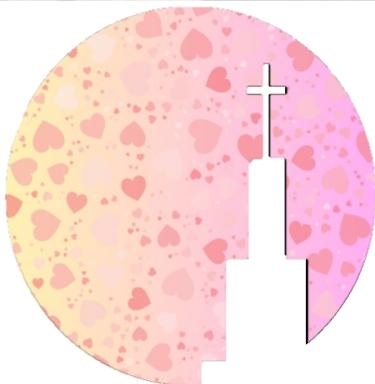


Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

The Evangel

February 2026 Edition



ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church



We are all, without exception, beloved children of God

Sure Looks Like the End Times (Part 2) or On the Nature of Change

As you read this, I should be about midway through teaching my Revelation study on Thursday nights. Given that it's Revelation, I shouldn't say that "we are really getting into the good part," but we are getting into the part where it gets really interesting and equally instructive.

In chapters 11 and 13, John introduces us to the Beast and his hype man, the Prophet of the Beast. These serve as the main embodiments of evil through the back half of Revelation. They have near, but not quite, God like power, and people flock to them in droves. They love the Beast. They can't get enough of the Beast. In chapter 11, when some prophets of God give their testimony, the Beast rises from the pit and kills them, while the inhabitants of the earth let them lie in the street for three and half days and celebrate their deaths. It paints a grim but all too familiar picture of evil. It feels powerful and appears popular. It can knock the hope out of even the most earnest believer in a better world.

The figure of Thanos, in the Marvel comic/cinematic universe, captures some of this feeling. For those of you unfamiliar, Thanos is one of Marvel's all powerful, world destroying bad guys. He seeks to claim all the Infinity Stones, to put into the Infinity Gauntlet, and then snap 1/3 of all life out of existence. He sees himself as the answer to everyone else's failed choices, that by destroying so much, he will achieve a balance that no one else was willing to do. He's so confident in his own power and prospects that he declares, "I am inevitable."

Revelation paints a picture of an evil that feels exactly that - inevitable. The good and the godly get batted away like so much noise. The Beast shows real power and ability to draw a crowd. Forces amass in heaven for what looks like a nail-biting final battle. Then, in chapter 19, God's army shows up to do battle and then immediately wins. It isn't a contest at all. Christ and his forces run through the Beast's army like a Cuisinart. The hymn setting up the victory gets close to as many verses as the description of the battle. It only looked close to us. It never was. The only thing that was inevitable was God's victory.

I've suffered from Chronic Depression my whole life. It makes one particularly susceptible to the feeling that pain, suffering, and wrong will never go away, that those feelings are inevitable, and that you just live there now. I spent the first six years of my 30s believing that my life could only get progressively worse moving further away from the life that I envisioned, when I left home at 19. As the years dragged on, it became a fairly dark season in my life. Then, my phone rang. I could come home to Houston after 15 years of some of the strangest places in the world and some of the equally strangest places in rural Texas. It felt inevitable that my life would only ever get worse right up until the moment that it got better. History can work this way too. Soviet East Germany built the Berlin Wall to appear absolutely inevitable. 87 miles of parallel concrete walls 12 feet high and 4 feet thick, over 300 hundred guard towers with guards authorized to shoot escapees, over two hundred dog runs with guard dogs trained to sniff out and attack anyone attempting to flee, all combined to project this image of the absolute nature of state control and their inevitable triumph over resistance. That state of affairs lasted for decades from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. Growing unrest and protests throughout 1989 combined with a poorly communicated new immigration policy led to November 9, 1989, when East Germans began crossing no man's land in mass and the inevitable wall began to be torn down live on international television. I may have been three years old, when this happened, but since my Dad has the same first name as Tom Brokaw, was traveling at the time, and also had a grey trench coat, I remember seeing Tom Brokaw standing on top of the wall, surrounded by joyous East and West Germans and believing that it was my father on the news.

Sometimes, change comes gradually over time, like the passage from dusk to dawn, the change of the seasons, or the progression of human aging, but Revelation testifies to an alternative mode of change - explosive and sudden, destroying the seemingly inevitable in a burst of divine power. We don't always see it coming. It sometimes doesn't even feel possible until it happens. Thus, hope isn't always about looking for positive signs of good things and, instead, can be a spiritual discipline of choosing to believe in the possibility of good, when good appears to be the farthest thing from possible.

Revelation paints a vivid and often startling picture of how God, God's goodness, and God's love win in the end. If you find yourself feeling like you're banging your head against a wall and not getting anywhere, this message is for you. Keep going. You never know when God's going to break through. Vaya con Dios,

Pastor Trey

Cover photo: Crafting at Messy Church. January 13th, 2026



The church does not belong to us

Youth and Family News

Messy Church — We had another awesome Messy Church in the month of February with around 80 people crafting, eating, having fun, and learning about God’s Reckless Love. Scan the QR code on the right to visit our new Messy Church hub. Here you can find the dates for the upcoming Messy Church nights, and if you’re able, support this ministry financially.



Can’t scan the QR code? Visit ststx.org/messychurch instead.

