

THE INTERPRETER

Church Office Hours: Mon-Wed 8-4:30 & Fri 8-3:30
Ministers: The Congregation
Minister to the Ministers:
Rev. Michael Southcombe



No matter who you are . . .
. . . or where you are on life's journey,
YOU are welcome here.



Maundy Thursday
Service at Our Saviours
Lutheran 6 PM
~Potluck Dinner~

Good Friday
Our Saviours 11 AM
Christ United Methodist 4 PM
Tenebrae Service
Saint Stephens 6 PM

Easter Sunday
“Sunrise” Service 6:30 AM
Easter Breakfast 7:30 AM
Egg Hunt 8:30 AM
Easter Service 9:00 AM

Saint Stephens UCC
903 E. 2nd St.
Merrill, WI. 54452
715-536-7322

Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs
618-558-5014

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JOIN US FOR EASTER BREAKFAST!

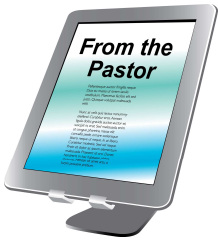
Easter Breakfast Menu: Biscuits and Gravy, Egg Bakes, Scrambled Eggs, Cinnamon Rolls, and Fruit.

Easter Breakfast Tickets will be available for purchase in the church office. They will also be available the morning of Easter! All Easter Breakfast proceeds will support the upcoming Mission Trip to Back Bay Mission in June!



Adults - \$12
Children 5-10 - \$6
Children 4 and Under - Free





So, where was the actual gardener? We are told, Mary did not recognize the risen Jesus and she mistook him for the gardener and approached him. She did not recognize him until he spoke her name.

We can do a month of bible studies and personal meditations on what is said in John 20:1-18. Artwork usually depicts the risen Christ in glowing, white clothes, but he must have looked rather normal for Mary to not notice him right away.

Mary saw the empty tomb and ran back to tell the other disciples. Peter and “the other” disciple ran back to the tomb with her and checked things out. Then they ran back to town. Mary hung around the empty tomb crying and mistook Jesus for the gardener. She then has a conversation with the risen Christ and heads back to town to tell the other disciples what he said.

So, where was the gardener? Mary must have had the expectation that a gardener would be there. Unlike others along this Lenten journey, his not being there does not change the story. The stranger who told Joseph his brothers headed to Dothan changed the story. We do not know the stranger’s name, who he was or what he was doing. He is not much more than an extra in the background of the scene. But if this character had not told Joseph where his brothers had gone, Joseph might have just headed back to his father to report he could not find them. His brothers would not have seen him coming from a distance, started to affirm each others’ feelings of resentment and ultimately sold him into slavery to a passing caravan.

We have many characters like that in scripture. Common, everyday people who happen to be in the right place at the right time and who move the story along. Most of the time we don’t even learn their names.

As I thought about this question, I remembered the delightful movie from 1979, *Being There*, starring Peter Sellers as “Chance,” a simple man who had been the gardener his entire adult life. He could not read or write, he liked to watch television. When his employer died, he was sent on his way out into the world where people thought he said Chauncy Gardner when they asked his name and he answered questions with simple gardening techniques or television slogans that people misread as wise, prophetic observations. People projected their deepest needs onto this blank slate of a man and received his simple confusion as wisdom from on high. He became an advisor to the president and the talk of the town in the rarified air of Washington political circles. It is worth rewatching it or checking it out for the first time if you haven’t seen it.

So, where was the gardener? Watching from a distance, taking all these events in and pondering them? Maybe he was off that day or running late. Maybe he had seen the rock rolled away from the tomb and run away in fear.

I like to think of him as heading back to his family and friends and telling them what he had seen. “Christ is risen, Christ is risen, indeed!” he told them. Maybe he was God’s back up plan if the disciples had continued in fear and not gone forth to proclaim the Gospel. Maybe he was part of God’s plan to reach the people who had already written off the disciples as a bunch of crackpots.

Like the song says, “If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus and say he died for all.”

I bet if we listened to the gardener, we would hear some wisdom, some confusion and awe, a bit of admiration for Mary’s faith and courage, some compassion for her as well.

Ultimately, most of us are background characters in God’s story of creation, life and community, some named, some anonymous. To ask, “Where was the gardener?” is to ask, “Where am I?” in God’s unfolding plan of salvation for us all.

Wherever the gardener is, let us join him in telling what we have seen, sharing our wonder and cultivating a community where Christ is rooted, seen, heard and lived.

