ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL- MISSOURI SYNOD



ISSUE 3 August-October 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Cardinal Kids

Mission and Ministry Update

Farewell From Vicar Josh

Welcome From Vicar Tristan

Comfort Dog Ministry

LWML News

Merry Market

Finance & Facility Board Report

Aug/Sept/Oct Birthdays of the Homebound & Seasoned Citizens (80 & Older)

Celebrate the Family

School Endowment Report

Children & Family Ministry

School News 12 & 13

Youth News

Mission Connection

Follow Us 16



Cardinal Kids

We invite you to join us for our second annual Warriors for Pediatric Cancer "Cars for a Cure" car show on September 20th from 10 am to 2 pm.

This school year's fundraiser will go to the Carolina Caring: Cardinal Kids program.

Cardinal Kids is a community-based sanctuary that offers pediatric palliative care, hospice, and prenatal support services.

The mission of Cardinal Kids is to deliver compassionate care, ensuring every child and family feels supported and understood.

They aim to enhance the quality of life for young parents, providing comfort and relief through tailored care plans that reflect their individual needs and desires.

Their vision is to be a sanctuary of support, where every family feels empowered and every child receives the care they deserve.

Carolina Caring is located in Newton, North Carolina, and serves the children in the Catawba region.

Thank you in advance for your kindness and willingness to help our school and students raise money for this organization.



Mission and Ministry Update

As I write this newsletter article, there is a great deal of noise just outside my window. Yes, construction on our new Mission & Ministry Center has begun in full force! We are excited about how this building will support and facilitate all that we do as a congregation, now and for generations to come.

In this process, we can clearly see that the Lord's timing is always best. While we were somewhat frustrated with the lengthy permitting process (and by some of the changes that were required), the timing ended up being far better than we could have imagined. One challenge with building right in between structures that were put into place over a period of decades is that we have discovered some water, sewer, phone and power lines in unexpected places. To put it simply, it has been far less disruptive to suddenly lose water to our school while 300+ students and staff have been on summer break!



So, as wonderful as it is to see progress being made on a building, I really want to focus on an even more important Mission and Ministry update – how God is at work In, Among and Through us here at St. Stephens!

First of all, what a blessing that we have seen in our Youth as God gathered them this past week together in worship, service and discipleship at the National Youth Gathering (NYG). This event takes places every 3 years, and it is a big deal (as in 20,000+ large!). This year, we sent our largest contingent in many years, so God be praised. Additionally, many of them will then also be part of servant week at Camp Linn Haven as soon as they return from NYG.

Secondly, I would like to give thanks for the way that God continues to bless SSLC with one wonderful Vicar after another. It is always hard to say "goodbye" to the departing Vicars (and spouses), but as Josh and Sarah return to Seminary, we are also looking forward to welcoming Tristan and Carolyn Jones (and soon to arrive child!) as they come to serve among us. What a blessing it is to see how God is at work in these young couples!

Third, as we celebrate the way God raises up "workers for the harvest", I want you to realize that this means YOU as well! One of our congregational goals for this year is to "Develop a pathway to train people to live as everyday missionaries, connecting people with Jesus where we live, learn, work and play", so we are excited to begin introducing material written by LCMS pastor Greg Finke to train and encourage each one of us to "Join Jesus on His Mission". This will be a major emphasis later this year and especially at the beginning of 2026. By then, we will clearly see a building taking shape, but having a Mission & Ministry Center must be accompanied with us all being well-equipped to carry out the work of the Lord. This the truly the "mission" and the "ministry" that God has for us here at St. Stephens, and through us, He will carry it on until the day He returns!

Finally, here is the most important Mission and Ministry Update: God is right now continually at work In, Among and Through us to Connect People with Jesus. The Lord is using us to nurture faith, strengthen relationships and serve our neighbors - to Him be all the glory and praise!

Blessings,

Pastor Dave

Farewell From Vicar Josh & Sarah

To the family of Christ at St. Stephens,

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3-5)

I can't think of better words than these from St. Paul to express my thanks, my joy, and my gratitude for these last 12 months. From the very first day that we arrived, we have felt the love of Christ from His people here in Hickory. Your partnership in the gospel is evidence of the body of Christ at work, a body which has supported and encouraged me in my development to be a pastor who leads others with the gospel.

