The Shield

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | ST STEPHEN'S UMC |

OCTOBER 2026 – VOLUME 93

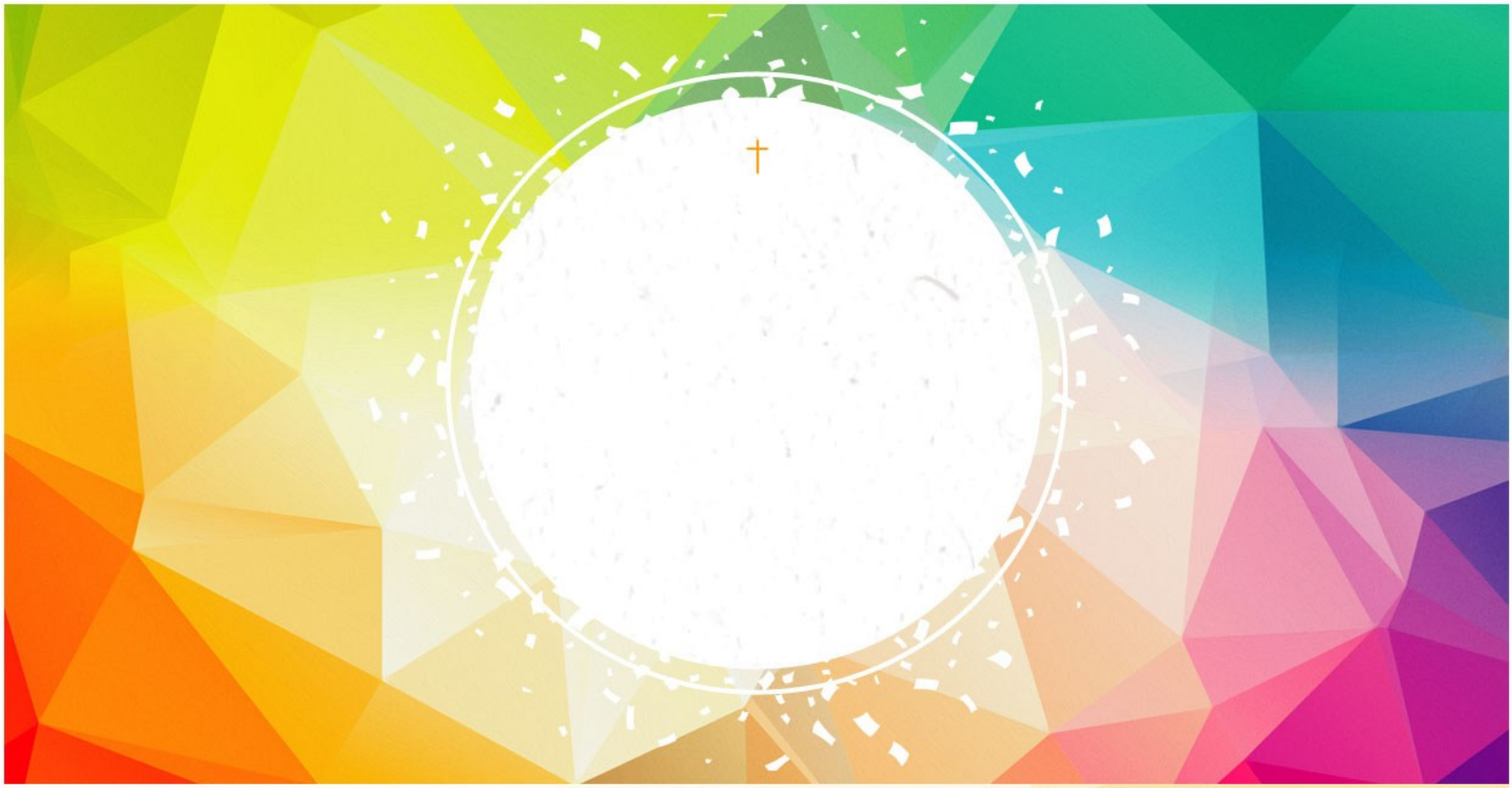
Youth Shenanigans

October already?! How is that even possible? The youth group had a great September rounding out our summer mission events with the Stockholder Dinner and Youth Sunday. Both were great events and we are so thankful for all who helped make our summer mission possible.

