



MISSION CONNECTION

VOLUME 24

ISSUE 4

November 2025—January 2026

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**Merry
MARKET**

SATURDAY
November 22 • 9a-2p
St. Stephens Lutheran Church MS

50 VENDORS!
**CHRISTMAS
SHOPPING EVENT!**

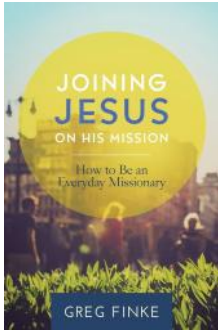
- SEWING
- CRAFTS
- JEWELRY
- POTTERY
- ARTWORK
- CLOTHING
- HANDBAGS
- BAKEGOODS
- COOKBOOKS

LUNCH
SOUP
or
SANDWICH

PROCEEDS FROM BOOTH SPACE RENTAL
TO BENEFIT ALASKA MISSION TEAM

2304 SPRINGS ROAD • HICKORY

Joining Jesus In 2026 and Beyond



As we step into 2026, we will embark on a shared journey of everyday mission. Beginning in January, we will be using “*Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary*” by LCMS pastor Greg Finke. This engaging and practical book (along with video bible studies) will help us discover what it means to join Jesus in the places we already live, learn, work, and play.

Jesus is already at work in the lives of people around us—neighbors, co-workers, classmates, friends, and even strangers. Our calling is not to “add more to our plates,” but to recognize and join the mission He’s already carrying out. This is what it means to live out our **Core Values**:

- **We are Disciple-Makers** – The practice of everyday mission helps us grow in faith and nurture the faith of others.
- **We are Everyday Missionaries** – We believe we are called to connect people with Jesus exactly where we live, learn, work, and play.
- **We are Servant Leaders** – Jesus leads by serving; joining Him means loving and serving our neighbors in practical, real ways.
- **We are Kingdom-Driven** – Jesus is the heart of everything we do. As we follow Him, we seek His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Imagine what God can do as each of us joins Jesus right where we are! Over the coming months, we’ll explore practical ways to recognize His work and participate in it with joy. Whether at the dinner table, on the ball field, in the classroom, or at the office, Jesus is already on mission. He’s inviting you to join Him.

*God Bless,
Pastor Shea*

Cemetery Updates

The new cemetery (Springs Rd.) will have a new sidewalk leading to the columbarium from the drive poured in the next couple of weeks. The sidewalk is being poured to help assist those visiting the columbarium for various reasons.

Over the years the cemetery records (paper copies) have gotten weathered, torn, taped, and pretty much everything in between. In today’s world of technology, several members of the cemetery committee have researched several companies to get our cemeteries on a digital data base. What benefits is there to going digital?

- We have accuracy of the plots and the names of those within the plots (GPS)
- Information will be available to the public (we have people calling asking if someone is buried in our cemetery)
- The data base will have pictures of the headstone
- All of the above and more will be available to you as a member online

The committee has met and contracted A Lazarus Cemetery Mapping to begin work as soon as the sidewalk to the columbarium is completed.

On January 1, 2026 cemetery plots will see an increase in price. The cost of a cemetery plot is for the perpetual care, long term maintenance of the grounds.

Church members - \$400

Non-Members who currently own a plot - \$1,300

What Has Changed Since 2005?



When I was installed as a pastor at St. Stephens in 2005, the congregation was actively developing plans for a major construction project. As the “new guy” it was exciting to be part of such a thriving congregation! I soon noticed, however, that there was a growing tension, especially in Congregational meetings. Ideas varied, of course, but the master plan called for building a very large Worship Center, with a seating capacity of up to 1200. That bold plan was technically approved in a rather raucous meeting, but the problem was obvious – the congregation was divided.

I believe that it is healthy for a congregation to have members with differing opinions, which is one reason we strongly advocate for our worship to have a variety of styles in order to reach more people, but relationships began to suffer when we lost focus on Jesus Christ (the very One whom we worship) as we sank into “worship wars”. Since we were becoming more divided, we had a vital decision to make about building – we chose to rebuild relationships out of Love for God and for one another.

