



WINTER 2019 ..... Issue No. 5  
*Stories of God at work in our lives*

**ANASTASIS** | **ἀνάστασις**  
*[Greek for 'Resurrection' or 'Rising Up']*



..... *Anastasis is a quarterly publication of* .....

**ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

30 West Main St (PO Box 266)

New Kingstown, PA 17072

717-766-2168

[www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org)

Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/StStephenLC.org](http://www.facebook.com/StStephenLC.org)

Thank you for reading this issue! Our congregation seeks to be a loving presence in the community and to boldly share the Good News of God at work in the world. We are called to action in response to the grace God bestows on us. The stories in this issue are recent examples of times we have experienced God in our lives. We invite you to encounter Jesus each Sunday morning in worship or in any other the other events listed on the back page of this publication.

**PASTOR:** *Pastor Matthew Best*

[pastor@StStephenLC.org](mailto:pastor@StStephenLC.org)

[www.pleasepraywith.me](http://www.pleasepraywith.me)

[www.laceduplutheran.com](http://www.laceduplutheran.com)

@Laceduplutheran — Twitter

**PARISH OFFICE MANAGER:** *Kevin Stafford*

[office@StStephenLC.org](mailto:office@StStephenLC.org)

**ORGANIST & CHOIR DIRECTOR:** *Abby Best*

[organist@StStephenLC.org](mailto:organist@StStephenLC.org)

**CUSTODIAN:** *Michael Wogan*

# Contents

04

**Community Snapshots.** Images of recent events and activities.

05

**Pastor's Letter** *by Rev. Matthew Best.*

06

**Guiding Words** *by Stacy Schroeder.* A new, Spirit-driven approach to those pesky New Year's resolutions.

08

**Connecting Touch** *by Sally John.* We are called to feed the hungry in many ways.

10

**Inner Journey** *by Caroline Sheaffer.* Cristian returns home with the support of friends.

12

**Meditation on Saul's Conversion** *by Tom Burson.* Musings on what Saul's conversion means to us.

13

**Waypoint** *by Stacy Schroeder.* A modern conversion story.

16

**The Art of Making Tea** *by Stacy Schroeder.* A poem on mindfulness (with bonus recipe).

18

**Life is Hard But God Has Got My Back** *by Lela Enell.* A powerful personal testimony.

21

**Counting the Uncounted** *by Chris Kapp.* Census taking of those in need.

23

**Boundaries** *by Kara Vojcsik.* The importance of setting boundaries in relationships.

24

**Closing Prayer** *by Rev. Matthew Best..*

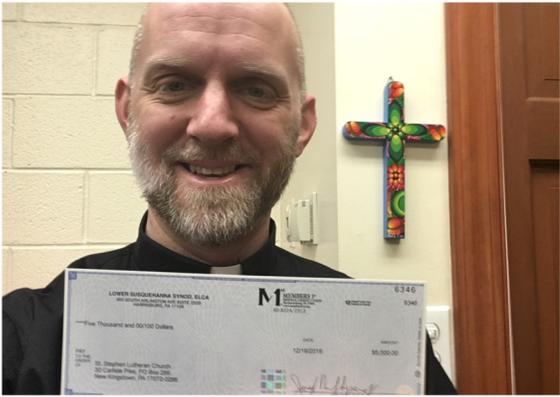
25

**A Few Ways to Receive & Respond.** God works through each of us and uses us to help each other.

**BACK COVER**

**Upcoming Events.** You are invited!

# Community SNAPSHOTS



*Top left:* Pastor holds grant check for community hunger work

*Above:* Tapology's monthly conversation at Desperate Times Brewery

*Left:* Christmas carolers prepare to head out into the community

*Bottom:* Sunday school class gathers to serve holiday dinner at Project SHARE



# THE INNER TRAVEL ISSUE

Travel is one of those things that people either love or hate. There's really no in between.

Some people love the idea of going somewhere they haven't been before to learn about a new culture, see things they haven't seen before, make new friends, and create new memories.

