

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

# The Evangel

April 2026 Edition



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



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

A lot of what we write gets kept, for better and for worse. Did you write bad/depressing Live Journal poetry in the early to mid 2000s? Don't worry. It's still accessible. Did you fixate on the romantic potential of Dana Scully and Fox Mulder and commit your musings to digital print? Fear not. Archive of Our Own (AO3) still has it alongside over 17,300,000 similar works across every fandom imaginable and many unimaginable. Did you send an email to a parent about their child's grades and attempt to schedule an IEP meeting in 2010? Don't you worry your little head. Thanks to government records retention requirements, that's on a server somewhere. Did you send an email from your corporate account or personal Gmail setting up a lunch with a potential new client and/or vendor in 2012? You bet your company or Google, or both still have that. Wonder what you tweeted in 2008? X the Everything App knows. Ever thought what your original Facebook status update was? Even if you deleted your account, Mark Zuckerberg can most likely find that information for you. So much of the minutia of modern written life exists for posterity somewhere in a data center in New Jersey.

Two things give birth to this stored cacophony. With the advent of digital storage and modern connectivity, it's never been easier to keep literally everything. It no longer requires shelf space. Millions of words can be stored in a smaller space than the period at the end of the sentence, and we can distribute backup copies of your shockingly negative thoughts on the nicest restaurant in Syracuse, New York that you ate once in 2015 around the globe near instantly.

Also, in the developed world, we can all read and write. At no other point in human history has so much of humanity been literate. Literacy rates had been creeping up over the centuries but really exploded in the last hundred and fifty years. We've never had so many people contributing their words to great record of human experience, but we've mostly used it for memos, memes, and mean comments on the Internet.

The ancient world functioned entirely differently. Each written work had to be painstakingly written out on paper, velum, or ceramic, and keeping them accessible beyond their immediate time meant storage in libraries (with a real risk of burning, like the Library of Alexandria) or someone else going through a similarly painstaking process of copying words. On top of that, a tiny percentage of people could read, and an even smaller percentage could write. It's frankly miraculous and a testament to the work of all those librarians, scribes, and monks over the centuries that we can mean to read but always put off reading the works of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Pliny, Josephus, and Sophocles.

It's also particularly miraculous that we have Paul's letters to Titus and Philemon, and I love it. His letter to the Romans fully explicates some key pieces of Christian theology. His letters to the Corinthians show him working through a conflict with one of his churches, while laying out what Christian love and vocation truly mean. His letters to the Thessalonians and Philippians speak deeply of Christian hope, and his letter to the Galatians challenges us all to see past our own perspective and context. To Titus and Philemon, Paul wrote interoffice memos that got saved and dutifully transcribed and translated across the centuries.

They do offer important windows into theology but from the perspective of working through the details of a movement spread across a massive geography.

"Dear Philemon, I'm not there to help you working through this, and, yes, your slave, Onesimus escaped and hung out with me. However, he's a Christian brother now, so that changes some things. XOXO, Paul"

"Dear Titus, yes, the Cretans are a problem. It's a hard mission, but you're going to have to work through because they too are worthy of God's love. XOXO, Paul"

They are the kinds of communications that anyone who has worked at a church or run any organization has written and read dozens of times. Normally, unlike today, that stuff just didn't make it into the historical record. The ephemera of daily written life just doesn't typically get saved. I love Titus and Philemon because they're a great reminder that running the church 2,000 years ago was not that different from running the church now. I can see my own life in them.

These letters form a part of the collection of small books at the tail end of the New Testament that often get ignored. Titus and Philemon sit alongside 1 and 2 Peter and 1, 2, 3 John. If you want to know what other treasures await in these tiny chunks of New Testament come or tune in Thursday nights from now until the end of May. I'll be teaching my Bible Study series Small Books, Big Truth.

These books don't have a ton of words and are occasionally deeply strange, but they contain a lot about how we should see God and one another.

Vaya con Dios, Pastor Trey

## Cover photo:

2

Please submit dates, pictures and information for the May Evangel by April 23rd to [steven@stshtx.org](mailto:steven@stshtx.org).

THE EVANGEL Vol. 32 Issue 4, April 2026



# The church does not belong to us

## Youth and Family News

**May Messy Church** — Because Holy Week fell at the beginning of April, we were forced to alter our Messy Church calendar a little. The Messy Easter on March 31st was essentially our April Messy Church.

