

**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

## Ministries and Resources During COVID-19

Our work making disciples has continued during the Coronavirus, and people in the community are taking notice!

Visit [stshtx.org/coronavirus](https://stshtx.org/coronavirus) to see a list of ways to connect, and also to find a page with links to stories about St. Stephen's from KHOU, The Texas Annual Conference, The Leader, and more!



The cover photo features our members, Christian and Alex Catalan, preparing a meal for Furlough Kitchen Houston. Alex and Christian, who lost his job at the beginning of the stay-at-home order, have worked faithfully to cook and prepare delicious meals for Furlough Kitchen since the beginning of this ministry.

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





# The church does not belong to us

## Family Ministries Update

### Virtual VBS

We're well underway preparing for our virtual VBS beginning July 27. Just a few days ago, I opened my front door and found a tower of nine boxes, stuffed full of the awesome crafts your kids will be making.

You may be wondering what our VBS will look like? Although some details are yet to be worked out, here is what you can expect:

The week before VBS we will have multiple time slots to pick up the VBS kits. The kits will include login instructions, a t-shirt, and all of the materials the kids will need for the week.

Beginning Monday, July 27th our schedule will include the following:

At 9 AM, a live assembly will kickstart each day. We'll be streaming our morning assembly online. Kids will get to hear from Sparky the Dragon and we'll round off dancing to our Knights of North Castle theme song.

Following the assembly, participants will be directed to our VBS website where they will find craft, music, storytime, science, and Bible Village videos that they can watch at their own pace. We'll also have some downloadable activities, family discussion questions, and art pieces for children to create from Illustrated Children's Ministry.

At 10 AM each day, we'll invite the children back to a live-streaming on ZOOM where we will have breakout sessions by age group. Each day of the week will have a different activity. For example, on Monday, the live group sessions may be doing the second craft of the day. Another day would be a live music lesson learning and singing some of the songs of the week. Depending on the number of available volunteers, your child's age group might have their live class at 10:30, or 11. All schedules will be made available to you in advance.

Live classes throughout the week will include crafts, music, science, storytime, and Bible Village. These classes will be designed for smaller groups so that the children can interact with the lesson or activity.

Following the live session, campers will once again head back to our VBS site to round off the activities of the day.

At noon, we'll wrap up with a closing assembly featuring Sparky the Dragon where we'll reinforce the lessons of the day.

As mentioned earlier, we're still evolving and discovering what this week will look like. If you have any feedback or suggestions, I highly encourage you to email me at [steven@ststhtx.org](mailto:steven@ststhtx.org)

As we get closer, more details about the week will be released. Even at a distance, we can't wait to meet your Knights of North Castle!

Steven Fisher  
Director of Family Ministries



## 2020 Church Survey

As a church, we are committed to providing for the needs of our church family and our community. A few weeks ago we sent out a church-wide survey by email, and want to say THANK YOU to those of you who have already filled it out. We want to encourage everyone to take the time to do so, it's a helpful tool in ensuring we're doing everything we can to meet people's needs. You can fill it out online at <https://stsumc.churchcenter.com/people/forms/139052>

If you would like to fill it out but don't do things on the computer, please call the office and leave a message for Mary Ellen (713.686.8241 ext. 6) and someone will assist you!



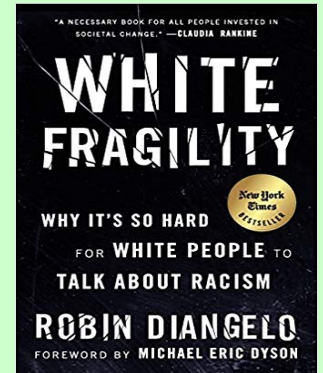


# God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

## Get Involved

### Book Study: White Fragility by Dr. Robin Diangelo

Join us for a six-week study on the book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. This book has been recommended by our Bishop, Scott Jones, as well as the bishops in Missouri and Louisiana as helpful reading as we learn what we can do to help rid the world of the sins of racism. The book became immensely popular very quickly, and is on backorder in hard copy nation-wide. We have ordered copies of the book from Cokesbury which should arrive soon. After you register, we'll notify you of the date to start the study via Zoom. Register at <https://stsumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/438695>