Other people would much rather skip the packing, the travel hassles, the crowds, and other challenges they could face – preferring to stay home, or at most go somewhere they are familiar with, strengthening existing relationships, and making new memories that way.

Regardless of the person and their regard for travel, there is a sense of rejuvenation in going either somewhere new or familiar – an opportunity to get away from our routines and relax in our own unique ways.

In 2019, Anastasis will be focusing on traveling. We'll journey to places we haven't been to before, but also visit some very familiar themes. In the coming editions, you'll hear from some new friends sharing their encounters with God and read reflections on familiar Scripture passages.

Why travel? Throughout Scripture, we read story after story of people on a journey. We hear God sending Abraham on a journey. We read about the Israelites journey through the wilderness after being set free from slavery. We hear about the travels of disciples and Apostles

through Acts. We also read a great deal of stories of people who go on internal journeys – Encounters with God that transform lives. We hear Esther's story of transformation to save her people from certain death. We read about the call of prophets. We hear about Jesus "turning his face to Jerusalem" to fulfill his purpose.

In this edition of Anastasis, we will focus in on the internal journey we are each traveling. We'll use Paul's conversion as our guide. This experience transformed Paul into an Apostle to the Gentiles and caused him to travel throughout the Mediterranean to proclaim the Gospel.

For this edition, I invite you to go on a journey – a journey of reflection, meditation, and self-care.

A journey to hear how God loves you and also transforms you so that you can go out and proclaim boldly the Good News of God's loving and saving presence in the world.

Blessings!



Pastor Matthew Best

# GUIDING WORDS

A Spirit-Driven Approach to New Year's Resolutions

by Stacy Schroeder/ Stewardship

All my life I've looked at the world through the eyes of a writer. Words well deployed have power to make the heart sing, the mind ponder, and the soul feel understood. They can take you on a journey to another world, comfort a mourning friend, provoke or avoid conflict, or capture an exact feeling so that people across distance and centuries feel connected.

A number of years ago, I learned of yet another way to harness the power of words, this time for annual goal setting. Read on if you'd like to learn more about this healthy way to care for and inspire yourself.

Many New Year Resolutions fail ... perhaps, in part, because they often begin with a list of ways we are critical of ourselves. In response, we commit to rigid and ambitious plans to excise these faults in pursuit of the "perfect" life. For some, this kind of structure and discipline may be effective. But for many, we feel overwhelmed from the start. How can something rooted in this bear good fruit?

If we listened to a friend's internal dialogue go this route, we would surely see the fallacies and cognitive dissonances. We would tell them to be gentler with themselves. Yet we are often blind to our own missteps and so the year's planning becomes grounded in negativity. While our intentions are good, our words set us up for failure.

But what if we did things differently?

What if we took the opportunity to have our words take us on a *positive* journey driven by the Holy Spirit?

For the last six years, I've participated in a style of planning where you choose a word (or few words) to guide you throughout year. The premise is that you choose word/s symbolizing the direction you want to move (such as *nourish* or *mindfulness* or *trans-*

*formation* or *balance*) and then lean into those words when making decisions. Instead of inevitably failing to complete a punishing checklist, this method allows you to continually evaluate and adjust course as you live your life. Dare I say ... this method comes with much more grace and much less damnation. It promotes prayer and mindfulness.

At first, I just choose just one word. Later I joined a wellness circle where three words were encouraged. Because I am a rebel, last year I even selected three short phrases (*Be real, Be present, Be healthy*).

If this concept sounds promising to you, here are a few tips on how to start.

First, take time to prayerfully discern what your word or words might be. Use the questions below to start your thinking. Perhaps journal in response to them. Think about them on your morning walk or while washing the dishes. Pray to God for guidance and then allow some time for the words to arise in your consciousness.

- What do I want more of in my life?
- What themes/topics have I been noticing as I go about my daily life?
- In what areas of my life do I want to be stronger? What would I like to improve?
- What is something I miss and would like to bring back into my life?
- What nudges have I been feeling from God but ignoring or tucking away because I am busy with other things?
- What are some of the gifts and talents God has given me?

