

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World



# The Evangel



**ST. STEPHEN'S**  
united methodist church



# We are all, without exception, beloved children of God

## From the Senior Pastor

Beloved, I miss seeing all of you in person, but I am so proud of our church. In the midst of all of this uncertainty and difficulty, people of faith have options. We can focus ourselves on the things we miss and the disruptions to our lives, or we can acknowledge those things — because they're real and difficult — but focus our attention on what God is doing in our midst. At St. Stephen's, we have a mission and vision we use to try to focus on God's work and our role in it. So, what are we up to these days? Let's talk about it through the midst of our core values.

### **We are all, without exception, beloved children of God**

And we are doing everything we can to help people feel God's love even in the midst of self-isolation. On Thursday I was able to be a part of a very different sort of UMYF, where several of our youth gathered together via Zoom. We played games, checked in on each other, and had a wonderful time!

### **The church does not belong to us**

We remain committed to finding ways to be the church — praying, serving, and loving our neighbors in new and meaningful ways. People continue to use the herb garden along the side of the church, and the Blessing Box installed by our Girl Scouts continues to be stocked for folks in need by church and community members.

### **God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building**

...and lately, so are we :). Sorry, couldn't resist a little joke. But I have to tell you, I have been seeing God all over the place these days. Every night, Sarah and I have been taking our dogs for a walk to get some fresh air and exercise. You know what we see? Kids playing in their front yards while their parents sit and watch. Teenagers riding their bicycles. Neighbors meeting each other (at a safe distance!) for the first time. I smell BBQ pits smoking and hear people laughing. God is in our neighborhood, even when we can't be together in our building.

### **Worship connects us with God and with each other**

We have been able to connect with God and with each other in some new ways. Although communal gatherings for worship are not happening in-person, we have been streaming worship services on Facebook and Youtube. We have had several hundred views online of our services (over 1,000 of our first week of streaming!) Obviously, connecting with each other has been different these days, especially for those of us who are not super comfortable with technology. If you need some help with learning how to connect with technology, we have some folks happy to walk you through it. Call the church office or send Nathan an email ([nathan@ststx.org](mailto:nathan@ststx.org)) and he'll connect you with someone who wants to help.

### **The stories of scripture transform our own stories**

Studying scripture and reading the bible is a crucial part of our spiritual formation. What bible stories have been meaningful to you lately? I have so enjoyed our daily devotionals on the Psalms, they are a great way to start the day in the midst of scripture. Many of the Psalms were written in the midst of difficulty and uncertainty, they are really speaking to me right now.

I also have been really blessed by our weekly Sunday School lessons on Zoom that Tom and Emily Leffler have been leading. I'm also still teaching a weekly bible study on Wednesdays at noon, also on Zoom. If you need help, please let us know. If you need TO help, let us know that too. I am so blessed to be your pastor, and I cannot wait for us to worship God together again. Until then, we will continue to gather in new ways and do everything we can to remind one another that God's love is real and true, and that we are so much more than a building.

Paz,  
Nathan  
[nathan@ststx.org](mailto:nathan@ststx.org)

## More About Using Zoom

Did you know that even if you don't have a smartphone or a computer you can participate in Zoom as a conference call? For either Pastor Nathan's 12 p.m. Wednesday Bible study, our 9:30 a.m. Sunday morning Sunday School, our 12 p.m. Sunday Virtual Potluck, call [346 248 7799](tel:3462487799) and when prompted for a meeting code, enter [339 172 0915](tel:3391720915) followed by the pound key.

Cover Photo: Quarant-UMYF—March 26, 2020

Please submit dates, pictures and information for the May 2020 Evangel by April 27 to [info@stsumc.org](mailto:info@stsumc.org).

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# The church does not belong to us

## Family Ministries Update

Hi everyone,

I sincerely hope that all who read this are well. We closed the church office to staff on Tuesday, March 24, and I now find myself working at home, too. I want you to know that it's okay to agree that self-isolation is the correct way forward AND also feel grief for so many sudden changes in your lives. I have been following the news of the virus' spread like many of you, and armed with the latest information, have come to some decisions about upcoming events. I truly believe they are the right decisions, and they are things we could probably see coming a few weeks ago, but they were still hard to make. I miss all of the children and youth who come to our church, but I miss them for all of the right reasons. Please scroll down to the headings of the ministries that are part of your family's lives for the latest update.



