

# The Scroll

SUMMER 2024



**St. Stephen's**



*United Methodist Church*  
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# Spencer's Spot

## Change, Trust, and Oversized Shoes

I don't know about you, but I remember shoe shopping as a kid was not always a straightforward experience. Maybe you wore them out, didn't have dress shoes for someone's wedding, or simply outgrew them. Still, there were different resolutions depending on the situation. When replacing shoes you'd outgrown, multiple considerations were involved, particularly if you were in a growth spurt. The old shoes hurt your feet, but you were not getting brand-new shoes that you would be out of in a few weeks. So, at times, I found myself wearing shoes that were a full size too big so that I had room to grow into them. Was that just me? I imagine it wasn't.

Recently, in a meeting of some church leaders, I was reminded of the phrase "liminal space." If you're not familiar with that phrase, in general terms, it is whatever exists between "what is" and "what will be." Physically, it might be the foyer in a building or home. Or that space between the tip of my big toe and the inside edge of my new shoes. Metaphorically, it is a transitional period between a current situation and an anticipated new one.

The United Methodist Church, globally, and St. Stephen's United Methodist Church (UMC), specifically, are going through a time of change and transition.

We have entered "liminal space," marked by uncertainties and questions brought about by many factors, including the global pandemic and the recent General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

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In many ways, we are still recovering and reimagining the church in the "post-pandemic world." Churches everywhere look different today than they did five years ago. We at St. Stephen's are still settling into what that means for our congregation, with many lingering questions unanswered and newer questions arising. Most recently, with this year's General Conference removing any prohibitions regarding

the LGBTQ+ community, quite a few churches find themselves wondering what's next. To be clear, many progressive churches found lifting those restrictions to be clarifying and grounding. For them, that aspect of liminality has ended. However, for many churches with a history of rich theological diversity, such as St. Stephen's,

we remain in the "in-between" place. Which can be a challenge, but it also provides opportunities.

According to Kimberly Dawn Neumann of Forbes Health (and medically reviewed by Jeff Temple, Ph.D.),

"Uncertainty can be very uncomfortable, lonely, overwhelming, paralyzing, emotionally demanding and mentally exhausting," says Cohen. "But, it

can also be transformative and valuable, providing creativity, strength and the opportunity to move forward, evolve, grow and develop a mindset that anything is possible." Or, in terms of our faith life, we might understand

“liminal space” as Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr describes it. “...a unique position where human beings hate to be but where the biblical God is always leading them. It is when you have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else.” Scripture is filled with these “liminal spaces.” There were times, places, and situations when people had to leave what they knew to go to a new place or do a new thing, and the only certainty they had was God. Abraham had no idea what awaited him and his people in the Promised Land, but he trusted God and went anyway. David had no idea how to defeat Goliath but trusted God and went anyway. When Jesus called the disciples to “come and follow,” they had no idea what that meant, but they trusted God and went anyway. When Jesus later told his followers, “I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay

here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high,” they had no way of anticipating what God was about to do, but they trusted and went anyway.

Liminal space can be uncomfortable, like a shoe that is too big. But it also holds a lot of promise! God works wonders in liminal spaces and calls us to do just one thing: trust and do. God hasn’t changed our mission; we are still making disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. Over the next several months, we will actively discern our next steps together and the direction of our ministries. We are seeking to prayerfully listen for what God is calling us to do in this period of change and how we can live into that call together. Join me and one another as we take a leap of faith, wearing shoes too big, into the uncertainties of the future of ministry as the people of St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church.

Peace and grace to you,  
Pastor Spencer

## The Gift of Love

As we wrap up our sermon series on 1 John, we’re reminded that our path forward is all about love—not the romanticized kind from the marketplace, but the humble, selfless love shown through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. 1 John calls us to live in loving fellowship with God and each other, embracing our flaws and accepting God’s forgiveness. This journey invites us to embody an active, present, and sacrificial love, just like Jesus did.

In a world that often feels divided and troubled, we’re called to demonstrate this love through real actions, standing with those who are weak, suffering, or vulnerable—just as St. Stephen’s UMC has done for many years! The story of Ann Jarvis inspires us, showing that true holiness is about community and mutual support, reaching beyond divisions to serve everyone.