If you choose three words, consider making two of them "reach" words and select one that is already beginning to be a strength for you. This can keep



*In January, we offered a community workshop on the selection of personal guiding words and the creation of vision boards for the year.*

*Vision boards are collages of photographs, words/quotes, and images that visually expand a person's guiding words and serve as ongoing inspiration and reflection.*

*Here are two participants with their beautiful boards. Each vision board is as unique as its creator.*

+++++

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHOOSING GUIDING WORDS, VISIT:

[OneWord365.com](http://OneWord365.com)

[MyOneWord.org](http://MyOneWord.org)

[Dayspring.com/yourwordquiz#/home](http://Dayspring.com/yourwordquiz#/home)



everything from feeling overwhelming, especially in your first year of this practice.

After you have done this work, use the websites mentioned in the side bar (or others you search out) to help you fine-tune your words if you want. These sites have lists of commonly used words and other tips and recommendations. I do encourage you to do your personal work first so your choices are rooted in prayer and your heart and not unduly influenced by what you read from others.

Once chosen, there is no one right way to live out your words ... each person's journey is individual. You will get out of it what you put into it. But trust me that this is a powerful tool and a meaningful experience if you approach it prayerfully and intentionally.

Some ways to work with your word/s are:

- Creation of a vision board with your word and associated images and concepts (examples at left), which you then place in a visible location so you encounter it regularly
- Reading books and articles related to your word
- Seeking out jewelry or clothes with your word so that you can wear it as you go about your day
- Being aware of the times and ways your word recurs in your thoughts and the messages around you
- Continuing to pray about your word and refer to it when making decisions

My words have deeply changed how I live my life. I've been transformed not just by the words themselves but by the process of viewing situations and decisions through them. These words have become a part of my identity. They work together and hold me accountable in ways I am not always able to envision when I choose them. Like prayer, they are another lens for me to hear God's voice.

If you looking to make some changes in your life, or simply deepen your understanding of yourself and your connection to God, I encourage you to explore this concept as a tool to help you on that path. It is a journey worth taking! †

+++++

# CONNECTING TOUCH

*by Sally John/ Social Ministry*

Yes, Social Ministry's big project these days is working with the homeless at Flying J and providing fellowship and food at Dinner with Friends.

Yes, these are important ministries that we are passionate about and stretch to support. Reaching out to the poor is what God calls us to do as we witness in Jesus' shadow.

But nurturing within is a worthy mission, too.

College youth of today have a host of pressures that many of us cannot fathom or appreciate. Financial debt is astronomical compared to what it was when I went to college. More and more college students are forced to work or do school-related research and at-

tend classes at the same time, and that barely puts a dent in the cost. They balance finding time to work, go to classes, get schoolwork done, and yet have some semblance of a social life to boot. And with a larger percentage of this generation having a basic undergraduate degree, the pressure has become even greater to get good grades so they can then compete in the job market.

Our St. Stephen students have been touched by theft, anxiety, depression, suicide, and a crazed gunman killing people within earshot. That's a pretty full plate of things to deal with while trying to focus on an education. Most of those things I thankfully never gave a thought to when I blissfully bopped from class to class. And for most, they must handle it all while away from their familial cocoon.

Many years ago, Social Ministry began sending care packages to the college students in our congregation. Firstly, who doesn't like receiving a package in the mail? Secondly, who doesn't like receiving a package in the mail filled with goodies? But more importantly, who doesn't like having a little touch from home from someone who cares? This is a small way for us to connect with them and remind them that they are thought of and prayed for, they are a part of our family, and they are children of God. After all, wasn't that part of our corporate promise to them when they were baptized?

