

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

# The Evangel

March 2026 Edition



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



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

## The People Called Methodist

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d, Retain that dear perfection which he owes Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name, And for that name which is no part of thee Take all myself.” (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2)

Juliet has a vested interest in names not mattering. Everyone’s favorite 24-hour teenaged bride’s love life would go much better if Romeo Montague wasn’t named Romeo Montague. I get that Shakespeare, with a little help from a later editor, wrote these lines, but that doesn’t make them wisdom. Second City (the sketch comedy powerhouse) did an internet sketch about Juliet. They imagined her having a sassy friend to set her right. It gives the punchiest summary of why dear Juliet constitutes a less than reliable source, “You met him Sunday. It’s barely Thursday morning. Slow down, Crazy ... I think you’re 14, and you’re an idiot ... Look at your life. Look at your choices.”

Despite Juliet’s protestations, names have power. Major plot points of the Old Testament center around who has or does not have the divine name. To face Pharaoh, Moses doesn’t request an army. He wants God’s name. The Ten Commandments don’t warn us against swearing in front of our grandmothers. They put in place an injunction against taking the Lord’s name in vain, which phrased another way means not misusing God’s power. Parents put great consideration into the name of a child. Whole companies exist solely to name new products and companies – to come up with increasingly ridiculous new non-words to endow the new entity with the right vibes without risking someone else’s copyright, “Exxon,” “Enron,” “Truist,” “Entergy,” “Wegovy,” “Skyrizi,” “Strivent.” The rich, powerful, and prominent stamp their names on anything that holds still long enough. You may not know anything about Jones, Kinder, McGovern, Hobby, Hermann, or Bush, but you know their names and that in and of itself shows their power.

As a person who lives my life going by something other than my given name, I went through the annual ritual of correcting teachers on the first day of school. **Teacher:** Thomas Comstock? **Me:** (Raising my hand with trepidation) I go by “Trey.”

When I did a term at Oxford University, in England, I met with my first abject failure in this interaction. None of my professors could wrap their heads around the concept of “Trey,” and so “Thomas,” I was. It felt wrong and, frankly, confusing. Not even my mother calls me, Thomas. Names contain a lot, so we should probably consider the name, Methodist.

It didn’t start as a compliment.

In the late 1720s and into the 1730s, John Wesley felt an increasingly strong pull to take his faith seriously. He began to read, study, and pray with greater intensity. At Oxford University, he started to meet with some friends to do the same. Eventually, John’s brother Charles, after a season of what John described as “dissipation” joined in as well. Over time, a consistent small group of Oxford students and teachers began to meet multiple times a week to study, to serve local children in need, to visit folks in prison and debtors prison, to attend church every week (The normal standard for the university was three times per year), and to generally, intentionally, carry out practices that let them grow closer to God.

For a while, this group of five or six devout weirdos flew under the radar, but eventually, as more such groups began to form seeing the Wesley’s and Co. as inspiration, broader Oxford society began to take notice. They were not kind. These intentional small groups got a number of derisive nicknames – A Holy Club, Bible Moths. However, one name above all others grew mimetically around Oxford and got cemented by a 1733 pamphlet designed to embarrass John and friends – Methodists. They did so many acts of piety and with such dedication that it was as if they had a method for salvation. John never truly found comfort in the name. Still, the insult stuck, and 293 years later, we are still the people called Methodist.

Every Sunday, throughout Lent and into Easter, we will explore what it means to be Methodist, what it means to journey with John Wesley along the way of salvation. Part of that core is in our name. Our insult turned moniker. John Wesley saw clearly, lived out in his own life, and challenged others to do the same that our relationship with God functions the same ways as any other relationship. It only grows when we take intentional time. With your spouse, this might look like date night or a weekend away. With your children, this might mean putting the screen down and playing a board game or going to the park. It might mean calling your mom. With God, it means prayer, Bible study, acts of service, worship, and, above all, carving out holy space in your life. John Wesley envisioned us doing this all the time. Perhaps, this Lenten season is a good place to reclaim our own name and to get started.

