

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

The Evangel

June and July Special Edition



ST. STEPHEN'S
United Methodist Church



We are all, without exception, beloved children of God

From the Senior Pastor

The concept of summer as a grown up is a weird thing. As a student and teacher until my late 20s, I had nearly three decades of June and July as a glorious liminal space of unreality. Ordinary time stopped, and at least at the outset, time felt unlimited. At some point, reality crashed in. Church life runs 52 weeks a year. You have to pay for daycare in the summer whether you need it or not to hold your spot, so you might as well send your kid. Mission trips and VBS balance out any time that you think that gain back.

However, this summer, I enter a new era. With Esther finishing Pre-K and starting Kindergarten in the fall, we no longer have a daycare spot to maintain. For the first time since the pandemic, I won't have to rise before dawn to take a child somewhere. Other worldly summer is back! So, below is my now annual (in that this is the second year that I've done it) Pastor Trey's summer reading and watch list for your beach, vacation, children at day camp, or hiding the bathroom to avoid your children enjoyment.



Books that You Should Read

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

I read this book ages ago and then had the opportunity to re-encounter it recently. Spoilers for later in the list, this isn't C.S. Lewis's only entry in my summer reading. He's an interesting fellow - a later in life convert to Christianity who became a theologian wishing to reach normal humans. *Mere Christianity* is born out of his radio addresses to the British public during WWII trying to remind them about what Christian goodness can look like in the midst of devastation. It's an introduction to Christianity by a master intellect who happens to be master communicator.

Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder

This is a now 20 year old biography of Paul Farmer, founder of Partners in Health. I had to read it early in my undergraduate studies, and if you sometimes wonder why many of my stories from 20s make me sound like less of a traveling weirdo and more of an actual crazy person, this book has a lot to do with it. Paul Farmer is fundamentally driven to help people without normal access to health care to get the help that they need, and he will up end his own life to do. It's a (potentially cautionary) portrait of what it looks like to give yourself completely over to a vocation of service – to the exclusion of all else.

March (Volumes 1-3) by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell.

The Civil Rights Movement serves as a beautiful example of what brave, faithful, and oppressed people can accomplish against even impossible odds. It's an indictment of the ways that our country doesn't always live up to its ideals and a testimony to what God can do. Late in his life, John Lewis, who was a youth organizer in the movement, worked with some folks with a lot of comic book experience to make a graphic novel version of the fight for Civil Rights. As a dyslexic person who also loves to read, I appreciate rendering this important moment in our history in a more visual medium.

Leaders Eat Last by Simon Sinek

Of all the leadership and business books that I've had to read over the years, this is the one that has stuck with me the most. It frames leadership as acts of sacrificial caring to help create a circle of safety for the people that you seek to lead. The title is taken from a tradition within the US Marine Corp where higher ranking officers eat only after the front line fighters have had their share. Although it's written from a secular perspective with a focus on brain chemistry, it paints a Christ like picture of servant leadership.

Cover photo: Images of May and Early June



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Hell-Bent by Benjamin Lorr

It's the story of the author's journey through Bikram Yoga. It's only partly about extreme stretching in 110 degree heat. It's more about finding one's place, healthy obsession, unhealthy obsession, the limits of human endurance, and keeping an open mind. It did not make me take up Yoga, but it did push me to start pushing my workouts a little harder and to be less judgmental.

My Current Wall of Shame (Books that I have downloaded and never start or finish) May 2026 Edition:

Remaining entries from last year:

The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The Coming Revolution in Church Economic by Mark Deymaz

Removed entries since last year:

The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs

New entries for 2026:

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

It's come up a bunch lately, and I realized that I've only seen the made for TV version starring Timothy Dalton, which I watched, when I was 12. I should actually read it.

War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy

Not to keep loading up my list with massive works of Russian literature, but this is another book that keeps coming up in my life that reflects on topics, like the duality of humanity, that I really care about, that I have never read. Maybe, I should declare Sad Russian Summer!