Another ministry that we are passionate about is feeding those within our congregation who are hurt, sick, or homebound. Two or three times a year a group of folks get together in the kitchen to make casseroles that are then labeled and frozen for later distribution. At a time when it is needed, someone from Social Ministry, or Pastor Matthew, or a mutual ministry per-



*Third Saturday of each month at  
ST STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH*

30 West Main St., New Kingstown, PA 17072

Upcoming dates: 2/16, 3/16, 4/20

Enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal followed by some kind of relaxed activity. Details of each month's menu and entertainment can be found at [www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org) closer to each event.

son serving communion takes a meal to someone who may be having difficulty cooking for him/herself. Again, we hope that this meal and this gesture is one that connects people back to the caring community of God.

And one of my favorite Social Ministry events takes place every February. (I know it isn't meant for my birthday, but it is often held around that date and I do love chocolate, so one can pretend!) Our Chocolate Tasting event is a low-key way to provide a sweet fellowship opportunity for our congregation during the bleak winter months. Any time I – I mean, *we* – can have our sins washed away through communion, then walk into fellowship hall and eat chocolate is a good day in my book!

So I guess when you boil it all down (a little cooking metaphor) the Social Ministry committee feeds.

Period.

We feed those who hunger outside of our congregation, both literally and spiritually.

Just as importantly, we also feed those who hunger within our congregation - those who hunger for support and those who hunger for a connecting touch.

After all, we are Lutheran.

And Lutherans do love a good potluck. †



## Hunger Education & Advocacy Workshop

Tues, February 26

7:00PM

ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

Wish to help the hungry but having trouble knowing where to start?

Want to learn more about the size of the problem and whom it affects?

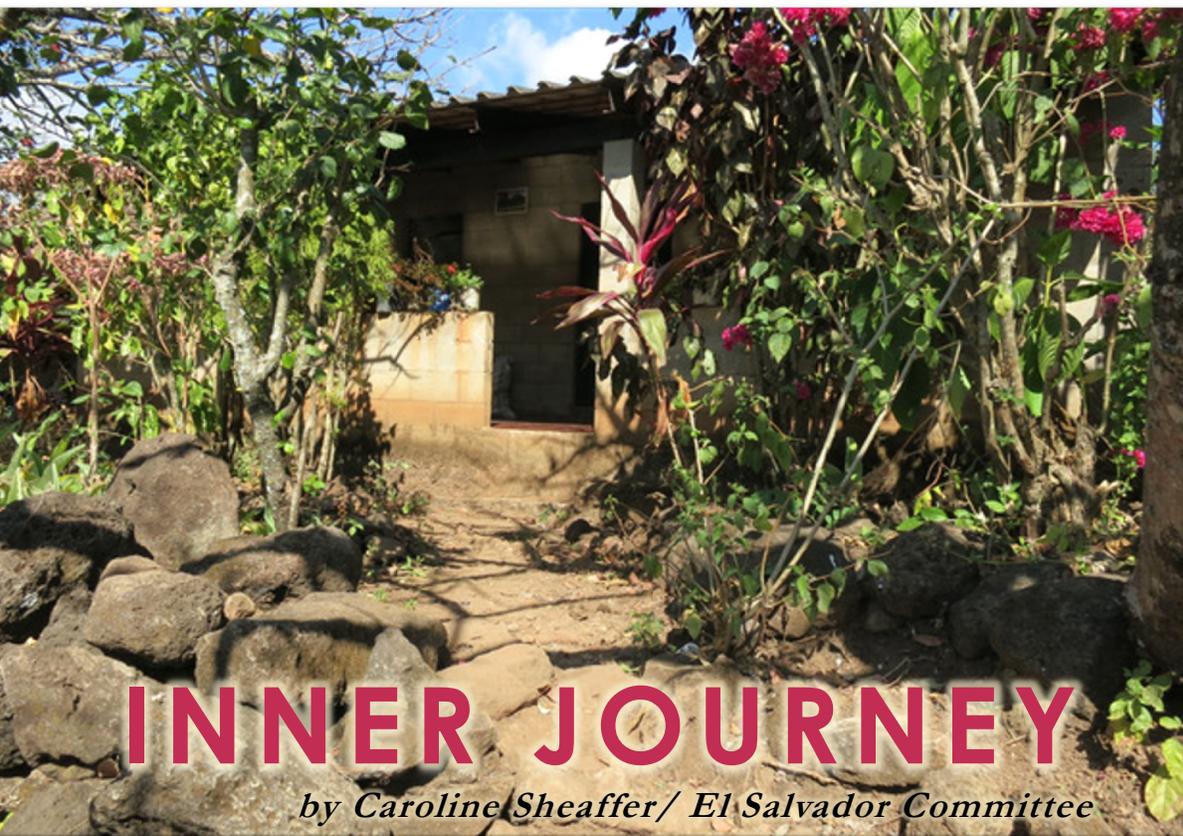
Have an idea but need more hands to make it work?