As we leave, my prayer for all of you remains the same. First, I thank and praise God for our partnership in the gospel, the good news of Jesus' great love for us, a gift

that we can never thank God for enough. And second, I pray that you might remain strong in this faith which we share. Continue to be strengthened by the Word of God, read and preached every week. Continue to be strengthened through God's gift of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Endure. Look to Jesus. Amen.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

Josh and Sarah Marlatt 5 Founders Way, Unit C St Louis, MO 63105

Welcome Vicar Tristan & Carolyn



My name is Tristan Jones and I'm excited to be Vicar #8 at St. Stephens! I'll be coming with my wife Carolyn, our dog Apollo, and a little boy who is due to make his debut in early September. For a bit of background on me, I grew up in Texas and moved to Florida in high school. I got a Bachelor's degree in computer Science from the University of Central Florida, but more importantly that is where I met Carolyn. When it comes to ministry Lutheran camps have a special place in my heart. I spent many years as a camper and three years as a summer staff. It was at camp where I really felt like I encountered the power and depth of God's grace and love, and saw the power of a community gathered together around Christ.

Carolyn and I are very excited for our vicarage here at St. Stephens. We have already experienced a great deal of hospitality before even arriving, and thank you for making us feel so supported. I look forward to getting some first hand practical experience on what it looks like to serve God's people as a pastor. Certainly honing my preaching and

teaching skills, but more importantly learning how to build relationships and speak God's life-giving Word into people's lives beyond the context of Sunday morning. A year is a deceptively short time, so I plan to do everything I can to get to know as many as y'all as possible. I cannot wait to see what the Lord has to teach me through each and every one of you.

See y'all soon,

Tristan Jones

Comfort Dog Ministry

Oh, What a Summer!

What an incredible summer it has been! Our Comfort Dog team has been busy spreading love, encouragement, and God's comfort through visits and ministry work. One of the highlights of our summer was attending the National LCC Comfort Dog Conference in Chicago-a truly uplifting and meaningful experience!



Every two years, Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) hosts their national gathering for Comfort Dogs and their teams. This year's theme was "Comfort, comfort my people," based on Isaiah 40:1: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."

As part of the conference, each team was invited to bring a centerpiece that represents what comfort means to them. For us, comfort is found in God. Comfort is found in Jesus. And above all, comfort is found in our faith in Him. We chose to reflect this through Faith's Bible verse, John 11:25-26: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?""

A heartfelt thank you to Beth Bowman and Gary Coble for designing and building our beautiful and meaningful centerpiece—it was truly a labor of love.

This year, I had the joy of traveling with my Top Dog, Sandy Matthews, Caregiver Laura Balhmann, handler Savannah Lee, and ministry partners Kristy Smith and Carolyn Watson. The conference was a wonderful time of fellowship, learning, and spiritual renewal. We had opportunities to connect with other teams, strengthen our purpose, and engage in hands-on training to continue growing in our ministry work.





Thank you for your prayers and support leading up to this trip. It was my very first airplane ride and airport experience, and I'm so thankful to report that everything went smoothly and safely!

As we look ahead, we're excited for the upcoming Comfort Dog Ministry year! Starting Tuesday, August 5th, we'll begin our monthly meetings, held at 1:00 PM or 6:30 PM in the conference room. If you feel called to be a part of this incredible ministry of compassion and connection, we would love to have you! For more information, please reach out to Top Dog, Sandy Mat-

thews, at: comfortdog@sslcms.org

With gratitude and love, Faith Comfort Dog

Lutheran Women's Missionary League

QUARTERLY MEETING COMING UP:

Ladies, please join us for the quarterly meeting of LWML on Sunday, September 7, 2025, from 3:00 – 5:00 in the fellowship hall. Hosted by the Elizabeth Circle, refreshments will be provided. Rhonda Roederer, professional genealogist and educator, will be our guest speaker and present two programs "In Her Footsteps, How Women In Your Ancestry Shape You" and "Who Do You Think You Are?", delving into the family histories of our two Co-Chairs, Regina Propst (Vickie Fletcher) and Teresa Ritchie (Cynthia Hewitt). Be prepared as Rhonda unlocks the past, inspires the future, and brings families together...one generation at a time. This is one you will not want to miss! Hope to see you there!

