

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.

Our Church's Graduates

2026

Rose Dornbrack
Ryleigh Golisch
Wyatt Lyon

Avery Frisch
Kamryn Klade
Khloe Rajek

We will be celebrating our graduates on Baccalaureate Sunday, May 24. Please call the church office if any graduating students are missing or if you know of any college students graduating!

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

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

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Quarterly Giving Statements will be emailed by April 28. If you do not have an email on file with the church and would like a copy, please get in touch with Terra, and she can print one for you to pick up. With the increasing cost of postage, we plan to email statements going forward. If you create an account with Realm, you can access your giving account at any time. Let Terra know if you need help getting an account with Realm!

Thank you for supporting Saint Stephens UCC!!!





Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. (Matthew 6:28b-29, NRSV)

Earl did not worry much about what he wore. A good work shirt, overalls, workboots and a neckerchief on a hot day, Earl was fine. Earl did, however, worry about the lilies.

His knees had given out years ago. Somehow, he learned to walk on what little bone or cartilage was left. He used his walker when he came to church, more and more he only made it on Communion Sundays. His son or daughter-in-law did his grocery shopping for him. He did not eat much, so soup, bread and lunchmeat were the staples of his diet.

But Earl made it to the cemetery every day. He had been married to Esther for 74 years, in love with her since they were both in grade school. The steps down from his back door were 4'x4' plywood panels to fit him and his walker on each step. His car was parked right there at the bottom of the steps. When it rained or snowed, he would pull up by the row where she was buried, 5 plots down from the road. On clear and sunny days, he would get out of the car and hobble over to her grave, maybe leave some flowers, lean on his walker for as long as he could and talk to her.

Unfortunately, he started falling on the way to her grave. The cemetery was a popular jogging path so either a jogger or sometimes the funeral director would find him lying in the grass, unable to get up. The paramedics would help him, sometimes bandaging a cut on his cheek or hand. The police, paramedics and the cemetery board finally told him he could not walk over to the grave if he was alone anymore. So he would open his car door and sit sideways and talk to her from there.

When we mailed the church newsletter out with the Easter Lily order forms, Earl called the church and reserved 2 of them. Then he would call every week until Easter to make sure he had ordered those two lilies. He didn't have to fill out the form, we knew who they were in memory of.

His son and his family would usually come with him for Easter service. His son helped him put the plant holders into the ground on either side of the tombstone and Esther would have her Easter Lilies.

I learned a lot about Earl and Esther over the early years of my ministry at that church. Earl had gone with his father and Rev. Berger to take Esther's family some food when they were quarantined during the flu pandemic in 1919. Esther's mother and 2 siblings had died. Ten year old Earl fell in love with the 8 year old girl looking out through the window, thanking him, silently waving.

Earl's parents had worked a vein of coal on their land for a few years and then cut firewood for the town. That was Earl's primary work, too. Chopping and hauling firewood. They never farmed more than enough for just their own needs and maybe to sell a few eggs or a bit of corn or beans. On a good year, he might have been able to sell some pigs for a little extra money. He picked up work at some of the farms here and there. They made do.

I learned a lot about their life, sitting listening to them when Esther was still alive and then listening to Earl if he felt a bit talkative, which was rare. But I never learned why the lilies were so important to him—or to her. She had a beautiful flower garden. She grew flowers along with their vegetables. But I never saw lilies as a special part of that garden. Rows of daylilies bordered the road in front of the house, and the drive up to their house.

When I asked about the lilies, Earl just smiled and nodded. "They're special," was all he said.

Consider the lilies, with their glorious bonnets turned toward the rising sun and do not worry. And let us remember, we are all loved by a risen Christ who will worry about the lilies for us. And may you all know a love that smiles and says, "You're special," as they tend to the things you love.

Happy Eastertide,
Pastor Mike



MAY RADIO BROADCASTS

We have all Sundays available for radio ministry sponsorships this month!



May 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31



May Livestream is sponsored by Mike & Sue Kunkel.

