

# The Shield

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | ST STEPHEN'S UMC | JUNE 2026 – VOLUME 89

## 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!

As I write this article, we are on the eve of our participation in the OKUMC Annual Conference Service of Remembrance at Church of the Servant. The choir and bell choirs of St. Stephen's UMC have worked so hard in preparation for this moment and I know they will add great meaning and depth to this service with the music they are providing. We've prepared 30 minutes of pre-service music and the choir has also prepared an offertory anthem for use during the service. I cannot adequately express how much I admire, respect and appreciate the nearly 50 VOLUNTEER musicians who will be a part of this experience. I tell the choir all the time that they are unicorns. You simply don't see this type of volunteer commitment to a church music ministry out there in the world very often these days. It's an honor and a privilege to be their director.

Looking ahead just a bit - the choir will take a much earned break during the month of July and I'm looking for instrumental or vocal solos/ensembles to play/sing each Sunday in July. If you'd be interested in singing or playing an instrument on a Sunday in July, let me know! I'd love to add you to the schedule.

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!

## Church Events

- June 1<sup>st</sup> - SPRC
- June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Lunch Bunch
- June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Fiction Club
- June 14<sup>th</sup> – Trustees
- June 15 –18 – Interfaith Friendship Camp
- June 16<sup>th</sup> – Lunch Bunch
- June 17<sup>th</sup>—Adult Ed meeting
- June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Finance Committee
- June 29<sup>th</sup> – Ad Council

# Shine Kids

Hello everyone!

Well, we did it! Summer is finally here! Lazy days, sleeping in, pool time, all the relaxation.

And finally, what I personally have been waiting for all year... Interfaith Friendship Camp! June 15-18 from 5:30 to 8:00 pm. Our

theme is "All We Need is Love" and I am super excited about the groups we have involved this year. Some groups are returning but we also have groups joining us for the first time including the First American UMC of Norman. It takes volunteers to make this event happen so please

register as a volunteer on our website or let me know via email, call or text. This is an amazing opportunity for us to grow as a community.

We continue to need volunteers for nursery and Sunday School so PLEASE help us out! Sunday School curriculum is provided and I lay out all items needed so you can walk in on Sunday morning and teach! Nursery, well you get to hang out with babies and toddlers and what is better than that?

All volunteers will have a training video and

background check prior to time with children! Again, please let me know if you are interested and we can find a spot for you!

Sunday Night Live is on a break for the summer but will return in August, more information to come.

I hope everyone has a wonderful and safe summer.

Blessings,  
Ms. Jenn  
Director of Children's Ministries  
children@ststephens-norman.org

# Youth Shenanigans

How is it already summer time? It is hard to believe we are already done with another school year and the hot lazy days of summer are here. May was a quiet month for the youth group, we didn't have any graduating seniors this year, but that means we will have more next year. □ But we try not to take our time for granted with our students and will enjoy every second we can with them until it's time to send them off into the big world of adulthood.

Summer also means it is time for our annual mission trip. This year we will be traveling to Fayetteville, AR and working with Good Shepherd Lutheran

Church from July 12-18th. We will be doing things like working at the Squire Jehagen food bank, the Arkansas Justice Reform Coalition focusing on social justice advocacy, grounds projects, and so much more. We might even squeeze in a fun day at the Buffalo River for some fun in the sun and water.

Summer Mission brings fundraising too. We started off our fundraising with yet another amazing Easter Breakfast in April, and starting May 31st you will see us set up in the loggia for our annual Stockholder sale. All funds raised go towards the purchase of rental

vehicles, gas, food, and all things mission. My favorite part is coming home and having our Stockholder Dinner where you will get a chance to hear from our students and adults while enjoying dinner served by our students.

If you have questions, please feel free to come and chat with us in the loggia starting this week. We are grateful for everyone who donated during our Easter breakfast and for all who will buy stock in our trip.

# Pastor's Pen

## A Season of Radical Love and Relentless Momentum

### Beloved St. Stephens Family,

As we close the chapter on a beautiful May and step boldly into June, my heart is overflowing with immense gratitude and fierce pride for who we are and what we are building together. To serve a congregation so deeply committed to social justice, radical inclusion, and actionable theology is a profound joy.

Looking back at this past month, it is clear that the Spirit is moving powerfully through our community.

### Celebrating Our May Milestones

We didn't just talk about inclusion this month; we put our faith into action.

- **Norman Pride:** I am still riding the high of our prophetic witness at the Norman Pride parade! We had exactly **82 people** from St. Stephens marching together. We didn't just show up; we showed out. In a time when LGBTQIA+ rights are constantly under threat, those 82 voices marching in solidarity served as a beautiful, visible reminder to our city that God's love is expansive, unconditional, and fiercely protective. Thank you for showing up for our queer siblings and showing Norman what true, lived theology looks like.

**The Queer Library is Here:** We also received the long-awaited shipments of books for our new queer library! These texts—ranging from queer theology and history to affirming children's books—are now ready to be processed. Representation matters, and ensuring our community has access to resources that reflect the beautiful diversity of God's creation is a critical part of our spiritual formation.

### Speeding Up for Summer

In many church traditions, the arrival of summer means scaling back, taking a breath, and slowing down. But here at St. Stephens? **We aren't slowing down—we are speeding up.**

The work of justice and community building doesn't take a summer vacation, and neither do we.



Here is what we are diving into as the weather warms up:

- **Interfaith Friendship Camp:** We are eagerly preparing for this beautiful initiative. In a deeply fractured world, creating spaces to build bridges of understanding, peace, and mutual respect with our neighbors of different faith traditions is more vital than ever.
- **Outreach Task Force:** We are laying the groundwork to launch our new outreach task force. This team will help us focus our activist energy, ensuring we are showing up effectively and sustainably for the marginalized in our broader community.

**Community Hall Transformation:** We are kicking off a major soundproofing and art project for the community hall! Not only will this make the space more accessible and comfortable for neurodivergent folks and community gatherings, but the new art installations will ensure our space visually reflects the vibrant, inclusive justice we preach.

### Looking Forward

We have just a couple more projects to wrap up in June, and then comes a deeply personal milestone. Once these initiatives are crossed off our list, we will be celebrating my one-year anniversary as your Senior Pastor!

I cannot wait to sit down with you all, reflect on the incredible mountains we have moved together over the last twelve months, and dream wildly about the future of St. Stephens. We are doing the work, beloveds. Let's keep this beautiful momentum going.

In solidarity, faith, and radical love,

Rev. Jinx M. Barber