

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

2024 AUGUST NEWSLETTER



Church Calendar

When clicking the link above you will be directed to our church calendar. Maria will be maintaining the calendar of all church activities. Please notify her of events that you would like posted and/or any revisions needed. Remember, schedules remain a moving target so always check for current updates. Thanks, Maria.

You can reach Maria at saintstephensucc@gmail.com

Updates of Current Church Activities

END OF JULY REMINDERS...

'Jesus at the Movies' series is concluding with the film *The Last Temptation of Christ* which is being split into two sections due to the length of the film. The first part will be shown on **Sunday, July 28th** immediately following church service. The second part will be shown on **Monday, July 29th** at 6:30p.m.

AUGUST EVENTS

- **First Fridays of the Valley, Friday, August 2, 2024** - There will not be any event at St. Stephen's Church this month. Other venues and events scheduled throughout downtown can be found [here](#).
- **Communion Sunday, August 4th @ 10:30**
- **Council Meeting, August 18th @ 9:30 a.m.**

Update & Schedule of Mission Outreach Projects

Please mark your calendars and become a part of the joy of giving. Contact DD Dawson with questions and opportunities in which to serve or contribute; dddawson63@gmail.com

Saturday, November 2 - Community Lunch at our church. Hot meal being served at 10:30

Saturday, January 4 (2025) - Community Lunch at our church. Hot meal being served at 10:30

Also, this year the Department of Social Services has asked for donations of coloring books and crayons for their December Christmas party. In addition, our church will once again provide \$25 gift cards to be



distributed to families for their holiday gift-giving season.

Prayers, Concerns and Praises



Let us continue to offer our prayers and well wishes to the following people in our church family and those associated with members of our church:

Frances Owens, Patti Rockhill, Allen Lee, Eric Ruple, Ainsley Woodard, Sylvia & Rodney Eagle, Paul Chowdhury, Howard Pratt, Gerald Roddy, Ray Clary, and Charlotte Good, Ellen Hicks

Please share any updates as appropriate.

August Birthdays

Ashby Woodard - 5	Betty Jo Crist - 5	James McHone - 6
Jaxon Stajduhar - 8	Rachel Frye - 10	Brooke Liskey - 11
Sean Allen - 12	Jessica Gordon - 27	

News from the Christian Education Committee...

Looking Ahead! **Christian Education Update**

The summer movie series has been relatively successful. We have had attendance from 5-9 attendees. Reactions after the viewing have been interesting - some favorable, some so - so and others, you've got to be kidding. But with each, I think we have taken home something to think about.

As of this writing, we have three more movies to view: *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *The Shack* and *The Jesus Revolution*. If you haven't been able to join us, we invite you to come and view at least one of the last ones. Popcorn and drinks are available for FREE!

Beginning September 29 and continuing through November 3, we will be meeting after the service for a study of *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I will be more than happy to order the book for you from Amazon (\$9.29, checks payable to St. Stephen's UCC). It is also available on Kindle for \$8.83. If you are ordering your own book, please let me know if you will be participating so I can create a group contact list.

Books for Fall, Advent and Lent are available for you to view in the office. And as always, if you have any suggestions, ideas, etc. for our studies, please feel free to let Christian Education or Pastor Craig know.

Our studies are open to one and all, if you can attend all or one, we welcome you. Please contact Maria Blair at saintstephensucc@gmail.com, or 540-434-6290 for more information.

Missions at St. Stephen's

At the core of the Christian faith is the call of Jesus to be servants in the service of others. At Saint Stephen's, our mission outreach extends to the community we call home. Among our missional efforts, there are several ministries to which we focus our attention.

Patchwork Pantry - <https://www.patchworkpantry.org/>

Alcoholic Anonymous - <https://harrisonburgaa.org/>



Community Counseling Center - <https://hbccc.org/>

Habitat for Humanity - <https://www.habitat.org/>

Open Doors - <https://www.valleyopendoors.org/>

People Helping People - <https://phpharrisonburg.org/>

DD brought to the attention of the congregation of a special collection currently underway for school supplies. She reminded us that most supplies are on sale now during the "Back to School" days. Please bring your contributions to church and DD will distribute them.

