



# The Shield

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER |  
ST. STEPHENS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH |  
FEBRUARY 2026 – VOLUME 85

## Music Ministry

Our bell choirs and vocal choir are off to a quick start in 2026! We are excited to begin preparation for the start of the Lenten season as well as Easter Sunday. It's a perfect time to come and sing with the choir - Good Friday, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday always include lots of really great music! You are invited to join us anytime on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary.

I'm very excited about the launch of our enhanced Sunday Night Living programming for our children! Morgan Magelssen will lead our children in song at the second service on February 8th

and it will be a great opportunity for our church family to meet her. Miss Jenn has programmed loads of fun, educational and interesting Discovery Time activities to complement the awesome music programming that Miss Morgan has planned. Please come and join the fun each Sunday from 4:30 pm - 6 pm.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions - [music@ststephensnorman.org](mailto:music@ststephensnorman.org) or catch me or Julie at the church on Sunday!

## Music Ministry

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## Church Events

- Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>—Lunch Bunch
- Feb 7<sup>th</sup>-Platinum Rule Leadership
- Feb 8<sup>th</sup> – Platinum Rule Leadership
- Feb 9<sup>th</sup>—NCRS Board of Directors
- Feb 16<sup>th</sup>—Ad Council
- Feb 17<sup>th</sup>—Lunch Bunch
- Feb 18<sup>th</sup>-Adult Ed Meeting
- Feb 18<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday Service
- Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> – Finance Committee

# From The Sr. Pastor

## ***A Love Like This: Healing a Fractured World***

As we move into February, a month often saturated with commercialized sentiments of affection, we are invited as a congregation to lean into a much deeper, more transformative calling. Our theme for this month is "**A Love Like This.**"

It is a theme that arrives at a sobering moment in our history. As we look across our country and around the globe in this early part of 2026, we cannot ignore the evidence of a world in pain. We see it in the rising tides of exclusionary rhetoric, the sharpening of political divides that treat neighbors as enemies, and the persistent shadows of fear that drive people to build walls—both literal and metaphorical. From the ongoing struggles for global human rights to the quiet anxieties in our own zip codes, the "simmering cauldron of fear," as one bishop recently described it, continues to boil over into hate.

### ***The Antidote to Fear***

In the face of such overwhelming division, it is easy to feel small. Yet, our faith reminds us that the opposite of love is not simply hate—it is **fear**. Fear tells us there isn't enough to go around; love tells us that in God's economy, the more we give, the more we have.

"**A Love Like This**" is not a passive feeling. It is a radical, "alien" kind of love that:

- **Seeks the Outcast:** It mirrors the ministry of Jesus, who moved toward the people the rest of the world moved away from.
- **Dispels the Darkness:** It acts as a beacon of hope in a "post-truth" world, centering itself on the inherent dignity of every human being.
- **Heals the Fractured:** It recognizes that we cannot mend the world without first mending the way we see one another.



### ***Love as Accountability***

But let us be clear: a progressive love is not a "nice" love that ignores injustice. To love one another as God loves us requires **accountability**. We cannot claim to love our neighbor while remaining silent about the systems that oppress them.

Healing this world requires us to hold one another to a higher standard—to be "better for one another." This means:

**Challenging our own biases** and the "us vs. them" mentalities we carry.

**Speaking truth to power** when we see fear being weaponized against the vulnerable.

**Staying at the table** even when the conversation is difficult, refusing to let go of each other's humanity.

As we journey through February, let us practice this "Love Like This." Let us be a sanctuary not just from the world, but *for* the world—a place where accountability and grace meet, and where we prove that love, when rooted in the Divine, is the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend.

**With hope and radical love,**

*Pastor Jinx*

# From The NCRS

## **Support the St. Stephen's Refugee Program**

The February Fish basket is dedicated to the Norman Coalition for Refugee Support (NCRS). Throughout February there will be fundraising efforts. If you are able, please donate to this mission of St. Stephen's and show your support for this refugee resettlement program in Norman. You can donate by check to the NCRS in the Fish Basket, the Sunday offering plate, the church office or pay online at [nc4rs.org](http://nc4rs.org). Please see Brent Smith if you have questions at [bsmith103@cox.net](mailto:bsmith103@cox.net).