What I'll be Reading and Watching This Summer

The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis

Thomas has read all the Harry Potters, the entire Lord of the Rings corpus, and every Percy Jackson book. It's time to go where that whole genre begins - well constructed fantasy meets Christian allegory.

Midnight in Chernobyl and *Challenger* by Adam Higginbotham

Apparently, having been born in 1986, I want to read about two disasters from 1986, and Adam Higginbotham seems to only write about things that went wrong in 1986. I pray that he never feels the need to write about me.

Revenge Wears Prada by Lauren Weisberger

The movie version of *The Devil Wears Prada* came out while I ran a college movie theater, and I fell in love with it. It got me to read the book, which has ended up one of those books that I think about an unreasonable amount. I've read the third book in the trilogy, *When Life Gives You Lululemons*, but with the new movie coming out, I need to fill in the gap before I head to the theaters to reconnect with Meryl Streep, Ann Hathaway, and the Tucc.

Baseball by Ken Burns

I picked up the entire documentary series on VHS at a library sale recently. It's an absolute classic of American documentary film making. Also, given the Astros' current performance, I'd much rather recede into the story of baseball's past than face the present, as my usual boys of summer aren't rising to the occasion.

Vaya con Dios,
Pastor Trey

VBS Snacks

We have over seventy VBS volunteers and almost all of them are teens. Teen metabolisms can obliterate snacks and they usually need a lot to keep going. If you are in a position to be able to, please consider donating snacks to our VBS volunteers. We will start accepting donated snacks during the week of June 23rd.





The church does not belong to us

Youth and Family News

Summer Camp Dates:

Please note our summer camp dates on the right. St. Stephen's will be alive with camps during almost every week of the HISD summer break.

VBS and Lakeview registrations for campers are closed but UM ARMY is still available for registration all the way up to June 20th.

High Voltage Rock Camp and Musical Theater Camp are ran by outside groups. The registration links can still be found at www.stshtx.org/events but you would need

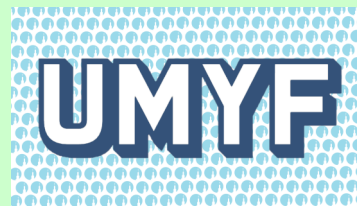
to contact the directors of those camps through their website contact information to see if there are still spots available if you were interested.

VBS Volunteers—Our need for as many VBS volunteers as possible will continue all the way up to opening day on July 6th. If you are ready to volunteer, visit www.stshtx.org/events. If you want to help but aren't sure where you'll fit in, we definitely have a role for you. Or, can you come some days but not the whole week? We can work with that! Please direct all questions and queries to Steven Fisher at steven@stshtx.org

Safe Sanctuary Training—For any adults who will volunteer alongside children under the age of 18 and/or vulnerable adults, safe sanctuary training is vital. It is important that we all understand the steps and measures needed to not only keep vulnerable people on our campus safe, but also how to protect ourselves.

There will be a VBS volunteer safe sanctuary training on Sunday, June 28th at noon in the Fellowship Hall and (hopefully) on ZOOM. Anyone who wishes to complete Safe Sanctuary training for any reason other than VBS is also encouraged to attend. Safe Sanctuary training is valid for one year from the date of the training.

Summer UMYF—The summer schedule can be a little chaotic with so many summer camps to navigate. Because of this our Sunday youth group does not meet on its usual regular schedule. The best way to keep up to date with our UMYF group is to follow our social media pages @stshtx or to get on our mailing list found at <https://stsumc.churchcenter.com/people/forms/443765>



August Kick-Off—Our Fall ministry kick off week will take place between Sunday, August 9th and Sunday, August 16th.

During this week we'll have a Blessing of the Backpacks, a MAM back to school drive, a youth group party, and the return after their summer breaks of Family Worship and Messy Church.

Keep an eye on our social media pages @stshtx for more exciting details.



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Welcome Briona Jones

Exciting things are happening with St. Stephen's Family Ministries! So much so that we have appointed our first ever Assistant Family Ministries Director. Briona Jones started her new role on Tuesday, June 1st. Be sure to say hi to Briona and welcome her to St. Stephen's UMC when you see her.

