



St. Stephen's
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

the shield

This Week in Worship

August 31, 2025

"Why was God rejected?"
Jeremiah 2:4-13

Rev. Jinx Barber



Candlelight Vigil for Immigrants

Join us in the sanctuary Tuesday evening, the 9th of September from 7:30—8:00 pm for a candlelight vigil for our immigrant community. There will be readings, prayers, candle lighting and music by Liam Carr. We welcomed refugees into our safe spaces. Now, they are fearful of a maligned immigration policy that threatens their future. Together, we will honor the immigrant journey and grieve for their fear. Please join us.



Two Immigrant Stories

Immigration is dangerous now in the U.S., especially without a green card.

Mohammad and Jose (names changed for confidentiality) and their families each came to Norman as refugees 4 and 2 years ago and represent two of many paths of immigration. Both families left behind important relationships with family and friends built in a young lifetime. Both families hope one day to become U.S. citizens. NCRS resettled their families in Norman. They both represent relative success stories in the U.S. immigration system. . . they are not yet deported!

Mohammad helped the U.S. Army Special Forces in Afghanistan in combat, undercover and Afghan translations for the U.S. troops in the war against the Taliban. He and his family were air lifted to the U.S. in August 2021. Within three months of arriving he (through an attorney) applied for his Afghan visa and received his work permit. His visa was approved six months later and a year after that he and his family had their green cards, Permanent Resident Authorization. Green card holders can apply for citizenship after five years. Mohammad and his family have three years to go! The U.S. Administration has considered revoking the Afghan visas and green cards.

Jose met his partner and future wife in Venezuela after she had been persecuted by the local government. They fled their home in Venezuela with his family to find safety and work in the coffee fields of neighboring Colombia. The kids were in school and they had jobs and this worked well, until violent drug activity got too close to Jose when one night his cousin was murdered. They decided Jose would find a place in the U.S. and she would follow with the children. He traveled through the dangerous Darien Gap in Panama and made his way to the U.S. border and obtained entry documents. The NCRS accepted Jose, and his family followed three months later. Because Jose entered the U.S. during a certain window of time, he was eligible for a special visa called a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelans. His wife entered the U.S. after the close of that window of time for the TPS and so applied for asylum with a court date four years out. Four months after her U.S. entry, Jose and his wife married in a beautiful wedding at their church in Norman. With the new U.S. administration, the immigration rules in place when Jose entered the U.S. changed. Along with 350,000 Venezuelans, Jose's TPS was revoked, canceled, and Jose was left with no status. He now awaits his wife's asylum approval before he can be added to her asylum case. If asylum approval is obtained, they can then apply for green cards, if they are not deported in the meantime!

Meanwhile, the NCRS continues to integrate Jose and his family into the social systems in Norman. Mohammad "graduated" from the NCRS program and has since moved out of Norman due to a job change. These are two immigrant stories of families living under different threats.

Life Happenings
August 24, 2025

We celebrate:

Julie Sondag's dad celebrated his 93rd birthday! Ron & Velma House had a great time at Brenda Wheelock's 60th birthday party. Stacy Hydes and Lisa Hoog were back in first service. Becky LeClair is looking forward to the cooler weather. Dan Snell mentioned that OU starts on Monday. Barb Drumond shared the very successful Laundry Love event in Norman on Saturday. They served 78 families and fed 150. Thanks to SSUMC folks, Terri S., Holly VanAuken, Carla and Marty for volunteering. Annie Campbell starts at OU but found out she still will be able to be in our choir. Holly VanAuken is leaving Wednesday traveling to Ohio to celebrate her 70th birthday. Grayson and Michael Vidrine celebrated their birthdays! Emily Turner was back in second service and her back surgery was successful. Chris Suit is very glad for the Chinn family's return.

