

The Shield

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

July 2026

Mark Your Calendar

7/3
Office Closed

7/4
Fourth of July

7/7
Lunch Bunch

7/12—7/18
Youth Mission Trip

7/15
Adult Ed Meeting

7/21
Lunch Bunch

Shine Kids

Hello everyone!

Interfaith Friendship Camp 2026 is a wrap! 32 campers, countless youth and adult volunteers and 7 faith backgrounds were represented. We sang, we danced, we drummed, we learned, we loved and we laughed. It is always incredible to me what the children think are the best parts of camp and it is typically, the smallest of moments. I was so proud to be a part of this event and am grateful for the opportunity to share St. Stephen's message to our community. Mark your calendars for next year, June 14-17!

We are continuing our series in Sunday School "Donuts and Disciples," so we hope to see your family each week.

August 23rd will be the Sunday Night Live Kickoff Event and we will then get back in the swing of things!

October 18th seems a long way off but it will be here before we know it! Please mark your calendars for Crop Walk. The children will be learning about this amazing event during October as we celebrate Children's Sabbath.

Have a wonderful July!
Blessings,
Ms. Jenn

A Word from Pastor Barber

Dear St. Stephen's Family,

As we settle into July, the forecasts are already telling us what we can feel every time we step outside: we are in for a record-breaking summer. Thanks to El Niño, we are gearing up to experience plenty of "wonderful" summer weather over the next few months. I hope you are all finding ways to stay cool, stay hydrated, and enjoy the sunshine.

However, as I think about the physical climate, I can't help but reflect on our current social climate. We are living in a precarious time. Our country feels more polarized and politicized than ever before, to the point where we have isolated ourselves from one another. We retreat into our own ecosystems and echo chambers, only speaking to those who already agree with us. The temperature out in the world is rising in more ways than one.

In any good workout routine, there is a rhythm of stress and relax. You have to push the muscle to make it grow, and then you have to rest it so it can recover. Because of this, a lot of people tend to view the hazy days of summer strictly as the "relax" phase—a time to clock out and take a break from it all. But

I want to gently remind you that **the work of the church is ongoing**. While we should absolutely take time to rest our bodies and minds this season, we cannot take a vacation from our calling. There are people in our community, right here and right now, who desperately need to know about God's love for them.

So, as you travel, run errands, go to baseball games, or hit the local parks this summer, I want to challenge you: **be visible**. Wear your St. Stephen's shirts. Put on your church bracelets. Wear them proudly. When someone asks about them, tell them about this amazing place where God's love is tangibly stronger than all the hate and division that fills the rest of the world. Be the bridge out of the echo chamber.

As we move through this record-breaking summer together, please hold fast to this core truth: **The church is not here for us**. We are here for all of the people we haven't met yet. Let's make sure they know where to find us, so this summer can be record-breaking in better ways.

Tread lightly, care deeply.

