

The Shield

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | ST STEPHEN'S UMC |

MAY 2026 – VOLUME 88

Youth Shenanigans

April was kicked off with our Youth Easter Breakfast Fundraiser. We were blessed with over \$2700 in donations that will go directly to our summer mission trip to Fayetteville, AR. We will be partnering with Service Learning Camps and Rev. Dr. Clint Schneklath at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. We are looking forward to meeting new friends in Arkansas and showing them the love of God through our service to them and their communities. Thank you to everyone who came and had breakfast with us on Easter Sunday and who donated to our group. Alyssa, Grace, and the youth are always so grateful for the way our congregation takes care of our group.

In May we look forward to celebrating the 2026 seniors in our congregation and really starting to prepare for our mission. We might even get to throw in a lock-in at some point. Be on the lookout in the near future (June) for our annual Stockholder fundraiser.

Church Events

- May 2nd—Pride Festival
- May 3rd—Pride Parade
- May 5th—Lunch Bunch
- May 5th—Conversational Spanish Class
- May 9th—OKC Handbell Ensemble May concert
- May 11th—WIAA Gubernatorial Forum
- May 11th—NCRS Board of Directors
- May 12th—Conversational Spanish Class
- May 17th—End of Year Party for Sunday Night Live



WIAA Hosts Gubernatorial Forum

Women In Action For All (WIAA) has announced a gubernatorial forum featuring Democratic candidates **Cyndi Munson** and **Connie Johnson**. The event is scheduled for **May 11 at 6:30 pm** and will be held in **Community Hall**.

The forum offers voters a direct opportunity to hear from the two prominent Democrats vying for the Oklahoma governorship in 2026.

- **Cyndi Munson**, current State House Minority Leader, has centered her campaign on public education investment and healthcare access.
- **Connie Johnson**, a former State Senator, brings a platform focused on community rebuilding and social justice.

This event serves as a critical platform for the candidates to outline their visions for Oklahoma's future and engage with community members ahead of the primary elections. Attendance is open to the public as the state prepares for a high-stakes 2026 election cycle.

Church Events (continued)

- **May 19th—Lunch Bunch**
- **May 19th—Fiction Club**
- **May 20th—Adult Ed Meeting**
- **May 25th—Finance Committee**
- **May 26th—Conversational Spanish Class**
- **May 28-30—Annual Conference**

Pastor's Pen

A Light in the Public Square: The Theology of Showing Up

Grace and peace to you, St. Stephens family.

As a socially and theologically progressive community here in Norman, we often find ourselves navigating a unique tension. We are a sanctuary of radical inclusion nestled within a broader cultural and political landscape that is distinctly conservative. In such an environment, it is easy for progressive voices to feel isolated, and more importantly, it is dangerously easy for marginalized individuals to feel entirely alone.

That is exactly why our physical presence in the community matters so deeply.

When we talk about living out our faith, we often focus on what happens within the walls of our sanctuary—the worship, the study, the fellowship. But the Gospel we preach is one of active, incarnational love. Jesus did not minister from a distance; he consistently and intentionally placed himself alongside the marginalized, the rejected, and the oppressed. For us, following that example means we have to be seen.

Earlier this year, when we hosted our community roundtable focused on peace and our roles in the community, a recurring theme was that true peace isn't simply the absence of conflict—it is an active, vocal commitment to justice and safety for everyone.

This is why we show up.

When we put on our St. Stephens shirts and march at the Norman Pride Festival, we are doing more than celebrating; we are sending a clear, theological message to the LGBTQIA+ community that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, fully loved by God,

and fiercely defended by us. In a place where religious rhetoric is too often weaponized against them, our visible, joyful presence serves as a theological counter-narrative. We are there to say: *You are safe here.*

Similarly, when we stand together at "No Kings" protests and advocate for democratic integrity and human rights, we are standing against the systems of power that disproportionately harm the vulnerable. We are publicly declaring that our faith demands equity, justice, and the protection of the marginalized over the concentration of power.

Being visible in these spaces is not about seeking attention for our church. It is about providing a beacon. There are people in our city who have been hurt by the church, who feel abandoned by their neighbors, or who are exhausted from fighting for their basic humanity. When they see us at Pride, or holding a sign at a protest, they see a tangible reminder that they have allies. They see that God's love is expansive, and that there is a faith community ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them.

St. Stephens, our calling is to be a light, and a light does no good if it is hidden. Let us continue to step outside our doors, to be boldly and unapologetically visible in our love, and to show Norman exactly what progressive, inclusive faith looks like in action.

In solidarity and hope,

Pastor Jinx

St. Stephens United Methodist Church

Music Ministry

With Lent and Easter behind us, the music ministry at St. Stephen's is still busy at work learning and preparing new music (and some old favorites!) to help lead worship each Sunday. The bell choirs and the children's choir will ring and sing on Sunday, May 10th and you won't want to miss the beautiful music they have prepared!

Looking ahead - the choir and bell choirs will continue to provide music for our worship services in May, but we also have something very special that we'll be working on for May. The choir and bell choirs from St. Stephen's UMC have been invited to provide music for the Memorial Service at the OKUMC Annual Conference 2026. The service will be held on the evening of May 28 at Church of the Servant in Oklahoma City. The choir and bell choirs will provide 30 minutes of pre-service music and the choir will also prepare an offertory anthem for use during the service. We are honored to have been invited to be a part of this meaningful and special time of worship and remembrance.

Looking even further ahead - the choir always takes a much earned break during the month of July and I schedule special music provided by the many, many talented people of our congregation. 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.

Sunday Night Live will have a short schedule in the month of May since there are several big things we have to schedule around. We won't meet on May 3rd due to the Pride Parade and we won't meet on May 10th so that families can spend time together for Mother's Day. **However, on May 17th we hope all our children can be at SNL since that will be our final meeting of the school year and we are planning an end of year celebration!** After that we will pause SNL for the summer and start back up when the school year begins in August. BUT don't forget about Friendship Camp that runs from June 15 - June 18!!

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!

Shine Kids

Hello everyone!

Parents you are in the home stretch of the school year and summer is right around the corner! I know we can all use the rest and reset of a more laid back season.

Shine Kids has some exciting stuff planned for May...new curriculum called "I'm Crafted," will start on April 26th and continue throughout the month of May. Here are important dates to put on your calendar:

- May 10th Shine Kids will sing during 2nd service.

- May 17th will be the last Sunday Night Live until fall. Please plan on joining us for a fun family evening.

And don't forget, Interfaith Friendship Camp will be June 15th-18th, sign up to go out this week. The theme is "All We Need is Love," and we are looking forward to another great year! Please email me children@ststephensnorman.org if you are interested in volunteering.

I appreciate your support and attendance. When your family is absent, we miss them. We are working so hard to grow St. Stephens as a whole and young families are a critical part of that goal!

Happy May!

Blessings.
Ms. Jenn