Family Worship Service—Our monthly Family Worship Service and Community breakfast will take place on Sunday, February 15th at 9:15 a.m.

The service will feature contemporary music from our band “The Early Byrds”, open table communion, a shorter “sermonette”, two craft stations, and then an extended children’s time in an adjacent room with a third craft and short message tailored for young children.

A community breakfast is always served before the service around 8:30 a.m. and is open to all even if you don’t stay for the service.

Summer Camps—We have the fullest slate of summer camp offerings that we have perhaps ever had in our 75 years of existence. There are two weeks of High voltage Rock Camp, Lakeview and Choir Camp in Palestine, UM ARMY, VBS, and three weeks of Musical Theater Camp. That’s just what is available to everyone - JMS will have two weeks of camps for their students too. Check out the graphic below for a handy reference guide as you plan your summer and then...

ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church

2026 SUMMER CAMP

REGISTRAT-O-MANIA

REGISTRATIONS OPEN FEBRUARY 10TH!

LAKEVIEW	HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK CAMP	UM ARMY	VBS	CHOIR CAMP	MUSICAL THEATER CAMP
JUNE 15-19	JUNE 15-19 & 22-26	JUNE 21-27	JULY 6-10	JULY 13-17	JULY 13-17, 27-31 & AUGUST 3-7

REGISTER AT [STSTX.ORG/EVENTS](https://ststx.org/events)

2026 Summer Camp Registrat-o-Mania! - Our annual “all of the summer camp registrations go live day” will be Tuesday, February 10th at 10 a.m.! All links will be live at ststx.org/events

February 2026 Highlights

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
--------	--------	---------	-----------	----------	--------	----------

Worship Times

Sunday School— 9:15 am, Education Bldg

Traditional Service—10:30 am, Sanctuary

Virtual Service—10:30 am, Facebook & YouTube

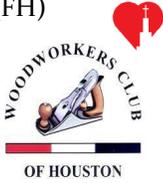
Family Worship Service—Third Sunday of the Month at 9:15 am, Fellowship Hall

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.

For a list of recurring events, please see the next page.

*Register for events at stshtx.org

CR=Choir Room FH=Fellowship Hall Sanc=Sanctuary

<p>1 9:15am- Sunday School</p> <p>10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)</p>	<p>2 Groundhog Day</p> 	<p>3 Line Dancing— Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. (FH)</p> 	<p>4</p>	<p>5 JMS Closed for Teacher Training</p> 	<p>6</p>	<p>7 Winter Olympics Begin</p> 
<p>8 9:15am- Sunday School</p> <p>10:30am- Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)</p>	<p>9 The Gathering Place—10 a.m. (FH)</p> 	<p>10 Messy Church Reckless Love 5:30-7:00 p.m. (FH)</p> 	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 Valentines Day Woodworkers 9-2:00 p.m. (FH)</p> 
<p>15 8:30am - Community Breakfast</p> <p>9:15am- Family Worship Service (FH)</p> <p>9:15am- Sunday School</p> <p>10:30am Traditional Worship (Sanc)</p>	<p>16 Presidents Day</p> 	<p>17 Board of Stewards Meeting 7 p.m.</p> 	<p>18 Ash Wednesday See Page 6</p> 	<p>19 Prayer Shawl Ministry.— Thursdays 10 am. Room 112</p> 	<p>20 Newsletter Article Deadline</p> 	<p>21</p>
<p>22 9:15am- Sunday School</p> <p>10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)</p> <p>Town Hall Meeting 12 p.m. (Sanc)</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 Senior Games— Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.</p> 	<p>26</p>	<p>27 Parents Night Out</p> 	<p>28</p>



God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

What's on at St. Stephen's

Parent's Night Out—Our next Parents Night Out takes place on February 27th at 6 p.m. Children 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).

Registration is open now and can be found at stshtx.org/events.



Facility Rental—Are you in need of a space for your ministry, event, or business? Do you know of someone looking for such an arrangement?

St. Stephen's facilities are available for short and in some cases, long term rental.



Town Hall Meeting—Following worship on Sunday, February 22nd we will host our first town hall meeting of the year. In it, we will discuss what we learned in 2025 including a financial report. We'll also talk about some upcoming plans and what are hopes are for St. Stephen's in 2026. All are encouraged to attend the meeting and the discussion.



Metro District Training Day—

St. Stephen's is the host site for the annual Metro district training event. If you didn't know, St. Stephen's is part of the Metro District which itself is a part of the Texas Annual Conference (TAC). At this training event you can take a class with expert teachers (including our own Pastor Trey) on one of the following:

- Church Media
- Grant Writing
- One Board Model

If you are interested in this event, you can register here directly:

[Metro District Training 2026](http://stshtx.org/events)

Or you can go to our events page at stshtx.org/events to find the registration link.



