

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.

SEPTEMBER



September 14

Join us for the kick-off of the program year! Children will start in church with some fun activities with the congregation and Pastor Mike. After the children's moment, they will head up to the Sunday School room for some icebreakers!

Sunday school will be the same as last year. On communion Sunday they will start in the Sunday School room and then head down to participate in communion. The remaining Sundays they will begin in church and head up to Sunday School after the children's moment!

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

Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs
618-558-5014

September Events	p. 1
From the Pastor	p. 2
Upcoming Events	p. 3
Radio Ministry	p. 3
Lectionary Readings	p. 3
Sept Mission/Bible Study	p. 4
Nature Church	p. 5
Upcoming Events	p. 5
Stewardship / WISE	p. 6
Green Team	p. 7
Financials	p. 7
Birthdays	p. 8
Memorials	p. 9



We are excited to announce our first fundraising dinner for the Mission Trip, which will take place on **September 11 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM**. The dinner will feature unlimited spaghetti with your choice of sauces: Meat, Marinara, and Alfredo, along with Salad, Garlic Bread, Beverages, and one Dessert.

Advance tickets can be purchased at the scrip table and in the church office.

We will be hosting one dinner each month to support those attending the mission trip to Back Bay Mission next year!



Stirring the Spirit: Soup and Pastoral Conversations

Join Pastor Mike for lunch and a conversation on **September 22 at noon** at Saint Stephens church in the Kuck Lounge. Conversations can be about the church, life, or any other topic you bring. Stirring the Spirit will take place every fourth Monday at noon.



Years ago, when I was an assistant manager at a shoe store, one of the general managers told the story of a wrong number he answered decades before.

In the early 1960s, when divorce was still frowned upon and couples had to have “grounds” for getting divorced, Shelly had moved back in with his parents. He was in his early 30s, felt humiliated, was worried about providing for his 2 young daughters. But his wife wanted out of the marriage and, according to Shelly, did not want counseling or any other path except divorce.

One night, the phone rang. There was one phone in his parent’s house. He ran down the steps to the first floor to the little shelf that held the phone and phone book and grabbed the receiver. The conversation went like this:

“Hello?”

“Dad, please don’t hang up. It’s Sheldon.”

“Buddy, you got the wrong number.”

No!! Please, Dad, don’t hang up, don’t do this to me. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please, I just want to come home (sobbing).”

“Look, Buddy, I don’t know who you are. You’ve got the wrong number.”

“You know it’s me Dad! I know I messed up. Please, I just want to come home and talk. You don’t have to take me back. I just want to talk.”

After a few minutes of this sort of back and forth, Shelly finally, exasperated and tired, said, “Sheldon, come home,” and hung up.

Was it a coincidence that Shelly, my friend and Sheldon, the caller, had the same name? When Shelly hung up, he looked up the stairs and saw his father, who said, “Sheldon, go back to bed and stop talking to yourself.”

Shelly said he checked the papers for 3 weeks after that to make sure no one had been shot going back into his parent’s house.

“Sheldon, come home.” The grace that he had heard from his father he passed along to a wrong number. He never knew if it made a difference in that poor soul’s life. He knew that he appreciated his parents even more after that night. He had never considered the shame they felt in having a son getting a divorce and he appreciated them all the more. It was a different time, a different culture. We do not think in terms of shame in divorce anymore, at least, I hope we don’t. Learning from our relationships, identifying those ways we can grow, focusing on the needs of our children—those are the things we focus on in divorce now. We worship an Easter God, who brings life and new relationship out of death.

When I knew him, he had been married to his 2nd wife for 25 years, had a good relationship with his 2 adult daughters and a cordial and even loving relationship with his first wife and her 2nd husband. Recalling that story, however, took him back to a time when he needed to offer grace to another to appreciate the fullness of grace he had received.

Coincidences, God’s providence, the great Rascal Flatts’ song, “Bless the broken road that led me straight to you,” all make me wonder if we give God room to act through our imperfections.

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I hope we can find ways to allow the Holy Spirit to act a bit more in our lives. Sometimes we need to hear a stranger say, “Sheldon, come home.”

Pastor Mike

upcoming events

September 1 – Office Closed – Labor Day
September 5 – The Vibe @ St. Stephens 6 PM
September 14 – Messy Church
September 14 – Sunday School Begins
September 22 – “Stirring the Spirit” @ Noon
September 23 – Adult Night Out 6 PM
September 27 – Nature Church

Bible Study - Every Wednesday at 5 PM

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



SEPTEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

Sept 7, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 18:1-11	Ps 139:1-6, 13-18
Deut 30:15-20	Ps 1
Philemon 1:1-21	Luke 14:25-33

Sept 14, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 4:11-12, 22-28	Ps 14
Ex 32:7-14	Ps 51:1-10
1 Tim 1:12-17	Luke 15:1-10

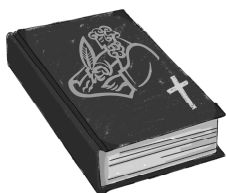
Sept 21, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jere 8:18-9:1	Ps 79:1-9
Amos 8:4-7	Ps 113
1 Tim 2:1-7	Luke 16:1-13

Sept 28, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15	Ps 91:1-6, 14-16
Amos 6:1a, 4-7	1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31	Psalm 146

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



SEPTEMBER RADIO BROADCASTS

September 7 – In honor of grandchildren Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler

September 14 – In memory of Laura Plautz for her September 12 birthday from Bob & Jolene Plautz



Open Radio Ministry Dates:

September 21 and 28
October 5, 12, and 26
November 2, 16, and 30
December 7, 14, 21, and 28



September Livestreams are sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre. They are in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.

One Sunday is also sponsored by Stan & Debbie Seeger in honor of their 50th anniversary.

Open Livestream Month: October



Dinner will be at **BB Jack's in Antigo, September 23 at 6 PM!** This will be a casual gathering to converse about life and enjoy a meal together. The meal is at your own expense, but the company is free! If interested, please sign up at the kiosk or call the church office.

SEPTEMBER MISSION:

Neighbors In Need

The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy.

Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" and enter the amount you would like to donate to Neighbors in Need on the monthly mission line. You can also give online at <https://ststephensucc.net/give> or text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to donate via mobile.



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
— Galatians 6:2

Prayer for Compassion

God of compassion,
Give us the courage to breathe in care,
and breathe out all that separates us.
The voices of your people can be lost in a cacophony of need.
Help us to pay attention and see clearly our neighbors.
Encourage us to not only help, but listen,
so all may have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
Strengthen us to confront evil
and alleviate suffering.
Let us not turn away from the direct needs of ourselves and
those around us
even as we seek to dismantle deeper injustice.
Turn us toward justice, peace and reconciliation.
We pray in your holy name,
Amen

MISSION TRIP UPDATES

All sign-ups and a deposit of \$50 per person are due by October 31st for those planning to attend next year's mission trip, which is scheduled for June 14 to June 20, 2026. Todd and Renea Frederick are donating up to 21 seats for a flight to New Orleans, where we will rent a van and drive the rest of the way. Since we are flying, we will need additional details. Please see Terra in the church office to register. We will need your name as it appears on your driver's license and your date of birth.

To fly within the United States, all attendees must ensure they are Real ID compliant (look for a star in the upper right corner of your license). If your license does not have the star, you will need to visit the DMV and provide the necessary information to become Real ID compliant.

We estimate the cost to be about \$600 per person. If you are looking for assistance to cover this cost, please help during the fundraising dinners. Those who help with the fundraising dinners will receive priority for the funds raised.



BIBLE STUDY



Bible study resumes on **September 10 at 5 PM**. We are continuing to explore "The Chosen" series and will begin with season 3 of "The Chosen."

NATURE CHURCH & BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



A number of people expressed a desire to have more outdoor services after our church picnic this year. Perhaps not coincidentally, there is a growing movement of outdoor services in

churches across the country. The movement is most visible in the “Church in the Wild: an alternative eco-friendly group” that connects churches from different denominations and independent faith communities with the hope of “Following the Spirit through Creation, adventure, & restoration.”

We are probably not quite ready to join the 3 UCC churches in our Wisconsin Conference that have launched their own “Church in the Wild” services. Our WISE Team, however, has seen the great value in reconnecting with nature for our spiritual and mental health.

So, on Sunday, Sept. 28, from 4-6 pm, we will have our first “Pop up” church in nature at Stanges Park. God speaks to us through scripture and through creation. These outdoor services seek to help us reconnect our spirituality with nature.

This first one will feature a brief scripture reading and short reflection leading into time for us to walk, listen, see and touch God’s good creation on the park grounds. We may have some singing as well. We will also allow time for a “Blessing of the Animals,” a service usually offered on or near Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. Leashed pets and animals in carriers are welcome.

Participants are invited to bring their own picnic dinner. The church will provide cups, ice water, and lemonade to drink. We plan to offer an outdoor service 4 times a year so watch future Interpreters for information on the Winter Nature Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**“The Vibe”
Open Mic Night
Friday, Sept. 5, @ 6 PM
St. Stephens Church**



Come and share your talents!

**TRUNK
or
TREAT**

At St. Stephens UCC

October 31 | 903 E 2nd Street
4 PM to 7 PM | Merrill, WI 54452

SAVE THE DATE!

