

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

The Evangel

May 2025 Edition



ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church



We are all, without exception, beloved children of God

On Being Methodist

In small Methodist history museum in Oxford, England, I got shown a fascinating and strange piece of Methodist ephemera. It was a small piece of cardstock, maybe 2 inches by 3 inches with various small tabs pulled off around its circumference. What I viewed in the case was literally an 18th century version of a Methodist punch card. Every time you met with your group, you got your card punched. If you failed to come to enough meetings and thus accumulate enough punches in a sufficiently short amount of time, they would kick you out of your local branch of Methodism.

Two things about this:

One, John Wesley was a brilliant theologian and skilled organizer who understood clearly many aspects of the faith and Christian community. He was also an incredibly intense, overly driven individual, who often drove even the people closest to him out of his life. So, I promise that we don't need to emulate everything that he did. We'll be okay.

Two, the early Methodist weren't running a church. They ran a discipleship movement. They assumed that you would go to the Church of England for weekly worship, Communion, Baptism, weddings, funerals, and ordination. Methodism, at that time, functioned a voluntary, parachurch organization, so removing someone from Methodism didn't cut them from the Body of Christ. Instead, it merely meant that they didn't share the same focus of fellow Methodist – intensive, communal discipleship.

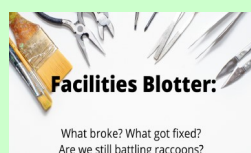
The punch card speaks to something deep though. Methodism, as a movement, began as a small group discipleship opportunity. Wesley framed God's grace in terms of a journey of sanctification, and he insisted that those who wanted to go on this journey do it together through intentional, accountable relationships. Something important happened when we do this with others. To quote Wesley himself, "There is no holiness without social holiness." They met regularly in small groups and larger groups to study, serve, and check in on each other's souls. That was the method behind Methodism. Overtime and especially with its arrival on this side of the Atlantic, Methodism evolved into something more like a what we now call a denomination with its own churches, clergy, sacraments, and seminaries. We grew and grew, becoming one of the largest forms of Protestant Christianity globally. However, with that growth, it could be easy to miss our most distinct claim on church life – coming together to continue our growth as Christians outside of the Sunday morning experience.

In the coming weeks, we will have a couple of opportunities to live into more Methodist identity. Every Thursday night, from now until October, at 6:30pm, we will be offering some kind of discipleship opportunity. Right now, Mary Wenzel is offering a way to explore your faith through art. In June, we will have an opportunity to explore faith through writing. In July, I will begin an intensive survey of the Old Testament entitled, "Speed Dating the Old Testament." From my own personal life, I know that a lack of childcare is one of the key barriers for folks, so childcare is offered every Thursday night for those who want to be a part of the studies.

On June 1, immediately following worship, we will have a Missions Fair in the Fellowship Hall. There will be representatives from all of the various ways you can work with others to make church life happen and folks from several of our nonprofit partners with opportunities to serve beyond the church walls – out into the community.

All of this is connected to an active, engagement, communal discipleship that has been at the heart of Methodism from its inception.

Vaya con Dios,
Pastor Trey



The work on the sanctuary ceiling tiles began on Monday, April 28th and (at the time of writing) was expected to be finished in time for Sunday worship on May 4th.

Regular maintenance has been completed on our HVAC units.

The vent hood over the stove top was professionally cleaned and will soon have a fire prevention device installed within.

Cover photo: Images from Holy Week (Messy Church, Easter Egg Hunt, and Easter Sunday)



The church does not belong to us

Youth and Family News

Messy Church — Our final Messy Church of the spring season will take place during May.

Join us on Tuesday, May 13th at 5:30 p.m. in our Fellowship Hall. We'll have eight craft and activity stations, and dinner for the whole family. Our theme this month is "Our World" and we'll have some crafts about the world God made, and some belated earth day adjacent stuff.

We broke a record last month with 42 kids and almost 90 people total at Messy Church. Join in worship with the growing community at Messy Church and invite your neighbors and friends (if they don't already come)



Summer Camps—Registrations are open for all of our summer camps and can be found at stshtx.org/events.



