

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

The Evangel

August 2025 Edition



ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church



We are all, without exception, beloved children of God

Fun For the Whole Family

My family ends up at Stomping Grounds with slightly disturbing frequency. If you've never been, it's a fairly simple concept – 6 different eateries, 1 bar, open space. The food skews cosmopolitan and quality – Korean barbeque, Vietnamese, Mexican, Sushi, pizza, contemporary American, and ice cream. The open space has a fence all the way around it, only a couple of gates in, and AstroTurf on the ground. So, you can show up with your kids, eat food that caters to diverse tastes, have a relaxing beverage, while your kids run around with relatively little need for supervision. It checks the boxes of what's becoming a formula for restaurants in our area – food the adults enjoy and something for the kids to do.

This is us as well. As I write this, our Family Ministries programs will spring back into full life next week. Messy Church returns on Aug 12. Family Worship kicks off on 8/17. We are rolling out an additional children's Sunday School class on 8/24. One of the things that we decided to be as a church, to live into our neighborhood, is a spiritual version of Stomping Grounds. We have many opportunities for adults to grow spiritually – Sunday School classes, Thursday Night Bible Study, Great Heights Bible Study, and Sunday morning worship. We have an ever grow set of things for children and youth – Messy Church, Sunday School, Family Worship, VBS, UMARMY, and Youth Group. We've made it our mission to be spiritually good and fun for the whole family.

It's not shocking that this has become our niche. Johnson Memorial School opened decades ago and has been a haven for young children and their families ever since. They'll welcome their next batch of smiling energetic faces on 9/4. From 1967 onward, JMS has been a constant ministry and outreach of this church to children and their families. The spiritual Stomping Grounds that we are today builds on a legacy of who've been all along.

Vaya con Dios, Pastor Trey



The Purpose of Prison is Not Solely to Punish! (by David Massey, A Heart Free Prison Ministry, a mission effort of St. Stephen's UMC)

As Christians, we believe that no one is beyond the reach of God's love and God's ability to rehabilitate. Scripture testifies constantly to the radical life change that God can bring about. Too often people question my commitment to prison ministry with the comment that they are there to be punished. They are certainly there because they were convicted of the breaking the law, and they live the reality of those consequences. Even still, God's grace has the power to wash away our sins – even legally actionable ones. Our commitment as the hands and feet of Christ in the world is continue our good shepherd's work of reaching the lost sheep and offering all the life change grace and power of God.

The prison system shares some of these goals. The commitment of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is safe and appropriate confinement, supervision, rehabilitation, and reintegration of adult felons. However, the State of Texas has a very limited budget, and their focus is primarily on safety, both to the public from those who have committed crimes and for the safety of those who are incarcerated. Many openings go unfilled within the TDCJ for Correctional Officers. They depend heavily on chaplaincy volunteers to provide for the rehabilitation efforts.

Simply locking someone away for a period of time is not going to change their attitude but often reinforces and hones their penchant for poor choices. Many do feel guilty about the crimes they have committed but feel that there is no alternative for them. Many did not have the advantage of loving parents, and they have no example for loving behavior.

Prison chaplain volunteers can fill the role of providing guidance and examples of Christian love by involving themselves with everyday lives of the incarcerated and taking their time to volunteer to assist them in the thought process of concern for others.

This information is presented not to condone or provide any excuses for their behavior, but to emphasize that some of these men who are incarcerated can benefit from the example of Christian love and the concern shown by the community of Christ for their welfare. No, we do not reach all of the men who have exhibited criminal behavior. Many of them will return to a life of crime. However, if we can reach some percentage of these men, there is a possibility that they will not return to prison, can go out upon their release to lead productive lives, and become responsible parents and member of society. It is for this percentage of the inmates that I am involved in prison ministry.

Cover photo: Images from VBS



The church does not belong to us

Youth and Family News

FAMILY MINISTRIES FALL KICKOFF

August 11-18th



Fall Family Ministries Kick-Off—We've had a terrific summer at St. Stephen's. Children, youth, and adults were involved in 11 summer camps connected to the church. Participant numbers across the entire summer were over 300. But with the end of our summer schedule comes Fall and we have big things coming in Fall.

Messy Church — We're back. It's been a two months and we've missed our Messy Church community! Join us on Tuesday, August 11th for eight craft and activity stations with the theme of "Hands On".

We'll provide dinner for the whole family and have the children lead a short worship service towards the end with song and skit.

All the fun takes place between 5-7 PM. Welcome back!