SIGN-UPS TO HOST A TRUNK WILL BE AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER!

**YOUTH FAITH
FORMATION RETREAT**

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025

Join us for a YFF Retreat at Daycholah Center in Green Lake. The retreats, for those in grades 6 through 12 and their adult leaders, are appropriate for confirmation classes and for any youth interested in exploring their faith in community with other youth. More details to come!

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Saint Stephens Scrip Program



Let's take another look at our Scrip Program. With the back-to-school season and the start

of holiday shopping, scrip gift cards are a fantastic option.

First, using gift cards helps you create and stick to a budget. Secondly, you won't have to worry about identity theft when you use gift cards, unlike debit cards. Third, every gift card you purchase through our Scrip Program raises funds for the church at no additional cost to you. Each business gives the church a discount on the gift cards, but the church only benefits from that discount once you make a purchase.

If we don't have a card in our inventory that is available on the national scrip program, we can order it for you. We typically place our orders on Mondays and receive the cards by Thursday or Friday. You can pick up your cards at the office during office hours on Friday or the following Sunday.

You may also purchase scrip gift cards during office hours since the staff is available to sell them to you. This means you don't have to wait until Sunday to get your gift cards.

If you have any questions about the Scrip Program, please stop by the scrip table and talk to the volunteers who are selling the gift cards. There are order forms available at the table for you to take home and return with your order. We also provide information on how to order scrip online and how to reload most gift cards once you've purchased them.

We look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning!

Cheryl Buck-Stewardship Chairperson.

WISE TEAM

Saint Stephens is a WISE congregation!

By Paula McIntyre

This summer, the UCC Mental Health Network approved Saint Stephens as WISE for mental health. We are the 94th UCC congregation in the conference to earn this recognition. Thanks to all of you who supported and prayed for the WISE team as we journeyed through the discernment process. I also greatly appreciate Marilyn Baumgart, Corey Dornbrack, Melanie Golisch, Bill McIntyre, Leanne Schnabl, Frank Van Alstine, and Pastor Mike who shared their experience and passion for this with me.

The WISE team will share this great news with the community and is eager to keep our mental health ministry growing. We will start by asking for your feedback on personal and family wellness activities that you are interested in through a survey (scan the QR Code or click the link below for the survey). We hope to connect with the Northwoods chapter of the National Alliance and Mental Illness (NAMI) to learn how we can best support their mission. As a church, we will continue to offer a safe space for those with mental illness and mental health concerns.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 PM in the first-floor classroom if you are interested in joining the Wise Team!

Personal and Family Wellness Survey Links

<https://forms.gle/eVZbLQGqxB4hiSph9>

Scan Me!



GREEN TEAM

How to Be Green This Fall!

There are many ways to be more sustainable this fall. One way is to embrace nature by participating in outdoor activities, such as composting leaves instead of placing them in plastic bags. Additionally, you can support local agriculture by shopping at farmers' markets for seasonal produce. When it comes to decorating for the season, consider using natural, biodegradable items like gourds and pinecones. These are just a few ideas to help you think more sustainably!

Enjoy this recipe using fall produce.

Cider Vinaigrette Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
 4 medium golden beets, peeled and thickly sliced
 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 3 medium garnet sweet potatoes, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 4 medium parsnips, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long pieces, any tough woody core removed
 1 large red onion, thickly sliced
 3/4 teaspoon thyme, dry or fresh

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl (with enough room for all the vegetables), mix the cider vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables—the beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion—to the bowl and toss to combine.

Line two large roasting pans or sturdy rimmed baking sheets with aluminum foil. Spread the root vegetables out over the pans in a single layer. Be sure the vegetables don't crowd each other too much.

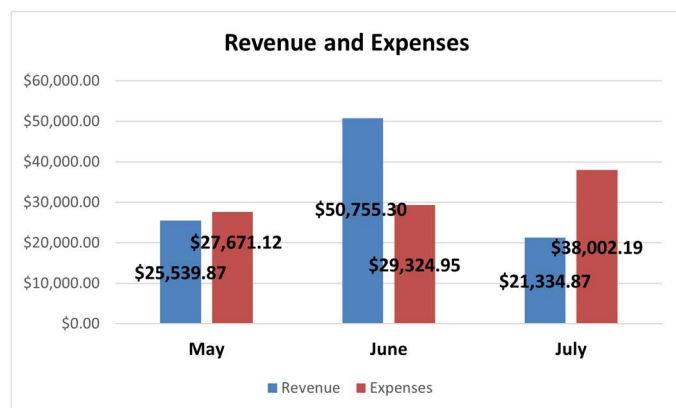
Pour the remaining vinaigrette over the root vegetables in the pans.

Place vegetables in the oven and roast at 450°F for 35 to 40 minutes, turning the pans (and swapping bottom and top rack positions), halfway through roasting. Cook until the vegetables are well browned and caramelized around the edges.

Remove from the oven and gently loosen the root vegetables from the foil with a wooden spoon. Sprinkle with thyme. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



July Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$21,334.87

Expenses \$38,002.19

Net Loss: \$16,667.32

The congregation raised \$1,655 towards next year's mission trip to Back Bay Mission!

Your 2025 Church Council Members

Jennifer Porath	President
Jody Meyer	Vice President
Leanne Schnabl	Secretary
Sally Woller	Treasurer
James Bjorklund	Darryl Frick
Jerry Burnett	Stan Seeger
Marcus Reinhardt	Emma Golisch
Todd Frederick	Cathy Dornbrack

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

SEPTEMBER 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!

Sep 1	Brad Sturm	Sep 12	Brian Haufe	Sep 24	Cheri Reinhardt
Sep 1	Mayward Schmidt	Sep 12	Mandi Kohnhorst	Sep 25	Anna Bowe
Sep 2	Dawn Bishop	Sep 12	John Keddell	Sep 26	Aaron Hoffman
Sep 4	Nancy Hayes	Sep 13	Gloria Kottman	Sep 27	Bobby Hinner
Sep 4	Paulette Heuser	Sep 14	Ryan Golisch	Sep 28	Jeffrey Kanitz
Sep 4	Kris Smith	Sep 16	Sandy Spears	Sep 28	Virginia Peterson
Sep 4	Bill McIntyre	Sep 17	Theresa Schwartz	Sep 29	Christopher Hommerding
Sep 5	Sue Kraft	Sep 17	Amara Lazare	Sep 30	Ronald Prey
Sep 5	Jill Mosser	Sep 17	Heidi Stevenson	Sep 30	Dean Bowe
Sep 7	Brian Oestreich	Sep 17	William Kunkel		
Sep 8	Bonnie Koelsch	Sep 17	Bodhi McCarthy		
Sep 8	Elizabeth Reinhardt	Sep 18	Sue Gleason		
Sep 9	Marcus Reinhardt	Sep 19	Jonathon Johnson		
Sep 9	Matthew Reinhardt	Sep 20	Jamie Clark		
Sep 11	Chris Gano	Sep 23	Paul Mussell		
Sep 12	Alvin Bunge	Sep 23	Taylor Zastrow		
Sep 12	David Golisch	Sep 23	Evie Klug		



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

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Some stock photographs in this issue are courtesy of ChurchArt, Clip Art, Pixabay, and Unsplash. www.pixabay.com
www.unsplash.com www.clipart-library.com www.churchart.com

GIFTS & memorials

Received through August 17

Dedicated to the glory of God and...

Radio Ministry

\$190.00	in honor of our grandchildren, Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$190.00	in loving memory of Norm Hass, Donald & Bernice Radke, and brother Jeff Radke from the Radke family

Livestream

\$200.00	September's livestream is sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30 th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.
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New Roof Fund

\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jody Meyer
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Sally & Mark Woller
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Kevin & Terry Krueger
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$250.00	in memory of Dorothy Bergh from her family

Anniversary Fund

\$100.00	in honor of the 43 rd wedding anniversary of Jeff & Sandra Krueger
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Sanctuary Updates

\$150.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
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Food For Kids

100.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Carol Garcia
\$200.00	in memory of Lois Wold from family

Memorial offering

\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Polly Krause Endres
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Mary Walsh and Jacob Walsh
\$25.00	in memory of Jean Mootz from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$25.00	in memory of Phyllis Reinhardt from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Kathryne Berndt
\$15.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Linda Hass
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Jerry Krause
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jerry Krause
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Joe & Marlene Thomaschefskey
\$10.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Al & Joy Hulke
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Fran Heckendorf
\$300.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$10.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Shirley Ziemke
\$20.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Dan & Patsy Pick

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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>

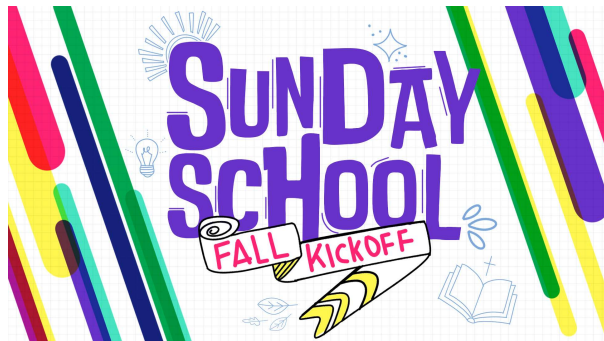
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Years ago, when I was an assistant manager at a shoe store, one of the general managers told the story of a wrong number he answered decades before.

