more photos from the luncheon and other events!)

2 Attendance and Contributions at St. Stephen's:

	8:30 am	11:00 am	Sunday School	Operating	Building	Missions/ Communion	Other	Fundraiser
June 11	43	181	127	\$7,760.00	\$450.00	\$1,445.00	\$336.33	—
June 18	69	185	121	\$8,233.00	\$246.00	—	\$335.01	—

From the St. Stephen's Foundation Committee - "Heartspring Highlights"



As You Travel, Stay Connected

Summer is prime vacation travel season for many. As you head out, remember to stay connected to your church home. Consider setting up a recurring giving plan to make sure you continue your regular tithing so summer ministries may continue to thrive in your absence. You also may want to consider giving a little extra during the hotter months to cover the higher electricity bills that result from keeping the sanctuary cool and inviting all summer long. For more information on ways to support the church this summer, contact the church office, or Heartspring Methodist Foundation at 713-533-3780, 1-800-521-9617 or office@heartspringmethodist.org.

Milestones

We Welcome Our New Pastor!



On Sunday, July 2, we will welcome our new pastor, Rev. Nathan Lonsdale Bledsoe, and his wife, Sarah! The YEAs (Young Energetic Adults) and Radical Hospitality Ministry Team of St. Stephen's are hosting a Welcome Luncheon for Pastor Nate and Sarah on July 2, following the 11:00 a.m. worship service. We would like as many groups as possible to sign up to decorate a table representing the different ministries and activities at the church. We feel this is a great way for Nathan and Sarah to start learning about their new congregation, while allowing each group to showcase itself.

Decorations can consist of anything that seems applicable, and can be simple or complex. Please contact the church office with the name of your group, the person who will be providing the decorations and any other details you might have. The fellowship hall will be available for table decorating Saturday, July 1, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., and before Sunday School on July 2. We will also continue our tradition of hosting the Apple Pie Contest, so bring your best pies to share!

Welcome, New Member!



Ken Weems joined St. Stephen's by transfer of membership from Pathways Church on Sunday, June 18. Here is contact information for Ken, so that you can welcome him personally:

**1823 Ebony Lane,
Houston, Texas 77018
Home phone: 713-681-9902
Cell: 832-493-2212
Email: kenweems1@aol.com**

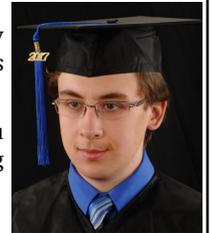
Note of Thanks

Dear St. Stephen's Family,

Thank you for praying over me at my graduation. I appreciate the meaningful cross and the graduation box full of cards and gifts.

I am grateful for my church family and how you prayed for me when I was little and going through open heart surgeries.

Thank you and God Bless,
Michael B. Sackett



St. Stephen's Wins Readers' Choice Awards!

St. Stephen's United Methodist Church was a winner in 3 categories in *The Leader* Newspaper's 2017 Reader's Choice Awards:

- St. Stephen's UMC - Silver Place Winner in the "Best Church" Category.
- Rev. Kevin Otto - Bronze Place Winner for "Best Minister".
- The Johnson Memorial School at St. Stephen's - Silver Place Winner for "Best Learning Center".



In Memory



During a recent review of our membership records, we discovered that **Margaret Wann Jacobs**, a long-time member of St. Stephen's, passed away February 7, 2017. A funeral service was held for Margaret on February 18 at Brookside Funeral Home in Houston, Texas.

We extend our prayers and sympathy to the family of **Florence Epperson**, who passed away June 7, 2017. Florence's funeral service was held at St. Stephen's on June 13. A graveside service was held for her on June 14 at Houston National Cemetery.



Evangel Deadlines

Publication Date	News Deadline
July 7	Noon-Monday, July 3
July 21	Noon-Monday, July 17

Send articles to maryellen@stsumc.org or call the church office.

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Friday, June 23:**Boy Scouts Troop 604 Leaves for Summer Camp**

6:00 am—Men's Prayer Breakfast (Denny's @ W 34th & 290)

Saturday, June 24:**Troop 604 at Summer Camp/Medicine Mtn Scout Ranch, S. Dakota**

7:00 am—Garden Angels Dirt Diggers Workday (Work on flowerbeds.)