Happy Easter,

Pastor Mike



- April 2** – Maundy Thursday
- April 3** – Good Friday 6 PM Service
- April 5** – Easter Sunday
- April 6** – Office Closed
- April 8** – Confirmation Class 5 PM (Last Class)
- April 12** – Messy Church 4 -6 PM
- April 15** – Green Team “Journey of the Universe” movie presentation, 6:30pm
- April 19** – Green Team Earth Day Tomatoes
- April 26** – Confirmation Sunday

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



APRIL LECTIONARY READINGS

- April 5, Easter**
 Acts 10:34-43 Ps 118:1-2, 14-24
 Col 3:1-4 John 20:1-18
- April 12, Second Sunday of Easter**
 Acts 2:14z, 22-32 Ps 16
 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31
- April 19, Third Sunday of Easter**
 Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Ps 116:1-4, 12-19
 1 Peter 1:17-23 Like 24:13-35
- April 26, Fourth Sunday of Easter**
 Acts 2:42-47 Ps 23
 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10



+ These are the lectionary readings for Sundays. Not all readings will be used every Sunday. These are provided for your study and devotion.

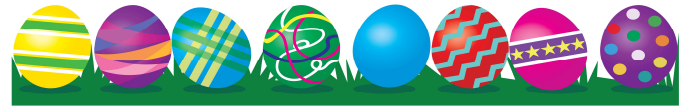
APRIL RADIO BROADCASTS

April 12: Happy Birthday, Jon Robinson, and in memory of Lillian Wengeler’s birthday from Gerri Robinson



We have several available dates for radio ministry this month!

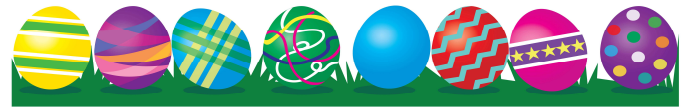
April 5, 19, 26



We have several Livestream sponsorships open for this year. For \$200 you can sponsor an entire month in memory or honor of

someone. Call the church office to sponsor your preferred month.

Open Months: April, May, June, August, September, October, and November



We invite you to join us on **April 26** for a special celebration honoring the 2026 confirmation class. This important milestone marks their commitment and journey in faith!

Presenting our Confirmands:

Will Detert
Aubrie Brandenburg
William Frisch

Bailey Kohnhorst
Avery Clark
Owen Weisman

APRIL MISSION



The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the largest grassroots organization in the U.S. focused on improving the lives of those affected by mental illness.

Founded in 1979 by a small group of families, NAMI has grown to include over 600 local Affiliates and 49 State Organizations. We raise awareness and provide education and support through various programs accessible in many communities.

NAMI offers educational resources, hosts support groups for individuals with mental illness and their caregivers, and advocates for mental health policy at the national level. Our toll-free HelpLine responds to hundreds of thousands of inquiries annually, providing essential information and support.

Through events like Mental Illness Awareness Week and NAMI Walks, NAMI combats stigma and promotes understanding of mental health issues.

We will be collecting monetary donations for NAMI Northwoods. Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" or you can also contribute through our online giving platform on our website <https://ststephensucc.net/donate>. Additionally, you can text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to donate via your mobile device. Thank you for your generosity!



24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT

WISE TEAM

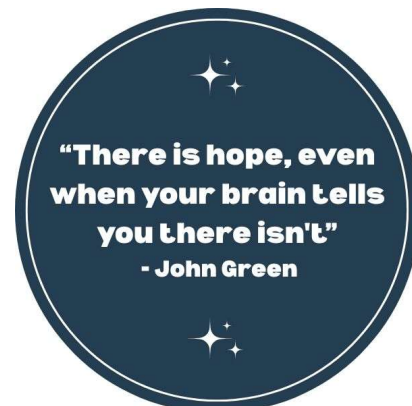
Let's talk about mental health: The realities of intimidating conversation (Part 2)

By Lydia McIntyre

I need to talk to someone about my mental health; what do I do?

First, find a trusted individual who listens to you, has your best interests in mind, and respects you. Remember, you only need to share what you are comfortable with. Practice what you want to say or make notes! Starting the conversation can be difficult, try to be very clear about the intent of the conversation. You could say, "I've been having some mental health struggles. I really need someone to listen; would you be able to talk about this with me?" Remember to let them know what support you need from them. You could say, "It's okay if you don't have a solution, I just need a listening ear" or "It would help if you could reach out to check in with me each week."