In the early 1960s, when divorce was still frowned upon and couples had to have “grounds” for getting divorced, Shelly had moved back in with his parents. He was in his early 30s, felt humiliated, was worried about providing for his 2 young daughters. But his wife wanted out of the marriage and, according to Shelly, did not want counseling or any other path except divorce.

One night, the phone rang. There was one phone in his parent’s house. He ran down the steps to the first floor to the little shelf that held the phone and phone book and grabbed the receiver. The conversation went like this:

“Hello?”

“Dad, please don’t hang up. It’s Sheldon.”

“Buddy, you got the wrong number.”

No!! Please, Dad, don’t hang up, don’t do this to me. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please, I just want to come home (sobbing).”

“Look, Buddy, I don’t know who you are. You’ve got the wrong number.”

“You know it’s me Dad! I know I messed up. Please, I just want to come home and talk. You don’t have to take me back. I just want to talk.”

After a few minutes of this sort of back and forth, Shelly finally, exasperated and tired, said, “Sheldon, come home,” and hung up.

Was it a coincidence that Shelly, my friend and Sheldon, the caller, had the same name? When Shelly hung up, he looked up the stairs and saw his father, who said, “Sheldon, go back to bed and stop talking to yourself.”

Shelly said he checked the papers for 3 weeks after that to make sure no one had been shot going back into his parent’s house.

“Sheldon, come home.” The grace that he had heard from his father he passed along to a wrong number. He never knew if it made a difference in that poor soul’s life. He knew that he appreciated his parents even more after that night. He had never considered the shame they felt in having a son getting a divorce and he appreciated them all the more. It was a different time, a different culture. We do not think in terms of shame in divorce anymore, at least, I hope we don’t. Learning from our relationships, identifying those ways we can grow, focusing on the needs of our children—those are the things we focus on in divorce now. We worship an Easter God, who brings life and new relationship out of death.

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SEPTEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

Sept 7, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 18:1-11	Ps 139:1-6, 13-18
Deut 30:15-20	Ps 1
Philemon 1:1-21	Luke 14:25-33

Sept 14, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 4:11-12, 22-28	Ps 14
Ex 32:7-14	Ps 51:1-10
1 Tim 1:12-17	Luke 15:1-10

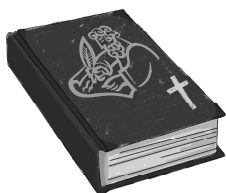
Sept 21, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jere 8:18-9:1	Ps 79:1-9
Amos 8:4-7	Ps 113
1 Tim 2:1-7	Luke 16:1-13

Sept 28, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15	Ps 91:1-6, 14-16
Amos 6:1a, 4-7	1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31	Psalm 146

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September 21 and 28
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December 7, 14, 21, and 28



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The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy.

Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" and enter the amount you would like to donate to Neighbors in Need on the monthly mission line. You can also give online at <https://ststephensucc.net/give> or text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to donate via mobile.



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
— Galatians 6:2

Prayer for Compassion

God of compassion,
Give us the courage to breathe in care,
and breathe out all that separates us.
The voices of your people can be lost in a cacophony of need.
Help us to pay attention and see clearly our neighbors.
Encourage us to not only help, but listen,
so all may have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
Strengthen us to confront evil
and alleviate suffering.
Let us not turn away from the direct needs of ourselves and
those around us
even as we seek to dismantle deeper injustice.
Turn us toward justice, peace and reconciliation.
We pray in your holy name,
Amen

MISSION TRIP UPDATES

All sign-ups and a deposit of \$50 per person are due by October 31st for those planning to attend next year's mission trip, which is scheduled for June 14 to June 20, 2026. Todd and Renea Frederick are donating up to 21 seats for a flight to New Orleans, where we will rent a van and drive the rest of the way. Since we are flying, we will need additional details. Please see Terra in the church office to register. We will need your name as it appears on your driver's license and your date of birth.

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NATURE CHURCH & BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



A number of people expressed a desire to have more outdoor services after our church picnic this year. Perhaps not coincidentally, there is a growing movement of outdoor services in

churches across the country. The movement is most visible in the “Church in the Wild: an alternative eco-friendly group” that connects churches from different denominations and independent faith communities with the hope of “Following the Spirit through Creation, adventure, & restoration.”

We are probably not quite ready to join the 3 UCC churches in our Wisconsin Conference that have launched their own “Church in the Wild” services. Our WISE Team, however, has seen the great value in reconnecting with nature for our spiritual and mental health.

So, on Sunday, Sept. 28, from 4-6 pm, we will have our first “Pop up” church in nature at Stanges Park. God speaks to us through scripture and through creation. These outdoor services seek to help us reconnect our spirituality with nature.

This first one will feature a brief scripture reading and short reflection leading into time for us to walk, listen, see and touch God’s good creation on the park grounds. We may have some singing as well. We will also allow time for a “Blessing of the Animals,” a service usually offered on or near Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. Leashed pets and animals in carriers are welcome.

Participants are invited to bring their own picnic dinner. The church will provide cups, ice water, and lemonade to drink. We plan to offer an outdoor service 4 times a year so watch future Interpreters for information on the Winter Nature Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**“The Vibe”
Open Mic Night
Friday, Sept. 5, @ 6 PM
St. Stephens Church**



Come and share your talents!

**TRUNK
or
TREAT**

At St. Stephens UCC

October 31 | 903 E 2nd Street
4 PM to 7 PM | Merrill, WI 54452

SAVE THE DATE!

SIGN-UPS TO HOST A TRUNK WILL BE AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER!

**YOUTH FAITH
FORMATION RETREAT**

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025

Join us for a YFF Retreat at Daycholah Center in Green Lake. The retreats, for those in grades 6 through 12 and their adult leaders, are appropriate for confirmation classes and for any youth interested in exploring their faith in community with other youth. More details to come!

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Saint Stephens Scrip Program



Let's take another look at our Scrip Program. With the back-to-school season and the start

of holiday shopping, scrip gift cards are a fantastic option.

First, using gift cards helps you create and stick to a budget. Secondly, you won't have to worry about identity theft when you use gift cards, unlike debit cards. Third, every gift card you purchase through our Scrip Program raises funds for the church at no additional cost to you. Each business gives the church a discount on the gift cards, but the church only benefits from that discount once you make a purchase.

If we don't have a card in our inventory that is available on the national scrip program, we can order it for you. We typically place our orders on Mondays and receive the cards by Thursday or Friday. You can pick up your cards at the office during office hours on Friday or the following Sunday.

You may also purchase scrip gift cards during office hours since the staff is available to sell them to you. This means you don't have to wait until Sunday to get your gift cards.

If you have any questions about the Scrip Program, please stop by the scrip table and talk to the volunteers who are selling the gift cards. There are order forms available at the table for you to take home and return with your order. We also provide information on how to order scrip online and how to reload most gift cards once you've purchased them.

We look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning!

Cheryl Buck-Stewardship Chairperson.

WISE TEAM

Saint Stephens is a WISE congregation!

By Paula McIntyre

This summer, the UCC Mental Health Network approved Saint Stephens as WISE for mental health. We are the 94th UCC congregation in the conference to earn this recognition. Thanks to all of you who supported and prayed for the WISE team as we journeyed through the discernment process. I also greatly appreciate Marilyn Baumgart, Corey Dornbrack, Melanie Golisch, Bill McIntyre, Leanne Schnabl, Frank Van Alstine, and Pastor Mike who shared their experience and passion for this with me.

The WISE team will share this great news with the community and is eager to keep our mental health ministry growing. We will start by asking for your feedback on personal and family wellness activities that you are interested in through a survey (scan the QR Code or click the link below for the survey). We hope to connect with the Northwoods chapter of the National Alliance and Mental Illness (NAMI) to learn how we can best support their mission. As a church, we will continue to offer a safe space for those with mental illness and mental health concerns.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 PM in the first-floor classroom if you are interested in joining the Wise Team!

Personal and Family Wellness Survey Links

<https://forms.gle/eVZbLQGqxB4hiSph9>

Scan Me!



GREEN TEAM

How to Be Green This Fall!

There are many ways to be more sustainable this fall. One way is to embrace nature by participating in outdoor activities, such as composting leaves instead of placing them in plastic bags. Additionally, you can support local agriculture by shopping at farmers' markets for seasonal produce. When it comes to decorating for the season, consider using natural, biodegradable items like gourds and pinecones. These are just a few ideas to help you think more sustainably!

Enjoy this recipe using fall produce.

Cider Vinaigrette Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
 4 medium golden beets, peeled and thickly sliced
 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 3 medium garnet sweet potatoes, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 4 medium parsnips, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long pieces, any tough woody core removed
 1 large red onion, thickly sliced
 3/4 teaspoon thyme, dry or fresh

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl (with enough room for all the vegetables), mix the cider vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables—the beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion—to the bowl and toss to combine.

Line two large roasting pans or sturdy rimmed baking sheets with aluminum foil. Spread the root vegetables out over the pans in a single layer. Be sure the vegetables don't crowd each other too much.