Jinx



Music Ministry

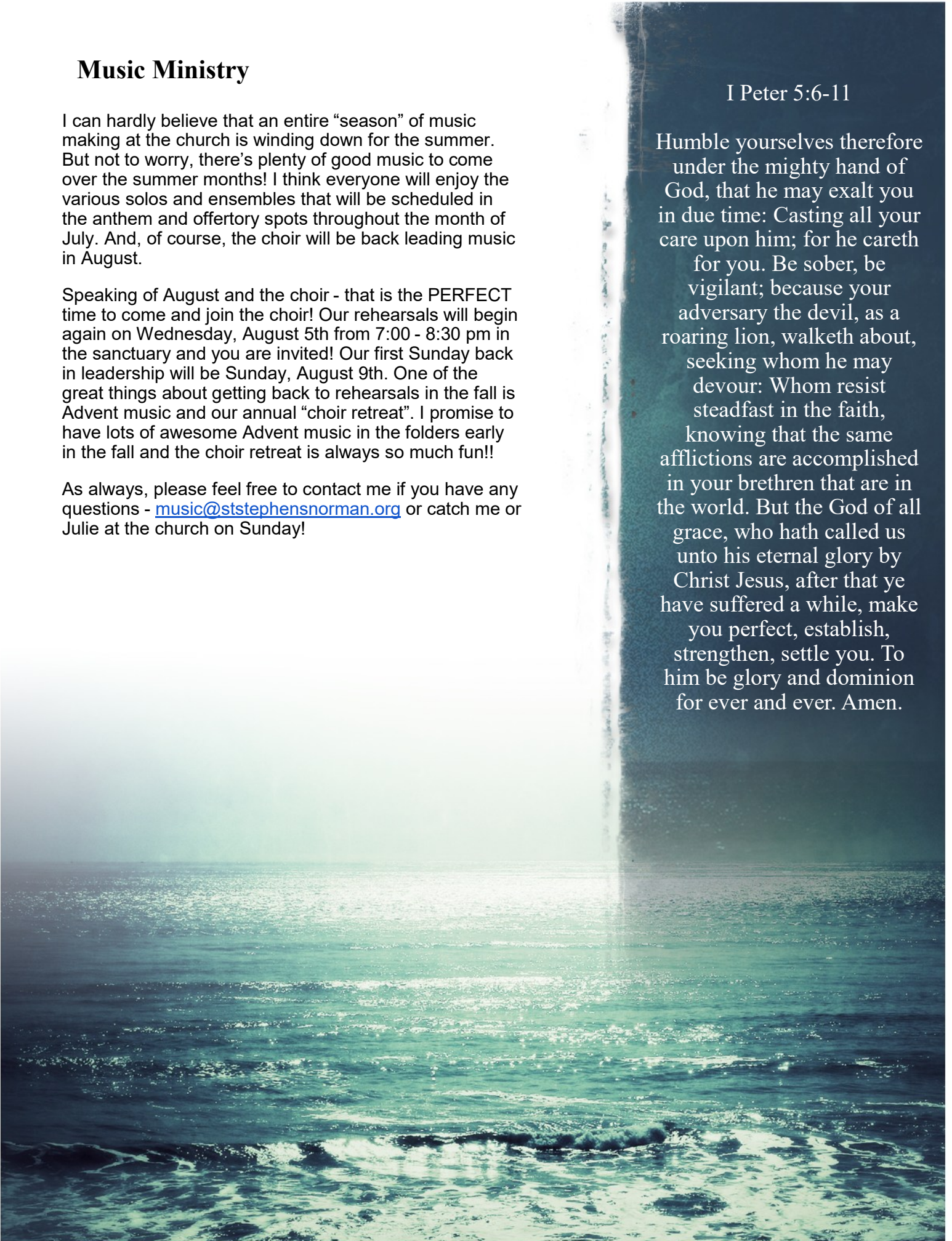
I can hardly believe that an entire “season” of music making at the church is winding down for the summer. But not to worry, there’s plenty of good music to come over the summer months! I think everyone will enjoy the various solos and ensembles that will be scheduled in the anthem and offertory spots throughout the month of July. And, of course, the choir will be back leading music in August.

Speaking of August and the choir - that is the PERFECT time to come and join the choir! Our rehearsals will begin again on Wednesday, August 5th from 7:00 - 8:30 pm in the sanctuary and you are invited! Our first Sunday back in leadership will be Sunday, August 9th. One of the great things about getting back to rehearsals in the fall is Advent music and our annual “choir retreat”. I promise to have lots of awesome Advent music in the folders early in the fall and the choir retreat is always so much fun!!

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

I Peter 5:6-11

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.



The Little Free Pantry

We are blessed with a fabulous two-part Little Free Pantry that is heavily used in front of our church. Here are a few tips that will help everyone.

Please put food in the front part of the pantry and non-food and personal items in the back. This keeps everything a little tidier.

If you bring a case of something, please take the items out of the packaging and dispose of them (preferably by taking the trash/recycling home). There is a trash can beside the pantry but it fills up quickly. If you are able, please empty the trash into our dumpster if it is full to keep trash from blowing around.