### Fun4Seniors Drive-By Ice Cream Parade

Harris County Precinct 4 Encore! invites everyone 50 years of age and above to Drive by, Honk, and Wave at the Fun4Seniors Ice Cream Parade, Monday, July 20, in the parking lot at St. Stephen's. Decorate your vehicle and drive by for a cool time. Snow Dogs Ice Cream Truck will be on the scene serving up some of your all-time favorite ice cream bars. Limit one ice cream per person in attendance. There is no cost for this event, however, reservations are required. Register at <https://www.hcp4.net/encore/events/> or call 713-274-4050.

### Give Blood—Save a Life!

The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center is working during this pandemic to save lives. Blood donors are needed to give consistently now, as well as in the future. St. Stephen's will host a blood drive Sunday, July 26, from 8 am to 12:30 pm in a mobile unit in the Educational Building parking lot. The Blood Center has stepped up all sanitization and safety guidelines in the midst of the Coronavirus, and is working with the CDC, FDA, FEMA and the U. S. Surgeon General to ensure that blood donations continue to be a safe process. During the pandemic, blood donations will be accepted by appointment only. Use the reference code "Nook" at the time of your donation and receive a limited edition tote bag. Register at [https://www.commitforlife.org/donor/schedules/drive\\_schedule/297004](https://www.commitforlife.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/297004)

### Support Furlough Kitchen Houston

COVID-19 has been hard on all of us. Many people have lost their jobs as a result of the effects the virus has had on the economy. In April, St. Stephen's began a new ministry partnership providing free meals each Tuesday and Thursday to 100+ people who have been laid off or furloughed from their jobs due to the Coronavirus. Since then, the Furlough Kitchen ministry has seen a steady increase in demand. If you would like to help this ministry continue to feed hungry people in our area who have lost their jobs, you can make a donation by visiting <https://furloughkitchenhouston.org/>

### Order Farm Boxes

Another option to support the ongoing work of Furlough Kitchen Houston AND provide your family with fresh, local produce, is to buy a box of produce! The produce will vary week to week, but comes to us from The Common Market, a partner we are so excited to work with! Check out their website <https://www.thecommonmarket.org/> for more information about who they are and why they're such a great partner for Furlough Kitchen. Produce boxes are available every 2 weeks. Order on a Friday for contact-free pick up the following Tuesday outside the fellowship hall in St. Stephen's Educational Building parking lot. To place an order for a Farm Box, please visit <https://stsumc.churchcenter.com/registrations>



## FURLOUGH KITCHEN HOUSTON

[FURLOUGHKITCHENHOUSTON.ORG](https://furloughkitchenhouston.org)





# Worship connects us with God and with each other

## From Our Pastors

Friends,

Below is a letter from Pastor Suzi about an exciting opportunity for her and for us as a church. When Suzi signed on with St. Stephen's, the board and I knew there was a possibility she would start a 12-month Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) residency this fall that would require her to move to part-time with St. Stephen's. We are very supportive of her opportunity, and the board and I have already begun working with Suzi to build a plan for the next year that ensures we maintain our excellent standards in worship and arts as a church. Join us in congratulating her!

Paz,  
Nathan

LOL!

A couple of weeks ago in Sunday School we read a story from the Book of Genesis Chapter 18:1-15. Sarah laughed when she was told that she was supposed to have a post-menopausal baby and I shared with the group that I laugh a lot when God comes up with the most implausible calls for me.

First, God called this young German woman to Southern Mississippi – to learn how to sing better. Mind you that I had declined a full ride at Juilliard School. But of course, I was to experience God's love through that wonderful church and become a believer and so, in hindsight, it made sense. But I laughed. Fast forward a decade and God called me to music ministry and led the way into seminary. And I laughed but I also did go and got a theology degree (my 5th Master's degree). And when I began my first position as a full-time music minister, I thought I had finally arrived, but God called me to ordained ministry. And I laughed. Really? You want me to go back to school and go through a ten-year process as a single mom of two little girls. I laughed and shook my head but God knows how to insist and so I went through that grueling process. Three years ago, I was ordained as a Deacon in the United Methodist Church and clearly, I had arrived, or so I thought.