An additional collection will be received during the month of August as noted herein:

Christmas in July

Well, Saint Stephen's may be a month late but thought this was a great idea. The UCC put out a request to contribute to the Pension Fund. This fund, formally, Veteran's of the Cross, helps retired clergy with financial, physical and spiritual health.

Throughout the year, the Pension Fund receives letters sharing how this fund helps to cover household repairs, unexpected medical expenses or just a simple "Thank You."

Since December is such a busy month, we decided to collect for this fund during August instead of December. You will find envelopes in the bulletin during the month of August if you choose to contribute. This Fund is one of the Five for Five Offerings collected by the UCC.

Rerun: 'A thin slice of Joy' ...

On Sunday, July 21, 2024, I preached a sermon entitled, "From Pastures to Palaces" based on 2 Samuel 7:1-14a. Of the 200+ sermons I've preached at Saint Stephen's, this one was probably among the most important. Here's an excerpt from that sermon with the 5 important truths you can hold onto during the transitions of your life:

1. You can trust in God's timing (2 Samuel 7:8-9). David's rise to the throne wasn't immediate. God took a young shepherd boy with a skill for slingshots and after facing numerous trials and transitions, he eventually became king. In your own life, you can trust that God is in control and will guide you through your transitions. There is purpose in the process; each phase of David's life served a purpose, preparing him for his ultimate role as king. In the same way, your experiences - even the difficult ones - shape you and equip you for future purposes in God's plans. This I know: That no matter what you've been through, God can redeem it ALL. Job came to this conclusion amid all that befell him; he said, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25).
2. You can find peace in God's presence (2 Samuel 7:9). God spoke this truth to David through the prophet Nathan, "I have been with you wherever you went." God's presence is constant through all the stages of your life. When you need the comfort of knowing you're going to be alright, listen for the assurance from the Holy Spirit that God is with you and that you are never alone. God was with David through his years as a fugitive just as God was with David throughout his tenure as king. God is with us in every season of life. Whether you're moving through personal, professional, or spiritual transitions, God's presence provides guidance and comfort and "peace that the world cannot give" (John 14:27).
3. You can depend on God's great faithfulness (2 Samuel 7:10-11). God promises to establish a place for God's people and to give them rest from their enemies. That's precisely why you can depend on God's promises and why you can bank on God's

faithfulness to fulfill those promises even when your path seems uncertain. But, YOUR faithfulness during periods of liminal space reflects your trust in God's timing and presence and promises and goodness. When doubts arise as to whether you will make it or not, open your Bible anywhere and read 3 to 5 chapters. I can guarantee you will be encouraged by someone else's testimony to God's faithfulness or a verse that speaks a word of faith that will inspire you to trust the LORD and keep going.

4. You can rely on God's provision for your future (2 Samuel 7:12-13). God speaks of raising up offspring and establishing a kingdom, highlighting God's faithful and intentional provision for David's future even AFTER he's dead. Think about that for a moment: God has plans (plural) for your future and is working to bring them to fruition, well beyond your lifetime. God's provision may not be the fatted wagyu calf from a king's court banquet; it may even be crumbs from the king's table so to speak, but the provision of God that extends throughout and beyond your life is trustworthy and true. Of course, when you add your hard work and the discipline to do your very best with kindness and generosity to others, God's provision is more than enough. Here's the best part. As you look back and reflect on your life you start to echo the words of David in Psalm 16:5 which says, "LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure." I like how the New Living Translation records it, "LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine." You can rely on God's provision for your future because God is your provision for the future.

5. You can lean into God's love (2 Samuel 7:14). The final promise of our focus reading is this: God speaks this blessing and promise, "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me." This reflects an intimate, parental relationship from God, which includes both love and discipline. I want you to understand that challenges and corrections are part of God's loving guidance, that help shepherd you, shape you, and grow you. Maybe today, you need to hear God's promise over your life, "I will be a parent to her, and she shall be a daughter to me." "I will be a parent to him, and he shall be a son to me." Even when our earthly relationships with others - including parents - have soured, soiled, or

stopped, the grace of knowing that we are God's children, that the LORD Almighty is our parent, is a measure of love we can lean into.

If you're going through a particularly difficult season of your life, it's okay to give it to God and talk to a licensed mental health professional. If you're not at that point yet, I am available to listen and support you in any way I can. Whether you need a listening ear, a prayer partner, or just someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to reach out. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness, and taking steps towards healing is a vital part of your well-being.