10:00 am—VBS Volunteer Breakfast and Safe Sanctuary Training (Fellowship Hall)

8:00 pm—Narcotics Anonymous Support Group (Scout House)

Sunday, June 25:**Third Sunday after Pentecost****Our Youth Leave for UM ARMY Camp in Lufkin, Texas****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

7:30 am—Sonrise (Celebration Service) Choir Practice (Sanctuary)

8:30 am—Celebration Service (Sanctuary)

9:40 am—Sunday School for Children, Youth & Adults (Education Bldg)

11:00 am—Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

Monday, June 26:**Our Youth at UM ARMY****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

7:00 pm—Trustees Board Meeting (Church Library)

Tuesday, June 27:**Our Youth at UM ARMY****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

9:30 am—Line Dancing Class (Fellowship Hall)

7:30 pm—Sea Scouts Ship 24 Meeting (Scout House)

Wednesday, June 28:**Our Youth at UM ARMY****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

6:00 am—Men's Bible Study (Fellowship Hall)

9:30 am—Senior Games (Fellowship Hall/Bring a sack lunch.)

Thursday, June 29:**Our Youth at UM ARMY****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

1:15 pm—Office/Program Staff Meeting (Room 101)

7:00 pm—Chancel Choir Practice (Choir Room)

Friday, June 30:**Our Youth at UM ARMY****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

6:00 am—Men's Prayer Breakfast (Denny's @ 34th & 290)

Friday, June 30 (cont.):

11:30 am—Solitaires Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)

Saturday, July 1:**Our Youth Return from UM ARMY Camp****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

8:00 pm—Narcotics Anonymous Support Group (Scout House)

3:00-5:00 pm—Table Decorating (Fellowship Hall)

Sunday, July 2:**Fourth Sunday after Pentecost****We Welcome Our New Pastor, Rev. Nathan Lonsdale Bledsoe****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

7:30 am—Sonrise Choir Practice (Sanctuary)

8:30 am—Celebration Service (Sanctuary)

9:40 am—Sunday School for Children, Youth & Adults (Education Bldg)

11:00 am—Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

12:00 pm—New Pastor Welcome Fellowship Lunch (Fellowship Hall)

Monday, July 3:**Church Office Open****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

9:30 am—Line Dancing Class (Fellowship Hall)

10:00 am—Senior Adult Council Meeting (Room 201)

12:00 pm—Deadline to turn in articles for July 7 *Evangel*(Send to marvellen@stsumc.org or call the church office.)**Tuesday, July 4:****Church Office Closed in Observance of Independence Day****Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

No events or meetings scheduled at St. Stephen's.

Wednesday, July 5:**Troop 604 at Summer Camp**

6:00 am—Men's Bible Study (Fellowship Hall)

9:30 am—Senior Activities Day Games & Lunch (Fellowship Hall)

7:00 pm—Education Ministry Team Meeting (Room 112)

Thursday, July 6:**Our Youth Serve at BIG HOUSE Camp at St Matthew's UMC****Troop 604 Returns from Summer Camp**

10:00 am—Prayer Shawl Ministry Meeting (Room 112)

11:00 am—VIPs Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)

Friday, July 7:**Our Youth at BIG HOUSE**

6:00 am—Men's Prayer Breakfast (Denny's @ 34th & 290)

Solitaires

The Solitaires is a ministry at St. Stephen's offering support and fellowship to any who have lost a spouse. We welcome you to join us for our monthly meeting and luncheon, **Friday, June 30**, at 11:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. The cost is \$8 per person for a catered meal. Please RSVP to Betty Brashear at 281-787-1403.

Line Dancing

The Line Dancing Class will meet the first week of July on **Monday, July 3**, instead of Tuesday due to the 4th of July holiday. Our usual meeting time is each Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Men and women of all ages are welcome; older teens are welcome, too!

Senior Activities Day

Our monthly Senior Activities Day will be held **Wednesday, July 5**, in the fellowship hall. Domino games begin at 9:30 a.m., followed by a soup-and sandwich lunch at 11:45 a.m. Love offerings are encouraged to help cover the cost of lunch.

Seniors gather for games each Wednesday at 9:30 a.m., but lunch is only served on the first Wednesday of the month. On all other weeks, you are welcome to bring a sack lunch.

VIPS Luncheon and Field Trip

The VIPs, a fellowship group for adults age 50 and better, will meet 1 week early this month, on **Thursday, July 6**. A short business meeting begins at 11:00 a.m., followed by live musical entertainment with Dennis Evans of RBM Entertainment and a catered meal at noon. You are welcome to come early for fellowship, if you like. The cost is \$10 per person. RSVP to Barbara Johnson at 713-686-6116.