By embracing God’s life-giving love, following Christ’s obedience, and being agents of God’s perfect love, we truly live out our calling as Christians. This way of living not only reflects the transformative power of God’s love but also embodies the eternal life that is both not yet but already here. Dear siblings in Christ, as we continue to move forward to what’s next, let us love, for God has first loved us!

–Pastor Minoo



*Spring Musical Celebration, "Friendship"*



*Confirmation Sunday*

# Creation Care at St. Stephen's

United Methodists embrace the belief that our connection to God, our Creator, requires our stewardship over all of creation. The Social Principles reflect our collective obligation to care for all people and all of creation. Addressing issues such as global warming, food shortages, clean air, and clean water can sometimes seem overwhelming at an individual level. However, individual changes made collectively in our everyday lives have a meaningful impact. The people of St. Stephen's have embarked on a journey to make small changes progressively that can lead to larger impacts in both the near and long term.

At the 2024 Annual Conference meeting, St. Stephen's is one of three churches being recognized as a Sustaining Green Church. The Virginia Annual Conference first recognized St. Stephen's as a Green Church in 2023. Actions that led St. Stephen's being one of a small number of churches to receive this recognition included the Green Day events held in 2022 and 2023, and efforts of the Trustees to adopt policies and procedures to lessen energy consumption at the church and enact environmentally friendly practices. The 2024 Green Day event was the first one conducted outdoors and featured exhibits and activities hosted by members and outside agencies.



*From Green Day 2024*

Please join our efforts to better care for God's creation. All members of St.



Stephen's are encouraged to read the Social Principles that were recently revised at the General Conference and continue to practice good stewardship of God's Creation in everyday activities at home, at the church, and in the community.

## Memorial Service for Glenn Baumgartner

A memorial service honoring the life of Glenn Baumgartner will be held in the sanctuary on Saturday, June 15, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., followed by a reception in the Fellowship Hall. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery on June 17 at 11:00 a.m. More information will be provided for those desiring to attend the interment.

## The Rose Garden Committee Needs YOU!

The Rose Garden Committee is looking for a few good people to help with the garden.

1. Anyone interested in learning more about the care and feeding of our plants is welcome to join.
2. An army of clippers is needed throughout the season starting now to clip off dead blossoms to promote the new formation of buds. This can be a one or two-time offering. Training is provided and it's more fun if you bring a buddy. We are also offering service hours for students who wish to help throughout the summer.



Please contact either Mimi Dunham at 703-774-5370 or Kathy Hoffman at 571-643-8511 if you are interested. Don't forget to stop and smell the roses!

## Endowment Fund Opportunity

Many endowment gifts are easy to make and do not require the help of an attorney.

1. Make St. Stephen's UMC Permanent Endowment Fund the beneficiary of your qualified retirement plan such as an IRA, 401(k), 403(b), or SEP. Just fill out a Change of Beneficiary Form from your plan provider.
2. Make St. Stephen's UMC Permanent Endowment Fund the beneficiary of a checking or savings account upon your death. Ask your bank for a Payment On Death Form.
3. Make St. Stephen's UMC Permanent Endowment Fund the beneficiary of a life insurance policy. Request a Change of Beneficiary Form from your insurance company. If you don't need your policy anymore, transfer ownership of the policy to The St. Stephen's UMC Permanent Endowment Fund, and you can qualify for an income tax deduction.

RECEIVE, REFLECT, AND RELAY CHRIST



*Easter 2024*



# Church Communications

## How do I publicize my area's events and work?

**The short answer is:** you can always send material to me at [communications@ststephensfairfax.org](mailto:communications@ststephensfairfax.org).

**The longer answer is:** I rely on the staff to relate to all of the various groups in the church, and then pass along important information to me on Tuesday mornings at staff meetings. They do a great job of keeping everything up to date. I also rely on the staff to transmit to me all of the whos, whats, wheres, and whys. No one knows the work of the church better than they do, and no communicator can provide accurate information without them.

My "electronic door," though, is always open to everyone at the church!

Anyone (hopefully someone representing a group in the congregation) can email me an announcement or story, along with a request of where they would like to see it appear.