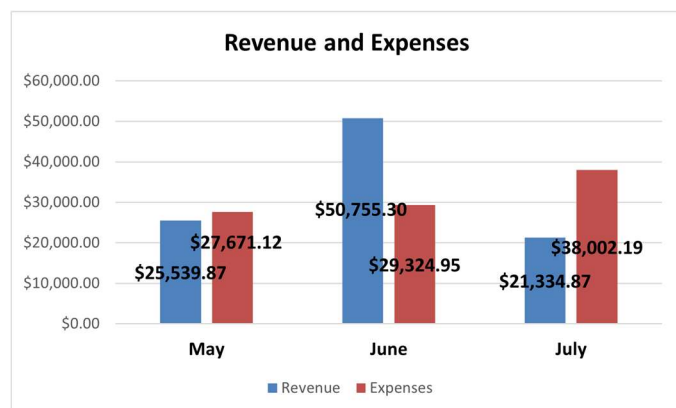
Pour the remaining vinaigrette over the root vegetables in the pans.

Place vegetables in the oven and roast at 450°F for 35 to 40 minutes, turning the pans (and swapping bottom and top rack positions), halfway through roasting. Cook until the vegetables are well browned and caramelized around the edges.

Remove from the oven and gently loosen the root vegetables from the foil with a wooden spoon. Sprinkle with thyme. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



July Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$21,334.87

Expenses \$38,002.19

Net Loss: \$16,667.32

The congregation raised \$1,655 towards next year's mission trip to Back Bay Mission!

Your 2025 Church Council Members

Jennifer Porath	President
Jody Meyer	Vice President
Leanne Schnabl	Secretary
Sally Woller	Treasurer
James Bjorklund	Darryl Frick
Jerry Burnett	Stan Seeger
Marcus Reinhardt	Emma Golisch
Todd Frederick	Cathy Dornbrack

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

SEPTEMBER 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!

Sep 1	Brad Sturm	Sep 12	Brian Haufe	Sep 24	Cheri Reinhardt
Sep 1	Mayward Schmidt	Sep 12	Mandi Kohnhorst	Sep 25	Anna Bowe
Sep 2	Dawn Bishop	Sep 12	John Keddell	Sep 26	Aaron Hoffman
Sep 4	Nancy Hayes	Sep 13	Gloria Kottman	Sep 27	Bobby Hinner
Sep 4	Paulette Heuser	Sep 14	Ryan Golisch	Sep 28	Jeffrey Kanitz
Sep 4	Kris Smith	Sep 16	Sandy Spears	Sep 28	Virginia Peterson
Sep 4	Bill McIntyre	Sep 17	Theresa Schwartz	Sep 29	Christopher Hommerding
Sep 5	Sue Kraft	Sep 17	Amara Lazare	Sep 30	Ronald Prey
Sep 5	Jill Mosser	Sep 17	Heidi Stevenson	Sep 30	Dean Bowe
Sep 7	Brian Oestreich	Sep 17	William Kunkel		
Sep 8	Bonnie Koelsch	Sep 17	Bodhi McCarthy		
Sep 8	Elizabeth Reinhardt	Sep 18	Sue Gleason		
Sep 9	Marcus Reinhardt	Sep 19	Jonathon Johnson		
Sep 9	Matthew Reinhardt	Sep 20	Jamie Clark		
Sep 11	Chris Gano	Sep 23	Paul Mussell		
Sep 12	Alvin Bunge	Sep 23	Taylor Zastrow		
Sep 12	David Golisch	Sep 23	Evie Klug		



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

Some stock photographs in this issue are courtesy of ChurchArt, Clip Art, Pixabay, and Unsplash. www.pixabay.com
www.unsplash.com www.clipart-library.com www.churchart.com

GIFTS & memorials

Received through August 17

Dedicated to the glory of God and...

Radio Ministry

\$190.00	in honor of our grandchildren, Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$190.00	in loving memory of Norm Hass, Donald & Bernice Radke, and brother Jeff Radke from the Radke family

Livestream

\$200.00	September's livestream is sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30 th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.
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New Roof Fund

\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jody Meyer
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Sally & Mark Woller
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Kevin & Terry Krueger
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$250.00	in memory of Dorothy Bergh from her family

Anniversary Fund

\$100.00	in honor of the 43 rd wedding anniversary of Jeff & Sandra Krueger
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Sanctuary Updates

\$150.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
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Food For Kids

100.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Carol Garcia
\$200.00	in memory of Lois Wold from family

Memorial offering

\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Polly Krause Endres
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Mary Walsh and Jacob Walsh
\$25.00	in memory of Jean Mootz from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$25.00	in memory of Phyllis Reinhardt from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Kathryne Berndt
\$15.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Linda Hass
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Jerry Krause
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jerry Krause
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Joe & Marlene Thomaschefskey
\$10.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Al & Joy Hulke
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Fran Heckendorf
\$300.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$10.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Shirley Ziemke
\$20.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Dan & Patsy Pick

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MERRILL WI 54452

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Pastoral Care Telephone Number 618-558-5014



&



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ststephensunitedchurchofchrist/

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>

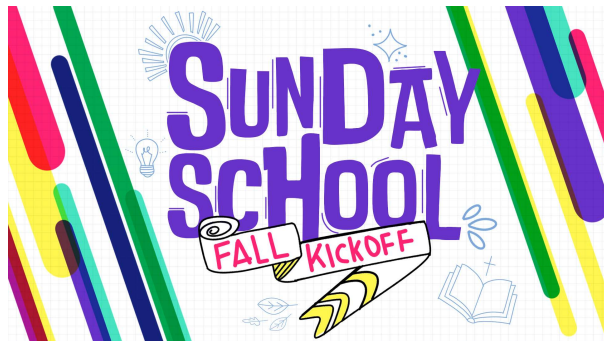
THE INTERPRETER

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.

SEPTEMBER



September 14

Join us for the kick-off of the program year! Children will start in church with some fun activities with the congregation and Pastor Mike. After the children's moment, they will head up to the Sunday School room for some icebreakers!

Sunday school will be the same as last year. On communion Sunday they will start in the Sunday School room and then head down to participate in communion. The remaining Sundays they will begin in church and head up to Sunday School after the children's moment!

Saint Stephens UCC
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Merrill, WI. 54452
715-536-7322

Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs
618-558-5014

September Events	p. 1
From the Pastor	p. 2
Upcoming Events	p. 3
Radio Ministry	p. 3
Lectionary Readings	p. 3
Sept Mission/Bible Study	p. 4
Nature Church	p. 5
Upcoming Events	p. 5
Stewardship / WISE	p. 6
Green Team	p. 7
Financials	p. 7
Birthdays	p. 8
Memorials	p. 9



We are excited to announce our first fundraising dinner for the Mission Trip, which will take place on **September 11 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM**. The dinner will feature unlimited spaghetti with your choice of sauces: Meat, Marinara, and Alfredo, along with Salad, Garlic Bread, Beverages, and one Dessert.

Advance tickets can be purchased at the scrip table and in the church office.

We will be hosting one dinner each month to support those attending the mission trip to Back Bay Mission next year!



Stirring the Spirit: Soup and Pastoral Conversations

Join Pastor Mike for lunch and a conversation on **September 22 at noon** at Saint Stephens church in the Kuck Lounge. Conversations can be about the church, life, or any other topic you bring. Stirring the Spirit will take place every fourth Monday at noon.



Years ago, when I was an assistant manager at a shoe store, one of the general managers told the story of a wrong number he answered decades before.

In the early 1960s, when divorce was still frowned upon and couples had to have “grounds” for getting divorced, Shelly had moved back in with his parents. He was in his early 30s, felt humiliated, was worried about providing for his 2 young daughters. But his wife wanted out of the marriage and, according to Shelly, did not want counseling or any other path except divorce.

One night, the phone rang. There was one phone in his parent’s house. He ran down the steps to the first floor to the little shelf that held the phone and phone book and grabbed the receiver. The conversation went like this:

“Hello?”

“Dad, please don’t hang up. It’s Sheldon.”

“Buddy, you got the wrong number.”

No!! Please, Dad, don’t hang up, don’t do this to me. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please, I just want to come home (sobbing).”

“Look, Buddy, I don’t know who you are. You’ve got the wrong number.”

“You know it’s me Dad! I know I messed up. Please, I just want to come home and talk. You don’t have to take me back. I just want to talk.”

After a few minutes of this sort of back and forth, Shelly finally, exasperated and tired, said, “Sheldon, come home,” and hung up.

Was it a coincidence that Shelly, my friend and Sheldon, the caller, had the same name? When Shelly hung up, he looked up the stairs and saw his father, who said, “Sheldon, go back to bed and stop talking to yourself.”

Shelly said he checked the papers for 3 weeks after that to make sure no one had been shot going back into his parent’s house.

“Sheldon, come home.” The grace that he had heard from his father he passed along to a wrong number. He never knew if it made a difference in that poor soul’s life. He knew that he appreciated his parents even more after that night. He had never considered the shame they felt in having a son getting a divorce and he appreciated them all the more. It was a different time, a different culture. We do not think in terms of shame in divorce anymore, at least, I hope we don’t. Learning from our relationships, identifying those ways we can grow, focusing on the needs of our children—those are the things we focus on in divorce now. We worship an Easter God, who brings life and new relationship out of death.