As God worked through many faithful individuals and courageous leaders (along with the guidance of a group called Ambassadors of Reconciliation), the Lord began to draw us back together as the “Body of Christ”. This required the confession of sins such as anger, idolatry, gossip and a lack of love, both among individuals and at times publicly, but by God’s Grace, we forgave one another and many relationships were restored. We still have different opinions, but our culture has shifted to prioritize working together. Perhaps the best example of this change is our unique model of governance. When I arrived, we were ineffectively working under a policy-based model with a single board. This is very popular with businesses and non-profits, and can work very well, but as I saw it, a large part of the conflict in our congregation centered around who could control that sole board. As we restructured, the congregation decided to include many more people in different, yet cooperative roles. Instead of a single Board, we now have a Board of Elders, a Board of Finance & Facilities, and a School Board, each with their own area of responsibility, yet also with a support for, and accountability to, one another. The leaders of those three Boards form a Council, along with our President and Vice-president. This Council serves the purpose of Coordination, Communication and Conciliation. Yes, this structure is a bit cumbersome as it requires a lot of effort, and sometimes even multiple levels of approval to get anything done. It is not efficient, but it has been effective at making us to work together.

With a healthier culture and a different model of governance all striving for unity, what else has changed at St. Stephens in the past 20 years? On the negative side, we have less people involved in worship than we did in 2005. As a single data point, that is concerning, but we actually have more people involved in small group ministry and Bible Study, which means that a higher percentage of our members are involved in the Word and Fellowship. Here’s some more data for you. In the last 10 years, there has been considerable “turnover” in the congregation. We have received 528 members in the past decade, which includes 209 baptisms! Some of those have come and gone, but many have become vital servants and sharers of God’s Grace. Also, part of the changing membership of our congregation are those whom the Lord has called to Glory. That number since 2015 includes just over 200 Saints of St. Stephens. They have received the Victory, but the Lord still has much for us to do in our ongoing mission of “Connecting People with Jesus”.

So, 20 years later we are peacefully and cooperatively working together to build. There’s the obvious construction of a Mission & Ministry Center which will serve church and school as a “Firm Foundation” for all that comes next as we serve the Lord and our community. But more than a physical structure, God is working in and through and among each of us to build up the Body of Christ so that we may bless generations to come with the Love of Jesus. That must never change. Thank God that He is not finished with us! To God be the Glory.

Pastor Dave

Car Show Thank You



Thank you to everyone who came out and supported our 2nd annual Cars For a Cure Car Show. Because of you, we were able to raise \$6,347.65 to donate to Carolina Caring: Cardinal Kids through our Warriors Against Pediatric Cancer Fundraiser.

A Special Thank You to our Sponsors:

- K&M Tire
- G&E Landscaping
- TechMet
- Killian's Hardware
- HVY Construction
- VESCO
- Superior Control & Data
- Berkshire Hathaway Blue Ridge Realtors
- Jennifer E. Eckard Attorney at Law
- T.H.E. Salon and Studios
- LC Parham Inc. FedEx

Please join the staff and students of SSLS for:

Veteran's Day Breakfast & Chapel
Tuesday, November 11, 2025

8:15am - Breakfast

9:00am - Chapel

Call Debbi in the school office to RSVP.



Connecting People With Jesus

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November 2025–January 2026
Volume 24 Issue 4

Comfort Dog Ministry

The past few months have been a busy and joyful time for me, Faith Comfort Dog, and my amazing ministry team. We've had so many opportunities to be out in the community, sharing love, comfort, and the peace of Christ—one paw at a time!



In August, we kicked things off by attending the Back to School Bash, where we helped hand out free backpacks and school supplies to local children. It was such a blessing to be part of helping families prepare for the new school year. I loved seeing the kids' smiles—there's something really special about being part of moments like that.

In September, we stayed busy with a variety of events. We took part in our church's Ministry Fair, where we promoted the Comfort Dog ministry and shared how we serve both inside and outside our congregation. Later that month, we were at the Cars For a Cure Car Show, where SSLS raised money for Carolina Caring: Cardinal Kids. It was a fun day filled with beautiful cars, friendly faces, and a great cause that helps children in need of hospice and palliative care.



I also attended the Back-the-Blue Breakfast at St. Stephens Lutheran School, where we had the opportunity to thank our local police officers for their service. It meant a lot to be there to show support and gratitude, and I could tell it meant a lot to them, too.

In October, we went on a special trip to Virginia Beach, VA to attend the Southeastern District Church Workers Conference. It was a wonderful time of learning, worship, and encouragement with other church workers from all over our district. I was there to provide a little extra comfort and companionship during the busy conference days—and I think I did just that.