UM ARMY—Our UM ARMY camp in Nacogdoches this summer is beginning to shape up. Leadership will soon be assigning the adult roles and possibly before the next Evangel, they will start assigning youth to teams. We will still allow registrations almost to the day that the camp begins, but the later you sign up, the higher the chance you'd be assigned where there is a need space rather than to make balanced teams. You can register now at stshtx.org/events



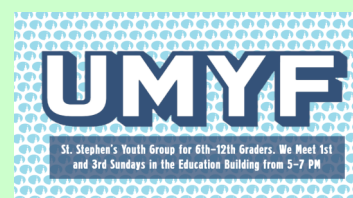
Parent's Night Out—Our next Parents Night Out takes place on May 30th at 6 p.m. Children 4-10 years old can be left at St. Stephen's under the care of experienced and licensed childcare professionals (and employees of our very own Johnson Memorial School).

The cost is \$30 for your first child and \$10 per sibling. Registration is open now and can be found at stshtx.org/events.



UMYF—Our youth group will meet twice in May. Students 6th-12th grade are invited to join us on Sunday, May 4th, and Sunday, May 18th from 5- 7 PM.

At youth group we play group games, take part in a short devotional study, and eat dinner together—all free of charge. You don't have to be a member of St. Stephen's or any church for that matter to take part.



May 2025 Highlights

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
<div><div><div>Worship Times</div><div>Sunday School—9:15 am, Education Bldg Traditional Service—10:30 am, Sanctuary Virtual Service—10:30 am, Facebook & YouTube Family Worship Service—Third Sunday of the Month at 9:15 am, Fellowship Hall</div></div><div><div>This calendar features highlights from our church schedule of events. For a more detailed calendar or to learn more about our church visit stshtx.org or call the church office.</div><div><div>For a list of recurring events, please see the next page.</div><div>*Register for events at stshtx.org</div><div>CR=Choir Room FH=Fellowship Hall Sanc=Sanctuary</div></div></div></div>							
<div><div>*** Remember and Honor</div><div>MEMORIAL DAY MAY 26th</div><div></div></div>			<div><div></div></div>		<div><div>1 Experiencing Faith Through Art Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. (Edu)</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>2</div></div>	<div><div>3</div></div>
<div><div>4</div><div>9:15am-Sunday School 10:30am-Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)</div></div>	<div><div>5</div></div>	<div><div>6 Line Dancing. Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>7</div></div>	<div><div>8 Prayer Shawl group. Thursdays at 10</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>9</div></div>	<div><div>10 Houston Woodworkers Association. 9-2:00 p.m. (FH)</div><div></div></div>	
<div><div>11</div><div>9:15am-Sunday School 10:30am-Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)</div></div>	<div><div>12</div><div>The Gathering Place—10a.m. FH</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>13</div><div>Messy Church 5:30-7:00 p.m. (FH)</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>14</div></div>	<div><div>15</div></div>	<div><div>16</div></div>	<div><div>17 Concert 7-8 p.m.</div><div></div></div>	
<div><div>18</div><div>8:30am - Community Breakfast 9:15am- Family Worship Service (FH) 9:15am-Sunday School 10:30am Traditional Worship (Sanc)</div></div>	<div><div>19</div></div>	<div><div>20 JMS Last Day of School Chapel and Graduation</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>21</div><div>The 75th Anniversary of St. Stephen's First Worship Service</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>22</div></div>	<div><div>23</div></div>	<div><div>24</div><div>Newsletter Article Deadline</div><div></div></div>	
<div><div>25</div><div>9:15am-Sunday School 10:30am-Traditional Worship (Sanc)</div></div>	<div><div>26</div><div>Houston Philatelic Society Meeting (FH) 7p.m.</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>27</div></div>	<div><div>28 Senior Games. Wednesdays at 10 a.m.</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>29</div></div>	<div><div>30</div><div>Parents Night Out. 6p.m. (FH)</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>31</div></div>	



God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

What's on at St. Stephen's

Experiencing Faith Through Creativity—It's not too late to join us on Thursdays in May for a new Experiencing Faith course. It's okay if you missed the first class too.

This class will celebrate the creativity of God through our own creativity. Attendees will work with watercolors, acrylics, and more.

The Thursday night classes will run from 6:30-8:30 p.m. You can register to take part at stshtx.org/events.



75th Anniversary—The very first service held by the people who would make up St. Stephen's occurred on Sunday, May 21st, 1950. The service took place at Oak Forest Park near where the backstop and pool are now. There was a single story garage built for a small fire engine, and just a small handful of people gathered to worship that day.

Over the following years, St. Stephen's moved around taking up residence in a house on Ebony Lane, and later the Garden Oaks Theater. This was until 1952, when a sanctuary was built at our current location albeit where the Fellowship Hall stands now.