When I knew him, he had been married to his 2nd wife for 25 years, had a good relationship with his 2 adult daughters and a cordial and even loving relationship with his first wife and her 2nd husband. Recalling that story, however, took him back to a time when he needed to offer grace to another to appreciate the fullness of grace he had received.

Coincidences, God’s providence, the great Rascal Flatts’ song, “Bless the broken road that led me straight to you,” all make me wonder if we give God room to act through our imperfections.

AI may create wonderfully constructed papers, but it does not make room for personal creativity, that turn of phrase you think of struggling and staring at that blank paper or that end of a paragraph you can’t seem to get just right.

We program phone numbers into our phones, and don’t allow for trembling fingers to push that dial all the way to the stop on the round face. We have replaced wrong numbers with SPAM and talk to an AI generated voice on the other end.

I hope we can find ways to allow the Holy Spirit to act a bit more in our lives. Sometimes we need to hear a stranger say, “Sheldon, come home.”

Pastor Mike

upcoming events

September 1 – Office Closed – Labor Day
September 5 – The Vibe @ St. Stephens 6 PM
September 14 – Messy Church
September 14 – Sunday School Begins
September 22 – “Stirring the Spirit” @ Noon
September 23 – Adult Night Out 6 PM
September 27 – Nature Church

Bible Study - Every Wednesday at 5 PM

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



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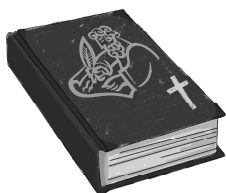
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Amos 8:4-7	Ps 113
1 Tim 2:1-7	Luke 16:1-13

Sept 28, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15	Ps 91:1-6, 14-16
Amos 6:1a, 4-7	1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31	Psalms 146

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Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- Galatians 6:2

Prayer for Compassion

God of compassion,
Give us the courage to breathe in care,
and breathe out all that separates us.
The voices of your people can be lost in a cacophony of need.
Help us to pay attention and see clearly our neighbors.
Encourage us to not only help, but listen,
so all may have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
Strengthen us to confront evil
and alleviate suffering.
Let us not turn away from the direct needs of ourselves and
those around us
even as we seek to dismantle deeper injustice.
Turn us toward justice, peace and reconciliation.
We pray in your holy name,
Amen

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Saint Stephens Scrip Program



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First, using gift cards helps you create and stick to a budget. Secondly, you won't have to worry about identity theft when you use gift cards, unlike debit cards. Third, every gift card you purchase through our Scrip Program raises funds for the church at no additional cost to you. Each business gives the church a discount on the gift cards, but the church only benefits from that discount once you make a purchase.

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Saint Stephens is a WISE congregation!

By Paula McIntyre

This summer, the UCC Mental Health Network approved Saint Stephens as WISE for mental health. We are the 94th UCC congregation in the conference to earn this recognition. Thanks to all of you who supported and prayed for the WISE team as we journeyed through the discernment process. I also greatly appreciate Marilyn Baumgart, Corey Dornbrack, Melanie Golisch, Bill McIntyre, Leanne Schnabl, Frank Van Alstine, and Pastor Mike who shared their experience and passion for this with me.

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Our next meeting is on Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 PM in the first-floor classroom if you are interested in joining the Wise Team!

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<https://forms.gle/eVZbLQGqxB4hiSph9>

Scan Me!



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How to Be Green This Fall!

There are many ways to be more sustainable this fall. One way is to embrace nature by participating in outdoor activities, such as composting leaves instead of placing them in plastic bags. Additionally, you can support local agriculture by shopping at farmers' markets for seasonal produce. When it comes to decorating for the season, consider using natural, biodegradable items like gourds and pinecones. These are just a few ideas to help you think more sustainably!

Enjoy this recipe using fall produce.

Cider Vinaigrette Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
 4 medium golden beets, peeled and thickly sliced
 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 3 medium garnet sweet potatoes, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 4 medium parsnips, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long pieces, any tough woody core removed
 1 large red onion, thickly sliced
 3/4 teaspoon thyme, dry or fresh

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl (with enough room for all the vegetables), mix the cider vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables—the beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion—to the bowl and toss to combine.

Line two large roasting pans or sturdy rimmed baking sheets with aluminum foil. Spread the root vegetables out over the pans in a single layer. Be sure the vegetables don't crowd each other too much.

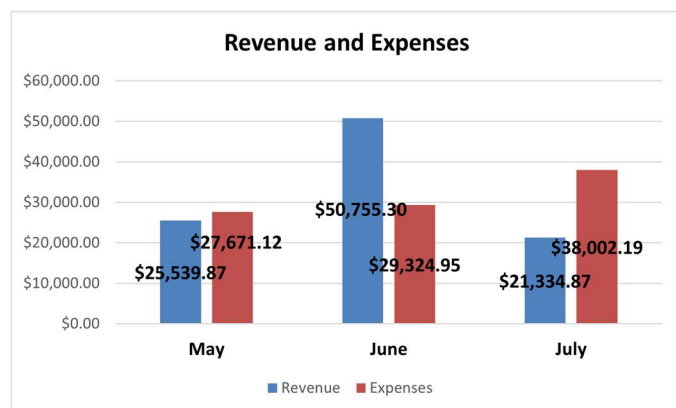
Pour the remaining vinaigrette over the root vegetables in the pans.

Place vegetables in the oven and roast at 450°F for 35 to 40 minutes, turning the pans (and swapping bottom and top rack positions), halfway through roasting. Cook until the vegetables are well browned and caramelized around the edges.

Remove from the oven and gently loosen the root vegetables from the foil with a wooden spoon. Sprinkle with thyme. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



July Revenue and Expenses

Revenue \$21,334.87

Expenses \$38,002.19

Net Loss: \$16,667.32

The congregation raised \$1,655 towards next year's mission trip to Back Bay Mission!

Your 2025 Church Council Members

Jennifer Porath	President
Jody Meyer	Vice President
Leanne Schnabl	Secretary
Sally Woller	Treasurer
James Bjorklund	Darryl Frick
Jerry Burnett	Stan Seeger
Marcus Reinhardt	Emma Golisch
Todd Frederick	Cathy Dornbrack

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

SEPTEMBER 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!

Sep 1	Brad Sturm	Sep 12	Brian Haufe	Sep 24	Cheri Reinhardt
Sep 1	Mayward Schmidt	Sep 12	Mandi Kohnhorst	Sep 25	Anna Bowe
Sep 2	Dawn Bishop	Sep 12	John Keddell	Sep 26	Aaron Hoffman
Sep 4	Nancy Hayes	Sep 13	Gloria Kottman	Sep 27	Bobby Hinner
Sep 4	Paulette Heuser	Sep 14	Ryan Golisch	Sep 28	Jeffrey Kanitz
Sep 4	Kris Smith	Sep 16	Sandy Spears	Sep 28	Virginia Peterson
Sep 4	Bill McIntyre	Sep 17	Theresa Schwartz	Sep 29	Christopher Hommerding
Sep 5	Sue Kraft	Sep 17	Amara Lazare	Sep 30	Ronald Prey
Sep 5	Jill Mosser	Sep 17	Heidi Stevenson	Sep 30	Dean Bowe
Sep 7	Brian Oestreich	Sep 17	William Kunkel		
Sep 8	Bonnie Koelsch	Sep 17	Bodhi McCarthy		
Sep 8	Elizabeth Reinhardt	Sep 18	Sue Gleason		
Sep 9	Marcus Reinhardt	Sep 19	Jonathon Johnson		
Sep 9	Matthew Reinhardt	Sep 20	Jamie Clark		
Sep 11	Chris Gano	Sep 23	Paul Mussell		
Sep 12	Alvin Bunge	Sep 23	Taylor Zastrow		
Sep 12	David Golisch	Sep 23	Evie Klug		



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

Some stock photographs in this issue are courtesy of ChurchArt, Clip Art, Pixabay, and Unsplash. www.pixabay.com
www.unsplash.com www.clipart-library.com www.churchart.com

GIFTS & memorials

Received through August 17

Dedicated to the glory of God and...

Radio Ministry

\$190.00	in honor of our grandchildren, Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$190.00	in loving memory of Norm Hass, Donald & Bernice Radke, and brother Jeff Radke from the Radke family

Livestream

\$200.00	September's livestream is sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30 th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.
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New Roof Fund

\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jody Meyer
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Sally & Mark Woller
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Kevin & Terry Krueger
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$250.00	in memory of Dorothy Bergh from her family

Anniversary Fund

\$100.00	in honor of the 43 rd wedding anniversary of Jeff & Sandra Krueger
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Sanctuary Updates

\$150.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
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Food For Kids

100.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$100.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Carol Garcia
\$200.00	in memory of Lois Wold from family

Memorial offering

\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Polly Krause Endres
\$25.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Mary Walsh and Jacob Walsh
\$25.00	in memory of Jean Mootz from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$25.00	in memory of Phyllis Reinhardt from Roger & Julie Wendorf
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Kathryne Berndt
\$15.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Linda Hass
\$50.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Jerry Krause
\$20.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from Jerry Krause
\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Joe & Marlene Thomaschefskey
\$10.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Al & Joy Hulke
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Fran Heckendorf
\$300.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$10.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Shirley Ziemke
\$20.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Dan & Patsy Pick

ST STEPHENS UCC
903 E 2ND ST
MERRILL WI 54452

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Pastoral Care Telephone Number 618-558-5014



&



facebook.com/
ststephensunitedchurchofchrist/

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>

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.