In the cases where you don't quite know what to write, I'm more than happy to help. If you want to talk by phone, my number is 202-412-4323, and I love to get a text message before you call (I get so many SPAM calls I generally do not answer calls from numbers not in my phone book). Feel free to check in with me any time.



*Rev. Steven Martin,  
SSUMC Communications Director*

When assembling information for The Scroll, emails can easily become unwieldy, so I ask that you email me your story with the "Scroll" in the subject line so I will be able to easily search for it. It's very helpful if everyone honors the deadlines for submission that appear in our other publications; another member of my team lays out The Scroll, and it causes a lot of problems if material is late.

Even though I work remotely, I do all I can to be accessible. Please feel free to reach out to me directly by phone or email if you need anything having to do with getting the word out to members of the church, the community, or to the whole world!

-Steve





*Anniversary Celebration*



*April Green Groceries*

# Children's Ministries

**VBS registration** is open now through June 6. Registration forms can be found on the children's page of the St. Stephen's website. VBS is for children aged rising 1st-6th grade and is happening July 15-19 from 1-4 p.m. If you are interested in being a VBS volunteer, email Devin at [children@ststephensfairfax.org](mailto:children@ststephensfairfax.org).

**Mission Possible Kids (MPK) and SHINE**, St. Stephen's children's programs that promote service to others, completed their projects in May. The groups, comprised of children ages 1st-6th grade, served others this school year by providing food to children facing food insecurity, offering gifts to Sunday morning visitors, helping with Green Day, creating centerpieces for an assisted living facility, providing dessert for our Youth Group and snacks for guests at the Lamb Center. This names only a few of the ways our children have served others this year.

If you or your child are interested in serving others through the

MPK and SHINE program, contact Devin at [children@ststephensfairfax.org](mailto:children@ststephensfairfax.org). MPK and SHINE will resume on September 13.



## Summer 2024

Children and Children's Ministry Leaders will celebrate the end of the school year on June 9 from 12-2 p.m. with pizza, ice cream, and a bounce house.

**Children's Sunday School** will pause for the summer break. The last class will meet on June 9, and we will resume again on September 8. The Blessing of the Backpack service will take place the Sunday before the start of school on 18.

**The Nursery** will be available at the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services throughout the summer. Godly Play will continue to be available during the 11:00 a.m. service.

## Celebrating the Success of Our Youth Ministry

# Youth

As we reflect on the past months, we are delighted to celebrate the success of our youth ministry. Through a series of engaging events and initiatives, our young members have strengthened their faith, formed lasting connections, and positively impacted our community.

### Pancake Supper Fundraiser

- We started our Lenten journey with a Pancake Supper Fundraiser. The entire congregation came together to support our youth, enjoying delicious pancakes and contributing to our ministry's mission. In the end, we raised over \$1,200 for our summer mission trip!



### Ski Retreat

- Our youth had an exhilarating Ski Retreat during the winter months. They swapped their books for skis and snowboards, relishing the thrill of the slopes and building bonds with each other. Beyond the fun, the retreat provided a space for reflection and spiritual growth with our lesson series "God Lifts Us Up".



### Middle School "Journey" Retreat

- Our middle schoolers had a transformative experience at Journey Middle School Weekend. Through workshops and discussions, they explored the core principles of their faith and deepened their understanding of God's love and grace. We're looking forward to inviting even more youth next year.



### High School D.C. Retreat

- Our high schoolers took time to unwind on their own journey through Washington D.C. We visited several Smithsonian sites and Artechouse, almost all on foot! When it got too wet outside, we found an Uber to help out, which led to lots of great fun with friends.



**Youth - Looking Ahead** *(from page 11)*

- As we look forward, we are excited about our upcoming Graduation Party, where we will honor our graduating seniors and celebrate their accomplishments. Additionally, our participation in Jeremiah Project's summer mission trip presents an opportunity for our youth to spread love and hope to communities in need.

As we reflect on the success of our youth ministry, we are grateful for the support of our church community. Your encouragement and involvement have been instrumental in creating a nurturing environment where our youth can grow spiritually and socially.

Blessings and joy,  
St. Stephen's Youth Ministry Team

In this issue, we proudly showcase photos by our dedicated church photographers. Their talent has beautifully captured the essence of our worship, service, and fellowship ministries throughout the year. We eagerly anticipate more stunning work from these gifted artists!