We also took part in National Night Out in Conover, NC, where I had the chance to meet so many people in the community, including first responders and local families. It was a great evening of connection and community.

As I look back over these past few months, I'm so thankful for every opportunity God has given us to serve. Whether we're handing out school supplies, supporting first responders, or just being a calming presence in a busy place, I know that we're making a difference—one gentle touch at a time.

Thank you for continuing to support this ministry. I can't wait to see where God leads us next!

If you would like to join me and my team on any of our outings, please contact my Top Dog, Sandy Matthews, at comfortdog@sslcms.org. There is a place for everyone in this ministry!



Faith Comfort Dog
John 11:25-26



The LWML Executive Board recently took a day trip to tour Samaritan's Purse—Operation Christmas Child in Boone, NC. A wealth of information about the how the program began, process of packing shoeboxes, shoebox destinations, and so much more. The ladies also picked up the shoeboxes that have recently been distributed to the congregation. Don't forget to return your packed shoebox by November 20.



LWML invites you to get Connected

We are excited that LWML has new members! Since the ministry fair, several ladies have joined and are working with circles to serve the missions they support. We want more members! All ladies of the church are invited to join a circle. Please visit the [LWML page](#) on the church website to view circle options, meeting times, and missions.

Did you love all the quilts we displayed on LWML Sunday? We could use your help! No sewing skills or special tools required. We meet the first Wednesday of each month 9 am- 3 pm, but everyone comes and goes as their schedule allows. Come for an hour or two and help tack quilts. Last year, we donated 98 regular size quilts and 81 lap quilts. That is a lot of warmth our church shared!



LWML at Merry Market and Cookies and Carols

We are planning for Merry Market on November 22 and need your help. Please scan the [LWML Signup Genius QR Code](#) for ways you can serve the LWML. We need items for the bake sale (cakes, cookies, breads, candy, or other yummy favorites) and circle members to work the booths. This year, we will also have a table of craft items for sale.

Also on the [Signup Genius](#) you will see spots to register for Cookies and Caroling on December 7. This is always a great time! We will visit local nursing homes and homebound members to bring a little Christmas cheer. Please sign up to go caroling with us and/or to bake cookies for the people we visit.

Carolina District Convention

Ladies - Be sure to save a spot on your calendar for the Carolina District Convention on May 1-2, 2026 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. You don't want to miss this event, especially since you won't even need to leave town to attend! More information to come.

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

Congregational Meeting Sunday, November 16 - 11:30am

Town Hall meeting:
Monday, November 10 at 5:30pm

Agenda: 2026 Budget & Goals



Finance and Facility Board Report

	<u>Church Income July thru Sept</u>		<u>Church Income Year to Date</u>	
	<u>Given</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Given</u>	<u>Total Budgeted</u>
Offerings	\$361,733.94	\$360,993.00	\$1,077,817.94	\$1,471,959.34
Other Income	\$5,447.46	\$4,125.00	\$18,335.09	\$16,500.00
Total Income	\$367,181.40	\$365,118.00	\$1,096,153.03	\$1,488,459.34

	<u>Church Expenses July thru Sept</u>		<u>Church Expenses Year to Date</u>	
	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Spent</u>	<u>Total Budgeted</u>
Less expenses	\$396,243.52	\$377,391.00	\$1,092,632.94	\$1,488,459.34
Balance	(\$29,062.12)		\$3,520.09	

	<u>School's Financials</u>	
	<u>Jan thru Sept</u>	<u>Total Budget</u>
Income	\$1,819,153.02	\$2,215,962.25
Expenses	<u>\$1,585,581.22</u>	<u>\$2,215,962.25</u>
Balance	\$233,571.80	\$0.00

Church Expansion Fund as of October 26, 2025

Needed: \$4.4 Million
 Account Balance: \$1,925,489.41
 Bills Paid So Far: \$1,039,139.92



Nov./Dec./Jan. Birthdays Of The Homebound and Seasoned Citizens (80 & older)

November

Howard Wagoner-11/1
 Carolyn Spencer-11/3
 Linda Warren-11/6
 Jon Guelzow-11/7
 David Propst-11/11
 Karen Killian-11/17
 Steve Ikerd-11/17
 Bob Watson-11/19
 Gayle White-11/22
 Jo Wilhelm-11/24

December

Annie Brauch-12/2
 Frances Reece-12/4
 Carroll Shook-12/8
 Sonnie Christenbury-12/16
 David Pingel-12/22
 Jim Lane-12/25

January

Helen Miller-1/1
 Pat Hovis-1/1
 Larry Baker-1/6
 Eugene Pharr-1/7
 Robert Weaver-1/7
 Jerry Huffman-1/23
 Hal Lail-1/23
 Char Ewald-1/27
 Larry Cline-1/30

Celebrate the Family



Weddings

Victoria Clarke and Shannon Hinson were married on September 13. Victoria is the daughter of Fran & Bobby.

