

THE INTERPRETER

Church Office Hours: Mon-Wed 8-3:30 & Fri 8-1
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.



First Wednesday Dinner Church

Something New at Saint Stephens UCC
Beginning August 5th at 6 PM



2nd, 3rd, and 4th Wednesdays
Contemporary Service
Lively Music, Spirited Discussion!

Call 715.536.7322
To RSVP for Dinner Church



Join us for our first Dinner Church on August 5 at 6 PM. Please
call the church office to RSVP. This event will be a church service-
- not a community meal.

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

**Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs**
618-558-5014

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LINCOLN COUNTY FAIR CHURCH FUNDRAISER Volunteers Needed

This year, we have the opportunity to deliver the Pepsi soda for
the Lincoln County Fair, and we need volunteers to assist
throughout the week. This opportunity will raise \$1,000 for the
church.

We will set up soda stands on Wednesday, refill them
throughout the week, and empty them on Sunday evening. We
need four volunteers per shift, especially some strong individuals
for Wednesday morning and Sunday evening!

Here are the shifts we need volunteers for:

Thursday, August 6 | 9 AM and 3 PM

Friday, August 7 | 9 AM and 3 PM

Saturday, August 8 | 9 AM and 3 PM

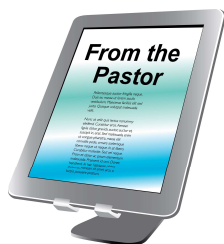
Sunday, August 9 | 6 PM

Please sign up on the kiosk to help with this fundraiser!

Communion Change Up:

Communion will be
the 2nd Sunday in
August.





Wednesday Evening Services Taking Us



Starting Wednesday, Aug. 5, we are starting something old in a new way. Wednesday services are coming back to St. Stephens UCC, with an updated style and format.

On the first Wednesday of the month, we will celebrate with a “Dinner Church.” We will open with a scripture reading to set the theme for the night, have a brief reflection and then Communion around the dinner table (like the early church did when they were still meeting in “house churches”).

Then, during dinner, we will have conversation cards to hopefully guide our conversation. For example: How do you understand the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 to apply today? If you could abolish one thing from the way in which “it has always been done,” what would you get rid of? If Jesus sent you out “2x2,” who would you want to go with and are you alike or do you complement each other?

After dinner, everyone can help clean up. We’ll have sign up sheets for those who can show up a little early and help get dinner on the table.

The hope is that we have some lively conversations and we build comfort in having these conversations together as well as building a sense of community in the church. This is not another “Dinner at Five,” but a true worship service in the earliest traditions of the church with a contemporary flair.

There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board for the first “Dinner Church” so we know how much food to make.

The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Wednesday worship services will be in the sanctuary and use music videos, some live music and singing together, time for silent prayer and contemplation and sermons that are more conversational and/or experiential than lecture style.

On those months we have a 5th Wednesday we will call that a “Service Wednesday” and use it to pack hygiene kits for Church World Service, Blessing Bags to hand out to people who are homeless (2 pairs dry socks, snack bars, granola bars, bar of soap, packet of laundry detergent and \$2.50 in quarters, sample size shampoo, deodorant, hygiene products, a small blanket, etc.). We can keep a stack at the church and members can keep some in their cars to hand out.

We are trying to launch these services without putting a greater strain on our organist, music director, song leaders and choir, although we expect all of them to be present for some of the services. If you would like to provide some music, please see me or Tiffany to let us know what you would like to do.

We will also be using movie clips to illustrate points for our reflections and really need a group of volunteers to learn how to run the soundboard and projection system for the music videos and movie clips.

These services are scheduled to attract people who cannot get here on Sunday mornings and designed to appeal to people for whom the traditional Sunday service just does not help them connect to God or a feeling of worship or spirituality.