SEPTEMBER



September 14

Join us for the kick-off of the program year! Children will start in church with some fun activities with the congregation and Pastor Mike. After the children's moment, they will head up to the Sunday School room for some icebreakers!

Sunday school will be the same as last year. On communion Sunday they will start in the Sunday School room and then head down to participate in communion. The remaining Sundays they will begin in church and head up to Sunday School after the children's moment!

Saint Stephens UCC
903 E. 2nd St.
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715-536-7322

Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs
618-558-5014

September Events	p. 1
From the Pastor	p. 2
Upcoming Events	p. 3
Radio Ministry	p. 3
Lectionary Readings	p. 3
Sept Mission/Bible Study	p. 4
Nature Church	p. 5
Upcoming Events	p. 5
Stewardship / WISE	p. 6
Green Team	p. 7
Financials	p. 7
Birthdays	p. 8
Memorials	p. 9



We are excited to announce our first fundraising dinner for the Mission Trip, which will take place on **September 11 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM**. The dinner will feature unlimited spaghetti with your choice of sauces: Meat, Marinara, and Alfredo, along with Salad, Garlic Bread, Beverages, and one Dessert.

Advance tickets can be purchased at the scrip table and in the church office.

We will be hosting one dinner each month to support those attending the mission trip to Back Bay Mission next year!



Stirring the Spirit: Soup and Pastoral Conversations

Join Pastor Mike for lunch and a conversation on **September 22 at noon** at Saint Stephens church in the Kuck Lounge. Conversations can be about the church, life, or any other topic you bring. Stirring the Spirit will take place every fourth Monday at noon.



Years ago, when I was an assistant manager at a shoe store, one of the general managers told the story of a wrong number he answered decades before.

In the early 1960s, when divorce was still frowned upon and couples had to have “grounds” for getting divorced, Shelly had moved back in with his parents. He was in his early 30s, felt humiliated, was worried about providing for his 2 young daughters. But his wife wanted out of the marriage and, according to Shelly, did not want counseling or any other path except divorce.

One night, the phone rang. There was one phone in his parent’s house. He ran down the steps to the first floor to the little shelf that held the phone and phone book and grabbed the receiver. The conversation went like this:

“Hello?”

“Dad, please don’t hang up. It’s Sheldon.”

“Buddy, you got the wrong number.”

No!! Please, Dad, don’t hang up, don’t do this to me. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please, I just want to come home (sobbing).”

“Look, Buddy, I don’t know who you are. You’ve got the wrong number.”

“You know it’s me Dad! I know I messed up. Please, I just want to come home and talk. You don’t have to take me back. I just want to talk.”

After a few minutes of this sort of back and forth, Shelly finally, exasperated and tired, said, “Sheldon, come home,” and hung up.

Was it a coincidence that Shelly, my friend and Sheldon, the caller, had the same name? When Shelly hung up, he looked up the stairs and saw his father, who said, “Sheldon, go back to bed and stop talking to yourself.”

Shelly said he checked the papers for 3 weeks after that to make sure no one had been shot going back into his parent’s house.

“Sheldon, come home.” The grace that he had heard from his father he passed along to a wrong number. He never knew if it made a difference in that poor soul’s life. He knew that he appreciated his parents even more after that night. He had never considered the shame they felt in having a son getting a divorce and he appreciated them all the more. It was a different time, a different culture. We do not think in terms of shame in divorce anymore, at least, I hope we don’t. Learning from our relationships, identifying those ways we can grow, focusing on the needs of our children—those are the things we focus on in divorce now. We worship an Easter God, who brings life and new relationship out of death.

When I knew him, he had been married to his 2nd wife for 25 years, had a good relationship with his 2 adult daughters and a cordial and even loving relationship with his first wife and her 2nd husband. Recalling that story, however, took him back to a time when he needed to offer grace to another to appreciate the fullness of grace he had received.

Coincidences, God’s providence, the great Rascal Flatts’ song, “Bless the broken road that led me straight to you,” all make me wonder if we give God room to act through our imperfections.

AI may create wonderfully constructed papers, but it does not make room for personal creativity, that turn of phrase you think of struggling and staring at that blank paper or that end of a paragraph you can’t seem to get just right.

We program phone numbers into our phones, and don’t allow for trembling fingers to push that dial all the way to the stop on the round face. We have replaced wrong numbers with SPAM and talk to an AI generated voice on the other end.

I hope we can find ways to allow the Holy Spirit to act a bit more in our lives. Sometimes we need to hear a stranger say, “Sheldon, come home.”

Pastor Mike

upcoming events

September 1 – Office Closed – Labor Day
September 5 – The Vibe @ St. Stephens 6 PM
September 14 – Messy Church
September 14 – Sunday School Begins
September 22 – “Stirring the Spirit” @ Noon
September 23 – Adult Night Out 6 PM
September 27 – Nature Church

Bible Study - Every Wednesday at 5 PM

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



SEPTEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

Sept 7, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 18:1-11	Ps 139:1-6, 13-18
Deut 30:15-20	Ps 1
Philemon 1:1-21	Luke 14:25-33

Sept 14, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 4:11-12, 22-28	Ps 14
Ex 32:7-14	Ps 51:1-10
1 Tim 1:12-17	Luke 15:1-10

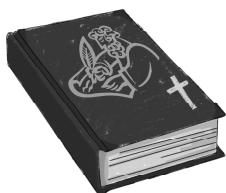
Sept 21, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jere 8:18-9:1	Ps 79:1-9
Amos 8:4-7	Ps 113
1 Tim 2:1-7	Luke 16:1-13

Sept 28, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15	Ps 91:1-6, 14-16
Amos 6:1a, 4-7	1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31	Psalm 146

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



SEPTEMBER RADIO BROADCASTS

September 7 – In honor of grandchildren Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler

September 14 – In memory of Laura Plautz for her September 12 birthday from Bob & Jolene Plautz



Open Radio Ministry Dates:
September 21 and 28
October 5, 12, and 26
November 2, 16, and 30
December 7, 14, 21, and 28



September Livestreams are sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre. They are in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.

One Sunday is also sponsored by Stan & Debbie Seeger in honor of their 50th anniversary.

Open Livestream Month: October



Dinner will be at **BB Jack's in Antigo, September 23 at 6 PM!** This will be a casual gathering to converse about life and enjoy a meal together. The meal is at your own expense, but the company is free! If interested, please sign up at the kiosk or call the church office.

SEPTEMBER MISSION:

Neighbors In Need

The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy.

Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" and enter the amount you would like to donate to Neighbors in Need on the monthly mission line. You can also give online at <https://ststephensucc.net/give> or text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to donate via mobile.



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
— Galatians 6:2

Prayer for Compassion

God of compassion,
Give us the courage to breathe in care,
and breathe out all that separates us.
The voices of your people can be lost in a cacophony of need.
Help us to pay attention and see clearly our neighbors.
Encourage us to not only help, but listen,
so all may have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
Strengthen us to confront evil
and alleviate suffering.
Let us not turn away from the direct needs of ourselves and
those around us
even as we seek to dismantle deeper injustice.
Turn us toward justice, peace and reconciliation.
We pray in your holy name,
Amen

MISSION TRIP UPDATES

All sign-ups and a deposit of \$50 per person are due by October 31st for those planning to attend next year's mission trip, which is scheduled for June 14 to June 20, 2026. Todd and Renea Frederick are donating up to 21 seats for a flight to New Orleans, where we will rent a van and drive the rest of the way. Since we are flying, we will need additional details. Please see Terra in the church office to register. We will need your name as it appears on your driver's license and your date of birth.

To fly within the United States, all attendees must ensure they are Real ID compliant (look for a star in the upper right corner of your license). If your license does not have the star, you will need to visit the DMV and provide the necessary information to become Real ID compliant.

We estimate the cost to be about \$600 per person. If you are looking for assistance to cover this cost, please help during the fundraising dinners. Those who help with the fundraising dinners will receive priority for the funds raised.



BIBLE STUDY



Bible study resumes on **September 10 at 5 PM**. We are continuing to explore "The Chosen" series and will begin with season 3 of "The Chosen."

NATURE CHURCH & BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



A number of people expressed a desire to have more outdoor services after our church picnic this year. Perhaps not coincidentally, there is a growing movement of outdoor services in

churches across the country. The movement is most visible in the “Church in the Wild: an alternative eco-friendly group” that connects churches from different denominations and independent faith communities with the hope of “Following the Spirit through Creation, adventure, & restoration.”

We are probably not quite ready to join the 3 UCC churches in our Wisconsin Conference that have launched their own “Church in the Wild” services. Our WISE Team, however, has seen the great value in reconnecting with nature for our spiritual and mental health.

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We look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning!

Cheryl Buck-Stewardship Chairperson.

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Saint Stephens is a WISE congregation!

By Paula McIntyre

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Scan Me!



GREEN TEAM

How to Be Green This Fall!