Briona sent in this article and bio to get the ball rolling on you all getting to know her:

Hello everyone!

My name is Briona Jones, and I am excited to be joining St. Stephen's UMC as the Assistant Director of Families Ministries and as a new member of the congregation.

In this role, I look forward to launching a book scholarship for teens, hosting writing workshops for families, and creating opportunities for youth to explore faith through creative expression, including art, poetry, music, and dance.

I hold a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Care and Counseling. I am also on the ordination track and continue to pursue growth in counseling, chaplaincy, and ministry. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family, reading, working out, traveling, and learning new things.

I would love to get to know as many members of the congregation as possible. If you'd like to connect over coffee, conversation, or prayer, please don't hesitate to reach out (Briona@stshtx.org). Thank you for welcoming me into this community. I look forward to growing in faith and service alongside you.



Social Media Interns

Over the summer you may see a new face (and another more familiar face) doing some work around the church. We are finalizing the the hire of a student from the University of Houston's communications department who will help develop how we communicate with the younger generations. This won't change our communication strategy on our current platforms in a significant way. Instead, we will see a greater diversity in how we reach people to tell them the story of Jesus and of St. Stephen's UMC.

Joining our summer communications intern team (and working on our communications on the road this summer) is church member Phoenix Cave. Please make sure to say hi if you see either of them around and crucially, consider being a part of some of the things we are looking to do next.



Acolytes and Ushers

Acolytes and Ushers are an important part of worship and the Sunday morning experience. We have many dedicated adults and children who fulfill these roles on a regular basis.

We are looking to expand our pool of people for both. If you have a child between the ages of 8-18 who would be interested in being an Acolyte, please contact Briona@stshtx.org

If you would be interested in being added to the Usher rotation, please reach out to info@stshtx.org

June 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, Vimeo & YouTube

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

	1	2 Messy Church—The Summer Son 	3	4 HISD Last Day of School 	5 National Donut Day 	6
7 Communion Sunday 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	8 10am— The Gathering Place, FH 	9	10 Senior Games 9:30 a.m. 	11 Prayer Shawl Thursdays at 10 	12	13 Houston Woodworkers Association. 9-2:00 p.m. (FH) 
14 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	15-19 2026 SUMMER YOUTH CAMP AT LAKEVIEW METHODIST CONFERENCE CENTER Week 1: June 15-19, 2026 Metro, Southeast, and Southwest Districts 					20
21 Father's Day 8:30am— Community Breakfast 9:15am—Family Worship Service 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	22-27 UM ARMY 					28
28 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	29 Houston Philatelic Society Meeting (FH) 7p.m. 	30 Line Dancing, Tuesdays 9:30 	HOVRC HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK CAMP JUNE 15-19 & JUNE 22-26 			

July 2026 Highlights

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4 Independence Day 
5 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship 5pm— UMYF	6 		7	8 		11 Houston Woodworkers Association. 9-2:00 p.m. (FH) 
12 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	13 10am— The Gathering Place, FH 	14 		15 		17 18
19 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship 5pm—UMYF	20	21	22 Senior Games 10 a.m. 	23 Prayer Shawl Thursdays at 10 	24	25 Newsletter Deadline 
26 9:15am- Sunday School 10:30am- Traditional Worship	27 Houston Philatelic Society Meeting (FH) 7p.m. 	28 Line Dancing, Tuesdays 9:30 	29	30	31	



God is in our neighborhood and not just in our building

Get Involved

Feeding UM ARMY

Our UM ARMY camp in Nacogdoches will need a lot of support. This month we have a few ways to achieve this. First of all, your prayers are welcome and needed. Secondly, if you are able, our communion offering in June supports the camp financially.

Thirdly, we will have a lot of stomachs to fill and could use a little help.

If you're able, we're looking for: individually packaged chips, snacks, desserts, and boxes of cereal. If anyone would like to make homemade treats we would gratefully accept but all homemade goodies would need to be nut-free as they wouldn't be labeled.