Frankly, these services will ask more of you than a Sunday morning service: more participation, deeper thought, greater vulnerability and honesty in conversation. They will also provide greater benefit and deeper relationships than the traditional Sunday morning service. They will be more adventurous and more rewarding. I hope you will give them a try and invite your friends and family who have given up on church for whatever reason to give them a try.

The future is changing. Let us go forward to it together.

Pastor Mike



August 5 – Dinner Church 6 PM
August 5-9 – Lincoln County Fair
August 12 – Contemporary Service 6 PM
August 19 – Contemporary Service 6 PM
August 26 – Contemporary Service 6 PM
August 30 – Noisy Offering



AUGUST LECTIONARY READINGS

August 2, Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Gen 32:22-31 Ps 17:1-7,15
 Rom 9:1-5 Matt 14:13-21

August, Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Gen 37:1-4, 12-28 Ps 105:1-6,16-22,45b
 Rom 10:5-15 Matt 14:22-33

August 16, Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Gen 45:1-15 Ps 133
 Rom 11:1-2a, 29-32 Matt 15:(10-20),21-28

August 23, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Ex 1:8-2:10 Ps 124
 Rom 12:1-8 Matt 16:13-20

August 30, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Ex 3:1-15 Ps 105:1-6,23-26,45b
 Rom 12:9-21 Matt 16:21-28



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

AUGUST RADIO BROADCASTS

August 16: In memory of Jerry and Zakary Plautz for their August birthdays from Carol Plautz

Please help support our radio ministry by sponsoring a Sunday. The cost is \$190 per Sunday. All other dates in August are available.



The Harlan Fausch Family sponsors August Livestreams.

Aug 2: In memory of grandparents, Catherine & Harvey Kriewald

Aug 9: In memory of grandparents, Edna & Harold Fausch

Aug 16: In memory of Phyllis Fausch on her birthday, August 16

Aug 23: In memory of Aunt June Kriewald

Aug 30: In celebration of the wedding of Sarah Ratajczyk & Lucas Raube on August 29, 2026

Open Months: October



MONTHLY MISSION

Bluejay NEST, Bluejay AID, and Bluejay Pantry



The Nest is a free resource from Merrill High School to help students. The Nest has food, clothing, hygiene items, and school supplies. They also have funds to help support MHS students with specific financial needs. The high school also has a Food Pantry available to students to access food.

Bluejay AID is available to students at Kate Goodrich Elementary and Washington Elementary. They provide items like clothing and school supplies.

Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" and enter the amount you would like to donate to the Bluejay Nest, Bluejay Aid, and Bluejay Pantry on the monthly mission line. This offering will also be available on the online giving platform from our website <https://ststephensucc.net/give>, or you can text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to give using your mobile device.



Noisy Offering – August 30 Benefiting Church Camp Scholarships

Bring your coins and listen to the sound of generosity ringing throughout the church!



WISE TEAM



When I was growing up, the Peanuts cartoonist Charles M. Schulz wrote various cartoon panels that featured Peanuts characters with the caption: "Happiness is . . . " and then listed a simple life pleasure. This got me to list things or people or places that make me think of what happiness is to me. So, I am sharing my "happiness list" with you, in hopes that you take time this month to pause and recall the things, people, or places that bring you true happiness.

Happiness is...

- * a clear, crisp fall day
- * listening to rain fall from a cracked open window
- * brushing my cat and feeling her purr
- * a phone call from a friend, just to "catch up"
- * the sound of birds chirping before the rest of the world wakes up for the day
- * kids stopping by to say "Hi, Mom"
- * seeing fresh snow fall
- * watching birds eat from my bird feeders
- * listening to music when no one else is home
- * a new ball of yarn
- * flowers, either cut stems or in a garden

Your Sister in Christ,
Leanne

Your 2026 Church Council Members

Jody Meyer
Marcus Reinhardt
Todd Frederick

President
Vice President
Treasurer

Jim Bjorklund
Jerry Burnett
Emma Golisch
Cathy Dornbrack

Darryl Frick
Stan Seeger
Candy Hinner
Marge Roggenbuck

Nancy Reinhardt-
Porath

STEWARDSHIP CORNER



"Who do you say that I am?" Jesus' question to the disciples in Mark 8 is not only a test of theological accuracy; it is a summons to unveil the true allegiance of the heart. Our answers inevitably shape what—and whom—we treasure, because naming Christ as Messiah re-orders all other loyalties. Matthew 6:21 tells us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Stewardship, then, is not merely about budgets and benevolence reports; it is locating the gravity that pulls our hearts, the gravitational center around which money, time, energy, and hope orbit.