Stay safe everyone. Thanks and with love,  
Steven Fisher  
Family Ministries Director, St. Stephen's UMC  
steven@ststx.org

**Daily**—We are uploading daily videos from the fantastic Mark Burrows to our Facebook page: [facebook.com/StSHTX/](https://facebook.com/StSHTX/) The videos are ten minutes long and include praise songs for children. The videos are available on weekdays after 12 noon.

**Sundays and Sunday School**—Our youth are still encouraged to watch our weekly streamed Bible study on the "God We Can Know". You can find it every Sunday morning on our Facebook page. Also, check that page for information on how to join our Zoom chat so you can connect with other people in the study and put forward your thoughts and ideas. Children's Sunday School material is available for download. Short introductory videos will be posted to our website: [ststx.org](https://ststx.org) that will contain an explanation of that week's theme. Question and activity sheets will be available to download on the same page. During Holy Week we'll be providing daily videos on our Facebook page following Jesus' footsteps on his way to his crucifixion and resurrection. Our children's moments will continue to be a part of Sunday worship. This will include the first Sunday in April.

**Acolyte Training**— Our Acolyte training has been postponed beyond April 5th. We do not currently have a new date for this event but due to the demand, I can assure you that it will happen in the not too distant future.

**Messy Easter** —Our Messy Easter has been modified. We invite you now to "Bring Home the Mess!" I'll be putting together take-home kits filled with five different crafts that will be available to pick up outside of the church before Holy Week. To ensure we have enough kits available, you are encouraged to sign up at [ststx.org/events](https://ststx.org/events). When you register, you'll receive an email letting you know when the kits are available. In certain cases, delivery to your home may also be possible. Then, on each weekday of Holy Week, I'll be posting a video online showing how to make each day's craft.

**Easter Egg Hunt**—I have taken the hard decision to postpone the Easter Egg Hunt. It is an event I immensely enjoy (even when overran by half of Houston - thanks ABC 13) but safety has to be paramount. Even using a conservative estimate, this event is likely to attract around 200 people. You may have noticed that I said postponed and not canceled. But Easter is the 12th? You might quite rightly be wondering. We will still have an Easter Egg Hunt this year, It's going to be at an odd time for sure, but once our worship atlas containing the next 12 months of sermons series is published, you'll see how we will be able to do this.

**UMYF**—UMYF is switching to online-only until further notice. Our first meeting was March 26 on Zoom. The photo on the front cover of this newsletter features participants of that meeting. We'll meet on Zoom every other Thursday at 3:30 pm.

**Summer**—I've been in communication with Lakeview and received communication from UM ARMY. Our summer schedule remains unchanged but they are monitoring the developing situation and we can't totally rule out changes down the line. At this moment, it is highly expected that our summer schedule will go ahead as planned but I will update you with any news as I receive it.





# God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

## Get Involved

### Financial Gifts

God is doing great things in and through St. Stephens, and we continue to seek new ways of being the church. The COVID situation has made many of our normal ways of making financial offerings unfeasible. If you are able to make a one-time gift or set up a recurring gift, it will be put to good use. To set up online giving, visit [stsh.tx.org](https://stsh.tx.org) and click on "give." Our giving provider, Planning Center, uses Stripe to process all financial transactions, and Stripe maintains the highest standards of privacy and security with financial info. If you do not do online giving, you are welcome to mail checks to the church; even though the offices are closed we are still monitoring the mail. Thank you for supporting what God is doing through our church!

### Easter Flowers

In the midst of difficult times, we are still joyfully planning and anticipating Easter Sunday worship! Although we won't be able to worship together in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 12, we will be worshipping together via a streaming service, and we will still have special flowers. We will try our best to keep the flowers alive and beautiful for when we next gather in person, which will be a special Easter Celebration 2020 style! Our order was reduced this year to keep the church's cost down while still providing some support to the Brookwood Community.

We are offering shares for \$15 each in memory or in honor of loved ones. As in past years, a bulletin insert will be published with the names of donors and their dedications. A portion of your donation will go toward the ongoing beautification of the grounds at St. Stephen's. You can register online at [stsh.tx.org/events](https://stsh.tx.org/events). If you don't do online ordering, contact Mary Ellen by email at [Maryellen@stsumc.org](mailto:Maryellen@stsumc.org) or call the church office at 713-686-8241, prompt #6, and leave her a message. Please be sure to leave a call back number. If you wish to have your dedication included in the worship bulletin, please place your order no later than Thursday, April 9.