McKenzie Becker and Kyle Moritz were married on September 5. McKenzie is the daughter of Tim Becker & Debbi Becker and sister of Madelyn & Meredith.

Births

Sarah Ruth Butler, born September 16. Daughter of Garry & Jessica and little sister of Clara Jane, Anna, Samuel, Nathan & Caroline

Annie Loretta Bolling born September 18, 2025. Annie is the daughter of Corey & Kristin, little sister of Luke, James & Noah and granddaughter of David & Sandra McCrary.

Micah Russell Jones, born August 20, 2025.

Roosevelt "Rosie" Dee Younhouse, born on October 14 to Kurt & Jessica. Proud grandmother is Sandy Matthews.

Lily Grace Brummet, born on October 15 to Daniel & Sarah.

Baptisms

Alva Lovise Olson, baptized on August 17. Daughter of John & Cecilia. Her sponsors are Sam Sackenheim and Jenna Fioravanti Sackenheim.

Micah Russell Jones, baptized on September 28. Son of Vicar Tristan & Carolyn. His sponsors are Kyle & Kate Hoffman.

Annie Loretta Bolling, baptized on October 12. Daughter of Corey & Kristin. Her sponsors are Caitlin Flinchum and Garrett Bolling.

Eternal Glory

Linda Sigmon—July 22, 1943—August 17, 2025—Mother of Karen Bolick.

Becky Poe—June 18, 1938—August 22, 2025—Wife of David.

Doris Herman—September 8, 1931—August 19, 2025

Troy Deal—September 17, 1932—August 31, 2025

Bruce Clontz—November 21, 1942—September 9, 2025. Father of Todd, brother of David, Barbara, & Linda.

Kevin Huffman—August 6, 1961—September 12, 2025

Carl Rullman—February 14, 1934—September 11, 2025. Husband of Bugs and father of Tia & Dinky.

Bill Howard—January 12, 1942—October 3, 2025—Husband of Carol.

Pat White—April 10, 1948 – October 19, 2025—Mother of Chris Rock-ensuess

Contact Information

St. Stephens Lutheran Church & School—MS

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Hickory, NC 28601

Phone: 828-256-9865

www.sslcms.org

School

Phone: 828-256-2166

www.sslwarriors.org

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Josh Marlatt, Vicar

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Randall Cline, Director of Youth Ministry

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Jadi Gurganious, Mission Facilitator

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Ross Chiles, Principal

rchiles@sslcms.org

Debbi Becker, Admin. Asst.

dbecker@sslcms.org

2025 Confirmand

Elizabeth Marie Coffey
daughter of Adam and Nicole

John 15:5 - *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Fix It Ministry

St. Stephens Fix It Ministry is up and running! We have a list of guys that can fix a leak, level a picture, hang a curtain rod, mount a shelf, repair a railing, hang a screen door, etc. If you need a hand with routine maintenance projects, or if you'd like to be on the helping end, reach out to Tom Smith: thmssmith@msn.com or 240-285-8853. Work requiring special permits or licensing may not be eligible. Experience valuable, tools helpful! Time commitment: 2-4 hours per month.



Youth Ministry

“Building relationships in Christ to develop and strengthen faithful followers for life.”

Fall Highlights

Back-to-School Kickoff (Aug 10 & 12)

We started the year with big energy — a night of *Manhunt* and a *Pool Party & Cookout*! Great food, great friends, and even better memories.

Hangtime Nights (Aug–Nov)

From *blindfold tag with rubber duckies* to *pickleball* and *gaga ball*, our Hangtime events have been full of laughter and lessons from our **U Matter** series — discovering how God created each of us with purpose.

Labor Day at the Fair (Sept 1)

Rides, fair food, and fellowship — the perfect way to wrap up summer!