In a culture that equates generosity with publicity—naming rights on buildings, donor walls, social-media hashtags—Jesus' own pattern is startling. He embraces his identity as Messiah yet commands silence. He reveals divine love not through acclaim but through costly self-giving. Here we glimpse a different economy: an invitation to invest our hearts where applause cannot reach and where the return is measured in transformed lives rather than public praise. To practice hidden generosity is to trust that God's gaze—not the crowd's—is what matters. It liberates both giver and gift from the tyranny of recognition and keeps our motives free from the corrosion of vanity. Such hidden stewardship is not small-minded privacy; it is a spacious discipline that keeps the heart's treasure unentangled from ego's craving for affirmation.

Unseen faithfulness as a profound act of discipleship—an investment of the heart that outlasts any plaque or ledger. If you looked at your own budget, calendar, and attention, what would it reveal about your heart's priorities?

Annual Income	Monthly Income	2%	3%	4%	5%	10%
20,000	1,667	33	50	67	83	167
25,000	2,083	42	63	83	104	208
30,000	2,500	50	75	100	125	250
35,000	2,917	58	88	117	146	292
40,000	3,333	67	100	133	167	333
45,000	3,750	75	113	150	188	375
50,000	4,167	83	125	167	208	417
60,000	5,000	100	150	200	250	500
75,000	6,250	125	188	250	313	625
100,000	8,333	167	250	333	417	833
125,000	10,417	208	313	417	521	1042
150,000	12,500	250	375	500	625	1250
200,000	16,667	333	500	667	833	1667

CONSIDER YOUR GIVING AS A PERCENTAGE
OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of our annual income would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in God's world. Thank you for prayerfully considering your commitment!

GREEN TEAM

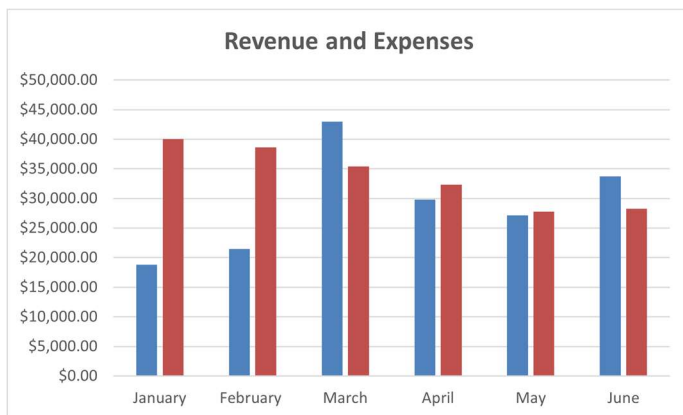


As we all know from the recent hot and smoky weather, climate change is serious, and it is upon us. The video below will help give some historical perspective on this. Despite the current situation, we have been learning for years about individual actions that we can take that will help. The Green Team encourages everyone to take action to help, and we thank you. Here is the link to the video for those who receive the Interpreter digitally.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wp-WiNXH6hl>



CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



June Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$33,694.67

Expenses \$28,247.21

Net Gain: \$5,447.46

The congregation raised **\$2,575** for Taco Tuesday!

Roof Loan Balance **\$48,532.06** as of June 30, 2026.

Sanctuary Updates Fund has a balance of **\$29,238.48** as of June 30, 2026.

Puzzle!