### Boy Scout Troop 604 Fundraising Events

Troop 604 will be smoking whole briskets for Easter. The proceeds go straight to summer camp cost. \$100 for a whole brisket (10+lbs) and \$55 for a half. The troop is going to smoke at least 15, maybe more (up to 25) if there is a demand. Pick up would be on Saturday, April 11th. Depending upon how many orders are received, it's possible they could have some ready late Friday. To order, email [troop604@yahoo.com](mailto:troop604@yahoo.com) or send the troop a message through their Facebook page: Troop604HoustonTexas. The troop will also host a crawfish boil on April 25. See details on the graphic below.





# Worship connects us with God and with each other

## From the Pastor of Music and Worship

By now you have surely read some of the devotions we have been sending every day. In this time of uncertainty, it is comforting to be reminded that God is with us and will always love us. When I originally chose the Psalms for the devotions, I based them on a prayer rhythm. This rhythm is derived from the rhythm contained in most Psalms. We begin with praise and thanksgiving, move into individual and corporate lament, followed by wisdom and close with recognizing God as the King of kings and full-throated praise. You will see this rhythm reflected in the devotions each week. Mondays begin with Thanksgiving and Praise, Tuesdays contain individual and Wednesday corporate lament, Thursday we see the wisdom of God, Friday we recognize God's regal nature and Saturday we praise God for all the blessings we have received. I want to invite you to participate in writing these devotions. All we are looking for is how this Psalm has touched you, how your life continues to be transformed by God through the hands and feet of God's children. As we continue to share with each other how God is at work in our "separated" lives, we connect as a body and grow closer to God and each other. Please contact [Steven@stsumc.org](mailto:Steven@stsumc.org) to receive a Psalm assignment. You might have heard about a new way of singing at St. Stephen's. As it became clear that we would not be able to meet in person anymore, I realized how difficult it would be especially for the choir not to sing with each other and not to have fellowship. The choir is the small group (sometimes it is a very large small group) that serves most often in pretty much any church. Between Wednesday rehearsals and Sunday morning worship we spend a lot of time together learning more about God and growing closer to God while we sing. My call is to help God's children to sing to God and so I thought up the Houston Virtual Choir!

The Houston Virtual Choir is a collaboration of the Pastors and Directors of Music of an ever-growing group of United Methodist Churches in the wider Houston area responding to the Covid 19 crisis with choral and congregational singing. We would like to invite all to join in as the choir rehearses virtually through a Zoom call which is also being broadcast later through Facebook and YouTube and the various churches' websites.

We are:

Rev. Lindsay Smith - Strawbridge UMC  
 Rev. Deandre Johnson - Christ Church UMC Sugarland  
 Rev. Bodie Gilbert - Westbury UMC  
 Christopher Carter - Westminster UMC

Lahonda Sharp - First UMC Missouri City  
 Matt Robinson - Kingwood UMC  
 Ernest Boamah - First UMC Lufkin  
 Rev. Suzi Byrd - St. Stephen's UMC

There is room for you!  
 Gottes Segen,  
 Pastor Suzi



### Here is the information on how to join in: Thursdays at 7 PM

Topic: Houston Virtual Choir Rehearsal Thursdays at 7PM

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/907814165>

Meeting ID: 907 814 165

One tap mobile

[+13462487799](tel:+13462487799)..907814165# US (Houston)

[+16699006833](tel:+16699006833)..907814165# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location

[+1 346 248 7799](tel:+13462487799) US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 907 814 165

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/abWqTgT2jg>

### Tuesdays at Noon:

Topic: Houston Virtual Choir Rehearsal Tuesdays at Noon

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/130922952>

Meeting ID: 130 922 952

One tap mobile

[+13462487799](tel:+13462487799)..130922952# US (Houston)

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/abWqTgT2jg>





# The stories of scripture transform our own stories

## Holy Week Events

### Palm Sunday, April 5

Join our virtual procession of palms! Visit our Facebook page to find out how: [facebook.com/StSHTX](https://facebook.com/StSHTX)

### Good Friday, April 10

We'll be hosting a Good Friday guided meditation service on Youtube and Facebook at noon that will be up the rest of the day.

### Easter Sunday, April 12

Sunday School at 9:30am on Zoom

Streaming worship service at 11:00 on Facebook and Youtube.