A trip to Liberty is planned for **Saturday, July 8**. The bus will leave St. Stephen's at 12:15 p.m. for a late lunch/early dinner at Mike's BBQ, Catfish and Steaks in Dayton. After our meal, we will proceed to the Liberty Opry for a Gospel Night show, featuring "The Singing Saints", and return to the church by 8:15 p.m. The cost for the evening of food, entertainment and good fellowship will cost \$25 per person. Please RSVP to Brenda Paulk at 713-686-8000 by June 26.

Red Hats Luncheon

The Red Hats welcome ladies of all ages to join us for lunch on **Saturday, July 8**, at 11:30 at Union Kitchen, 3452 Ella Blvd. Please RSVP to Betty Patterson at 713-688-3681. The Rambling Reds of St. Stephen's meet monthly on the first or second Saturday to support and encourage women in their pursuit of fun, friendship, freedom, fulfillment and fitness.





Communion Offering for July

Our Communion offering for the month of July will go to the **Kairos Outside** ministry. Kairos Outside believes that the families of the incarcerated are “doing time” right along with their loved ones and is designed to let those families know that there is a community that cares about them and their needs. The Kairos Outside Weekend is a way to help strengthen the family unit and encourage small support groups for women whose relatives are at the same facility. Kairos Outside hopes to help them find strength for their life journeys, and give them a chance to find and build friendships that may last a lifetime. Please support Kairos Outside with your prayers and generous contributions.

Communion Servers Needed



St. Stephen's is in need of Communion servers to serve the Cup during the 11:00 a.m. worship service beginning Sunday, July 2. A sign-up sheet is located in the Narthex (sanctuary foyer). Please prayerfully consider signing up for 3 Sundays, either in a row, or at various times. For more information, please contact Renee Ledbetter at 713-502-6171.

Be a Superhero!



At “Hero Central”, **July 17-21**, children age 3 through those entering the fifth grade next fall will have the opportunity to experience awesome adventures with some of their favorite Bible heroes and discover the qualities that make us truly heroic in God! VBS needs volunteers to make this a successful outreach to the children of our church and community. At this time, **we are especially in need of a teacher for preschool age children**. Registration forms for children and volunteers are available in the Narthex (sanctuary foyer), through the church office and on our website. For more information, please contact Mary Gossett, Director of Student Ministries.

Don't forget—our annual Breakfast and Safe Sanctuary Training required for all VBS volunteers—is **this Saturday, June 24**, at 10:00 a.m. in the fellowship hall.



New Opportunity with Our Homebound Visitation Ministry

Once a month a group of dedicated members spend a couple hours bringing love and companionship to those who are no longer able to join us at St. Stephen's. We meet at 10:00 a.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, and head out in pairs to visit one or two households. Sometimes we have flowers from the altar to share or a small donated gift. More recently, we began offering the option of Communion consecrated by our minister.

The visitors report that it is a meaningful and enriching experience, as we offer our fellowship and take the time to listen to the concerns of our homebound members. We want them to know they are still part of the church family, even if they can no longer get to St. Stephen's. We all find it very rewarding to share Christ's love, and to see the joy it brings to our members who otherwise might have felt forgotten.

Florence Bowman, who has coordinated our homebound visitation program for the past 27 years, is retiring. We invite you to consider coordinating the program. The coordinator first contacts our team of visitors to see how many will be able to go out, then calls the homebound to make sure they are able to receive a visitor. This does require some time to make the calls and get return calls from the messages that are left. Once we are all together at the church, we simply divide up the visits before we head out. It is such a satisfying way to spread the love of St. Stephen's family to members who might feel isolated without us. For more information, please call Florence at 713-682-4513.

UMCOR Church-Wide Project



The United Methodist Women are coordinating this year's Church-Wide UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) Project: **Health Kits**. A list of supplies needed for the kits and a collection basket are available in the Narthex (sanctuary foyer). Please bring one or more *new* items on the list. Donations for the health kits will be collected through Sunday, August 13.