Family Worship Service—Family Worship was only away for a month this year (we met in June because of Father's Day) but that doesn't mean we're not excited to be back. We have a few changes too. The Family Worship format has worked for two years now but we've identified some areas for tweaks and improvements. We'll have a new stage area, an extended children's time, and a bonus craft. Join us at 8:30 a.m. for breakfast and/or 9:15 a.m. for worship on Sunday, August 17th.



Blessing of the Backpacks—HISD and many neighboring districts and private school systems return to school on or near August 12th this year. On Sunday, August 17th we will hold our annual Blessing of the Backpacks during both services. Bring your school backpacks, work bags, and more as we pray over our students, educators, and administrators for a successful, and safe school year, and a positive learning environment for all. St. Stephen's has been blessed by the presence of many wonderful educators over the years (including at our amazing JMS). We will continue to advocate for educators and students in our community.



Parent's Night Out—Our next Parents Night Out takes place on August 22nd at 6 p.m. Children aged 3-10 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). Yes, you read that right. We've expanded to include potty trained 3 year olds too!

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

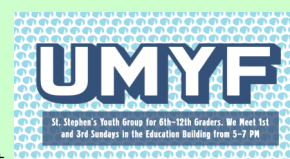


New Sunday School Class—Due to the increased number of children coming on Sunday mornings, it has necessitated a change in our Sunday school classes. We are happy to announce that our children's Sunday school will be splitting into two age groups for the first time since before the Pandemic. We will now offer a K-2nd grade class, and a 3rd-5th grade class. Both classes will take place every Sunday (except Family Worship Sundays) in our Education Building at 9:15 a.m.



UMYF—Our youth group will meet three times in August. Students 6th-12th grade are invited to join us on Sunday, August 3rd, 17th, and 31st.

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.



August 2025 Highlights

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<div><div>Worship Times 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>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. <u>For a list of recurring events, please see the next page.</u> *Register for events at stshtx.org CR=Choir Room FH=Fellowship Hall Sanc=Sanctuary</div></div>						
					1 Last Day of VBS	2
3 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)	4 5 6 7 8 MUSICAL THEATER CAMP				9 Houston Woodworkers Association. 9-2:00 p.m. (FH) 	
10 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)	11 The Gathering Place—10a.m. FH 	12 Messy Church 5:30-7:00 p.m. (FH) 	13	14	15 Hawaiian Shirt Day 	16
17 8:30am - Community Breakfast 9:15am- Family Worship Service (FH) 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am Traditional Worship (Sanc)	18	19 Line Dancing. Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. 	20	21 Newsletter Article Deadline 	22 Parents Night Out. 6p.m. (FH) 	23 College Football Returns 
24 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	25 Houston Philatelic Society Meeting (FH) 7p.m. 	26	27 Senior Games. Wednesdays at 10 a.m. 	28 Prayer Shawl group. Thursdays at 10 	29	30
31 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<div><div><div>Blessing of the Backpacks Sunday, Aug. 17 9:15 & 10:30 AM</div></div><div><div>HELLO MY NAME IS Holy Bible</div></div><div><div>SPEED DATING THE OLD TESTAMENT THURSDAYS 6:30PM</div></div></div>					



God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

What's on at St. Stephen's

Meet and Greet Plant Swap—Gardeners and plant enthusiasts from all experience levels are invited to join us on Saturday, September 27th from 10 a.m. to noon for a plant swap.

Bring seeds, or plants and find a community to share knowledge with and find a new plant to take home with you.

This event already has a high degree of interest. If you would also like to be a part of it, make plans to be in our Fellowship Hall in late September.

October Retreat—You are invited to join Katy Sabayrac and Lori Anderson for a contemplative retreat at Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey in Pecos, NM, from October 29 to November 3.

During the retreat, participants will experience the distinctly Benedictine rhythm of prayer, meals, and time spent in community as well as unstructured time for individual prayer, reflection, rest, walks, art, and contemplative interaction with scripture and other spiritual resources.

The retreat is \$130 per night (with a non-refundable \$130 deposit). Transportation must be arranged separately.

If you have questions about the retreat or would like to reserve your place, please contact Katy at Katy.sabayrac@gmail.com

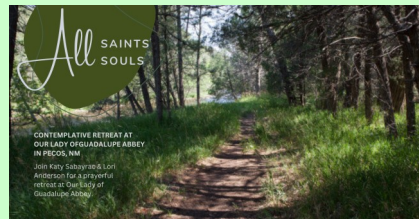
Great Heights Bible Study—Our Bible Study at Great Heights Brewing Co. will happen twice in the month of August. We'll meet from 5-7 p.m. on the 10th and 24th.

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

Speed Dating the Old Testament—Pastor Trey's Thursday evening Bible study "Speed Dating the Old Testament" continues this Fall.