October will be full of fun at the annual Trunk or Treat and Chili cook off event on Oct.25th. Alyssa will have a sign up sheet available the first week of October in the loggia for all who would like to help make this possible. There will be a big blow up toy, lots of candy, and some of the best chili in Oklahoma. We hope to see everyone there.

Church Events

- **Oct 6th—Lunch Bunch**
- **Oct 12th—Indigenous People's Day—Office Closed**
- **Oct 18th—Children's Sabbath**
- **Oct 18th—CROP Walk**
- **Oct 19th—Ad Council**
- **Oct 20th—Lunch Bunch**
- **Oct 21st—Adult Ed Meeting**
- **Oct 24—Choir Retreat**
- **Oct 25—Clergy Appreciation Sunday**
- **Oct 25– Trunk or Treat & Chili Cookoff**



Music Ministry

I'm so excited that our choir is back to leading Sunday morning worship! Hooray! We've also jumped quickly into learning some beautiful and festive Advent music. Please come and join in the fun! We rehearse Wednesday evenings from 7:00 - 8:30 pm in the sanctuary. We are a lively bunch of fun-loving, music making, good hearted people and there is ALWAYS a place for you with us. Our annual choir retreat is scheduled for Saturday, October 24th from 9 am - 1 pm and we'll focus exclusively on Advent music.

I'd also like to make a desperate plea for a few more handbell ringers! We have two wonderful groups - one that meets at 4:30 pm on Sundays and one that meets at 6:00 pm on Wednesday evenings.

As always, if you have any questions, please email Marci at music@ststephensnorman.org or catch me or Julie at the church on Wednesday evening or Sunday morning!

Church Events (continued)

- **Oct 26—Finance Committee**
- **Oct 31st—Church Work Day**

Pastor's Pen

Grace and Peace to you, Saint Stephen's family,

As we welcome the beautiful crisp air and changing colors of October (maybe), our focus for this month's edition of The Shield turns to a profound and sometimes misunderstood aspect of our faith: Stewardship.

Often, when the word "stewardship" is mentioned in church, there is a natural tendency to brace ourselves for a conversation exclusively about finances. We instinctively think of our wallets, the offering plates, and the annual church budget. While financial giving is certainly a beautiful and necessary part of how we sustain our ministries, I want to remind us all that true biblical stewardship is so much broader, deeper, and richer than money alone.

When we officially join the United Methodist Church, we take a sacred vow to faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. These five pillars form the true foundation of stewardship. It is the understanding that absolutely everything we have—our time, our unique talents, our energy, and our non-monetary treasures—is a gift from God. Stewardship is simply how we choose to manage and share those gifts to build up God's kingdom.

Here is what living our lives for God looks like through these five promises:

Prayers: Dedicating your time to pray for our church, our community, and the world is a vital act of stewardship. When you lift up the Saint Stephen's family in your daily conversations with God, you are offering a powerful spiritual treasure that sustains our church in ways money never could.

Presence: Showing up matters. In a world that is increasingly distracted and disconnected, giving the gift of your time and your physical (or digital) presence is incredibly valuable. Whether in Sunday worship, a small group, or a community event, your presence encourages others and strengthens our fellowship.

Service: Every single one of you has been equipped with a unique set of skills and passions. Volunteering your time—whether that is teaching Sunday School, greeting at the door, helping maintain the church grounds, or serving in local outreach—is an offering of your literal hands and feet to do God's work.

Gifts: Yes, this includes our financial giving, but it also encompasses the physical resources and non-monetary treasures we share. It might be providing a meal for a grieving family, donating supplies to a local shelter, or sharing the harvest from your garden.

Witness: How we live our lives outside the walls of Saint Stephen's is perhaps our greatest offering. Sharing God's love through our daily interactions, advocating for justice, and being a beacon of kindness in our workplaces and neighborhoods is the ultimate stewardship of the Gospel we have received.

This October, I invite you to reflect on your whole life as an offering to God. Where is God calling you to invest your time? How can you use your specific talents to serve others? What treasures—both financial and non-financial—are you being called to share?

Let us spend this month celebrating all the ways we can joyfully give back to the God who has so generously given to us.