Prayer Concerns

In Our Prayers

Ed & Claytie Abrahams, Dianne Alexander, Jim Alsup, Edie Anders, John & Dorothy Artz, Chappie Ashburn, Ruth Austin, Betty Babin, Lanny Baker, Robert Baldwin, Carolyn Belk, Peggy Bickel, Anita Bishop, Tyler Bothmann, Ed Bradley, Paula Brady, Phyllis Briggs, Nancy Buck, Patrick Burns Jr., Cayce Carlsson, Chappie Collins, Earl & Gloria Collins, Dorothy Cox, Margaret Demuth, Elizabeth Dennard, Wyatt Devilbiss, Elva Duncan, Gerald Dupree, Camryn Eaton, Walter Ebelt, Stephen & Brenda Edrozo, Cameron Elliott, the Emerson family, the family of Florence Epperson, Christie Fisher, Harold Freeman, Penny Gadmer, Bill & Mildred Gandin, Kendel Green, Linda & Bob Guggia, Carol Hamilton & family, Dorothy Haschke, Kathleen Hearn, Kathleen Heath, Tripp Hensley, Elizabeth Hickerson, Edison Hicks, Tammy Hicks' daughter, Jamie; Ann Hill, Betsy Hill, Rev. Tom & Florence Holcomb, Elizabeth Huebner, George & Betty Jackson & son; Damian Janacek, Cathy Johnson, Diane Johnson, Thelma Jones, Jeannette Klemola, Lee Kruse, Lucinda Kurtas, Jim & Dianne Latham & family; Angus & Virginia Lewis, Penny Loy, Carol Luce, Lavon Mahon & family, Bonnie Maple, Ginny Martin, Marsha Massey, Steve Mattison, Michelle Maurizi, Frances Mayberry, Charles Meyer, Ed Mills, Bill Moan, Mary Nelle Moore, Nina Myers (hospice), Michael Niederhofer, Donna Oliver, Gary & Dian Parker, Jody Parker, Betty Parks, Jean Parks, Margie Perron, Paulette Price, Gloria Powell, Billy Raines, Milton & Noni Ray, Gladys Reeve & family upon the death of her husband, Bob Reeve; Betty Roberts, Rogers & Jane Roberts, Kathleen Saathoff, Donna Schmidt, Barbara Smith, Lura Smith, Billy Stephens, Hazel Swearingen, Danny Thomason, Hazel Thompson, Rosalie Turner, Ronnie Vance, Bitsy Vilven, Virginia Wells, Margaret White (hospice), Paul Wieting, Jay Wilburn, George Wood, Gay Woods, Alan & Ashlee Zanelli

In the Military

Dirk Ray Jr., Allen Troth

In the Hospital

Colonial Oaks Westchase—Anna Ruth Putnam (hospice)

From the Director of Student Ministries



Summer Camp at Lakeview - We had a great week at summer camp where we talked about how God transforms us and makes us into a new person. We went to the first week of the new model of camp, and campers experienced messy games, paint wars, a giant jumping pillow, a carnival night, a dance, a swim night, and old favorites like the snack shack, the giant slide into the lake, and the famous Gaga ball pit. This year, campers and counselors got assigned into two “tribes” called the Tsula (fox) and Wohali (eagle). We had a very good, spirit filled week of camp, and I hope to see more campers and volunteers go next year.

Donuts with Dad - We had a great Donuts with Dad event this weekend. Thank you to all the members of the Education Ministry Team and the Children’s Sunday School teachers for providing the donuts and fruit.

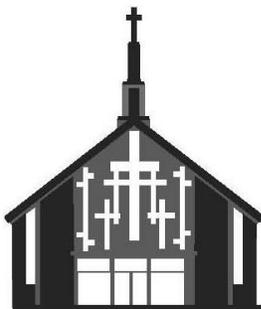
UM ARMY – Lufkin Camp - Our youth and adults are headed up to Lufkin on June 25, and the kitchen people have requested that we bring snack cakes (Little Debbie’s, Ding-Dongs, Swiss Rolls, etc.) for the lunches. If you are able to bring them, please give them to a member of the mission team before we depart on the 25th. Please lift up Vinnie, Keanna, Alec, Nick, Justin, Juli, Bryan, and Mary as they go out to serve others.

VBS Help Needed - Are you good with scissors? Can you cut material in a semi straight line? If so, we need your help making capes for VBS! We are making t-shirt capes, and in order to make enough for all of the children who attend VBS, we need to start cutting as soon as possible. If you can help, please see Mary Gossett for a bag of t-shirts and a template on how to cut them. (It’s really easy, you cut up the sides and leave the collar attached.)