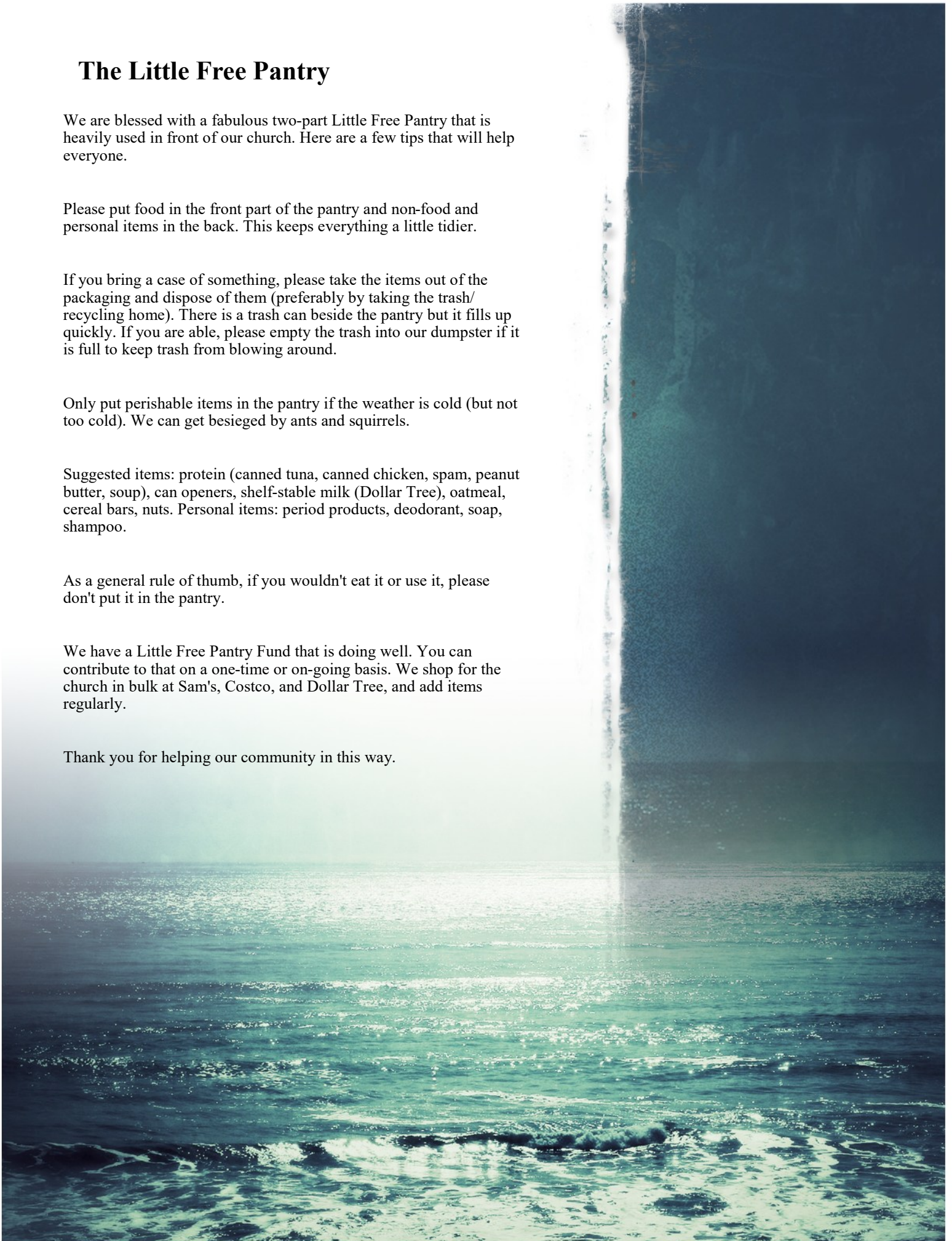
Only put perishable items in the pantry if the weather is cold (but not too cold). We can get besieged by ants and squirrels.

Suggested items: protein (canned tuna, canned chicken, spam, peanut butter, soup), can openers, shelf-stable milk (Dollar Tree), oatmeal, cereal bars, nuts. Personal items: period products, deodorant, soap, shampoo.

As a general rule of thumb, if you wouldn't eat it or use it, please don't put it in the pantry.

We have a Little Free Pantry Fund that is doing well. You can contribute to that on a one-time or on-going basis. We shop for the church in bulk at Sam's, Costco, and Dollar Tree, and add items regularly.