A MIRACLE DINNER

Matthew 14:15–21 & John 6:1–14
is a Bible story about a special dinner.
Below is a poem about that story.

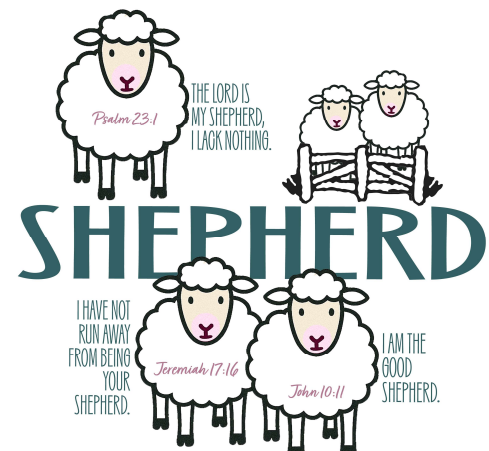


Complete the poem by filling in the blanks with the correct pairs of words.

then / men	rest / quest
true / you	began / ran
late / ate	faces / spaces
lunch / bunch	done / ton

Jesus was tired and went to find _____,
So away from the crowd he started his _____.
It came to an end before it _____,
The crowd followed Jesus; they walked and
they _____.
His boat pulled ashore and he looked at
their _____—five thousand men, plus families
filled all open _____.
And so Jesus spoke and he taught until _____.
The disciples told him it was time they
all _____.
Jesus said, “Yes, that is certainly _____,
and feeding this crowd is now up to _____.”
Feeding five thousand! It could not be _____!
What would they do? They’d need a
whole _____!
But then a young boy came and offered
his _____—five loaves and two fish to
feed this big _____.
Jesus gave thanks and blessed it and _____
it fed all the women, the children and _____!

Answers: rest, quest, began, ran, faces, spaces, late, ate, true, you, done, ton, lunch, bunch, then, men





HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

AUGUST 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!



Aug 1	Beth Frick	Aug 13	Justice Lange	Aug 22	Lori Anderson-Malm
Aug 1	Kathryn Vandre	Aug 13	TyLynn Osness	Aug 23	Molly Lyon
Aug 1	Robert Frisch	Aug 15	Kinzie Stevenson	Aug 23	Bryce Bloch
Aug 1	Cheryl Kanitz	Aug 15	Scott Brandenburg	Aug 24	Dale Krause
Aug 2	Kenneth Mootz	Aug 16	Emma Pajtach	Aug 24	Mary Schwartz
Aug 2	Jen Oestreich	Aug 16	Chris Stevenson	Aug 24	Timothy Seidler
Aug 2	Lily Kunkel	Aug 17	Jodi Golisch	Aug 24	Nick Oslage
Aug 4	Donna Frisch	Aug 17	Ralph Wangen	Aug 25	Thomas Smith
Aug 4	Dave Meyer	Aug 18	Jeffrey Hanig	Aug 26	John Joyner
Aug 4	Lydia Hanson	Aug 18	Lori Simonis	Aug 26	Greg Brandenburg
Aug 4	Eric Maluegge	Aug 18	Piper Lewitzke	Aug 27	Trenton Lapsenberg
Aug 6	Jeffrey Anderson	Aug 19	Nancy Seidel	Aug 27	Janie Rowe
Aug 6	Piper Plautz	Aug 20	Jerry Geiss	Aug 28	Gregory Kloss
Aug 6	Collin Gennrich	Aug 20	Tyler Drake	Aug 28	Ruby Golisch
Aug 7	Ervin Herdt	Aug 20	Kelly Gleason	Aug 29	Emerson Iwen
Aug 7	Matthew Duwe	Aug 21	Sharon Detert	Aug 29	Beaver Plautz
Aug 8	Gerri Robinson	Aug 21	Tiffany Bucheger	Aug 30	Sheila Anderson
Aug 9	Cherie Kultgen	Aug 22	Lee Gille	Aug 30	Janessa Weisman
Aug 10	Dawson Drake	Aug 22	Sandi Krueger	Aug 31	Stephannie Pajtach
Aug 11	Cheryl Buck	Aug 22	Glynis Schroeder	Aug 31	Finlee Lange-Peronto
Aug 12	Peter Bergh	Aug 22	Aimee Gennrich	Aug 31	Sawyer Drake
Aug 12	Kamryn Klade	Aug 22	Sally Tesch		