We pray with concern for:

Ann Taylor & Elvera Grisham are both at home from the hospital. Paula Weyerman is in Baptist Hospital. Melissa Duncan has a stress fracture in her foot. Holly's friend, DJ, tore his achilles. Becky LeClair reported that the Little Pantry is being emptied out very quickly. Filling it up as often as possible would be very helpful. Traveling mercies for Rick & Julie Sondag as they travel to Illinois this week. Brent Smith shared that NCRS is looking for a 4-5 bedroom house to rent for a Afghani family. This is an urgent need. The Guatemalan woman was denied asylum and has 30 days to appeal. Amber Mathis' dad starts physical therapy this week. Jen McDanel's friend, Natalie, lost her 19 week old triplets. Joan Hines prays for those in Gaza. Ash is having an EGB to investigate her stomach issues.

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO WELCOME REV. JINX BY YOUR OUTWARD AND **VISIBLE** SIGN!!!

We are looking for volunteers to paint the Pastor's office!!! If this is in your wheelhouse and you have time available please see Ron House and he will work with you to set up a time.

Scripture Readers Needed!

We are looking for scripture readers for our first and second services! Please sign up on the sign up sheets found on the table across from the office. Thanks!

Are you missing some pans/dishes?

ASAP—Please pick up abandoned (and unlabeled) pans and dishes in front of the window in Lyle Hall. We are organizing and cleaning that area and want to make space for Food for Friends items. Thanks!

Pastor Appreciation Celebration

We are celebrating ALL of our pastors on Sunday, October 5th immediately after second service. The event will be in the Loggia and heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

A sign up sheet is in the Loggia!

***This Week at
St. Stephen's***

Thursday, August 28th

6:30 Dinner & Discussion—
Community Hall
7:00 DBSA—Room 6

Friday, August 29th

6:30 Living Room NA—Room 11

Saturday, August 30th

8:30 Solutions AA—Room 11

Sunday, August 31st

8:30 Worship Service—Sanctuary
9:40 Sunday School —Various
10:50 Worship Service—Sanctuary

Monday, September 1st
Office Closed

Tuesday, September 2nd

12:00 Lunch Bunch—Loggia
6:30 Living Group NA—Room 11

Wednesday, September 3rd

1:30 Sacred Journey—Room 12
6:00 Fellowship of the Rings Bell
Choir—Sanctuary
7:00 Choir—Sanctuary

Lunch Bunch

will meet on

September 2 at

12:00 pm

**(It's now on the
1st and 3rd Tues-
days.)**





Hello everyone!

Back to School is such an exciting and busy time and I am so happy that we have such a large group of kids who are attending on Sunday mornings! I know everyone is busy and I am grateful when you make time for church.

Very important dates:

- September 7 from 4-6 pm we will have a church wide dessert potluck Back to School Bash. Obstacle course, inside games and wonderful fellowship.
- Beginning September 7 during Sunday School we will divide the kids into 2 groups (Pre K-2 and 3-5 grade).
- Also...September 14 we will have Celebrations for Pre K-2nd grade after the Children's Sermon. We will alternate weeks and have M and M for 3rd -5th grade on the 21st and continue with each group meeting every other week.
- September 21 will be our first Sunday Night Live for the year. This is a group for Pre K-5th grade from 4-6 pm. We will have children's choir, an activity, snack and wonderful time together. My plan is to have a special visitor on the 21st as we kick off Children's Sabbath!
- October 5th will be the next Sunday Night Live date and plan on a field trip (more info to come).

Important Reminders:

- Please remember to pick your child up from Sunday School at 10:40. Our teachers and staff have other obligations so we need to have your child in the appropriate place!
- During worship, please do not allow your child to leave the sanctuary alone. They must be accompanied by an adult.
- The back door is locked at 10 am for security reasons.

Have a blessed week!

Ms. Jenn



Help Us Furnish A Home for Our Food & Shelter Family

Thank you to everyone who has donated furniture and other items for the new family moving

into St. Stephen's cottage at Food and Shelter. We are working to get things moved in this weekend. Some of the items we are still seeking include:

- ☐ Couch
- ☐ Two chests of drawers
- ☐ End table
- ☐ Full and twin mattresses
- ☐ Bedside tables
- ☐ Area rug



We are also seeking volunteers to help with set up at the cottage Aug. 29 and 30.