Family Weekend @ Camp Linn Haven (Sept 6–8)

Theme: **Endure**. A time of renewal, connection, and learning to lean on Christ through every season.

Service Day (Sept 21)

We rolled up our sleeves to serve our community — from lawn care to home repairs, showing the love of Jesus.

SCarowinds & Lake Hickory Haunts (Oct 10 & 12)

Two nights of *thrills and chills*! Lots of screams, laughter, and bonding through all the scares.

Fall Festival & Youth vs. Parents Kickball Classic (Oct 26)

Our fall wrap-up tradition! Let's just say... the *real* winners were the ones who survived the laughter and friendly competition.



What's Coming Up

November: Serving with Joy & Thankfulness

-  *Backpack Program @ The Corner Table* (Nov 16)
-  *Merry Market Café Fundraiser* (Nov 22) — supporting 2026 summer missions
-  *Final “U Matter” Session* (Nov 23)
-  *Operation Christmas Child Processing Center* (Nov 26)

December: Advent & Celebration

-  *Shopping + Lights Night* (Dec 7)
-  *Youth Christmas Parties* (Dec 14)
-  *New Year's Eve Lock-In* (Dec 31)

Let's close out 2025 celebrating the greatest gift — **Jesus** — and look ahead to a new year filled with faith, friendship, and fun.



Stay Connected

Find photos, updates, and event details online!



Facebook & Instagram: @St Stephens Lutheran Church & School Youth or @ssleyouth on the gram



Website: sslcms.org/youth

See you soon — and remember: **U Matter to God and to us!**

School News

Ahhh November, the advent of Advent. I love the month of November. I consider November to be the advent of Advent. Here at SSLS we begin by welcoming Veterans in for our annual Veterans Day celebration. We also greet Veterans at Golden Corral. There will be other service projects as well before we leave for Thanksgiving break service is in the air at SSLS. Advent is the time the Church sets aside to prepare for our Savior's birth. That preparing is *just* a bit different for everyone because everyone is unique. Now, we could just let Advent show up but why not prepare for it. The way we do it here at SSLS is by serving our community. I think that is a great way to begin our Christmas season – before it even shows up. Our school year has moved along very well. I am excited for the work on the Mission and Ministry Center and love seeing the progress. We begin kindergarten registration on November 20th with our Kindergarten Open House. We currently have 10 children registered for kindergarten for the 2026-27 school year. I am hopeful that the success of our early registration will boost our Kindergarten enrollment for next school year. If you are looking for a kindergarten program or know someone who is, please encourage them to RSVP for our Open House on November 20th.

A couple things that are happening in our school (besides the day to day stuff). We are in the process of a comprehensive Safety and Security assessment that will be completed when the new building is open for business. We are also working with Lutheran Schools Consulting Services as part of our Strategic Plan. Their consulting includes surveys, demographic studies, and a site visit which will take place in February 2026. Their information will undoubtedly help us as we move forward and grow in the next several years.

Christmas is not that far off, I pray that your Christmas is filled with the Love and Joy that only Christ can bring.

In January we begin registration for next school year, we will make sure to send out reminders as we get closer.

One final note: Our Varsity Girls' Volleyball Team are the Champions. They did not lose to any of the schools; a perfect record. Total domination: not sure if I'm allowed to say that before Christmas oh well I'm a fan can't help it.

If you want to learn more about the school or have any questions or just want to see what we do just come on by the office.

Please continue to pray for our school.

Ross Chiles, Principal

A few Dates:

Veteran's Day Breakfast & Chapel–November 11–8:00am

Kindergarten Open House–November 20–6:30pm

Thanksgiving Break–November 26-28

Preschool & Kindergarten Program–December 5, 7pm in the Sanctuary

Upper Grade Program–December 12, 7pm in the Gymnasium

Winter Break– December 19–1/2 day–early dismissal at 11:30am

December 22–January 5

Open House for the entire school–January 22–6:30pm



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

Renee Stiles, Afterschool

Preschool Staff

Angela Parlier, Director

Karen Ly, PS3

Jessica Wacaster, PS3

Amy Trudel, PS4

Glenda Setzer, PS4

Bethany Kahill, TK



Wanna Go?