In Christ Alone,

Pastor Jinx

Immigrant Rights in the City of Norman

The state of Oklahoma is experiencing a significant increase in ICE presence, in particularly by expanding local police and sheriff cooperation through an agreement called the 287(g) Agreement. The 287(g) Agreement is an agreement between ICE and a local police or sheriff department. The Norman Police Department (NPD) opposes this and plans not to engage any agreement with ICE stating that would deteriorate their relations with the community and they support welcoming values. The Norman Coalition for Refugee Support (NCRS), of which St. Stephen's is a member, supports the Norman police in their opposition to use of a 287(g) Agreement.

The NCRS concern about use of this agreement is it generally avoids due process in immigrant arrests, leads to a fast track to deportation and leads to a deterioration of the welcoming values in Norman. The concern is also that the NPD may in the near future be pressured into this agreement. A more in-depth look at the use of 287(g) Agreements in Oklahoma can be viewed in this link to the OK Policy Institute article on 287(g) Agreements in Oklahoma, Entering into 287(g) agreements harms Oklahoma families and communities - Oklahoma Policy Institute.

Below are protections the NCRS proposed to the City of Norman to add in resolutions or ordinances. Or, in the worst case, add these protections in any ICE agreement to provide some degree of protections for immigrants residing in Norman. The City of Norman Police Department may be pressured contractually or politically through the 287(g) Agreement and associated funding pressures to depart from their current policy of non-compliance with ICE by cooperating with ICE to surveil Norman immigrants using information from the City of Norman or other sources and to then arrest and deport immigrants without proper protections.

Recent responses from the City of Norman indicated a new immigration page on the City of Norman website is being developed. The page is to state immigrant rights, provide information about immigration issues in Norman and identify immigrant resources in the area. The NCRS is pleased and supports this effort toward greater transparency of immigrant issues for all residents of Norman. The proposed immigrant protections listed below have been under consideration by the City of Norman for several months. The immigration page is expected to be up and running by the end of this year.

Proposed Immigrant Protections:

1. Require judicial warrants for civil arrests
2. State reason or purpose of arrest immediately to the detainee and on the public record
3. Allow the detainee a phone call to their family or their representative
4. Allow the detainee to be seen by their attorney and family representatives before leaving the city of Norman city limits
5. Require ICE officers to wear ID badges, body cameras, and no masks
6. No arrests in or around Norman schools or Norman churches
7. Allow asylees to attend their asylum court hearings as they are entitled and comply with the judge's ruling before considering detention or deportation. If approved, allow the immigrant free passage to their next immigration status. If denied, allow for appeal or allow for the established transitional period for self-deportation. Immigrants following the law should not be punished because a policy changed in the meantime.

Immigrant Rights in the City of Norman (continued)

Immigrants leave their country of origin to flee broken communities, due to economic collapse, violent conflict, or persecution from cultural or political discrimination or other extreme circumstances. Immigrants add to the cultural and economic vibrancy of the growing international community within Norman. Here, we can afford them the opportunity they desire to live out their dreams of a new life safe from the hardships that drove them from a country they loved. It's important that we uphold the right of all peoples to a life of dignity and the right of immigrants to petition a government for a path to citizenship. Immigrants lose their livelihoods and their dignity to travel here to a new country. Resettling in a new country is complicated by learning a new language and learning to navigate a strange set of social and economic resource networks. As Norman is a welcoming city and honors human rights, its important to outline provisions that ensure protections of immigrants.
May Norman continue to act out its welcoming creed and be the better angels in the lives of Norman immigrants.

CROP Walk

Be a Hunger Fighter: Join us for the Oct. 18 CROP Hunger Walk

You can help fight hunger locally and globally by joining our St. Stephen's team in the 43rd annual Cleveland County CROP Walk to Stop Hunger on Sunday, Oct. 18, at the Adult Wellness and Education Center, 602 N. Findlay Ave. Walker check in is at 1:30 p.m., and the send-off is at 2 p.m.

CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) is a fun, family-friendly event to raise awareness and raise funds to fight hunger locally and globally. Proceeds support the local work of Food and Shelter in Norman and the global development, refugee assistance and disaster relief efforts of Church World Service.

Register to raise funds or donate online at our St. Stephen's team page at https://events.crophungerwalk.org/st-stephens-norman. You can also register or donate using sponsor envelopes at the CROP Walk table in the loggia each Sunday preceding the event.

"Norman's CROP Hunger Walk was started 42 years ago by St. Stephen's and First Christian Church to help address food insecurity in our community and beyond and has expanded to include many faith groups and businesses," said CROP Walk co-chair Brenda Wheelock. "We have set a big goal for our 43rd annual walk to raise $45,000 to help our neighbors in need."