Mental health is a long-term conversation; you may not get the results you were looking for the first time. The process of talking to someone can be intimidating as well; it is okay to send a text or voice message to initiate a conversation. If the person you decide to speak with does not have a positive reaction or does not understand, remember that this will not be the case for everyone. You are important, brave, and should not go back to ignoring your mental health or struggling alone. Give the person some space, and when you are ready, you can try again with them or with someone else.



STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Support Saint Stephen's Through Scrip!

Did you know your everyday purchases can help support Saint Stephen's? Whether it's your next grocery trip, gas fill-up, restaurant meal, coffee run, or online order, you can make a difference simply by using scrip gift cards.

Planning a trip? We have Delta Airlines and Disney gift cards, plus options for cruises and more. And with Easter coming up, consider adding gift cards from Dairy Queen, Chips, Culver's, McDonald's, Walmart, or Amazon to your Easter baskets — a thoughtful and practical gift that also benefits the church.

Gift cards are available for purchase at face value from the Scrip box on Sunday mornings or in the church office during office hours. Each purchase earns a percentage back for Saint Stephen's, helping cover general expenses and keep our ministries running strong.

If you don't see the card you need, contact Terra — we can place special orders for additional merchants. For those always on the go, sign up for Raise Right using our organizational code to access scrip instantly through the app. It's a simple way to shop, dine, and travel while supporting Saint Stephen's every day.



Become Part of *Our* Church Family

NEW MEMBER LUNCH – APRIL 19

We're excited to share that several people are interested in joining Saint Stephen's! Our church family continues to grow, and we can't wait to welcome these new faces into our congregation.

To help everyone get acquainted, we'll be hosting a New Member Lunch on April 19, right after coffee fellowship. This will be a wonderful opportunity for potential new members to learn more about Saint Stephen's and for our current members to extend a warm welcome.

If you know someone who's interested in joining or looking for a church home, invite them to join us on April 19. And if you are interested in joining the conversation and providing a warm welcome, please let Pastor Mike know! Let's come together in fellowship and celebrate the growth of our Saint Stephen's family!

Your 2026 Church Council Members

Jody Meyer
Marcus Reinhardt

Todd Frederick

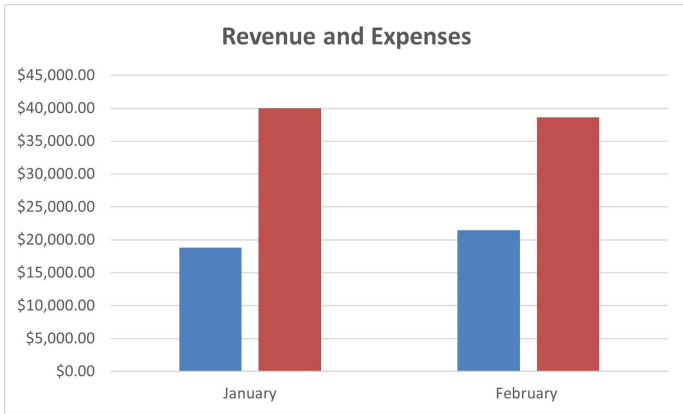
Jim Bjorklund
Jerry Burnett
Emma Golisch
Cathy Dornbrack

Nancy Reinhardt-
Porath

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

Darryl Frick
Stan Seeger
Candy Hinner
Marge
Roggenbuck

CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



February Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$21,451.28

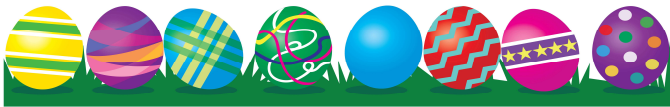
Expenses \$38,604.41

Net Loss: \$17,153.13

The congregation raised \$765 for Haven in February!

Roof Loan Balance \$50,872.27 as of February 28, 2026.

Sanctuary Updates Fund has a balance of \$27,068.48 as of February 28, 2026.



BREWERS BUS TRIP



Milwaukee Brewers Vs. St. Louis Cardinals

May 27

\$80/person

We have **24** seats remaining for our bus trip to see the Brewers take on the Cardinals! We have some great seats in the Loge Infield on the first base side! The bus will be loading at 7:45 AM, and departing at 8:00 AM. Just a heads-up: there will NOT be a dinner stop along the way, so be sure to pack some snacks or a meal for the ride home. Please sign up and pay by April 17!

GREEN TEAM



Join us in celebrating Earth Day on **Sunday, April 19th!** This year, the Green Team is excited to provide everyone with vibrant tomato plants to take home. Let's grow together and make a positive impact on our planet!