LWML invites you to get Connected



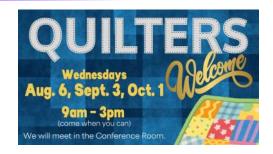
As the new school year begins, we invite you to join any of our circles. Below is a list of our circles, chair, mission and meeting time. Each circle has a mission they have taken on to serve our community and works with the overall LWML to serve on many levels. You can also check out our page on the church website (www.sslcms.org/lwml) for more information. Ladies of all ages are invited to join us!

Elizabeth Circle (Doris Sigmon) - Homebound Ministry - 2nd Tuesday of the month @ 1pm

Ruth Circle (Nancy Huffman) - Homebound Ministry and Fundraising - 4th Monday of the month @ 1pm Esther Circle (Pat Wilson) - Mission Outreach - 2nd Monday of the month @ 1pm Mary Circle (Teri Cain) - New Mothers, College Students, Military - 1st Wed. of the month @ 6:30pm

Rachel Circle (Sonni Thornton) - New Member & Visitor Relationships - 4th Wed. of month @ 10:30am





LWML Mites

One way to support national LWML missions is through mites. Each biennium the national LWML sets a mission goal. We are excited to share that the Mission Goal for this biennium has been met! Your generous support has made a tremendous impact, funding mission grants with a total of \$2.35 million to spread God's love and hope to those in need.

You may have been contributing Mites for years. If not, our LWML invites you to participate in this simple mission project. Little Mite Boxes are always available in the narthex next to the office door. Take one and put your extra change in it, along with a little prayer that these coins be used for various mission needs. Every 5th Sunday you can deposit your mites in the large Mite box in the narthex. Our next 5th Sunday is August 31. The LWML appreciates you joining us in this effort.

If you would like more information on the LWML, please visit the website (www.sslcms.org/lwml) or contact Regina Propst or Teresa Ritchie.



Connecting People With Jesus

Published quarterly by St. Stephens LCMS 2304 Springs Road NE Hickory, NC 28601

August-October 2025 Volume 24 Issue 3

Finance and Facility Board Report

	Church Income Jan thru June		Church Income Year to Date		
	<u>Given</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	YTD Given	Total Budgeted	
Offerings	\$716,084.00	\$735,979.70	\$716,084.00	\$1,471,959.34	
Other Income	\$12,887.63	\$8,250.00	\$12,887.63	\$16,500.00	
Total Income	\$728,971.63	\$744,229.70	\$728,971.63	\$1,488,459.34	

	Church Expenses Jan thru June		Church Expenses Year to Date	
	<u>Spent</u>	Budgeted	YTD Spent	Total Budgeted
Less expenses	\$696,389.42	\$743,680.02	\$696,389.42	\$1,488,459.34

Balance \$32,582.21

School's Financials Church Expansion Fund June

Account Balance

Jan thru June **Total Budget** \$951,728.28 \$2,215,962.25 Income

> \$1,025,753.28 \$2,215,962.25

Expenses (\$74,025.00) \$0.00 **Balance**



August/Sept./Oct. Birthdays Of The **Homebound and Seasoned Citizens** (80 & older)

August

Jean Spencer-8/5 Gail Cline-8/7 Elaine Kent-8/9 Betty Sigmon-8/14 Doris Sigmon-8/16 Virginia Caldwell-8/16 Tommy Campbell-8/21