The following is a message from The Spero Project, an NCRS partner and the premier refugee resettlement program in OKC. The NCRS fully endorses this message. Also, the NCRS is developing a rapid response program in partnership with other groups and our immigration attorneys to address the extreme policies of the U.S. Administration.

The message below artfully expresses our concerns.

“Over the past weeks, the federal government has launched Operation PARRIS — Post-Admission Refugee Reverification and Integrity Strengthening — in Minnesota, an initiative that has led to intensive re-examination of refugee cases and, in many instances, increased arrests and detentions of people with legal refugee status and pending asylum cases. Neighbors are being detained and sent to detention centers without cause. Recently, a Burmese mother was detained without cause and sent over 1,800 miles away to a detention facility in Texas, despite the need to nurse her 5 month old baby. If and when neighbors are released, they are given no resources to get home.

This has caused fear, disruption, and trauma for refugee families and communities who came here seeking safety and have followed every rule to rebuild their lives.

The Spero Project (and NCRS) believes in



safety, dignity, and respect for all our neighbors — regardless of immigration status. We stand firmly opposed to violence against any individual.

We stand firmly against policies and practices that destabilize communities or undermine the promise of protection for people fleeing persecution. We stand firmly against policies and practices that destabilize communities or undermine the promise of protection for people fleeing persecution.

It is unconscionable that we are upending the lives of individuals who have already experienced displacement. Our neighbors have lived decades—maybe their whole lives—in fear, uncertainty, and constant vulnerability. Not only did we offer refuge, but we promised it. We believe our communities are strongest when everyone can live without fear. We will keep showing up.

Our commitment to welcome, belonging, and safety for all neighbors will never waver.”



# Youth Shenanigans

January was a month of getting back into the rhythm of back to school, evening youth and starting a new curriculum. Being prayerful that 2026 will see personal growth, love, joy, and laughter within the amazing youth group here at St. Stephens.

During Sunday school we will spend our time diving into the Bible using resources from **The Bible Project**. They offer a variety of engaging videos and podcasts that explore different topics and books of the Bible. We will be using their overview videos to walk through the books of the New Testament, exploring a new book each week. Grace and Alyssa have found these videos to be incredibly helpful in deepening our understanding of Scripture.

For our evening curriculum, we will be continuing with **Holy Disruptions**. We really enjoyed their Advent curriculum and decided to continue using their resources. Over the next four weeks, we will work through *Finding Ourselves: A Characters of the New Testament Study*. *This series explores the lives of lesser-known figures in the New Testament. While they may not always be center stage, they play vital roles in God's story. The study encourages youth to see their Christian journey not as a pursuit of the spotlight, but as a call to faithfulness, courage, and compassion as participants in God's redemptive work in the world.*

We have some fun upcoming events soon, starting off with our Spring Break retreat in March. Alyssa and Grace will need at least 2 men who would be willing to go with our group. If that is something you think you might enjoy, please reach out with any questions.

# Shine Kids

Happy February everyone!

This month has a lot of fun things going on and I am so excited to share it all with your children.

February 8th the Children's Choir will sing in the 2nd service. The date has been changed so please adjust your calendars accordingly.

Sunday School will continue with the Cooking with Jesus curriculum. Lots of great lessons and the kids LOVE there being food every week. If you listen to them, they never eat!

Mighty Methodists has started our 2nd book as a read aloud of the book Wonder. We started on January 18th while I read, the kids made toys that we will be donating to the Norman Animal Shelter. (This was VERY popular!)

Celebrations will continue with lessons and activities from Sticky Faith.

And finally Sunday Night Live has welcomed Ms. Morgan into our church family and she is teaching all sorts of fun games and songs! We will have a variety of Discovery Time this month with guest teachers!

We are looking for more ways to have our kids participate in worship service so we are asking kids in 3rd to 5th grade to sign up to be liturgists by signing up on the link in The Shield. We will make sure they are prepared! Also, if your child is interested in passing the offering plate, they may do so by reaching out to Don MacGorman at [don.macgorman@cox.net](mailto:don.macgorman@cox.net). And last but certainly not least, ringing the bowl to indicate the end of "Greet Your Neighbor" time. This will be on a first come first serve basis (for now).

And another early reminder that June 15-18 will be Interfaith Friendship Camp this summer. It will be in the evening but not sure on exact times yet.

Have a great February and let me know if you need anything.

Blessings.  
Ms. Jenn

# Check us out!

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