Tuesday, Dec. 9
6:30pm

Cost: \$75 (Ticket, dinner, &
transportation)

Join us for an evening at Narrowway Christian Dinner
Theater, Fort Mill, SC

A deposit of \$25 is required to reserve your seat.
RSVP by Nov. 20 to Kristy at ksmith@sslcms.org

Advent 2025

MIDWEEK SERVICE

10:30 AM

6:30 PM

12/3 • 12/10 • 12/17

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:

7 PM CONTEMPORARY CANDLELIGHT

10 PM TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE:

10 AM WITH HOLY COMMUNION

Page 14 **Children's & Family Ministry**
WINTER 2025-26



Connecting Families to Christ

GO TO [SSLCMS.ORG](https://sslcms.org) FOR A FULL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY CALENDAR

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, our hearts are filled with the warmth of the winter season. This time of year is a beautiful reminder of the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. We are so excited to continue our journey together, sharing God's love and creating joyful memories with your children. I hope you will join us for some of the upcoming events and festivities that are happening this season as well as our weekly Worship and Sunday Bible Hour. This is also a wonderful time to consider how you and your family might be the hands and feet of Jesus in the upcoming year.... Serving and walking with Jesus as you share your time, talents, and blessings as you share the love of Jesus in your home, church, school, and community!



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



CHILDREN'S

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Saturday, Dec 20 5:30pm

Cookie Reception will follow worship.

Bring a plate of cookies to share!

Children who would like to participate should register with Donna Lee or Teresa Ritchie and plan to attend Sunday Bible Hour and Children's Worship.

Opportunities to serve in our Children's Ministry:

- Childcare Team
- Classroom Leader
- Classroom Assistant
- Hospitality/ Snacks
- Special Events
- Mentor/ Prayer Partner
- Faith Legacy Team



2025 Bible Blessings



*"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path."
- Psalm 119:105*

Benjamin Vaughn
Daniel Flowers
Hannon Hines
Becklee Eckard
Rhen Mae Sigman
Wyatt Moore
Bella Moore

Lachlan McDonald
Tenley Lutz
Bodee Eckard
Landon Travis
Easton Travis
Beckham Starnes
Finnian Edgell

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we are excited to continue growing and nurturing the faith of your children. To help us plan the best possible year we need your valuable feedback. Your input is essential for making our ministry a success and ensuring we meet the needs of your family. Please take a few moments to complete our short, confidential survey. Your thoughts will directly influence our plans for lessons, events, and family resources. [YES, I WANT TO TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

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

Mission Connection

The Come and See Ministry Fair was held in September. The Ministry Fair was a great time for members to learn about the different ministries and Bible studies offered here at St. Stephens. Each ministry represented gained new servant leaders (43 new signups). Thank you to the Ministry leaders for their time and dedication to Connecting people with Jesus.



Current

Merry Market

We are currently preparing for the 12th annual Merry Market, to be held on Saturday, November 22 from 9am-2pm.

Due to the construction of the Mission and Ministry building, we are working on a list of volunteers to help with the following:

- Setup on Friday, Nov. 21 from 5-7pm (assist the vendors to bringing in their goods—this is a great way to get a sneak peek, maybe make a purchase)
- Parking (possibly shuttling from Christ Church parking lot)
- Welcome (be the first smiling face the community sees as they enter our facility)
- Clean up on Saturday at 2pm (many hands make light work)



Corner Table—Backpack program

Join our team on **Sunday, December 14 from 2-3:30pm** as we go to the Backpack Program Warehouse and help pack 1400 bags, straighten up shelves, straighten up warehouse and more.

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.

Future

OPERATION ELF - We will once again support the residents of Trinity Village with Christmas Gifts this year. Look for the tags in the Narthex on November 23. **PLEASE**, if you take a tag, purchase the items and return them to the church. In the past, we have had tags taken and no gift returned.



Mystery Theater & Dinner

We are going back to the beginning! Our first Mystery Theater was the "Cruise" back in 2019. We thought it was time to go back on a "cruise". We are still working on the Spring date. In the meantime, here is how you can help us... We are looking for volunteers that would like to join us for a fun time as we prepare to make this "cruise" memorable. If you have a knack for theater or want to give theater a try, see Judi Gurganious or Sheila Poovey.



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**COME VISIT
KINDERGARTEN**



OPEN HOUSE
For Parents Only
Thursday, Nov. 20th at 6:30pm
Please RSVP 828-256-2166

*A discounted registration fee will be given to those who attend