September

Martha Killian-9/3 Cassie Deal-9/5 Harold Flowers-9/5 Doris Herman-9/8 Bill Isenhour-9/10 Ruth Cook-9/11 Thelma Huffman-9/11 David Poe-9/12 Peggy Allison-9/14 Ronnie Lewis-9/16 Benny Barger-9/20 Willine Austin-9/20 Bob Miller-9/24 Gil Brauch-9/26 Troy Deal-9/27 Ruby Hall-9/28 Carol Howard-9/28 **Honorable Mention** *Pastor Guelzow-9/1

*Pastor Shea-9/5 Pastor Ziehr-9/14

October

\$2,557,230.90

Ken Tillev-10/10 Ken Manfredi-10/12 Helen Janisko-10/14 Ralph Cazire-10/14 Hazel Murray-10/17 Jean Rollins-10/21 Lenora Isenhour-10/21 Gene Ewald-10/24 Allen Killian-10/27 Peggy Byers-10/28 Barbara Price-10/29

Celebrate the Family



Births

Henry Ryan Eddins, born June 4 to Zachary & Lauran. Henry is the grandson of Jeff & Dinky Eddins and the great grandson of Carl & Bugs Rullman.

Baptisms

Evelyn Jean Westby, daughter of Kyle & Jenna, was baptized on May 30. Her sponsors are Cory & Jessica Westby. Evelyn is the granddaughter of Sandy Westby & DuWayne Westby and the great granddaughter of Peggy Allison.

James Elliott Cline, son of Caleb & Tasha, was baptized on June 29. His sponsors are Justin & Brooke Joines and Brandon & Jordan Duncan. James is the little brother of Elijah & Asher and the grandson of Ricky & Nannette Cline.

Paige Marie Repass & **Andi Rae Repass**, children of Jeremy & Amanda, were baptized on July 6. Their sponsor is Megan Hudson.

Henry Ryan Eddins, son of Zachary & Lauren, was baptized on July 12. His sponsors are Ian Justice and Maddy Ogelsby. Henry is the grandson of Jeff & Dinky Eddins and the great grandson of Carl & Bugs Rullman.

Scarlett Grey Simpson, Elise Caroline Simpson, Sawyer Jane Simpson and Isla Grace Simpson, children of Megan & Wesley and grandchildren of Tom & Lori, were baptized on July 20. Their sponsors are Kevin Cornwell & Leah Granger; Bryan Granger & Sara Morrison; Kim Williams & Adam Pinkerton; Anna Stinson & Paul Morrison.

Evelyn Rea Isenhour, daughter of Kendall & Haley, was baptized on July 27. Her sponsors are Gavin & Keely Bennett.

Weddings

Congratulations to Courtney Houston and Eddie Taylor who were joined in marriage on August 2. Courtney is the daughter of Matt & Tammi Houston and Eddie is the grandson of Marie Huffman.

Eternal Glory

Gene Setzer–November 19, 1941–June 12, 2025. Husband of Harolene.

Contact Information St. Stephens Lutheran Church & School–MS

2304 Springs Rd. Hickory, NC 28601 Phone: 828-256-9865 www.sslcms.org

School Phone: 828-256-2166 www.sslswarriors.org

Staff
David Ziehr, Pastor
dziehr@sslcms.org

Shea Pennington, Pastor spennington@sslcms.org

David Guelzow, Visitation Pastor

dguelzow@sslcms.org

Josh Marlatt, Vicar

jmarlatt@sslcms.org

Randall Cline, Director of Youth Ministry

rcline@sslcms.org

Jadi Gurganious, Mission Facilitator

jgurganious@sslcms,org

Savannah Lee, Communication Coord.

slee@sslcms.org

Donna Lee, Children's Ministry dlee@sslcms.org

alee@ssici11s.org

Robert Smith, Traditional Music rsmith@sslcms.org

David Day, Contemporary Music dday@sslcms.org

Sharon Maynor, Administrator smaynor@sslcms.org

Tashia Fisher, Admin. Asst.

tfisher@sslcms.org

Tiffany Sigmon, Visitor Engagement Coord.

tsigmon@sslcms.org

Kristy Smith, New Member Coordinator

ksmith@sslcms.org

Brandon Buff, Tech. & Facilities

bbuff@sslcms.org

Ross Chiles, Principal

rchiles@sslcms.org

Debbi Becker, Admin. Asst.