If those items are a little too specific, we are also able to shop at the grocery stores in Nacogdoches to get needed supplies. If you are able to provide gift cards, the stores in town are Walmart, Kroger, and HEB.

Experiencing Faith Sunday School

Primal: A Quest for the Lost Soul of Christianity (Sundays, June 7–July 26 at 9:15 a.m. Room 101)

In a world full of distractions, competing priorities, and endless demands on our attention, it can be easy to lose sight of the very heart of the Christian faith. What did Jesus say was most important?

In Mark 12:30, Jesus gives a simple yet profound answer: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

This summer, join us for Primal: A Quest for the Lost Soul of Christianity, an eight-week Sunday School study that explores what it means to love God with our whole selves. Together, we will examine the four dimensions of Jesus' command—heart, soul, mind, and strength—and discover how each shapes our relationship with God and our daily walk of faith.

Whether you have been a Christian for decades or are simply seeking a deeper understanding of your faith, this class will challenge you to return to the essentials and rediscover the vibrant, life-giving center of Christianity. Come be part of the journey as we explore what it means to live a faith that is fully devoted to God—heart, soul, mind, and strength.



What's on at St. Stephen's Summer schedule subject to change

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Sunday School**—Sun., 9:15 am, Education Bldg
- Traditional Worship**—Sun., 10:30 am, Sanctuary & Online
- Narcotics Anonymous**—Mon. & Wed., noon; Thurs., 7pm; Saturday, 8pm, FH
- Line Dancing Class**—Tues & Fri, 9:30 am, FH
- Staff Meeting**—Wed., 2:00 pm, Church Office
- Sea Scouts Ship 24**—Tues., 7:30pm
- Senior Games**—Wed., 9:30am, Choir Room
- Prayer Shawl Ministry**—Thurs., 10am, Choir Room

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 Sundays 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

Upcoming Facility Work

- The HVAC in room 203, and room 207 was recently repaired.
- A project to replace all of the interior signage in our church is nearing completion. The new signs will be accurate to our facility and will match our brand colors seen elsewhere on campus and in our communications. Most of the signs have been delivered, and installation will hopefully begin before VBS.
- The Fellowship Hall painting job was rescheduled for the beginning of August. The painters were originally scheduled at the beginning of June but there were too many calendar conflicts which would have caused a risky time crunch to get the work done. The Fellowship Hall will get its refresh after the summer camp season and before JMS returns for the Fall semester of their 26/27 school year.



Facilities Blotter:

What broke? What got fixed?
Are we still battling raccoons?

June and July Communion Offerings

Our Communion offerings for the next to months will go our UM ARMY Camp in Nacogdoches (June) and Kairos Outside Houston (July).

Any donations for UM ARMY in June will go towards offsetting the cost of materials and scholarships for youth to attend the mission trip.



Kairos Outside supports the families of incarcerated loved ones and lets them know that there is a community that cares about them and their needs.

You'll be able to give to these ministries during these months by marking any offering or donation you make as "Communion"



Worship Attendance

5/3-6/2

	In Person	Virtual (Registered)	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Sunday, May 3rd	102	7	25	57
Sunday, May 10th	121	7	30	73
Tuesday, May 12th (Messy Church)	71			
Sunday, May 17th (Family Worship)	78			
Sunday, May 17th (Traditional Worship)	70	3	15	54
Sunday, May 24th	83	5	27	65
Sunday, May 31st	104	6	19	63
9 Tuesday, June 2nd (Messy Church)	97			



The stories of scripture transform our own stories

Johnson Memorial School News

EARTH DAY

Between the nature scavenger hunt, watching caterpillars grow in each classroom and then releasing their class Painted Lady butterflies, a two-day spring STEM room, a rainbow of recycled materials, and so many adorable crafts in the classroom, our students learned all about taking care of our planet and how to appreciate the many beautiful things we have here when we take the time to look around and explore.

The Helping Teachers went above and beyond for our spring STEM room this year - the students wanted a second day to play and learn in there!