This workshop will highlight local needs, statistics, and programs as well as identify gaps and partnership opportunities within the broader community.

Time for networking and discussion included.



**We feed those who hunger for support  
and those who hunger for a connecting touch.**



# INNER JOURNEY

*by Caroline Sheaffer/ El Salvador Committee*

Sometimes our inner fears haunt us for years.

Sometimes we can't face our fears alone.

Sometimes we need to reach out to those we trust to help us.

This is what happened several years ago when our Salvadoran friend Cristian, who was driving us to an interview eight hours north in the country, suddenly made a request.

“Do you mind if we make a detour off this road?” he began. “I have never been brave enough to return to my childhood home where I witnessed the military storm and kill my family members. I was three years old and have been plagued by nightmares. I have been afraid to come alone, but I think I can face my fears with you both of you.”

Obviously this had been on Cristian's mind for over thirty years and at first it struck me as odd that he never asked family members or any of his many friends to accompany him to his home.

He didn't know if the structure was even still there, didn't know if it was inhabited, didn't know if the present proprietors would welcome him.

Our friend charged ahead down the dirt path at a fast clip unfazed by the barking dog while I mentally tried to recall the date of my last tetanus shot.

The owners not only knew his family and his story, but also welcomed us which allowed our friend to re-live both the good and bad memories he had of his home.

“This is where we would run and hide from the helicopters strafing the area with guns,” he shared.

Next, he quickly climbed a tree and began knocking down large gourds his family used to carry water. (The owners sent him home with a large trash bag full of them.). “This is the stream I would fish in and during the war would hunt for guns to save for the guerrilla fighters.”

“Here is where my mom kept the chickens and over there the pigs.”

We were trying to keep up with him running around the property while he was quickly reminiscing and sharing memories.

Only when he was satisfied that his long overdue experience was complete did we hike back up the dirt lane and find the car again. He thanked us repeatedly for the opportunity to return to his home.

We hope some of his “cobwebs” will clear and healing can begin.

We were humbled and privileged to be entrusted with this “detour” of Cristian’s inner journey.

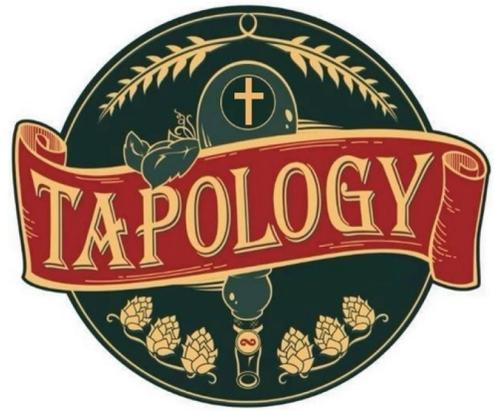
Sometimes our inner fears haunt us for years.

Sometimes we can’t face our fears alone.

Sometimes we need to reach out to those we trust to help us. †

---

*For more information about Cristian, visit [www.embracingelsalvador.org/christian-armando-chavarria-ayala/](http://www.embracingelsalvador.org/christian-armando-chavarria-ayala/). This website, [www.embracingelsalvador.org](http://www.embracingelsalvador.org), is a collection of ongoing stories and lessons we’ve learned through our congregation’s connection to the community and people there.*



Come to **TAPOLGY** where we talk about issues and theology that matters over some cold drinks. All are welcome.