Each week the class looks at a person from the new Testament in depth. Previous classes have focused on Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham and Sarah. Don't worry if you have missed a class or two (or all of them). You can pick up immediately from the next class onwards.

The class meets from 6:30—7:30 p.m. in Room 201. You can also take part on ZOOM. Check out our social media pages @stshtx for ZOOM information every Thursday. Childcare is also provided for this class free of charge.



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, 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: Keegan Ferrell

August Communion Offering

August's communion offering will go towards Memorial Assistance Ministries' (MAM) [Back to School program](#). This program helps parents to shop for new school uniforms for their children to ensure they are confident and ready for the new school year. MAM provides gift cards for families to buy these necessary supplies. Providing gift cards allows children to see their parents as the provider as opposed to simply handing out clothing.



If you can support MAM this month, you can do so by marking any offering as "Communion" or leaving any gift on the altar rails on Sunday mornings

Memorial Area Ministries (MAM) Activities coming up in August

MAM's quarterly half-off sale at the Blalock store will be Aug 15-16. They are looking for volunteers to assist on restocking and cleaning the store on Aug 17. St Stephens and MAM will be working together on a Back-to-School campaign in August. MAM continues to look for volunteers to review Business Plans from new entrepreneurs enrolled in their Innova program. For more information, check out the MAM webpage at MAMHouston.org or contact Jamie Etherton.

Worship Attendance

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, June 1st	126	2	24	72
Sunday, June 8th	93	4	37	74
Sunday, June 15th (Family Worship)	44			
Sunday, June 15th (Traditional Worship)	77	2	21	57
Sunday, June 22nd	98	4	27	73
Sunday, June 29th	81	2	28	69
Sunday, July 6th	96	7	51	73
Sunday, July 13th	95	7	25	97
Sunday, July 20th	108	9	38	57
Sunday, July 27th	94	5	50	71



The stories of scripture transform our own stories

Johnson Memorial School News—November Update

Candice Croker—JMS Director

JMS Updates

Our 58th school year at JMS is around the corner and the classrooms are starting to come together nicely! We currently have 56 students registered for our fall semester beginning on Thursday, September 4 - there's one spot remaining if you know of a sweet family looking for a special preschool experience.

JMS hired several new teachers this year. Andrea Hoelscher will be leading the PreK4 classroom, Suzy D'Souza (a 4x JMS mom) will be leading the older 3s classroom, Sierra Butterwick (JMS alum herself!) will officially take over the music classroom, and Courtney Miller (2x JMS mom) will join the Helping Teacher crew. We maintain a high standard for our staff and I am so pleased to report that these four additions to our staff are top-notch; if you see them around the building preparing for the school year, please be sure to say hello and offer up a prayer of good luck for a smooth start to the school year.



Welcome new teachers. L-R:

Andrea Hoelscher
Suzy D'Souza
Sierra Butterwick

Christie Fisher, church member and JMS School Board Member, kindly joined our JMS staff recently for an evening of sharing her wisdom and tricks of trade as a seasoned teacher. We are so thankful for her insight and hope to continue sending JMS students her way at OFE who are well-prepared for the rigor of Kindergarten!

Thanks to a suggestion by a JMS parent, our Helping Teachers hosted a summer camp in our classrooms for the first time. We had an author-themed week in June and a summer-fun themed week in July that was attended by about 20 kids each session. The camp was restricted to May 2025 graduates, returning JMS students, and incoming JMS students so most participants were familiar with our JMS schedule, routine, and behavior expectations. It was a memorable time for all participants and the reviews by parents were strong!

JMS staff will return for our staff development on August 26-27 and Day 1 with students is on Thursday, September 4 - we appreciate your prayers as we open up the St. Stephen's doors to 27 new families this school year!

Questions? Please reach out to JMS Director, Candice Croker at JMS@ststx.org





ST. STEPHEN'S
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The Evangel

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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 “Lived Out”, here they are.

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

8/3/25 - With Your Treasure
[Luke 12:13-21](#)

8/10/25 - In Your Life
[Isaiah 1:1, 10-20](#)

8/17/25 - Like Those Before
[Hebrews 11:9-12:2](#)

8/24/25— At All Times
[Luke 13:10-17](#)

8/31/25—To The Deepest Levels
[Luke 14:1, 7-14](#)

Fun Fact

Two food facts for you this month. 1) Honey never spoils. There has been honey found in ancient Egyptian tombs that is safe to consume. 2) Bananas are berries but strawberries are not. That’s bananas! We mean, that’s berries!?

What’s Inside

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Our Vision



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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