Vaya con Dios, Pastor Trey

Cover photo: Lollipops at Children’s Moment - February 22nd, 2026



# The church does not belong to us

## Youth and Family News

**Messy Church** — Because of some calendar quirks (namely spring break and Holy week) we'll have two Messy Church evenings in the month of March.

First of all, our March Messy Church will take place on Tuesday, March 3rd at 5:30 p.m. Our theme is "God provides".

Then during Holy Week on March 31st, we will have our annual Messy Easter. This service includes Easter crafts and activities, and some other fun features like confetti eggs and photo opportunities.

Dinner is of course provided for the whole family at both of these nights.

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 [stshtx.org/messychurch](https://stshtx.org/messychurch) instead.



**Family Worship Services**—There'll be two Family Worship services coming up before the next newsletter gets sent out.

Family Worship will take place on it's usual third Sunday, March 15th beginning with a community breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and worship at 9:15 a.m. There'll also be a Family Worship service on Easter Sunday at the same times but you can find out more about that in the Holy Week section of this newsletter a few pages on.



What is Family Worship? Well, the service features contemporary music from a live band (the Early Byrds) and two craft stations for children. We also celebrate communion each time too. During the sermon, children have the option of staying in the room or going down the hall for an additional craft and children's lesson on that week's scripture. There's space to move, dance, and wiggle. Kids are encouraged to be themselves in a non-judgmental environment.

**Summer Camps**—Registration is open for ALL summer camps now at [stshtx.org/events](https://stshtx.org/events). We have several options for children of all ages and several options for parents and adults to get involved with too. For more information, visit our events page listed earlier and get ready for the best summer ever!

We have scholarship money available for Lakeview, UM ARMY, Texas Choir Camp, and VBS. At St. Stephen's we believe in the transformative experiences that summer camp can bring. While we attempt to keep prices low wherever possible, we realize that any fee might present a barrier for some families. Financial concerns should not keep anyone from taking part. Reach out to us at [steven@stshtx.org](mailto:steven@stshtx.org)

<b>JMS SUMMER CAMP</b> June 8-12 & July 20-24	<b>TEXAS CHOIR CAMP</b> July 13-17   Palestine, TX
<b>LAKEVIEW SUMMER CAMP</b> June 15-19   Palestine, TX	<b>MUSICAL THEATER CAMP</b> July 13-17 & August 3-7
<b>HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK CAMP</b> June 15-19 & June 22-26	<b>Summer Camps 2026</b> 
<b>UM ARMY</b> June 21-27   TBA	
<b>VBS</b> July 6-10	

**VBS**—At the time of publication, our Vacation Bible School is near to selling out. We will have a waitlist and we usually get to admit several children from it—but—if you want to ensure the elementary aged children in your lives are registered, then we urge you to do it soon at [stshtx.org/events](https://stshtx.org/events). Registration costs \$20 for the first child and \$10 for each sibling thereafter. Children of volunteers can attend for free.



# March 2026 Highlights

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## 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 [ststx.org](http://ststx.org) or call the church office.

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

\*Register for events at [ststx.org](http://ststx.org)

CR=Choir Room FH=Fellowship Hall Sanc=Sanctuary

<b>1</b> 9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>2 Texas Independence Day</b>  	<b>3 Messy Church</b> God Provides 5:30-7:00 p.m. (FH)  	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6 Alamo Day</b>  	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)	<b>9 The Gathering Place—10 a.m. (FH)</b>  	<b>10</b> 	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Woodworkers 9-2:00 p.m. (FH)  
<b>15</b> 8:30am - Community Breakfast  9:15am- Family Worship Service (FH)  9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>16</b>	<b>17 St. Patrick's Day</b>  	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Prayer Shawl Ministry.— Thursdays 10 am. Room 112  	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>23 Newsletter Article Deadline</b>  	<b>24 Line Dancing—</b> Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. (FH)  	<b>25 Senior Games—</b> Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.  	<b>26 Astros Opening Day</b>  	<b>27 Parents Night Out</b>  	<b>28</b> Native Gardening Presentation  
<b>29 Palm Sunday</b>  9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>30</b>	<b>31 Cesar Chavez Day</b>  				



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

## Holy Week at St. Stephen's

**Palm Sunday**—The Sunday before Easter Sunday is known as Palm Sunday and recalls the time Jesus triumphantly entered into Jerusalem on a donkeys back with a cheering crowd waving palm leaves.