What are the benefits of this type of “loose parts play”?

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 discovered in the STEM room in a multitude of ways.

MUFFINS WITH MOM

Every year, we look back as a staff on this busy time of year and discuss how to simplify a bit and how to make sure every event is enjoyable and not too chaotic for our students, our families and our staff. Muffins with Mom is one of those special gatherings that is so well-attended and enjoyed by our students that its status on our calendar is permanent! This year, we made a strategic move from our Fellowship Hall into the classroom so moms and mother-figures could spend time with classmates’ families and students could show them around the classroom. Families were reading together, playing games on the floor, and enjoying amazing 1-1 time. The attendance was spectacular and no mini muffins were left over!

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

This year’s Teacher Appreciation Luncheon was so special to us - we truly felt so loved . Parents were incredibly generous to our team by bringing in baked treats all week, sharing cash gifts with the full staff, creating flowers bouquets for each teacher, and collecting kind words of affirmation from students that were turned into heart garlands for each teacher. The effort truly took our breath away! We are blessed to serve our amazing JMS community.

Our school year wrapped up on May 21 with Splash Day, the Movin’ On Ceremony and our end of year Parent/Teacher Conferences.

If you have any questions about JMS over the summer, please reach out to the Director, Candice Croker at JMS@ststx.org

JMS SUMMER CAMP

JMS Summer camp—organized by our Helping Teachers - will take place for the second year. JMS students will reunite with buddies from Monday to Friday (9am-1pm) the week of June 8 and July 20.

Students will return for our 59th school year at St. Stephen’s on Thursday, September 10. Have a wonderful summer!





Worship connects us with God and with each other

Prayer Requests

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

In Memory of Annie Brew

All at St. Stephen’s extend our condolences and our love to the family, friends, and loved ones of Annie Brew who passed away on June 4th, 2026. Memorial service details will be sent out via email once they are available. Please continue to keep Lydia, and all of Annie’s loved ones in prayer.

Senior Shout-Outs

Congratulations to the following seniors who recently graduated. There is a chance this is not a complete list. If you know of a senior who is not included, please reach out to steven@stshtx.org and we’ll ensure everyone is celebrated on our social media platforms.

- Cecilia Sullivan (Waltrip High School)
- Alec Eads (Master’s Degree—Rice University)
- Jackelyn Hernandez (Scholarship Recipient—University of Houston)
- Emily Maldonado (Scholarship Recipient—University of Texas)



Texas Annual Conference Recap



A lot has happened in recent years at the annual meeting of East Texas United Methodist Churches (which is known as the Texas Annual Conference). But this year was actually a straightforward conference. Churches were challenged to reimagine ministry and our connection to continue our mission to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Next year we will select delegates for General Conference.

Blood Drive

St. Stephen’s will host a blood drive, benefiting the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center, Sunday, August 2nd, from 8 am until 12:30 pm in our Fellowship Hall.



11 All successful donors will receive a thank you gift, not to mention the always popular cookies and juice. Sign up and save a life. Registration will be available soon at stshtx.org/events



ST. STEPHEN'S
united methodist church

The Evangelist

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Readings

If you like to get a head start on the scriptures in our current series “Out of Chaos”, you can find them listed through July 12th below. Evangelist readers who are reading the digital version can click or tap the scriptures to read them:

June 7th—“Loving the Chaotic”
[Matthew 9:9-13, 16-18](#)

June 14th—“Facing the World’s Chaos”
[Matthew 9:30-10:23](#)

June 21st—“Contributing to Chaos”
[Romans 6:1b-11](#)

June 28th—“Seeing Past the Chaos”
[Genesis 22:1-14](#)

July 5th—“Facing Our Own Chaos”
[Romans 7:15-25a](#)

July 12th—“Navigating Our Chaos”
[Genesis 25:19-34](#)

Fun Fact






Did you know?

The Earth is actually farthest from the Sun in early July! Summer is hot because of the tilt of the Earth, not because we’re closer to the Sun.

What’s Inside

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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