Before that, on **April 15 at 6:30 pm**, the Green Team is hosting a movie night to view the Emmy award-winning documentary ***The Journey of the Universe***.

"We belong to a dynamic unfolding universe that inspires wonder, awe, and creativity. Explore our offerings to understand what it means to be an integral part of the universe. This can energize your response to the ecological and social challenges of our times."

Come, let us explore together and be awed by God's creative powers!



"The Vibe" Open Mic Night will be canceled in April due to conflicting events. **"The Vibe" will be back on May 1.** Location is to be determined so watch the April Interpreter for more details!

United Church Camps

Registration is open for both Camp Daycholah and Moon Beach! Visit ucci.org for more information and to register! The church has scholarships available!

2026 Summer Camp Schedule







Select your session by grade completed or age shown.

Arrival time on Sunday is 4:00 pm
*Me Camp arrival time is 4:30 pm

Departure time on Wednesday is 11:00 am
Departure time on Friday is 11:00 am

NEW!
Family Camp! (aka Mega Me's)
June 28-July 1

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
June 28	29	30	July 1	2	3	4
 New! Family Camp... aka Mega Me Camp CIT- Counselor In Training Camp					4th of July	
July 5	6	7	8	9	10	11
4th of July		Middle School Adventure Camp- Grades 5-8 MADD Camp – Grades 5-12 CON Camp – Grades 9-12 And Me's – Grades K-2, Ages 4-6 Tenderfoot- Grades 2-4				
July 12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Middle School Adventure Camp- Grades 5-8 High School Adventure Camp- Grades 9-12 And Me's- Grades K-2, Ages 4-6 Tenderfoot- Grades 2-4						
July 19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Night Owl – Grades 9-12 NIGHTHAWK – GRADES Nightingale - Grades 3-5						
July 26	27	28	29	30	31	Aug. 1
Middle School Adventure Camp- Grades 5-8 Sail Camp – Grades 9-12 And Me Adventure - Grades K-2, Ages 4-6 Tenderfoot Adventure- Grades 2-4						
Aug. 2	3	4	5	6	7	8
 New! Camp Rewind! Adult Summer Camp Week!- Millennial, Gen X and Senior Camps!						



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

We want to acknowledge and celebrate your special birthdays! Send your church friends birthday wishes, whether in person, via email, or by sending one of those wonderful cards you can hold in your hands by mail!

Apr 1	Rpse Dornbrack	Apr 13	Ava Detert	Apr 22	Brad Davis
Apr 2	Jennifer Porath	Apr 13	Rick Neumann	Apr 23	Nancy Dabbert
Apr 2	Ashley Ziegelbauer	Apr 14	Sue Kunkel	Apr 23	Luke Golisch
Apr 3	Loretta David	Apr 15	Charlie Johnson	Apr 23	Ellie Bessey
Apr 5	Barbara Davenport	Apr 15	Daniel Krause	Apr 23	Neil Tesch
Apr 5	Candy Hinner	Apr 15	Amanda Mathis	Apr 23	Connie Russell
Apr 6	Donna Barkley	Apr 17	Owen Weisman	Apr 24	Richard Ollhoff
Apr 7	Randall Teske	Apr 18	Jennifer Lewitzke	Apr 24	Theresa Schmeltzer
Apr 7	Austin Depies	Apr 19	Faye Stevenson	Apr 24	Evelyn Drake
Apr 10	Ann Badeau	Apr 19	Bethany Lapsenberg	Apr 24	Elizabeth Schwartz
Apr 10	Tim Barkley	Apr 19	Linda Hilgart	Apr 25	Scott Voigt
Apr 10	Ida Knospe	Apr 21	Jan Ament	Apr 26	Laurie Grefe
Apr 10	Charlette Swope	Apr 21	Philip Natzke	Apr 26	Scarlett Leistikow
Apr 10	Jon Robinson	Apr 21	Dennis Rice	Apr 28	Nancy Bagley
Apr 11	James Bjorklund	Apr 21	Kathy Parks	Apr 29	Jacey Lyon
Apr 12	Lynn Nowell	Apr 21	Susan Greenlee	Apr 30	Penny Hommerding
Apr 12	Alexander Neumann	Apr 22	Jerry Badeau		

Happy Birthday

Saint Stephens UCC

715-536-7322 903 E. 2nd St., Merrill, Wisconsin 54452 ststephensucc.net

Rev. Mike Southcombe
Terra Holdridge
Kimberly McCaskill
Kari Weiland

Senior Minister
Administrative Director
Administrative Assistant
Christian Ed Director

mike@ststephensucc.net
terra@ststephensucc.net
kimberly@ststephensucc.net
kari@ststephensucc.net

GIFTS & MEMORIALS

Received through March 22
Dedicated to the glory of God and...