Because of this, our next Messy Church will be on Tuesday, May 12th at 5:30 p.m. The theme will be announced soon but there will be eight craft and activity stations, and dinner for the whole family.



Scan the QR code on the right to visit our 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](https://ststx.org/messychurch) instead.

**Family Worship Services**—Our April Family Worship service will happen on Sunday, April 18th. We'll start with a community breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and the service itself begins at 9:15 a.m.



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 [ststx.org/events](https://ststx.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@ststx.org](mailto:steven@ststx.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 Volunteers**—Well, it happened. In the time since the last newsletter our Vacation Bible School has filled up. If you were not able to register in time, then there is a waitlist. You can find that here:

<https://stsumc.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1183056>

We have our theme. We have one hundred kids signed up and raring to go. Now all we need is you! Our VBS has for decades now been an important part of so many neighborhood kids' summers. It's only possible with the assistance of caring volunteers. To volunteer for a number of different roles, please visit [ststx.org/events](https://ststx.org/events)



# April 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](http://stshtx.org) or call the church office.

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

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

CR=Choir Room FH=Fellowship Hall Sanc=Sanctuary

			<b>1</b> 	<b>2 Maundy Thursday</b> 	<b>3 Good Friday</b> 	<b>4 Easter Egg Hunt at Oak Forest Park</b> 
<b>5 Easter Sunday</b>  7:00 a.m. Sunrise Service  9:15am- Family Worship  10:30am- Traditional Worship (with Communion) (Sanc)	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Line Dancing— Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. (FH)  	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Prayer Shawl Ministry.— Thursdays 10 am. Room 112  	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Woodworkers 9-2:00 p.m. (FH)  
<b>12</b> 9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>13</b> The Gathering Place—10 a.m. (FH)  	<b>14</b>	<b>15 Tax Day</b>  	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Parents Night Out  	<b>18</b> St. Stephen's Serves 9-3 p.m.  
<b>19</b> 8:30am - Community Breakfast  9:15am- Family Worship Service (FH)  9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> San Jacinto Day  	<b>22</b> Earth Day  	<b>23</b> Newsletter Article Deadline  	<b>24</b> Arbor Day  	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:15am- Sunday School  10:30am- Traditional Worship (Sanc)	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Senior Games— Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.  	<b>30</b>		



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

## What's On at St. Stephen's

**St. Stephen's Serves**—this new ministry will complete its first service day on Saturday, April 18th. Registrations for this are closed but we already have our next service day opportunity lined up.



On Saturday, May 16th we will be working alongside Texas Ramps to construct a wheelchair ramp for a Houston resident in need. All materials are provided by Texas Ramps, we will just be providing the labor.

If you would like to be a part of this work, you can register at [www.stshtx.org/events](http://www.stshtx.org/events)

**Parents' Night Out**— Our next Parents Night Out takes place earlier in the month on Friday, April 17th 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). While at St. Stephen's, your child(ren) will enjoy dinner, snacks, games, crafts, a movie, and more.

Be sure to send your children with something comfortable to lay on.

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

**Sewing Circle**—The St. Stephen's Sewing Circle met for the first time on April 11th and will now enter a pattern (pun intended) of meeting every second and fourth Saturday from 10-1 p.m. Sewers will have the opportunity to create one of four different patterns or simply bring their own.



This program is free to all who would like to attend.

**Thursday Night Bible Study**—Did you know that some of Paul's interoffice memos got saved for posterity? Did you know that John was capable of writing concisely when he wanted to? Did you know that New Testament contains two attributed to brothers of Jesus? 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Titus, Philemon, and Jude have three things in common. They're short. They're often ignored, and they include incredible insight into who God is, how we should follow God, and what the early church was like. Small Books, Big Truth dives deep into each of these bite sized expressions of our theological and historical roots. Join us on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. in room 101 or on ZOOM.



## 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](http://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, Janet Cummins, the Dickson family, Allen Ebel, Maurice Ebel, 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

## April Communion Offering

Our communion offering for the month of April will go towards Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM).