Join us on Sunday, March 28th at 10:30 a.m. for our Palm Sunday service. During the opening hymn, all are encouraged to take part in a palm waving processional down the center aisle.

**Messy Easter**—Tuesday, March 31st is our annual Messy Easter service.

Our theme will be all about Easter and we'll celebrate all that Jesus did for us.

**Maundy Thursday**—St. Stephen's will gather in worship on Thursday, April 2nd at 7 p.m. for a Maundy Thursday service. This service centers around the Last Supper with the disciples. We will share communion and strip the altar in preparation for Good Friday at the end of the service.

**Good Friday**— This year we will hold our own Good Friday service in the sanctuary at 7 p.m. This service will focus on the sacrifice Jesus made for us as He died on the cross.

**Easter Egg Hunt**— Oak Forest Park will host our annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 4th. This hunt is open to the community and will feature 6,000+ eggs containing allergy friendly treats and toys. The fun kicks off at 3 p.m.—no registration required.

**Easter Sunday Sunrise Devotional**— Returning for Easter Sunday, April 5th is a sunrise devotional service at 7 a.m.. This service will take place on the steps in front of the sanctuary and will include prayer, scripture, and acapella singing as the sun rises to our East. Donuts and coffee to follow.

**Easter Sunday Family Worship**— One of two Family Worship services in April, join us April 5th for community breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and worship at 9:15 a.m. For more information on Family Worship see page 3.

**Easter Sunday Traditional Worship**— He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed. Celebrate Christ overcoming death with us at 10:30 a.m. in our Sanctuary. We'll sing uplifting hymns, and wear bright colors. The tomb is empty but the pews aren't. See you then.

**HOLY WEEK**  
AT ST. STEPHEN'S UMC

<b>MESSY EASTER</b>	3/31 5:30 PM
<b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b>	4/2 7 PM
<b>GOOD FRIDAY</b>	4/3 7 PM
<b>EASTER EGG HUNT</b> OAK FOREST PARK	4/4 3 PM
<b>EASTER SUNDAY SUNRISE SERVICE</b>	4/5 7 AM
<b>EASTER SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE</b>	4/5 9:15 AM
<b>EASTER SUNDAY TRADITIONAL SERVICE</b>	4/5 10:30 AM

## 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 [ststxtx.org](http://ststxtx.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, 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

## March Communion Offering

March’s communion offering will go towards Books Between Kids.

Books Between Kids is a Houston-based non-profit that aims to provide economically disadvantaged elementary-aged students with gently used books for their home libraries. The importance of kids having access to books in their own homes is well researched and cannot be understated. Books Between Kids have donated over 2.3 million books since May 2013.



To find out more about their organization, visit <https://www.booksbetweenkids.org/>

If you can support Books Between Kids this month you can do so by marking any offering as “Communion”, or by leaving an offering on the altar rails.

## Parents’ Night Out

Our next Parents Night Out takes place on March 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).

The cost is \$35 for your first child and \$15 per sibling. Registration can be found at [ststx.org/events](http://ststx.org/events).



## Worship Attendance

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, February 1	112	7	33	84
Sunday, February 8	99	7	36	55
Tuesday, February 10 (Messy Church)	73			
<b>6</b> Sunday, February 15 (Family Worship)	64			
Sunday, February 15 (Traditional Worship)	77	8	37	13
Sunday, February 22	116	1	19	63



# The stories of scripture transform our own stories

## Johnson Memorial School News

Candice Croker—JMS Director

Approximately 700 preschool teachers across the greater Houston area joined together again this year at St. Luke's UMC on Feb. 5-6 to attend training sessions with early childhood experts. Did you know that Texas Childcare Licensing requires us to earn at least 24 hours of continuing education credit each year? JMS staff members aim for 30 hours annually. Our JMS teachers were able to select five different topics of interest from options such as:

Neurodiversity and Disability Inclusion 101/Creativity Development in Young Children through Process Art/Story Dictation tips/Understanding Typical Language Development and Recognizing Signs of Communication Delays/Talking to Tantrums - Why Doesn't it Work?/Letting Loose with Loose Parts Play/Understanding Behavior: Are we maximizing intrinsic motivation?/Mindful Melodies: Supporting Early SEL (social-emotional learning) Through Music and Movement This is a valuable training experience for us each year and we are blessed to be able to close the school for a day and all attend together.

So many sweet Valentine's Day activities took place in each of our five classrooms - creative artwork to bring home, read-alouds on how to show love in different ways as a friend/sibling/etc., sensory tables full of materials around this theme, and the cutest songs about loving one another! From a school-wide standpoint, we hosted a wonderful local company called Arts Alive on Thursday morning to facilitate a program called "Friends Forever" where students passed bear hugs around a big circle, they danced with stuffed animals and classmates, and just giggled so much for the entire duration of this in-house field trip. So adorable! At the end of the day, each class enjoyed a class party hosted by parent volunteers - we are so appreciative of their time and effort to coordinate these memorable gatherings for the students around special holidays.

### JMS registration update for the 2026-2027 school year:

Early bird registration for current families was open from January 15 - February 15: 30 of our current students will be returning for another year with us + 11 younger siblings of JMS alumni will be coming back in the fall.

Registration opened to the community on February 17 and we were so thrilled to fill up that same day: 16 new families will be entering our hallways for the first time.

Tours are still being offered and our waitlist continues to grow. Families often have changes in their personal or work circumstances so we are generally able to accommodate most families on our waitlist by the time our school year begins after Labor Day. Tours can be scheduled by reaching out to Candice Croker, JMS Director (JMS@ststhtx.org).

We hosted "Granola with Grandparents" last Wednesday and had an amazing turnout of grandparents and grand-friends. Everyone enjoyed chapel together in the sanctuary with Mr. Steven and headed to the Fellowship Hall for a sweet treat afterwards.

Come check out the new playground improvements - we recently planted new spring flowers and vegetables along with the addition of new privacy screens along the fence. It looks great out there!



## Native Plant Presentation

Register now to be a part of our second annual Native Plants event. Join us on Saturday, March 26th, for an opportunity to take four informative classes that will help you have healthier plants and yards. Classes cost \$15 each or you can stay for the whole morning and attend all four classes for \$50. We'll have experts present talking about: Xeriscaping, Insects and Bugs, Bats, Designing with Native Plants What's more, we'll also have bird and bat houses available for purchase, made locally by the Houston Woodworkers Association.



If you get inspired to work in your yard and head straight for Wabash Feed Store on Shepherd following the event, please consider mentioning St. Stephen's at checkout and they'll donate 20% of their proceeds to our ministries.



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

**The Evangelist**

2003 W. 43rd St.  
Houston, TX 77018  
(713) 686-8241  
[stshtx.org](http://stshtx.org)



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Readings

Our Lenten series is called “The Method” so in addition to following Christ’s journey to the cross, we will also be examining what makes a Methodist. 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.

3/1/26 — “Prevenient” [John 3:1-17](#)  
Second Sunday in Lent

3/8/26 — “Justification” [Romans 5:1-11](#)  
Third Sunday in Lent

3/15/26 - “Regeneration” [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)  
Fourth Sunday in Lent

3/22/26— “Sanctification” [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)  
Fifth Sunday in Lent

3/29/26— “Social Holiness” [Matthew 21:1-11](#)  
Palm Sunday

### March Fun Fact

The months of March and November always start on the same day of the week. You can go and check... we’ll wait....

See?

## What’s Inside

- Page 2: From the Senior Pastor
- Page 3: Youth and Family News
- Page 4: March Calendar Highlights
- Page 5: Holy Week Information
- 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