Saint Stephens UCC

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

Rev. Mike Southcombe
Terra Holdridge
Kimberly McCaskill
Kari Weiland

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Christian Ed Director

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www.unsplash.com www.clipart-library.com www.churchart.com

GIFTS & memorIALS

Received through July 12

Dedicated to the glory of God and...

Radio Ministry

\$190.00	in memory of Bruce Schaefer for his June 29 birthday from Janet Schaefer
\$190.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from family and friends
\$190.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from family and friends
\$190.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from family and friends

Livestream

\$200.00	in memory of grandparents, Catherine & Harvey Kriewald; in memory of grandparents, Edna & Harold Fausch; in memory of Phyllis Fausch on her birthday, August 16; in memory of Aunt June Kriewald; in celebration of the wedding of Sarah Ratajczyk & Lucas Raube on August 29, 2026; from the Harlan Fausch Family.
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New Roof Fund

\$20.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Kelly & Barb Davenport
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Memorial

\$50.00	in memory of Ellanora Bessey from Janella Rice and family
\$25.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Robert & Candy Hinner
\$20.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Clint, Melanie, Emma, David, and Ryleigh Golish
\$30.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Fred & Karen Bruckert
\$20.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Carol Krause
\$25.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Jeff & Sheila Anderson
\$20.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Craig & Sharon Rezin
\$40.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Chris & Heidi Stevenson
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Mike & Jean Ravn
\$25.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Jay & Maxine Tlusty
\$25.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Kent & Wendy Reinhardt
\$25.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$10.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Diana Catlin
\$15.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Linda Blake
\$490.00	in memory of Penny Hommering from Mike and Family
\$25.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Janice and Allen Schiller
\$20.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Kalleen Wistein
\$100.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Robert & Jacqueline Gremler
\$20.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Donna Baumgart
\$20.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Sarah Sabatke
\$25.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Mary Walsh and Jacob Walsh

Endowment Fund

\$500.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Southaven RV & Marine
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Mark & Carlene Hixson
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Harlan Fausch
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Steve, Marta, and Brady Loos
\$100.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Carl Theorin
\$250.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Jill Moore

St. Paul Cemetery Fund

\$25.00	in memory of Duane Berndt from Kathy and Tim Case
\$40.00	in memory of Duane Berndt from Sandra Oestreich
\$60.00	in memory of Duane Berndt from Carol Berndt
\$310.00	in memory of Duane Berndt from the Berndt Hunting Crew

Sanctuary Updates

\$30.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Phil & Kelly Natzke
\$200.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Gary & Mary Schwartz
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Janet Schaefer
\$50.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Nancy Dabbert
\$100.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from Brad & Leanne Schnabl
\$100.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Brad & Leanne Schnabl

Summer Lunch

\$200.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Mike and Family
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Food For Kids

\$25.00	in memory of Penny Hommerding from Ray & Ellie Schwartz
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Choir and Music

\$73.00	in memory of Mike Kunkel from the Saint Stephens Choir
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?? ?
Bible Quiz
? ??

Jesus said that his followers are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). It wouldn't do much good to hide a light under a bushel, he said. It should be put on a lamp-stand to give light in the house. Then Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see ..."



Choose the ending of Jesus' sentence:

- A. their way and not stumble.
- B. how good and faithful you are as my servants.
- C. your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- D. in their darkness.

ST STEPHENS UCC
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Pastoral Care Telephone Number 618-558-5014



&



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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!"

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