MAM works alongside Houston families who are facing financial hardship and unexpected challenges. Through programs that include emergency assistance, job training, education, financial coaching, and access to community resources, they help people move from crisis toward long-term stability and independence. Founded in 1983, the organization partners with volunteers, congregations, and community supporters to ensure that neighbors across Houston have the tools, encouragement, and opportunities they need to build stable and hopeful futures. To find out more about their organization, visit [www.mamhouston.org](http://www.mamhouston.org)



## Worship Attendance

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, March 1	111	5	17	38
Tuesday, March 3 (Messy Church)	79			
Sunday, March 8	89	6	36	45
Sunday, March 15 (Family Worship)	58			
Sunday, March 15 (Traditional Worship)	103	5	27	64
Sunday, March 22	113	6	18	69
Sunday, March 29	105	6	25	68
Tuesday, March 31 (Messy Church)	77			
6 Sunday, April 5 (Sunrise Service)	19			
Sunday, April 5 (Family Worship)	58			
Sunday, April 5 (Traditional Worship)	133	5	33	96



# The stories of scripture transform our own stories

## Johnson Memorial School News

Candice Croker—JMS Director

Our Easter Chapel was so well attended by our JMS community. Everyone brought fresh flowers to add to the cross at the start of the service - BIG shout-out to several JMS moms at both entry doors who brought extra flowers so that each student could participate!



We had a great time outside during recess for the class Easter egg hunt. A little bit of math was involved (each child could only find six eggs) and a little bit of self-control was practiced (they had to share with others if more than six eggs were found) - a fun time for all!

READ ACROSS AMERICA UPDATE: We are so grateful for all the mystery readers who joined each class to read one of their favorite family books - the kids loved it!

Williams - Casey Hyvonen (Emmy), Melissa Schaefer (Hallie) and Kierstin Collins (Lee)  
D'Souza - Joanna Richardson, (Connor), Mattie Vonk (Cole) and Macy Fulford (Ben)  
Dean - Katie Kervin (George) and Ann Ritchie (Madeline)

Hoelscher - Tarah Vann (Palmer), Chelsea Jowers (Hannah + Julia) and Emily Paulis (Duncan)

Taylor - Melissa Schaefer (Merritt), Kate Gunawan (Charlee), Casey Hyvonen (Colton), Michelle Ware (Tate), Kelly Williams (Ben) and Dave Grandy (Truman's grandfather)

Reading aloud to kids daily has clear cognitive benefits. For example, brain scans show that hearing stories strengthens the part of the brain associated with visual imagery, story comprehension, and word meaning. And the landmark [Becoming a Nation of Readers](#) report from 1985 concluded that “the single most important activity for building knowledge for their eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.”



The JMS school year wraps up with an adorable Movin' On Ceremony on our last school day, May 19. Parents will be here for parent/teacher conferences on May 20-21 and then it's time for summer! Our first school day back for the fall semester will be after Labor Day on September 10, 2026 - our 59th school year in this wonderful Oak Forest community. Through the coordination of our amazing Helping Teachers, JMS will be offering two weeks of summer camp for our current students and recent graduates again this summer - the week of June 8 and July 20. If you have any questions, please reach out to the JMS Director, Candice Croker [JMS@stshtx.org](mailto:JMS@stshtx.org)

### St. Stephen's March Madness Champion

Congratulations to Christine Broadston for winning our St. Stephen's March Madness Bracket Challenge for 2026. Christine correctly predicted that the Michigan Wolverines would win the whole thing and as a result, finds herself all alone atop of the final standings. Susan Barcus finished as runner-up with last year's champion Ken Aldredge in third. Our tournament will be back in 2027 and we still haven't ever had a repeat winner. Will you add your name to the hall of fame?

2019: Brian Cardner, 2021: Allison Poore, 2022: Jason Holcombe, 2023: Garrett Holcombe, 2024: Chris Barcus, 2025: Ken Aldredge, 2026: Christine Broadston





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

**The Evangelist**

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Readings

Following Easter, we started a new series called “Making it Happen”. This series takes us through the early parts of the book of Acts and will continue until we reach Pentecost Sunday.

4/12/26 — “The Start” [Acts 2:14a, 22-32](#)

4/19/26 — “The Challenge” [Acts 2:14a, 36-41](#)

4/26/26 - “The Way” [Acts 2:42-47](#)

5/3/26— “The Highs and Lows” [Acts 7:55-60](#)

5/10/26— “The Where” [Acts 17:22-31](#)

5/17/26— “The Why” [Acts 1:1-14](#)

### April Fun Fact






In Hamlet, Shakespeare describes April as a time of renewal and new beginnings.

In Houston, we describe April as a time of heavy showers and new allergy headaches.

## What’s Inside

- Page 2: From the Senior Pastor
- Page 3: Youth and Family News
- Page 4: April 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