- May 1 – “The Vibe”
May 10 – Mother’s Day Celebration
May 24 – Baccalaureate Sunday
May 25 – Office Closed – Memorial Day
May 27 – Brewers Game
May 31 – Noisy Offering

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



MAY LECTIONARY READINGS

- May 3, Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 7:55-60 Ps 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10 John 14:1-14
May 10, Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 17:22-31 Ps 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22 John 14:15-21
May 17, Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 1:6-14 Ps 68:1-10,32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14,5:6-11 John 17:1-11
May 24, Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21 Ps 104:24-34, 35b
1 Cor 12:3b-13 John 20:19-23
May 31, Trinity Sunday
Gen 1:1-4 Ps 8
2 Cor 13:11-13 Matt 28:16-20



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



Sunday, May 10



MAY 25 – OFFICE CLOSED AND SUMMER HOURS BEGIN

MEMORIAL DAY

Remember and Honor.

MONTHLY MISSION

WISE TEAM



Strengthen the Church

The Holy Spirit gathers us together. From across the country and the spectrums of human experience, we become united in Christ. And, united, the Spirit commissions us to work for a more just world for all.

The Strengthen the Church Offering supports congregations and leader across the United Church of Christ as they respond to the Spirit's call to be united in Christ for a more just world for all. The challenges our congregations face vary:

- Some seek ways to strengthen youth ministry
- Some hope to start new congregations
- Some look for innovative ways to renew existing congregations
- Some need help developing leaders

The giving in your congregation can ensure congregations get the help they need from their conference and the national ministries of the UCC. Together we can answer the Spirit's call to be united in Christ for a just world for all.



We will be collecting monetary donations for Strengthen the Church. 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!

I really enjoy house plants, hanging basket arrangements, and outdoor potted plants. I have learned over the years that while I can't get much to grow out of the ground, when it comes to something living in a container or in a pot, I tend to make plants thrive. I even have the knack for making orchids grow and have three orchids that have bloomed many times over their lifespan since they have been in my care.



I am looking forward to "after Memorial Day" when I can place new hanging baskets outside and watch them grow and thrive. I am looking forward to the hummingbirds taking new interest in my outdoor plants. I love watching the cycle of life with my house plants: watching new growth appear, watching leaves and stems grow, and clipping away dead or delaying growth.

Recently, I received a fresh bouquet of flowers and I realized how happy that made me feel to have something colorful and green on my kitchen counter. It was almost as if the life of the stems were sharing new life with me. I think that is why I enjoy my potted plants as well: new life, new growth, the promise of new things, reminders of God continuing to bring new life to us.

The next time you are in the grocery store, pick up something green, or something growing out of a pot. Bring it home. Water it, feed it. Look it up on Google and learn what makes it thrive and grow. You may learn that you to have a green thumb in ways you never imagined. And, if the plant does not survive--don't worry. Focus on the enjoyment you had with that plant, and try another variety of plant to bring home! God also promises new opportunities!



Have a lovely Spring!

- Leanne Schnabl

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.



Your 2026 Church Council Members

Jody Meyer
Marcus Reinhardt
Todd Frederick

President
Vice President
Treasurer

Jim Bjorklund
 Jerry Burnnett
 Emma Golisch
 Cathy Dornbrack

Darryl Frick
 Stan Seeger
 Candy Hinner
 Marge Roggenbuck

Nancy Reinhardt-
 Porath

GREEN TEAM

How can my lawn be more pollinator-friendly?



If you want to add to your lawn's value to pollinators, add flowering plants to your lawn. Low-growing flowering plants like Dutch White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and Creeping Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) will add diversity to the flowering plants in your yard and can tolerate mowing and foot traffic. You may also consider purposely planting a bee lawn. Bee lawns are low-input lawns intentionally planted and managed with flowering plants to provide food for pollinators. Learn more about bee lawns from the University of Minnesota.

Reduce or eliminate pesticide applications to your yard. If you don't have evidence of a pest problem, or the pesticide provides limited or short term control, consider delaying the application or eliminating it altogether. Before applying an insecticide yourself or from your lawn care provider, confirm that you have a problem that warrants insecticides. Insecticides are rarely needed in Wisconsin lawns. If it is determined that you need a pesticide in your lawn, then do your research about how it might impact non-target organisms. For more information, see our Extension publication, Conservation of Native and Domestic Pollinators in Managed Turfgrass Landscapes.