dbecker@sslcms.ora

School Endowment Report

SSLS Endowment Fund: Quarter End 6/30/2025

Investment Category	12/31/2024	6/30/2025
Cash	\$616,010.48	\$591,595.98
Bond Funds	\$0.00	
Savings Account (Thrivent)	\$241,636.86	\$245,204.85
Stock Mutual Funds	\$724,925.57	\$770,488.70
Stocks	\$161,779.72	\$160,187.69
Real Estate	\$223,200.00	\$223,200.00
TOTAL	\$1,967,552.63	\$1,990,677.22

The above figures include a \$59,026.58 payment to SSLS in May 2025

Children's & Family Ministry

FALL 2025

KXXX

Connecting Families to Christ

GO TO **SSLCMS.ORG** FOR A FULL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY CALENDAR



It is hard to believe that it is BACK to SCHOOL time already. I am excited to welcome new and returning students to SSLS and will be praying for all students and educators throughout our region and beyond. As you get back into routine, consider worship, Bible study, and prayer as a part of your daily & weekly routine. Let us remember to encourage each other each day to stay connected both to Christ & one another.

Sunday, August 17 10:30am Worship students of all ages are encouraged to bring their bookbags & receive a blessing at the beginning of worship and receive a special gift to remind them that Jesus is with them as they return to school. Teachers will be commissioned and prayed over during this special Back to School Sunday.

Thank you to all who participated in this year's VBS: BUILD!



Over 150 children, teens, & adults put safety vests and hardhats on learning to BUILD their lives on the Solid Rock of Jesus! Each evening worship was led by Vicar Josh and Deb Kastner. 'Builder' Rachel Wilson & her 'Assistant' Harley Buff introduced the theme with their crazy antics. We built a giant Lego man.... The Feet reminding us to Stand Firm in God's Word. The Heart, to trust in God's love. The Hands to be part of what Jesus is doing and finally the Head, to get your whole self out there! Crews participated in four activity stations: Bible Challenge, Creation Station, Game Zone, & Praise Zone. On the 4th and final day we invited Parents to join us for a Closing Worship & Family Fun Night encouraging families to bring food items in for SSLC Backpack Ministry. We then enjoyed food, fellowship, and fun! LLL Men's Club provided dinner. Party Pros provided waterslide fun & Kona Ice was on hand with cool treats. It was truly an exciting week!



Family Bible Hour
Sunday Mornings
9:15-10:15am
PS & Kinders/ Little Lambs
Education Wing- Riser Room
Grades 1 & 2/ Enduring Faith
Education Wing #222
Grades 3-5/ Enduring Faith
Education Wing #220



You Can Make A Difference!

Opportunities to serve in our Children's Ministry:

- Childcare Team
- Classroom Leader
- Classroom Assistant
- Hospitality
- Special Events
- Mentor



CIFICAIN UP A CIFICLD IN THE WAY RESSHOULD GO: AND WHIEN HE IS OLD, HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT." PROV. 22:6

Faith Legacy: 3rd Grade Bible Blessing

Parents are invited to attend three sessions beginning the 1st Sunday in October:

- Why the Bible is so important in our Faith life.
- What the Bible is and how its pieces fit together to tell God's Story.
- How we use the power of God's word to direct our lives.

We explore these questions through group activities, videos, and bible study that equip families to grow in the Word together. Resources will be provided to use at home.

Sunday, October 26th 10:30am Worship

Participants will receive a special blessing during worship. Please RSVP if you plan to attend the parent sessions and would like your child to receive a Bible. SSLS 3rd Grade students will all receive a Bible and encouraged to RSVP to participate.

For more information Donna Lee at 381-5391 or dlee@sslcms.org.

Page 12

School News

Well, as I am writing this it is super-hot and in the middle of July; by the time it gets to you it will be close to Christmas. Of course I am speaking in hyperbole; it seems time is not constant it does pick up speed the older you get. Growing up, summer lasted forever and Christmas never seemed to get here. Although we all love summer, it is always a good thing to get back on a schedule and there is no better way to do that than to listen to a school bell every 45 minutes or so – well maybe there are better ways.