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
- Bible Study**—Thurs., 6:30pm
- 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)
- Great Heights Bible Study**—2nd and 4th Sundays at 5 p.m. at Great Heights Brewing Co
- 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, Carol Luce, Renita Majors, Marsha Massey, Michelle Maurizi, Audrey Mayfield and family, Clint McCray, Ben Newton, Nancy Piercefield, Gladys Reeve, Debby Roznovsky, 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

February Communion Offering

The Gathering Place is a ministry that provides opportunities for family caregivers of individuals with memory issues, to receive a break from caregiving responsibilities.

While at St. Stephen's, their loved ones take part in a number of activities such as games, music, arts, crafts, lunch, and socialization in a safe environment. There is no cost for this program but if you know of people who would benefit, pre-registration is required at carepartnerstexas.org



If you can support The Gathering Place this month you can do so by marking any offering as "Communion"

Ash Wednesday

Pastor Trey will be giving out ashes in a drive through format on Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Stop by the west parking lot between 6:30-10:30 a.m. or between noon and 1:30 p.m.

If you would prefer your ashes in a more traditional way, St. Stephen's is part of a combined service with other local UMC churches being held at Ebenezer UMC (7302 N. Main Street) at 7 p.m.



Worship Attendance

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, January 4	102	7	33	63
Sunday, January 11	107	7	17	63
Tuesday, January 13 (Messy Church)	121			
6 Sunday, January 18 (Family Worship)	82			
Sunday, January 18 (Traditional Worship)	70	9	23	58
Sunday, January 25 (Winter Storm Day)	25	5	55	130



The stories of scripture transform our own stories

Johnson Memorial School News—November Update

Candice Croker—JMS Director

JMS Summer Camp 2026

For the first time since JMS was founded in 1967, JMS hosted two weeks of summer camp last year on a trial basis and it was a HUGE hit with our students to reunite with classmates. This came about through a parent suggestion and our Helping Teachers made it happen! We are pleased to announce that summer camp at JMS will take place from Monday to Friday at 9:00AM-1:00PM on the following weeks this summer. Registration opens on February 10 along with all the other summer offerings at St. Stephen's. Week 1: June 8-12; Week 2: July 20-24

Who can attend?

Returning JMS students are invited to register along with those will have just graduated in May 2026. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate incoming JMS students or other younger siblings at this time. Please reach out to Mrs. Croker for the registration link: JMS@stshtx.org

When will registration close?

Spots will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis starting February 10. We will close registration once all 26 spots are filled or by April 1, whichever comes first.

Who will be facilitating the summer camp?

Current JMS staff members: Mrs. Butterwick will be overseeing the camp with support from Mrs. David, Mrs. Shah and Mrs. Sierra.

We had an amazing turnout for Dads 'n Donuts on Jan 28 - JMS students and their fathers or father-figures attended chapel with Pastor Trey and then enjoyed donut holes together in our classrooms. We took a slightly different approach to the event this year (not hosted all together in the Fellowship Hall) and I think the students LOVED the 1-1 time many of them got with their dads (and several grandfathers!) to read together, show you their favorite classroom toys, etc. Every year, our soon-to-be graduates from Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Hoelscher's classes have the opportunity to take a dedicated field trip. Last year, our excursion was to the Crocodile Encounter in Angelton but the distance made this a tough outing on a regular school day. On February 4, this group ventured up to the Houston Interactive Aquarium by IAH with the help of 12 parent volunteers. We were incredibly lucky that we arrived right when the facility opened and no other schools were there that day - several students had the opportunity to touch an octopus, feed otters, feed giraffes, see an anteater sleeping, see the active lemurs "chatting" with one another, feed a giant tortoise, see a kangaroo resting in the sun, feed stingrays, and so much more. We had great weather for an outdoor picnic and zero potty accidents - overall, this was a fabulous outing with such a well-behaved group.



JMS Fall Registration

Early bird registration for church members and returning JMS families is now open and your spot for the 2026-2027 school year is guaranteed as long as we have your completed form and fee in hand by February 15. Registration forms are available outside the Director's desk or for download from the church website.

Registration for new families opens on Tuesday, February 17 at 8:00am on a first-come, first-serve basis.

To learn more visit <https://stshtx.org/johnson-memorial-school/>

**JMS FALL
REGISTRATION
OPEN NOW**





ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church

The
Evangelist

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Readings

The following are the Sundays in Lent. If you would like to get a head start on the scriptures, here they are. Online readers can tap the scriptures below to read them in your browser.

2/22/26 - [Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7](#)

First Sunday in Lent

3/1/26 - [John 3:1-17](#)

Second Sunday in Lent

3/8/26 - [Romans 5:1-11](#)

Third Sunday in Lent

3/15/26 - [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)

Fourth Sunday in Lent

3/22/26— [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)

Fifth Sunday in Lent

3/29/26— [Matthew 21:1-11](#)

Palm Sunday

What's Inside

Page 2: From the Senior Pastor

Page 3: Youth and Family News

Page 4: February Calendar Highlights

Page 5: What's on at St. Stephen's

Page 6: Worship information and prayer requests

Page 7: Johnson Memorial School News

Page 8: Readings, Fun Facts, your name and address.

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

FEBRUARY: CAN I HAVE 30 OR 31 DAYS?



BEST I CAN DO IS 28, MAYBE 29