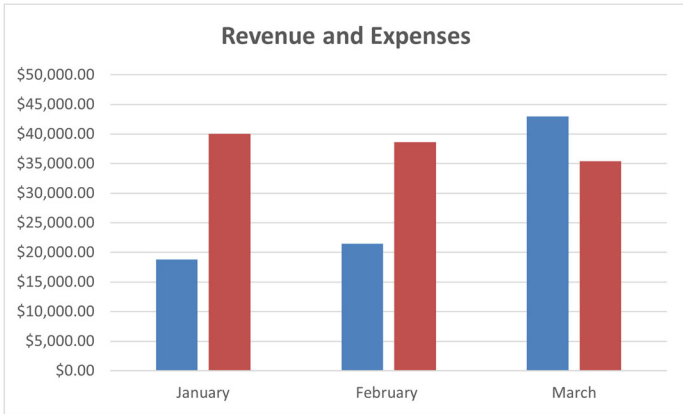


Did you know?

Oak and maple trees can be great sources of food for pollinators.

The article above was found at <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/whats-the-deal-with-no-mow-may/>. Check it out for more information!

CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



March Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$42,975.97

Expenses \$35,404.40

Net Loss: \$7,571.57

The congregation raised \$1655 for One Great Hour of Sharing in March!

Roof Loan Balance \$50,564.29 as of March 31, 2026.

Sanctuary Updates Fund has a balance of \$27,688.48 as of March 31, 2026.



EASTER FLOWER MEMORIALS

In memory of Barb & Kermit Golish from family

In memory of Audrey & Dale Zentner from Tom & Lynn Zentner

In memory of Grace & Don Rumpf from Tom & Lynn Zentner

In memory of David & JoAnn Sauer, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, from Bert & Darcia Hopp, Kristina & Mike Brown, and Eric and daughter Paisley Hopp.

In memory of Barb Iwen from Emerson and Bailey Iwen

In honor of Grandpa Herdt from Emerson and Bailey Iwen

In memory of Celina Schmidt from the family of Maynard Schmidt

In memory of Grandma Phyllis Oestreich from Brooklyn and Liam Oestreich

In memory of our parents, Sister Ruth and brother Bruce, from Jon & Gerri Robinson

In memory of Arlo, Scott, and Lisa Berndt from Eunice Berndt

In memory of Father and Grandfather, Jerry Plautz, from Dave & Sue Pyan and family

In memory of Father and Grandfather, Burnell Pyan, from Dave & Sue Pyan and family

In memory of Alice Kanitz from Cheryl Kanitz and Scott Kasten

In memory of Lorna Berndt Kanitz from Cheryl Kanitz and Scott Kasten

In honor of my sister Pam Hamilton's birthday on April 16, from Cheryl Kanitz and Scott Kasten

In memory of loved ones from the Michael Heuser family

In memory of loved ones from Bob & Candy Hinner

In memory of my husband, Kenny, from Eunice Schubert

In memory of Charles & Jean Southcombe from Mike & Sue Southcombe

In memory of James & Jennine Sprague from Mike & Sue Southcombe





HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

MAY 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!

May 1	James Badeau	May 10	Zach Anderson	May 21	Rowan Ziesemer
May 1	Sandy Mosser	May 11	Leah Zastrow	May 22	Hugh Hanig
May 2	Charles Reinhardt	May 14	Alex Gehrke	May 24	Paul Buck
May 2	Janice Schiller	May 14	Dave Pyan	May 25	Sandra Beaudry
May 4	Madisen Weix	May 15	Izabella Nelson	May 25	Mary Peters
May 4	Gary Wolff	May 15	Isla Golisch	May 27	Todd Osness
May 4	Susie Osness	May 15	Isaak Clapper	May 29	James Krueger
May 4	Ethan Ravn	May 16	Tiffany Peterson	May 29	Kelly Wallace
May 5	Cindy Geiss	May 16	Matthew Buck	May 29	Henry Williams
May 6	Sara Rajek	May 16	Kinsley Leistikow	May 31	Jill Reinhardt
May 6	Michelle Salter	May 17	Joseph Rodemeier	May 31	Khloe Rajek
May 6	John Rathke	May 18	Rob Moore		
May 7	Dave Schwartzman	May 19	Robert Hoeft		
May 8	Evie Parks	May 20	Michael Gennrich		

Happy Birthday

Saint Stephens UCC

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

GIFTS & MEMORIALS

Received through April 12

Dedicated to the glory of God and...