**First Sundays 5:00-7:00PM**

*(Upcoming dates: 3/3, 4/7, 5/5)*

Hosted by St Stephen at:

**DESPERATE TIMES BREWERY  
1201 CARLISLE SPRINGS RD  
CARLISLE, PA 17013**



## ... SAVE THE DATE ...

*Cristian Chavarria will be visiting the area this May. He plans to speak at our church and share more of his story.*

**SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2019**

**9:00AM Worship—Guest Preacher**

**10:30AM—Informal Q&A**

St Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church  
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

# Meditation on Saul's Conversion

## (Acts 9:1-19)

*by Tom Burson, Adult Sunday School Teacher*

Do you recall a time when you thought something was one way and then later on you realized that what you thought was actually not correct? This has often happened for me with songs where I did not correctly understand a word and later on I found out that it was actually another word.

It is not unusual for us to discover that our beliefs about something are not correct. Something happens, we find ourselves looking at a thing differently, and we realize that we misunderstood it. What does it take for us to realize our mistake? It could be something simple like seeing the words of a song in writing for the first time and realizing that they had been misunderstood. It could be someone pointing out the mistake and us listening to him/her and realizing that there had been a misunderstanding. Often these can be small things with no major consequences, but other times it can be significant when it affects relationships or life changing decisions.

When Paul, then known as Saul, was persecuting the early Christians, he thought that they were going against the teachings of God. He was looking at God's Word in a very narrow way and following what he had been taught as a Pharisee. He saw these people, then known as People of the Way, saying things and doing things that did not fit with what he understood. He was determined to correct them even to the point of stoning them to death as he assisted in the stoning of Stephen.

However, God had other plans for Saul. While on his way to Damascus to find and arrest the People of the Way, he had an encounter with the risen Jesus. The light which blinded him and the words he heard com-

pletely changed him. It apparently helped him really hear what Jesus and his followers were saying and not only did he accept those words, but he became one of the greatest converts to the message of universal salvation which Jesus proclaimed.

How do we discover and correct our misunderstandings? One way is to deliberately practice non-judgmental listening. This is where we try to listen with an open mind. This means hearing what was said and trying to understand it and not just dismiss it because it does not fit neatly in our already constructed framework. This does require effort because we have to deliberately try to not listen to our inner biases. We need to try and balance what we already think we know against what we are hearing and find ways to test for correctness. Sometimes we will change our minds and other times not, but this is OK. We are learning to grow and what we believe becomes more sure because we have tested it.

One of the best places to work on your spiritual growth is in Sunday School where each week we meet to discuss something about our belief, our church, and our community. We may learn something new, find some of our beliefs challenged, and make new or stronger friendships. There is probably no better place to develop our beliefs than in Sunday School where we have the time and non-judgmental support to interact and test out and refine our beliefs.

You are invited to join or just try out one of our Sunday School classes that meet every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., shortly after worship. †

# WAYPOINT

by Stacy Schroeder

*This modern fictional conversion story is inspired by and loosely based on Acts 9:1-19 with reference to parts of Acts 7-8.*

Saul Simons leaned back in his office chair with a satisfied sigh, stretching his arms. He had just watched the latest clip on the evening news where activist Stephen Kane was being crucified for his role in the disappearance of a local woman. The piece was full of covert photos of Stephen with his arm around her shoulders and Stephen leaning in close to her face. Of the woman getting into Stephen's SUV. Already social media comments were flooding in, condemning the popular speaker and accusing him of all kinds of things from rape to murder to leadership of a secret cult.

Saul's phone dinged, notifying him that \$20,000 had just been deposited in his bank account. This was followed by a simple text with a fire emoji and a smiley face.