Virtual Potluck at noon: [bit.ly/stshtxzoom](https://bit.ly/stshtxzoom)

## Daily Devotionals

If you are not receiving our daily email devotionals and would like to receive them, you can sign up at [bit.ly/stsdevo](https://bit.ly/stsdevo). Please feel free to invite your friends to sign up, too.

## Be a Reader in Worship

Each Sunday while we are worshipping away from the sanctuary, we will have two roles available to be filled by our congregation: Liturgy and Affirmation of Faith Reader, and Scripture Reader. If you would like to be a liturgist or a scripture reader for us in the weeks to come, you are invited to sign up at [stshtx.org/events](https://stshtx.org/events). Before you register, please read all of the details on the sign-up as there are a handful of requirements.

## Choir Fellowship

St. Stephen's Choir Fellowship meets on Zoom Wednesdays at 7:30pm. Join us! (See how to join a Zoom meeting on page 5.)

## In Memory

We extend our prayers and sympathy to Anna Ruth Putnam and her family upon the passing of her husband, **Ky Putnam**, on March 1, 2020. Ky and Anna Ruth were active members of St. Stephen's for several years before health issues necessitated moves to assisted living. A funeral service was held for Ky at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church on March 6.

Our sympathy and prayers are also extended to Sarah Eloff and her family upon the passing of her husband, **Charlie Eloff**, on March 7, 2020, after an extended illness. Charlie and Sarah joined St. Stephen's in April of 2019 by transfer of membership from Cornerstone UMC in Houston. A memorial service was held for Charlie at St. Stephen's on March 14.

## Prayer Concerns

Dorothy Artz, Anita Bishop & daughters, Jeanie & Janya; Rhonda Boehm, Sandra & Ray Bonnin, Debbie Bradley, Annie Brew, Dawn Butterwick, Arlene Caler, Jess Chambers, B.C. Chavarria, Doug Cherry, Gloria Collins, Janet Cummins, Allen Ebel, Kayla Ebel, Walter Ebel, Sarah Eloff & family, Kathleen Heath, Charm Hensley, Leif Hoijer, Stephanie Holmes & family, Diane Johnson, Mary Ellen King, Gloria Lastovica, Penny Loy, Russ & Bobbie Luedke & family; Wayne Meyenberg, Danny Niederhofer, Dian Parker, Mary Peek, the family of Ky Putnam, Rogers & Jane Roberts, Barbara Smith, Terry Sullivan, Preston Taylor, Edward Tousinau, LaTonya Williams, David & Carolyn Williamson, Todd Wilson, the Zanelli family, Shara Zatopek

Social Justice Prayers: Members of the CITGO6: Tomeu Vadell, Gustavo Cardenas, Jorge Toledo, Alirio Zambrano, Jose Luis Zambrano, Jose Angel Pereira; and all who are imprisoned or persecuted unjustly

**In the Military** Allen Clutter, Keanna Piercefield

**In Hospital** Paul Wieting—Encompass Health (rehab)

## Our Prayer Ministry

We believe that prayer works, and we seek to be a congregation that prays regularly. To help us to direct our prayers, we will be updating our prayer list weekly. To be added to the prayer list, please fill out a prayer card in the sanctuary or send an email to [info@stsumc.org](mailto:info@stsumc.org). Please let us know when and how God answers.



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**The Evangelist**

2003 W. 43rd St.  
Houston, TX 77018  
(713) 686-8241  
stshtx.org



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PERIODICAL  
PAID  
HOUSTON, TX



**April  
Communion  
Offering:  
UM Army**

## What's Inside

- Page 2: A Message from the Senior Pastor
- Page 3: Family Ministries Update
- Page 4: Get Involved
- Page 5: A Message from the Pastor of Music and Worship
- Page 6: Holy Week Events, Prayer Concerns

## Our Vision

- We are all, without exception, beloved children of God
- The church does not belong to us
- God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building
- Worship connects us with God and with each other
- The stories of scripture transform our own stories

## Stay at Home Schedule

Here are the weekly activities during our Stay at Home schedule:

### Daily:

Devotional Emails

### Sunday mornings:

Sunday School 9:30 am (Zoom, Facebook )

Worship: 11 a.m. Youtube, Facebook

Feast Virtual Potluck: noon, Zoom

### Wednesdays:

Pastor's Weekly Bible Study noon, Zoom

For information on how to connect with Zoom, where to find us on Facebook or YouTube, or to sign up for our email list, visit [stshtx.org](http://stshtx.org)