Livestream

- \$200.00 in memory of parents Arthur & Ramona Burrows; in memory of parents William & Dorothy Hommerding; in memory of family and friends; in honor our children Robert and Christopher, our grandchildren Nathaniel and Ethan, and our great-grandchildren Oaklynn and Hayden from Mike & Penny Hommerding
- \$200.00 in honor of our grandson Leo Lazare's talents in the performing arts; in honor of our granddaughter Amara Lazare's scholastic abilities and work ethics; in honor of our granddaughter Lilly Sue Kunkel's scholastic abilities and her excelling in High School track; in memory of my father, Leo Fehlberg on his May 20 birthday; in memory of my mother, Eleanor Fehlberg on her May 31 birthday from Mike & Sue Kunkel

New Roof Fund

- \$10.00 in memory of Ron Vachavake from Kathy Case
- \$10.00 in memory of JoAnn Sauer from Kathy Case
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from George Henrich
- \$10.00 in memory of Ronald Vachavake from George Henrich
- \$200.00 in memory of Gary and Mike Mosser for their birthdays from Jill Mosser
- \$100.00 in memory of all who have passed before us from Randy and Diane Perry
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Kristine Smith
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Jody Meyer

Memorial

- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Holly Henrich
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Harlan Fausch
- \$50.00 in memory of Ron Vachavake from Harlan Fausch
- \$20.00 in memory of Carol Weber from David & Cheryl Buck
- \$20.00 in memory of Ron Vachavake from David & Cheryl Buck
- \$20.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Stan & Debbie Seeger
- \$20.00 in memory of Ron Vachavake from Stan & Debbie Seeger
- \$50.00 in memory of Ron Vachavake from Patricia Schulz
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Paul & Kristine Murray
- \$200.00 in loving memory of my Aunt Carol Weber from Barbara Schaefer
- \$100.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Michael Schaefer
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Dianne Belling
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Gerald & Joan Koch
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Scott & Kelly Wallace
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Thomas & Lynn Zentner
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Dieter Nickle
- \$100.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Reginald & Joan Williams
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from John & Janice Liebenstein
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Mary Jo Laabs
- \$30.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Duane & Roxanne Byom
- \$50.00 in memory of Carol Weber from John & Helene Ader
- \$250.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Gerald & Andrea Henrich
- \$25.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Ronald & Sharon Pankow
- \$100.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Janet Schaefer

\$25.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Leslie & Sharon Smith
\$400.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Gerald & Sandra Weber
\$50.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Bruce & Janice Newell
\$50.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Bill & Paula McIntyre
\$155.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Steven & Barbara Weber
\$50.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from David Mootz
\$100.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Catherine Leway-Brown
\$50.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from Al Sholund
\$25.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$50.00	in memory of Lillian Wengeler's April birthday from Jon & Gerri Robinson
\$75.00	in memory of family and friends at Easter from Kathy Turner
\$50.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from Kristine Smith
\$20.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Mike, Paulette, and Joe Heuser
\$20.00	in memory of JoAnn Sauer from Deb and Stan Seeger
\$25.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Ben & Trina Knospe
\$50.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Jerry Weber
\$88.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Todd & Karin Miller
\$50.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Mike & Jean Ravn
\$50.00	in memory of Carol Weber from John & Lori Jensen
\$50.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Rick & Kathy Hinner
\$20.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Matt & Sarah Thomas
\$325.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from family and friends
\$50.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Bob & Barb Okray

Endowment Fund

\$20.00 in memory of Carol Weber from Mike & Sue Kunkel

Sanctuary Updates

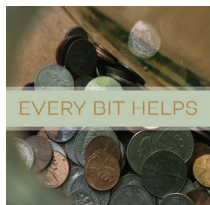
\$50.00	in memory of Ronald Vachavake from Randy & Diane Perry
\$100.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Dennis & LuAnn Grefe
\$25.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from Tom & Mary Maluegge
\$25.00	in memory of Carol Weber from Tom & Mary Maluegge
\$25.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from Mike & Glynis Schroeder
\$20.00	in memory of JoAnn Sauer from Eunice Berndt
\$75.00	in memory of my husband Bob for his April birthday from Kathy Turner
\$20.00	in memory of mothers Lillian Zimmerman and Emily Ziemke from Alice Ziemke
\$10.00	in memory of mom Lillian Zimmerman for her May birthday from Alice Ziemke

Food For Kids

\$100.00	in memory of Ron Vachavake from Gary & Angel Sholund
\$50.00	in memory of Carol Weber from David Mootz

Mission Trip

\$50.00 in memory of my husband Bob for our April anniversary from Kathy Turner



Noisy Offering for Camp Scholarships May 31



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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.

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"But wait! There's more!"

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