Love,

Pastor Craig Janney



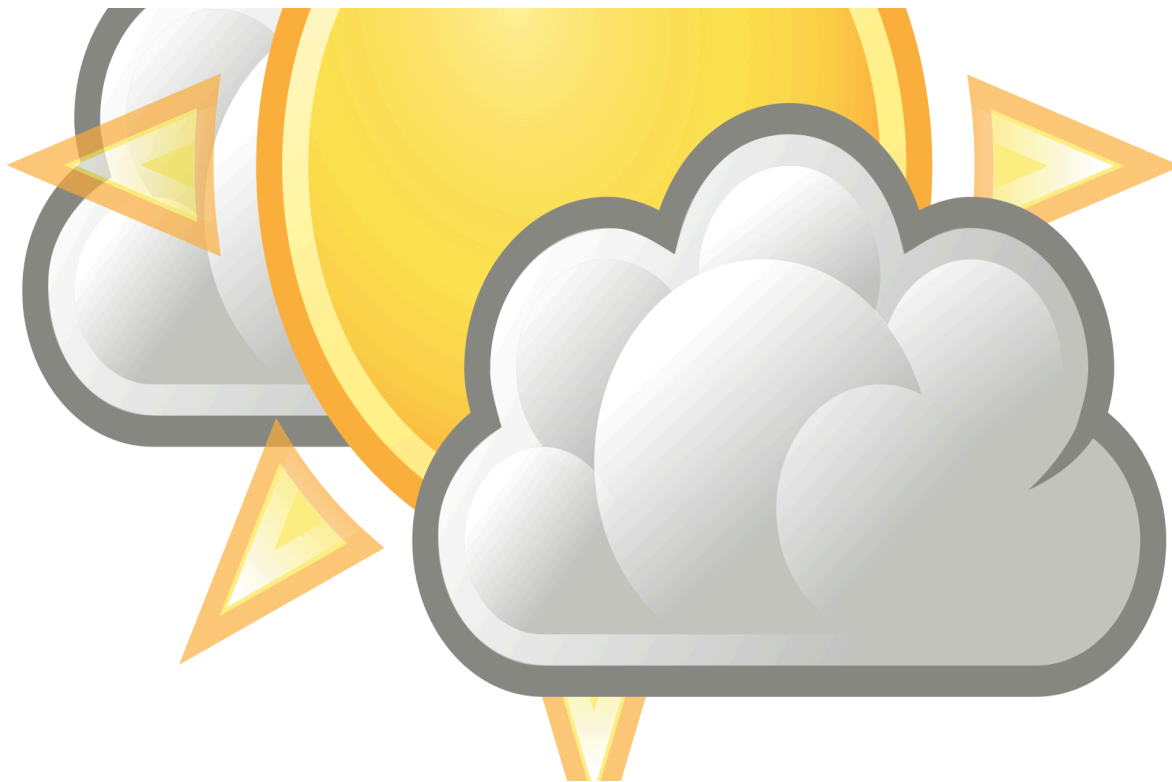
“Tell me something Good...”

Well, since I have had no submission from anyone to share “something good” for this newsletter, I am choosing to share my something good, love language. Oh yes, a poem...

Whether the Weather

By Anonymous

Whether the weather be fine, or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold, or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather, whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not.



Message to All:

We invite you to share your personal activities/events/joys/memories under the 'Tell Me Something Good' section. Please send it to me, at kay.acker@comcast.net in a PDF file. Pictures are welcomed but need to be in a jpeg or png format.

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, please contact Maria at saintstephensucc@gmail.com; or respond accordingly to this email.

Serving St. Stephen's UCC in 2024 ...

- Nancy Cornwell, President
- Tom Dawson, Vice President
- Jane Garber, Secretary
- Patti King
- Kay Acker
- James McHone, Treasurer
- DD Dawson, Financial Secretary
- Craig A. Janney, Pastor
- Maria Blair, Church Secretary

Minutes of Council Meetings can be found posted in the Garrison Room. (Current Minutes are subject to approval and acceptance at the following Council meeting)

"The greatest wealth is to live content with little." Plato

Rejoice, our Redeemer Lives!