To learn more and sign up online visit <https://mealtrain.com/gv370e> or use the QR Code. If you choose to make a financial gift, please make checks payable to St. Stephen's and write Food & Shelter Family in the memo line. You can also donate on the church website and add Food and Shelter in the notes section.

To arrange for delivery of furniture or larger items, call Brenda at (405) 620-1305 or Nanci at (405) 323-0703. Thank you for your generous support of our Food & Shelter family!

Please join us Sunday, September 7th immediately after second service as we celebrate Jinx's 50th Birthday!!!! We will be having a Potluck Lunch in Community Hall.

Sign up in the Loggia!



The Music Box

Update for Bell Choirs! It's time to get ringing again!

Fellowship of the Ringers will begin rehearsals on Wednesday, September 3 at 6:00 pm.
Ring for Joy will begin rehearsals on Sunday, September 7 at 4:30 pm.

We're always looking for a few more ringers to come and join the fun! Please let me know if you're interested in joining or would like additional information. You can reach me at music@ststephensnorman.org or catch me at the church on Sunday! - Marci Corey

BEN SOUTHERLAND

1944-2025

IN MEMORIAM

As many of you know, our friend Ben Southerland died in July. For those who have known him only recently, Ben was born in 1944 and raised on the family ranch west of Hobart in southwest Oklahoma. He literally grew up on horseback and in a very important sense, never really left the ranch. He earned a degree in agricultural economics from Oklahoma State University and worked in economic development in Selma, Alabama and San Luis, New Mexico before returning to Norman. He was a devoted member of St. Stephen's and of Challenges & Choices. If you were a friend of Ben's, you could appreciate how smart, fun-loving, and loyal he was. We miss him every day.

His family invites you to join in a celebration of Ben's life at the Norman Depot on Saturday, October 11, from 11:15 to 1:30.

Please RSVP to Aeschel at 229-220-0668.



Youth Shenanigans!

Youth will NOT be meeting for evening programming this week, Sunday, September 31st due to the Labor Day holiday. We will meet for Sunday school at 9:40am in Lyle Hall.

If you purchased stock in the youth mission trip you should have received your invite for the upcoming Stockholder Dinner. If you haven't received it by the end of the week, please reach out to Alyssa (youth@ststephensnorman.org).

If you have a student in grades 6-12 who would like to come to youth and you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Alyssa or Grace.

Disciple Bible Study

Disciple Bible Study, a small group, 34-week study of the whole Bible will meet in room 12 at 4-6 pm on Sundays beginning September 14. For six days, participants spend 30-45 minutes daily studying scriptures focused on a particular topic, along with information in the participant Study Manual. On day 7, the group meets to discuss the week's readings, aided by a video by a Biblical scholar. For more information, contact Don MacGorman (phone: 405-820-6762; email: don.macgorman@cox.net).

GREAT EXPECTATIONS!

Did you enjoy last year's pledge kickoff potluck dinner? Then you won't want to miss this year's! Mark your calendar for **September 28th at 5:30 pm** for delicious food, musical entertainment, and Great Expectations for 2026.

September 7th
4-6 pm

Block Party * Family Fun!

*** Games and a bounce house**

*** Bring ice cream/dessert to share**

www.ststephensnorman.org * 405-321-4988

Needs of the NCRS:

(Contact Brent Smith for more info at bsmith103@cox.net)

Ongoing Needs:

1. 4 or 5 Bedroom House (urgent)
2. Housing Chair—coordinate housing searches, etc.
3. Drivers—take family member to Dr. appts, etc.
4. Prayers for the Refugee Families



St. Stephen's United Methodist Church
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Church services Sunday Morning 8:30 am
and 10:50 am Sunday School at 9:40 am