This year's 2-mile route will include a stop at Norman's Food and Shelter Inc. and its Share Center, which will host an open house. We will once again offer rocking chairs for participants who want to "CROP Rock" to show their support for the cause. Participants are welcome to bring friendly, leashed pets.

Walkers who raise $100 or more will receive a free CROP Walk T-shirt. The 2026 T-shirts feature the theme, "Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly."

This year's CROP Walk will feature a free post-walk cookout and "Buskers for CROP Walk" live music along the route. The event will also include children's activity stations hosted by Pioneer Libraries Mobile Maker Lab and FCCLA – Family Career and Community Leaders of America.

"CROP Walk's slogan is, 'We walk because they walk,'" said Brenda, who co-leads St. Stephen's team with Becky LeClair. "By participating in CROP Hunger Walk, we are walking in solidarity with those who must walk miles every day for such basic necessities as food, water or medical care. We appreciate our St. Stephen's family's faithful support each year and hope you will join us again as a walker or sponsor."

For more information, call Brenda at (405) 620-1305 or visit the local walk website at www.clevelandcountycropwalk.org.

Mission Trip Fundraiser

For the Tulsa Wesley Mission Trip

The Tulsa Wesley is going on a mission trip to Puerto Rico! This is the very first time we are taking a mission trip as a Wesley. Our students will have the opportunity to serve alongside local ministries and communities through hands-on projects, helping with church and home repairs, homeless ministry, nursing home ministry, and disaster relief.



This trip is an opportunity for students to step outside their own communities, listen to the stories of others, and put their faith into action! Mission trips can be transformative experiences for students, but the cost can be a significant barrier. We don't want finances to be the reason a student can't go on this amazing trip.



That's where our UMC community and supporters can make a difference. Your support can help make it possible for a student to participate in this trip—to serve, to learn, to grow in their faith, an to bring what they experience back to Tulsa.

1) Purchase one of the items pictured. The cost includes the item and about a $10 donation to our fundraiser. It is created and shipped by Bonfire.

2) Give directly to the mission fund, found at the link below.

https://www.wesleytu.org/mission-fundraiser



T-shirts:

Premium Cotton: $27.99

Comfort Colors: $32.00

Sweatshirts: $40.00

Travel mug: $33.00

Shine Kids

Hello everyone!

This is such a busy time for everyone and we have some very exciting events coming up for ShineKids and I hope your family will join us every chance you get!

Upcoming events:

- Saturday October 3rd we will meet at The Garage on Main Street in Norman for lunch and then we will head to the Grand Reopening of Second Chance Animal Sanctuary.

- October 4th Sunday Night Live will learn about Meals Around the World. I promise some fun and interesting snacks will be provided.

- October 11th No Sunday Night Live due to Fall Break.

- October 18th Sunday Night Live will be held off site. We will meet at the Adult Wellness Center 602 North Findlay at 130 for a group photo and then we will participate in CROP Walk.

- October 18th is also Children's Sabbath and kids will lead worship. Sunday Night Live is the time we are practicing the music and we are working on speaking parts during Sunday School.

- October 25th Sunday Night Live will be a fun surprise! Be there or be square!

And looking further out we will have a Christmas Pageant on December 13th between services and January 10th we will have a Trivia Night which will be a fundraiser for Interfaith Friendship Camp! Please mark your calendars and plan on joining us for these 2 exciting new events!

We have lots of fun things planned for our kids and love it when they are able to participate. Please let us know if you need anything or have any questions!

Blessings,
Ms. Jenn

Hello everyone!

Fall Roundtable

Please join the Adult Education Committee at the Fall Roundtable as they sponsor a dialogue between Rabbi Harris of the Temple B'nai Israel and Imam Haris Ali of the Islamic Society of Norman, titled " Challenges Facing Islamic and Jewish Faiths in Oklahoma".

The Fall Roundtable will be Sunday, November 8, 2026, 2:00-3:30pm.

The Roundtable will be publicized in the St. Stephen's Shield and Facebook page. There will be no potluck meal this year for the Fall Roundtable. The Roundtable will be livestreamed on the St. Stephen's Facebook page.

Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for this fascinating dialogue between two important leaders in our broader faith community.

More information will follow in the weekly announcements, on Facebook, and in the November Shield.