Shower Home for Big House Needed! - Our junior high students are going to St. Matthew’s for Big House, July 6-9. We would love your help in caring for our students since they will be so nearby. Big House is suggesting that camps now have “Shower Homes” for work teams. This means that church members decide to open their homes on Friday and Saturday of camp from around 4-6pm to let a group of about 5 youth and one adult shower. Other groups might include adult volunteers who need to shower during the day. If you would like to open up your home to short term missionaries, are okay with a messy shower, and live relatively close to the church, please let Mary Gossett know. Mary will make sure that you are Safe Sanctuary certified and background checked before passing your name along to the camp director. If you or your Sunday School Class would like to donate a meal, snacks, or other items that would be useful at a camp, please let Mary Gossett know.



Please visit our Facebook page to see lots more photos of children and youth ministries and activities!



**St. Stephen's
United Methodist Church**

2003 West 43rd Street
Houston, Texas 77018
(713) 686-8241

www.stsumc.org



Rev. Kevin Otto
Senior Pastor
kevin@stsumc.org

Program Staff



Rev. Lindsay Smith
Minister of Music
music@stsumc.org



Mary Gossett
*Director of Student
Ministries*
youth@stsumc.org



Juyeon Kim
Organist



Candice Croker
*Director,
Johnson Memorial School*
jms@stsumc.org



Melissa Soto
Nursery Coordinator

**Anita Cabrera, Brittany
Hietpas, Adriana Montes,
Rachel Montes**
Nursery Staff

Administrative Staff



Mary Jessie
Accounting Manager
mary@stsumc.org



Mary Ellen King
Executive Secretary
maryellen@stsumc.org

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Notes from the Music Minister



Many of you have already heard that I will be on vacation for the next two weeks. Justin and I are celebrating our 10th wedding anniversary by taking a trip to Europe. Our girls will be staying at home with the grandparents, who are each taking a week! Please pray for all of them and safe travels for the girls as they visit Oklahoma on June 29th!

Our first stop is Dublin, where we will visit cathedrals, castles, and sing along with some Irish folk music! We will also have the opportunity to worship in Dublin at Centenary Methodist Church, which was founded in 1752 with 420 members, many of whom had conversion experiences during John Wesley's first visit to Dublin in 1747. The church now meets in the Wesley House, but they have moved locations several times in their history, including once in 1968 after a fire destroyed their building. Their vision statement sounds very similar to ours; it is "to receive God's love and to share it with others." As I read about this church, I see many similarities to St. Stephen's and I look forward to worshipping with this congregation on Sunday!

After visiting Dublin, Justin and I will travel to the Isle of Iona in Scotland. On Iona, there is an inspirational Christian community which writes many songs and liturgies which I often use. The Iona Community describes themselves this way on their website: "The Iona Community is a dispersed Christian ecumenical community working for peace and social justice, rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship. We are an ecumenical Christian community of men and women from different walks of life and different traditions in the Church engaged together, and with people of goodwill across the world, in acting, reflecting and praying for justice, peace and the integrity of creation; convinced that the inclusive community we seek must be embodied in the community we practise." I have long admired this community, and I am thrilled that I will get to briefly experience this beautiful island and beautiful community of people! If only we could stay longer! But, we have more to see, so it will have to wait for another trip.

After Iona, we stop briefly in Edinburgh. We will try to hit the highlights in the day we have there before flying to Rome. We know that we are trying to fit in too many things in this short trip, but it was hard to stop ourselves! Hopefully we will enjoy the journey as much as each location, and find some moments of rest along the way.

In Rome, we plan to see the Colosseum, the Roman ruins, and visit Vatican City. While in Rome, we will worship with another Methodist congregation, Ponte Sant' Angelo Methodist Church. This church is English speaking, and their membership consists of people from Africa, the Phillipines and Asia, the Americas and the Carribean, as well as a few native Italians. This church claims to be "the Pope's nearest protestant neighbor," as their building is located directly across the bridge of angels from the famous Castel Sant' Angelo at Piazza di Ponte Sant' Angelo. Isn't it amazing to think of how the Methodist Church is working and worshipping around the world!

We will see you all again on July 9th, and I will be back in the office on July 5th! Your prayers for safe travels, peace, rejuvenation, and inspiration are greatly appreciated!

Lindsay Smith