Radio Ministry

\$190.00
\$190.00
\$190.00

Thank you to our Dinner @ 5 Crew from Todd and Renea Frederick
In memory of Beatrice Marquardt's March 10 birthday from Todd & Renea Frederick
in honor of Todd Fredericks' birthday from Renea Frederick

New Roof Fund

\$100.00
\$20.00

\$50.00
\$25.00
\$25.00

in memory of my husband, Russ Radloff, from Theresa Radloff
in memory of Joy Malitz, a previous employee of St. Stephens and my friend from
Emily Schwartzman
in memory of Carol Weber from Sharon Detert
in memory of Carol Weber from Dave & Emily Schwartzman
in memory of Ron Vachavake from Dave & Emily Schwartzman

Sanctuary Updates

\$100.00

\$50.00
\$50.00
\$25.00
\$25.00
\$25.00
\$25.00

in loving memory of David Sauer Jr, our Dad, Grandfather, and Great-Grandfather
from Jon & Julia Wicke, Jeremy & Molli Wicke and family, and Justin & Symone Wicke
and family
in memory of Carol Weber from Bill & Joanne Wengeler
in memory of Ron Vachavake from Bill & Joanne Wengeler
in memory of Carol Weber from Linda & Bryan Plautz
in memory of Carol Weber from Kevin & Terry Krueger
in memory of Ron Vachavake from Kevin & Terry Krueger
in memory of Joann Sauer from Terry Krueger

Memorials

\$10.00
\$10.00
\$25.00
\$25.00
\$20.00
\$25.00
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in memory of Emily Ziemke for her February birthday from Alice Ziemke
in memory of Ed Zimmerman for his February birthday from Alice Ziemke
in memory of Sally Oberg from Randy and Diane Perry
in memory of Joan Johnson from Randy and Diane Perry
in memory of Allen Diels from Jerry Krause
in memory of Sally Oberg from John & Joanne Mixes
in memory of our parents David Sauer, Jr. and Barbara & Harold Hopp from Bert
& Darcia Hopp, Kristina & Mike Brown, and Eric and daughter Paisley Hopp
in memory of father and grandfather, David Sauer Jr, on the anniversary of his
death April 19 from Gloria Myers and Krystal Brock
in memory of husband, David Sauer Jr from JoAnn Sauer
in memory of Ron Vachavake from the Ushers Club
in memory of Mike Mosser from Carol Plautz
in memory of Gary Mosser from Carol Plautz
in memory of Carol Weber from Louise Thompson
in memory of Carol Weber from Thomas & Mary Enwright
in memory of Carol Weber from Dennis & Sharon Woller
in memory of Ron Vachavake from Dennis & Sharon Woller
in memory of Joann Sauer from Dennis & Sharon Woller
in memory of Carol Weber from Randy & Diane Perry
in memory of Carol Weber from Dan & Patsy Pick
in memory of Ron Vachavake from Dan & Patsy Pick
in memory of JoAnn Sauer from Dan & Patsy Pick
in memory Duane Berndt from Dan & Patsy Pick
in memory of Carol Weber from Gene & Arlene Schulze
in memory of Carol Weber from Bethany Schaefer

Food For Kids

\$50.00

in memory of Jean Holman and Joan Will from Darlene Johnson

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&



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Worship with us Sunday mornings
at 9:00 AM ...

Listen on the Radio or Join us for our
Livestream on Facebook!

"WE ARE THE CHURCH"

SAINT STEPHENS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OUR VISION

We are a Christian community called by God's Love to be a force for good in our neighborhood and our world.

OUR PURPOSE

We seek to tell stories of God that challenge our assumptions, to open our doors wide with radical hospitality, and to use our own hands and feet to change the world.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE INTERPRETER

If you don't already receive The Interpreter, please let us know if you are interested in receiving it. We will be happy to send it to you by email or mail, whichever you prefer!

"But wait! There's more!"

Email recipients also receive our weekly updates between the monthly editions. Call Terra in the office (715-536-7322) or sign up and subscribe yourself here:

<https://ststephensucc.net/resources/newsletters>