During my time as a pastor I found myself in hospital rooms talking to patients, in waiting rooms with anxious family and friends during the procedures and surgeries of loved ones, at the bedside of dying congregants, gently singing them to sleep. God affirmed every visit I made and I suddenly knew that God was calling again. This was a gentler call. I think I might have graduated from the in-your-face 2x4s. Maybe that is why I did not laugh, or at least not out loud.

About a year and a half ago I began to explore what pastoral care ministry could look like for me. I might have a natural gift for this, but I also know that I want to be the best pastoral care giver I can be and for that I have to do some more learning. Twelve months of chaplaincy residency are required to earn the necessary credits to become a hospital chaplain. I knew God was calling me in this direction, but I was very conflicted. I feared that there would be no more music in my life in chaplaincy and life without music sounds like death to me. I sent in my application, but I was not convinced.

It was just at that point when Rev. Laurie Purcell decided to retire, and Pastor Lindsay made the move to Strawbridge UMC. And there it was, God made a way for me to still have music and community in the local church. I shared with Pastor Nathan and the Board that I had applied for chaplaincy residency but that the chances for an interview were slim. Earlier this year I was invited to an interview and, consequently, offered a position at Memorial Hermann Hospital starting at the end of August. Again, I shared this with Pastor Nathan and the Board, and they celebrated how God was at work. I have asked to remain at St. Stephen's part time and to continue to lead the Choir and congregational singing, and the Board and Pastor Nathan graciously said yes. We'll work together to ensure our worship ministry thrives.

Please know that I have deeply fallen in love with you amazing people and it is my prayer that I may serve God, you, and this whole community for many more years. I do not know what comes after residency, but I do know that God will guide me, and I have learned to expect the unexpected.

Gottes Segen,  
Pastor Suzi



# The stories of scripture transform our own stories

## Upcoming Sermon Series



7/12-7/19

Two weeks on how and why singing is such a vital part of our discipleship, growth, and worship.



7/26-8/30

A series to round out the summer and with our first Messy Sunday!

## 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 [stshtx.org](https://stshtx.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 continuing to support what God is doing through our church!



**July Communion  
Offering:  
Kairos Outside  
Prison Ministry**

## Prayer Concerns

Dorothy Artz, Anita Bishop & daughters, Jeanie & Janya; Rhonda Boehm, Sandra & Ray Bonnin, Debbie Bradley, Annie Brew, Tom Burton, Arlene Caler, Jess Chambers, B.C. Chavarria, Doug Cherry, Gloria Collins, Janet Cummins, Allen Ebelt, Kayla Ebelt, Walter Ebelt, Kathleen Heath, Leif Hoijer, Garrett Holcombe, Diane Johnson, Penny Loy, Wayne Meyenberg, Danny Niederhofer, Dian Parker, Brenda Paulk, Mary Peek, Liz Powers & family, Rogers & Jane Roberts, Barbara Smith, Billy Stephens, Terry Sullivan, Preston Taylor, Jan Weeks, Todd Wilson, the Zanelli family, Shara Zatopek

Social Justice Prayers: The sin of racism and its effects on all of us; 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—Kindred Houston Northwest Dorrie Jackson—Memorial Hermann-Memorial City

## 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 visit <https://stshtx.org/prayer/> Please let us know when and how God answers.





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**The Evangelist**

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[stshtx.org](http://stshtx.org)



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## 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

**Tuesdays at 7 pm: "White Fragility" Book Study on Zoom, led by Nathan**

**Tuesdays at noon and Thursdays at 7 pm: Houston's Virtual Choir Rehearsal**

(Anybody may join via phone, smartphone, tablet or computer. Contact Pastor Suzi at [suzi@stsumc.org](mailto:suzi@stsumc.org) for information.)

**Tuesdays and Thursdays: Furlough Kitchen Meal Pick-Up, 4:30-6 pm (Education Bldg Parking Lot)**

**Wednesdays: "White Fragility" Book 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)

## Fun Fact

**Saturday, June 27, the Ribbon Cutting for the Playground for All Abilities will take place at Oak Forest Park!**