St. Stephen's has been a part of the Oak Forest Community for seventy-five years. We have welcomed thousands of people into our space from preschoolers to seniors, and held every type of service from baptisms to funerals, and everything in between. We will have a larger celebration of this milestone later in the year but we will mark the anniversary in smaller ways as we approach May 21st, and in worship on May 25th.

If you would like to be a part of the team that will plan our bigger celebrations later in the year, please email the office at info@stshtx.org

Great Heights Bible Study—Our Bible Study at Great Heights Brewing Co. will happen twice in the month of May. We'll meet from 5-7 p.m. on May 11th, and May 25th. Even though the 11th is Mother's Day, we are still planning on holding a group.



Anyone can attend regardless of where you are in your faith journey.

What's on at St. Stephen's

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday School—Sun., 9:15 am, Educational Bldg

Traditional Worship—Sun., 10:30 am, Sanctuary & Online

Narcotics Anonymous—Mon. & Wed., noon; Thurs., 7pm; Saturday, 8pm, FH

Boy Scouts Troop 604—Mon., 7pm, FH

Zoom Bible Study—Tues., 3pm

Email Susan Barcus at sjbarcus@comcast.net for the latest information.

Line Dancing Class—Tues & Fri, 9:30 am, FH

Staff Meeting—Wed., 1:30 pm, Church Office

Sea Scouts Ship 24—Tues., 7:30pm, FH

Senior Games—Wed., 9:30am, Café & 112

Prayer Shawl Ministry—Thurs., 10am, Rm 112

BI-MONTHLY EVENTS

UMYF—United Methodist Youth Fellowship
1st & 3rd Sundays, 5pm (unless stated otherwise)

Girl Scouts Juniors/Cadettes—Monday (varies), 10am, 201

Girl Scouts Daisies—1st & 3rd Tues., 6pm

Girl Scouts Daisies—2nd & 4th Thurs., 6pm

MONTHLY EVENTS

Community Breakfast—8:30 am on Third Sundays

Family Worship—Third Sunday of the month at 9:15 am

The Gathering Place—second Monday, 10am, FH (a ministry for persons with Alzheimer's or other memory loss & their caregivers)

OTHER RECURRING EVENTS

Harris County Parent/Child Visitation—1st, 3rd & 5th Saturday, 8am-2pm, FH (with a few variations during the year)

Houston Woodworkers Association—2nd Saturdays 8 am—4 pm

FH=Fellowship Hall CR=Choir Room
Sanc=Sanctuary SH=Scout House

For more information, visit stshtx.org.



Worship connects us with God and with each other

Prayer Requests (Please update the office if you no longer need to be on this list)

Greg Albert, Debra Akin, John & Dorothy Artz, Betty Beyer, Peggy Bickel, Tommy Bickel, Gloria Collins, Brayden Corson, Mark Cass, Janet Cummins, the Dickson family, Allen Ebelt, Maurice Ebelt, Mary Gail Ellis, Frieda (Cindy Tindol's sister) and Bob (Cindy's friend), Mary Kay Glenn, Phyllis Greene, Lori Gossett, Megan Eyre, Elsie Haley, Tricia Wright Halley, Shirley Hammonds, Bert & Charm Hensley, and Daniel Hernandez; Lola Hensley, Tripp Hensley, Elizabeth Hickerson, Betsy & Wesley Hill, Dustin James, Joe (Shirley Moan's brother), Cathy Johnson, Dot Lockhart, Carol Luce, Renita Majors, Marsha Massey, Michelle Maurizi, Audrey Mayfield and family, Clint McCray, Ben Newton, Nancy Piercefield, Gladys Reeve, Jane Roberts, Kim S., Barbara Smith, Meranda Soto, Michael Stuart, Preston Taylor, Charles Turner, Paul Wieting, Patricia Williams, Howard & Cindy Wright, Judy Zanelli

In the Military: Allen Clutter, Keegan Ferrell

May Communion Offering

Our May Communion Offering will go towards UMCOR's "Where Most Needed" fund.

UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief) is the humanitarian arm of the United Methodist Church. UMCOR responds to aid the victims of natural and man-made disasters. This support includes people all over the world who have been affected by war, famine, natural disasters, and a number of other causes of disaster.



The "Where Most Needed" fund will take any donations made and direct them to the most urgent need. You can give to UMCOR by marking your giving online or in person as a "Communion Offering" at any point during the month of May.