Within the span of our day, we build on the new things we began last year. Our new kindergarten program (with two teachers) and our S.T.E.A.M. program enjoyed successful years and we look to build on and grow both programs this year. We continue to grow our student body: we finished our 2024-25 school year with 230 students (Preschool - 42 & K-8 - 188) and we begin our 2025-26 school year with 265 students (Preschool - 56 & K-8 - 209). As we continue to grow, we look ahead at expanding our school ministry. This is going to be an exciting year. With our Mission and Ministry Center being built and the growth of our school, we give thanks for all of God's Blessings. Unlike the resounding gong of our school bell; we make a joyful noise.

Our theme for this school year is "Let's Make a Joyful Noise!" prior to this theme all our school themes have been unique to our school. This year we decided to jump on with the LCMS (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) and borrow their theme for schools which is "Let's Make a Joyful Noise!" Psalm 98:4 reads, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!" I do not want to appear as if I am going against scripture, that I want to be clear. Psalm 98:4 is a great place to start. However, a Joyful Noise does not begin or end there. Here is an extreme example; if a person is mute and cannot make any noise, are they incapable of making a joyful noise? Of course not.

When I think about a Joyful Noise I think about the Fruit of the Spirit. Joy is a Fruit of the Spirit and when I think about making a Joyful Noise, it in some way, always connects to a Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). My hope for our school year is that we are full of noise that is filled with Joy in all we say and do.

Please continue to pray for our SSLS ministry.

Ross Chiles, Principal

A few Dates:

8/17	Staff Commissioning and Backpack Blessing at the 10:30 Service
8/18	Kool Park Kick Off from 6:30-9:00
8/20	First Day of School
9/1	No School-Labor Day
9/19	1/2 Day of School (dismissal at 11:30am)—Teacher/Parent Conferences
9/20	2 nd Annual Cars for the Cure Car Show
10/16	No School–Teacher Workday
10/17	No School–Fall Break
11/11	Veteran's Day Celebration



SCHOOL STAFF

Ross Chiles, Principal Debbi Becker, Admin Asst. Deb Anderson, Family & Community Liaison

Tiffany Sigmon, Receptionist

Kathryn Fisher, Kindergarten Taylor Bosley, Kindergarten Rebecca Flowers, 1st Grade Devon Payne, 2nd Grade Natasha Whitaker, 3rd Grade Kelly Hooper, 4th Grade Rachel Wilson, 5th Grade Kelli Butler, 6th grade Homeroom April Drake, 7th grade Homeroom Cheryl Stiles, 8th grade Homeroom/ Religion Laura Frank Donna Lee, Art Rae Fritz, Health/PE Krystal Travis, Athletic Dir. Amity Enci, Lunch Room Head Sheila Poovey, Lunch Room Renee Stiles, Lunch Room Rose Drake, Lunch Room Kristin Priola, Resource Teacher Amber Boston, Music Beverly Fagan, Opener Nora Shaver, Afterschool Jane Guelzow, Afterschool Karla Martinz, Afterschool

Preschool Staff

Angela Parlier, Director Karen Ly, PS3 Jessica Wacaster, PS3 Amy Trudel, PS4 Glenda Setzer, PS4 Bethany Kahill, TK

Renee Stiles, Afterschool

AUGUST UPCOMING EVENTS

ST STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

AUG 14 PARENT ORIENTATION AT 6:30 PM

AUG 15 STUDENT OPEN HOUSE 1PM-3PM

AUG 17 SSLS STAFF COMMISSIONING/BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS (CHURCH SERVICE) 10:30 AM

AUG 18 KOOL PARK 6:30PM-9PM

AUG 20 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL - EARLY DISMISSAL AT 11:30 AM





Part-time Spanish teacher, Aids, Afterschool

Passionate about education? Love working with children? We would love to have you on staff.
Call 828-256-2166 to learn more.

Youth News

"BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRIST TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS FOR LIFE!"