There are many ways to be more sustainable this fall. One way is to embrace nature by participating in outdoor activities, such as composting leaves instead of placing them in plastic bags. Additionally, you can support local agriculture by shopping at farmers' markets for seasonal produce. When it comes to decorating for the season, consider using natural, biodegradable items like gourds and pinecones. These are just a few ideas to help you think more sustainably!

Enjoy this recipe using fall produce.

Cider Vinaigrette Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
 4 medium golden beets, peeled and thickly sliced
 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 3 medium garnet sweet potatoes, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 4 medium parsnips, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long pieces, any tough woody core removed
 1 large red onion, thickly sliced
 3/4 teaspoon thyme, dry or fresh

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl (with enough room for all the vegetables), mix the cider vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables—the beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion—to the bowl and toss to combine.

Line two large roasting pans or sturdy rimmed baking sheets with aluminum foil. Spread the root vegetables out over the pans in a single layer. Be sure the vegetables don't crowd each other too much.

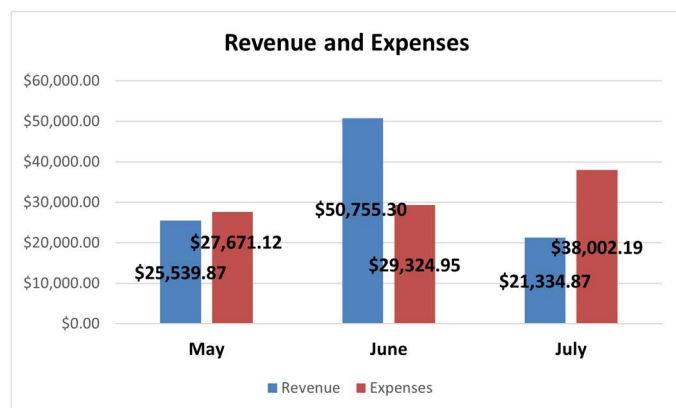
Pour the remaining vinaigrette over the root vegetables in the pans.

Place vegetables in the oven and roast at 450°F for 35 to 40 minutes, turning the pans (and swapping bottom and top rack positions), halfway through roasting. Cook until the vegetables are well browned and caramelized around the edges.

Remove from the oven and gently loosen the root vegetables from the foil with a wooden spoon. Sprinkle with thyme. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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James Bjorklund	Darryl Frick
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

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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
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\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Joe & Marlene Thomaschefskey
\$10.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Al & Joy Hulke
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Fran Heckendorf
\$300.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$10.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Shirley Ziemke
\$20.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Dan & Patsy Pick

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MERRILL WI 54452

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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>

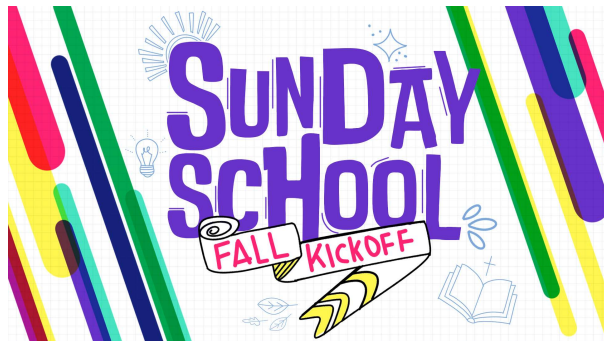
THE INTERPRETER

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.

SEPTEMBER



September 14

Join us for the kick-off of the program year! Children will start in church with some fun activities with the congregation and Pastor Mike. After the children's moment, they will head up to the Sunday School room for some icebreakers!

Sunday school will be the same as last year. On communion Sunday they will start in the Sunday School room and then head down to participate in communion. The remaining Sundays they will begin in church and head up to Sunday School after the children's moment!

Saint Stephens UCC
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Emergency
Pastoral Care Needs
618-558-5014

September Events	p. 1
From the Pastor	p. 2
Upcoming Events	p. 3
Radio Ministry	p. 3
Lectionary Readings	p. 3
Sept Mission/Bible Study	p. 4
Nature Church	p. 5
Upcoming Events	p. 5
Stewardship / WISE	p. 6
Green Team	p. 7
Financials	p. 7
Birthdays	p. 8
Memorials	p. 9



We are excited to announce our first fundraising dinner for the Mission Trip, which will take place on **September 11 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM**. The dinner will feature unlimited spaghetti with your choice of sauces: Meat, Marinara, and Alfredo, along with Salad, Garlic Bread, Beverages, and one Dessert.

Advance tickets can be purchased at the scrip table and in the church office.

We will be hosting one dinner each month to support those attending the mission trip to Back Bay Mission next year!



Stirring the Spirit: Soup and Pastoral Conversations

Join Pastor Mike for lunch and a conversation on **September 22 at noon** at Saint Stephens church in the Kuck Lounge. Conversations can be about the church, life, or any other topic you bring. Stirring the Spirit will take place every fourth Monday at noon.



Years ago, when I was an assistant manager at a shoe store, one of the general managers told the story of a wrong number he answered decades before.

In the early 1960s, when divorce was still frowned upon and couples had to have “grounds” for getting divorced, Shelly had moved back in with his parents. He was in his early 30s, felt humiliated, was worried about providing for his 2 young daughters. But his wife wanted out of the marriage and, according to Shelly, did not want counseling or any other path except divorce.

One night, the phone rang. There was one phone in his parent’s house. He ran down the steps to the first floor to the little shelf that held the phone and phone book and grabbed the receiver. The conversation went like this:

“Hello?”

“Dad, please don’t hang up. It’s Sheldon.”

“Buddy, you got the wrong number.”

No!! Please, Dad, don’t hang up, don’t do this to me. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please, I just want to come home (sobbing).”

“Look, Buddy, I don’t know who you are. You’ve got the wrong number.”

“You know it’s me Dad! I know I messed up. Please, I just want to come home and talk. You don’t have to take me back. I just want to talk.”

After a few minutes of this sort of back and forth, Shelly finally, exasperated and tired, said, “Sheldon, come home,” and hung up.

Was it a coincidence that Shelly, my friend and Sheldon, the caller, had the same name? When Shelly hung up, he looked up the stairs and saw his father, who said, “Sheldon, go back to bed and stop talking to yourself.”

Shelly said he checked the papers for 3 weeks after that to make sure no one had been shot going back into his parent’s house.

“Sheldon, come home.” The grace that he had heard from his father he passed along to a wrong number. He never knew if it made a difference in that poor soul’s life. He knew that he appreciated his parents even more after that night. He had never considered the shame they felt in having a son getting a divorce and he appreciated them all the more. It was a different time, a different culture. We do not think in terms of shame in divorce anymore, at least, I hope we don’t. Learning from our relationships, identifying those ways we can grow, focusing on the needs of our children—those are the things we focus on in divorce now. We worship an Easter God, who brings life and new relationship out of death.

When I knew him, he had been married to his 2nd wife for 25 years, had a good relationship with his 2 adult daughters and a cordial and even loving relationship with his first wife and her 2nd husband. Recalling that story, however, took him back to a time when he needed to offer grace to another to appreciate the fullness of grace he had received.

Coincidences, God’s providence, the great Rascal Flatts’ song, “Bless the broken road that led me straight to you,” all make me wonder if we give God room to act through our imperfections.

AI may create wonderfully constructed papers, but it does not make room for personal creativity, that turn of phrase you think of struggling and staring at that blank paper or that end of a paragraph you can’t seem to get just right.

We program phone numbers into our phones, and don’t allow for trembling fingers to push that dial all the way to the stop on the round face. We have replaced wrong numbers with SPAM and talk to an AI generated voice on the other end.

I hope we can find ways to allow the Holy Spirit to act a bit more in our lives. Sometimes we need to hear a stranger say, “Sheldon, come home.”

Pastor Mike

upcoming events

September 1 – Office Closed – Labor Day
September 5 – The Vibe @ St. Stephens 6 PM
September 14 – Messy Church
September 14 – Sunday School Begins
September 22 – “Stirring the Spirit” @ Noon
September 23 – Adult Night Out 6 PM
September 27 – Nature Church

Bible Study - Every Wednesday at 5 PM

Chime Choir – Every Thursday at 6 PM



SEPTEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

Sept 7, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 18:1-11	Ps 139:1-6, 13-18
Deut 30:15-20	Ps 1
Philemon 1:1-21	Luke 14:25-33

Sept 14, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 4:11-12, 22-28	Ps 14
Ex 32:7-14	Ps 51:1-10
1 Tim 1:12-17	Luke 15:1-10

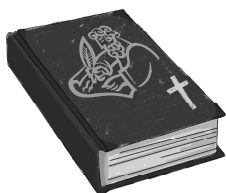
Sept 21, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jere 8:18-9:1	Ps 79:1-9
Amos 8:4-7	Ps 113
1 Tim 2:1-7	Luke 16:1-13

Sept 28, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15	Ps 91:1-6, 14-16
Amos 6:1a, 4-7	1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31	Psalm 146

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



SEPTEMBER RADIO BROADCASTS

September 7 – In honor of grandchildren Brandon, Wyatt, and Lydia from Dennis & Ione Koehler

September 14 – In memory of Laura Plautz for her September 12 birthday from Bob & Jolene Plautz



Open Radio Ministry Dates:
September 21 and 28
October 5, 12, and 26
November 2, 16, and 30
December 7, 14, 21, and 28



September Livestreams are sponsored by Bill & Paula McIntyre. They are in celebration of Bill's birthday on September 4, in celebration of our 30th wedding anniversary on September 9, and in celebration of and thanksgiving for the Staats and Sholund memorial scholarships.