Memorial Area Ministries (MAM) Activities coming up in May-June

The MAM Online Prayer Breakfast is May 28th from 9-10 AM.

MAM is looking for volunteers to review Business Plans from new entrepreneurs enrolled in their Innova program. They are also looking for a few volunteers to serve at the celebration for the Innova graduates on May 22nd.



MAM is having a 1/2 off sale at the Blalock location May 2nd-3rd and is looking for volunteers for their restocking day at the store on May 4th. Please note some of these dates have changed. For more information on these events, check out the MAM webpage at MAMHouston.org or contact Jamie Etherton.

Worship Attendance

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, April 6th	124	4	20	66
Sunday, April 13th	119	4	32	67
Tuesday, April 15th (Messy Church)	87			
Thursday, April 17th (Maundy Thursday)	29	N/A	25	81
Sunday, April 20th (Easter Family Service)	77			
Sunday, April 20th (Easter Traditional Service)	158	0	35	76
Sunday, April 27th	95	5	67	76



The stories of scripture transform our own stories

Johnson Memorial School News—November Update

Candice Croker—JMS Director

JMS Recap of April

Our five teachers and amazing parent chaperones made our walking field trip to TC Jester Park on Earth Day a great one - we completed a nature scavenger hunt, enjoyed a picnic lunch and LOVED the newly remodeled playground! Thankfully, the playground was cleaned up that morning since Easter festivities had left quite a mess and the bathroom doors were unlocked for us - big KUDOS for the Houston Parks Department for coming through for us. Leaf rubbings were done by most classes once we got back because the humidity got the better of us by the end. Some of the classes were even able to release their live butterflies that day - what perfect timing after carefully growing our little caterpillars in each classroom for the week prior.



Why did we organize this walking field trip? A calm walk in nature is not something most of us take the time to do often enough with our busy schedules, especially in our Houston climate. Really noticing nature, acknowledging how much beauty is all around us, and just doing something simple like a walk has so many benefits. We have also done research on the value of "loose parts play" and why our short and structured school day could use more time with this type of focus.

What are the benefits of this type of "loose parts play"?



If you see children engaged in loose parts play, you can see for yourself the true benefits and our parent volunteers can attest to this. Children get REALLY involved, much more than in adult-led activities. They have fun and learn so much at the same time with the extensiveness of the creativity being all their own. Since it is open-ended, this type of play helps students explore, observe, investigate, construct, deconstruct, and engage with others and nature. Their imagination is limitless and playing in small-group settings develops that imagination even more, plus they are able to set their own agenda for play, and use all the items found on a nature walk in a multitude of ways.

JMS mourns Ginny Martin

St. Stephen's, Johnson Memorial School, and many others in our community join in grief for the loss of Virginia "Ginny" Martin who passed away on March 31. Our school community continues to be in prayer for her family and her loved ones. A celebration of life service will be held at St. Stephen's UMC on Thursday, June 19 at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to Johnson Memorial School which her family started in memory of her brother, Robert Johnson.

A letter was sent home with all JMS students for how we plan to honor Ginny at her celebration of life - we have offered to make paper flower centerpieces with notes to the family about what we all love most about JMS. If you are a church member who has ties to JMS as a student, a JMS parent or former teacher, we would love your participation! Please pick up a flower template in the green basket outside the Director's office or request a template by email (JMS@stshtx.org) - completed flowers can be placed in that same green basket before June 1.

Fall registration for JMS is now open to all. Registration forms are available outside the Director's desk or for download from the church website. To learn more visit <https://stshtx.org/johnson-memorial-school/>



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The Evangelist

2003 W. 43rd St.
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stshtx.org



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Readings

For those of you who like to get a head start on the scriptures in our current sermon series “A Work in Progress”, here they are.

If you’re reading the digital Evangelist you can click on the scriptures to be taken to a page where you can read them.

4/27/25 - Embracing the Doubt
[John 20:19-31](#)

5/4/25 - Overcoming a Setback
[John 21:1-19](#)

5/11/25 - Anticipating the Reward
[Revelation 7:9-17](#)

5/18/25— Including the Previously Rejected
[Acts 11:1-18](#)

5/25/25—Receiving the Power
[John 14:23-29](#)

Fun Fact

This May 24th marks the 287th anniversary of John Wesley’s Aldersgate Experience where the father of Methodism had a spiritual experience which he described as his heart feeling “strangely warmed”.

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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