A Summer of Growth, Service, and Joy!

What an incredible summer it's been so far in the Youth Ministry at St. Stephens! God has been moving in big and small ways as students have gathered to grow in faith, build friendships, and serve others.

In **May and June**, students connected through monthly **Hang Time events** for both middle and high schoolers, where they enjoyed food, fun, and faith-filled discussions. We celebrated a night to remember at **High School Prom**, honored our **graduating seniors and rising students** on Graduation/Move-Up Sunday, and kicked off summer with a full day of thrills at **Carowinds**.



Middle schoolers had a blast during our "Build" VBS, an engaging week of games, teaching, and worship focused on building our lives on the Solid Rock of Jesus. Many of them also had the opportunity to spend a week in the mountains during Middle School Week at Camp Linn Haven, where they enjoyed outdoor adventures, Christ-centered friendships, and daily worship in God's beautiful creation.

In July, all eyes were on the 2025 LCMS National Youth Gathering – Endure, where our high school students joined thousands of others New Orleans for a week of worship, learning, and spiritual renewal. As July closed, more of our teens headed to the mountains for Camp Linn Haven Teen Servant Week, serving the community of Western North Carolina with joy and compassion.



Now, as we move into August, we're not slowing down:

August 10 | 6:00-9:00 PM-ManHunt!

A favorite returns! Grab your crew for an evening of high-energy fun and friendly competition.

August 12 | 1:00-4:00 PM-Back-to-School Pool Party!

We're closing out summer with a splash! All middle and high school students are invited to join us for swimming, food, and fun as we launch the new school year.

Thank you to all the parents, volunteers, and leaders who continue to support and pray for our youth. God is doing amazing things through this generation - and it's a joy to be part of it.



In Christ's love, Randall Cline Director of Youth Ministry



Mission Connection



Thank you for the prayers and support for the Alaska Mission team. Our trip to Fort Yukon, AK continues to form relationships in the village to Connect People with Jesus.

This was our year for travel nightmares. Delays, missed connections, staying at a hotel in Salt Lake City, backtracking flight plans, holding a plane just for us to make our connection; all before arriving in Alaska.

Recap of our week....It was unusually hot in Alaska. Josh, school maintenance brought us a portable AC unit which definitely helped us stay cool, preparing church pews to be refinished, kids laughter at VBS, songs, crafts, bible stories, adult bible study and crafts, growing our relationships with our team members during devotions, making new friends.



Saturday morning we received notification of our flight home being cancelled. After making new arrangements more delays and missed connections, we finally made it home Monday afternoon.

Connecting with our friends in Fort Yukon was worth all of our travel issues.

We are truly blessed to be a blessing,

Jadi Gurganious, Sheila Poovey, Rick Poovey, Heather Poovey, Teri Cain, Wayne Auton, Michee Ferber, Ben Simpson and Cheryl Simpson



Summer Missions Update

The SSLS library has received 70 new books this summer to add to the library. There are 20 books remaining that are labeled as "most wanted". You can check out the Amazon wishlist at sslcms.org/ssls-library.

The School supply drive will continue through August. The Esther Circle appreciates your support in serving our local schools. Check the bulletin for a complete list or watch your emails to order from the Amazon wish list.

Corner Table-Backpack program

The Corner Table—Backpack program supports our local schools by providing food bags for those students that need assistance. To help with this program we will be collecting the following items for the fall:

- Macaroni & Cheese (box)
- Oatmeal (packs)
- Can chicken or tuna

Please bring items to the Mission box in the narthex. Thank you for your support.



Tuesday, September 2

8:30am-Merry Market vendor registration. Look for the changes we have in place for registration.

Saturday, Sept, 13, and Sunday, September 14

Ministry Fair - This weekend you have the opportunity to get connected to the ministries we have here at St. Stephens Lutheran Church & School. More info to come.

ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN CHURCH—MS 2304 Springs Road NE Hickory, NC 28601 (828) 256-9865

Web-site address: sslcms.org

Non-Profit Organ. U. S. Postage PAID Hickory, NC Permit No. 83

Address Return Request