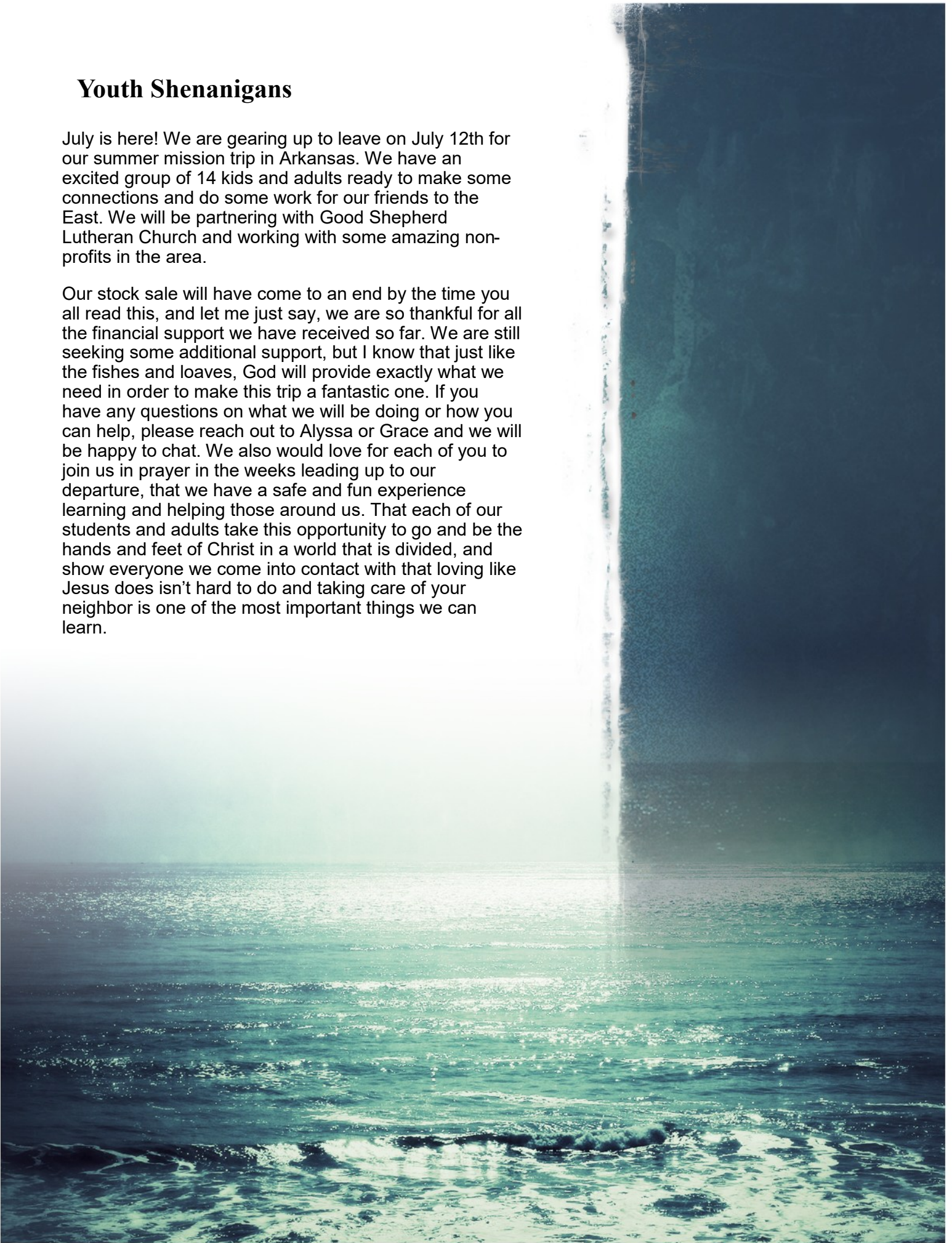
Thank you for helping our community in this way.



Youth Shenanigans

July is here! We are gearing up to leave on July 12th for our summer mission trip in Arkansas. We have an excited group of 14 kids and adults ready to make some connections and do some work for our friends to the East. We will be partnering with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and working with some amazing non-profits in the area.

Our stock sale will have come to an end by the time you all read this, and let me just say, we are so thankful for all the financial support we have received so far. We are still seeking some additional support, but I know that just like the fishes and loaves, God will provide exactly what we need in order to make this trip a fantastic one. If you have any questions on what we will be doing or how you can help, please reach out to Alyssa or Grace and we will be happy to chat. We also would love for each of you to join us in prayer in the weeks leading up to our departure, that we have a safe and fun experience learning and helping those around us. That each of our students and adults take this opportunity to go and be the hands and feet of Christ in a world that is divided, and show everyone we come into contact with that loving like Jesus does isn't hard to do and taking care of your neighbor is one of the most important things we can learn.



St. Stephen's Fish Basket Offering Recipients

General Fund Cash Reserves			January	Human Relations Day
			February	NCRS
2026 AVG Monthly Expenses	\$51,815.00		March	UMCOR Sunday
			April	Native American Ministries
			May	United Methodist student day
General Fund Balance	\$101,991.49		June	Peace with Justice Sunday
			July	Food & Shelter back-to school clothes
			August	NCRS
Duration of Cash Reserves	1.97	Months	September	CROP Walk
			October	World Communion Sunday
			November	Tiny Pantry
			December	The Hub (a day homeless shelter in the Griffin Complex)