One Sunday is also sponsored by Stan & Debbie Seeger in honor of their 50th anniversary.

Open Livestream Month: October



Dinner will be at **BB Jack's in Antigo, September 23 at 6 PM!** This will be a casual gathering to converse about life and enjoy a meal together. The meal is at your own expense, but the company is free! If interested, please sign up at the kiosk or call the church office.

SEPTEMBER MISSION:

Neighbors In Need

The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy.

Please use your "Special Offering Envelope" and enter the amount you would like to donate to Neighbors in Need on the monthly mission line. You can also give online at <https://ststephensucc.net/give> or text "SAINTSTEPHENS" to 73256 to donate via mobile.



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
— Galatians 6:2

Prayer for Compassion

God of compassion,
Give us the courage to breathe in care,
and breathe out all that separates us.
The voices of your people can be lost in a cacophony of need.
Help us to pay attention and see clearly our neighbors.
Encourage us to not only help, but listen,
so all may have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
Strengthen us to confront evil
and alleviate suffering.
Let us not turn away from the direct needs of ourselves and
those around us
even as we seek to dismantle deeper injustice.
Turn us toward justice, peace and reconciliation.
We pray in your holy name,
Amen

MISSION TRIP UPDATES

All sign-ups and a deposit of \$50 per person are due by October 31st for those planning to attend next year's mission trip, which is scheduled for June 14 to June 20, 2026. Todd and Renea Frederick are donating up to 21 seats for a flight to New Orleans, where we will rent a van and drive the rest of the way. Since we are flying, we will need additional details. Please see Terra in the church office to register. We will need your name as it appears on your driver's license and your date of birth.

To fly within the United States, all attendees must ensure they are Real ID compliant (look for a star in the upper right corner of your license). If your license does not have the star, you will need to visit the DMV and provide the necessary information to become Real ID compliant.

We estimate the cost to be about \$600 per person. If you are looking for assistance to cover this cost, please help during the fundraising dinners. Those who help with the fundraising dinners will receive priority for the funds raised.



BIBLE STUDY



Bible study resumes on **September 10 at 5 PM**. We are continuing to explore "The Chosen" series and will begin with season 3 of "The Chosen."

NATURE CHURCH & BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



A number of people expressed a desire to have more outdoor services after our church picnic this year. Perhaps not coincidentally, there is a growing movement of outdoor services in

churches across the country. The movement is most visible in the “Church in the Wild: an alternative eco-friendly group” that connects churches from different denominations and independent faith communities with the hope of “Following the Spirit through Creation, adventure, & restoration.”

We are probably not quite ready to join the 3 UCC churches in our Wisconsin Conference that have launched their own “Church in the Wild” services. Our WISE Team, however, has seen the great value in reconnecting with nature for our spiritual and mental health.

So, on Sunday, Sept. 28, from 4-6 pm, we will have our first “Pop up” church in nature at Stanges Park. God speaks to us through scripture and through creation. These outdoor services seek to help us reconnect our spirituality with nature.

This first one will feature a brief scripture reading and short reflection leading into time for us to walk, listen, see and touch God’s good creation on the park grounds. We may have some singing as well. We will also allow time for a “Blessing of the Animals,” a service usually offered on or near Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. Leashed pets and animals in carriers are welcome.

Participants are invited to bring their own picnic dinner. The church will provide cups, ice water, and lemonade to drink. We plan to offer an outdoor service 4 times a year so watch future Interpreters for information on the Winter Nature Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**“The Vibe”
Open Mic Night
Friday, Sept. 5, @ 6 PM
St. Stephens Church**



Come and share your talents!

TRUNK or TREAT

At St. Stephens UCC

October 31
4 PM to 7 PM

903 E 2nd Street
Merrill, WI 54452

SAVE THE DATE!

SIGN-UPS TO HOST A TRUNK WILL BE AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER!

**YOUTH FAITH
FORMATION RETREAT**

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025

Join us for a YFF Retreat at Daycholah Center in Green Lake. The retreats, for those in grades 6 through 12 and their adult leaders, are appropriate for confirmation classes and for any youth interested in exploring their faith in community with other youth. More details to come!

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Saint Stephens Scrip Program



Let's take another look at our Scrip Program. With the back-to-school season and the start

of holiday shopping, scrip gift cards are a fantastic option.

First, using gift cards helps you create and stick to a budget. Secondly, you won't have to worry about identity theft when you use gift cards, unlike debit cards. Third, every gift card you purchase through our Scrip Program raises funds for the church at no additional cost to you. Each business gives the church a discount on the gift cards, but the church only benefits from that discount once you make a purchase.

If we don't have a card in our inventory that is available on the national scrip program, we can order it for you. We typically place our orders on Mondays and receive the cards by Thursday or Friday. You can pick up your cards at the office during office hours on Friday or the following Sunday.

You may also purchase scrip gift cards during office hours since the staff is available to sell them to you. This means you don't have to wait until Sunday to get your gift cards.

If you have any questions about the Scrip Program, please stop by the scrip table and talk to the volunteers who are selling the gift cards. There are order forms available at the table for you to take home and return with your order. We also provide information on how to order scrip online and how to reload most gift cards once you've purchased them.

We look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning!

Cheryl Buck-Stewardship Chairperson.

WISE TEAM

Saint Stephens is a WISE congregation!

By Paula McIntyre

This summer, the UCC Mental Health Network approved Saint Stephens as WISE for mental health. We are the 94th UCC congregation in the conference to earn this recognition. Thanks to all of you who supported and prayed for the WISE team as we journeyed through the discernment process. I also greatly appreciate Marilyn Baumgart, Corey Dornbrack, Melanie Golisch, Bill McIntyre, Leanne Schnabl, Frank Van Alstine, and Pastor Mike who shared their experience and passion for this with me.

The WISE team will share this great news with the community and is eager to keep our mental health ministry growing. We will start by asking for your feedback on personal and family wellness activities that you are interested in through a survey (scan the QR Code or click the link below for the survey). We hope to connect with the Northwoods chapter of the National Alliance and Mental Illness (NAMI) to learn how we can best support their mission. As a church, we will continue to offer a safe space for those with mental illness and mental health concerns.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 PM in the first-floor classroom if you are interested in joining the Wise Team!

Personal and Family Wellness Survey Links

<https://forms.gle/eVZbLQGqxB4hiSph9>

Scan Me!



GREEN TEAM

How to Be Green This Fall!

There are many ways to be more sustainable this fall. One way is to embrace nature by participating in outdoor activities, such as composting leaves instead of placing them in plastic bags. Additionally, you can support local agriculture by shopping at farmers' markets for seasonal produce. When it comes to decorating for the season, consider using natural, biodegradable items like gourds and pinecones. These are just a few ideas to help you think more sustainably!

Enjoy this recipe using fall produce.

Cider Vinaigrette Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
 4 medium golden beets, peeled and thickly sliced
 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 3 medium garnet sweet potatoes, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long sticks
 4 medium parsnips, sliced lengthwise into 1- to 2-inch long pieces, any tough woody core removed
 1 large red onion, thickly sliced
 3/4 teaspoon thyme, dry or fresh

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large bowl (with enough room for all the vegetables), mix the cider vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables—the beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion—to the bowl and toss to combine.

Line two large roasting pans or sturdy rimmed baking sheets with aluminum foil. Spread the root vegetables out over the pans in a single layer. Be sure the vegetables don't crowd each other too much.

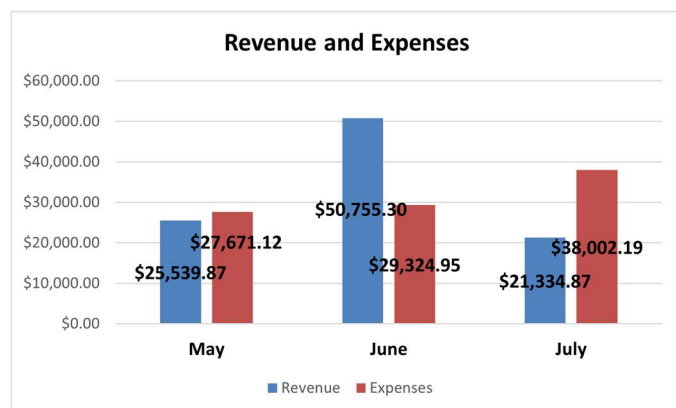
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Place vegetables in the oven and roast at 450°F for 35 to 40 minutes, turning the pans (and swapping bottom and top rack positions), halfway through roasting. Cook until the vegetables are well browned and caramelized around the edges.

Remove from the oven and gently loosen the root vegetables from the foil with a wooden spoon. Sprinkle with thyme. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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\$250.00	in memory of Ruth Buck from family and friends
\$25.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Dennis & Ione Koehler
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Joe & Marlene Thomaschefskey
\$10.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Al & Joy Hulke
\$20.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from Fran Heckendorf
\$300.00	in memory of Gary Mosser from family and friends
\$10.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Shirley Ziemke
\$20.00	in memory of Lois Wold from Dan & Patsy Pick

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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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