Saul was a private investigator, well paid to dig up dirt on people and, when no dirt existed, to creatively present things so that the clean appeared foul. Saul was a tool the powerful wielded to meld the world into their vision. Stephen had been a challenge until Saul discovered he was part of an underground railroad that helped victims of domestic abuse escape intolerable situations. Those who knew the truth would keep silent, protecting their network, allowing Stephen's reputation to be destroyed.

Saul's mind never rested. His eyes never stopped roving. The top-of-the-line tech he surrounded himself with never stopped tallying, hacking, recording, processing, accumulating. He did not know any other way to be.

For tonight, however, there was nothing more to do but let the world react to the version of events he had fed to the media. Saul set the security alarm on his of-

fice door and headed out to his favorite toy, his cherry red Tesla. "We're hitting the road tonight, baby," he said. "Tomorrow we're gonna see what's up with that uppity megachurch, The Way to Damascus." Saul was pumped for this next assignment. No way all that money and power was being used for good. He had a special dislike for churches, always had.

A storm was brewing and the sky was crackling with energy. It had already rained once and Saul had to step in a puddle to get into his car. As he reached for the door handle, his phone rang and simultaneously a particularly strong bolt of lightning struck the top of his office building, traveling through the puddle and hitting Saul as well. As he collapsed, he heard a loud crack and then a gentle voice whisper "Saul, Saul ... why do you persecute me?" After that, everything went black.

He awoke to arms lifting him onto something soft. He opened his eyes and saw ... nothing. This made him jolt and try to sit up. "Easy, there, pal," said a man's voice. "You've had a little run-in with the storm. We're taking you to Mercy General where they'll help you out."

"I can't see!" Saul shouted. "Where's my phone? Is my car OK? What about my office? Is the other guy hurt?"

"I think your phone is toast," said the voice, "but your car appears to be fine. Firefighters are here working on the building fire. The eyes sometimes like to rest for a little while after these kinds of situations. Best thing you can do right now is lie back and let us do our jobs to help you."

"And the other guy?"

"We didn't find anyone else."

Saul put his head back on the stretcher, unwilling to completely rest. He knew that his files were safe in offsite backups but it was going to take time and money to get his business up and running again. Without his phone or his sight, how was he going to contact his clients? What would happen to his reputation? And whose voice had he heard before he passed out ... had it been Stephen?

The next three days were excruciating for a man like Saul who was used to being in control and in motion. Now it was the hospital staff who had the freedom to move about and decide his schedule. His eyesight had not yet returned but his doctor urged him to rest and be patient. Saul listened to news coverage of the Stephen Kane scandal but eventually got bored and clicked off the remote. His listlessness eventually faded to a sort of bland calm. He found, oddly, he did not miss the frantic pace of social media or the demands

of his work. Must be some side effect of the medication he was on, he thought. Still, he found himself wondering about lives of the other people he encountered ... the nurse, the janitor, the therapist with the dog. Who were they? Why did they chose to do the work they did? His investigative mind ruminated on their lives but also noted the calmness in their voices and imagined the peace they might feel at the end of each day. How nice it would be to not always have to rush and be on guard.

Just then, a soft rap sounded at the door. "Saul, may I come in?" said an unfamiliar but kind voice.

"Sure," said Saul, expecting another new medical professional. "What test is up now?"

He could hear the person pause and inhale before answering. "Actually, God sent me to pray for your healing."



Scripture is full of powerful stories and opportunities to encounter God. This season, we follow Jesus' path to the Cross where He died for all of us. Check out these special learning and worship gatherings ...

**ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE/ Wednesday, March 6**

*7:00PM. Come worship as we remember we are dust and to dust we will return.*

**MIDWEEK LENTEN SOUP SUPPER & WORSHIP/ Wednesdays March 13 — April 10**

*6:30PM meal and 7:00PM worship service*

**PALM SUNDAY/ Sunday, April 14**

*9:00AM. Celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, receive palms.*

**MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP/ Thursday, April 18**

*7:00PM. Join the Agape Feast – worship and meal in St Stephen's Fellowship Hall.*

**GOOD FRIDAY OBSERVANCES/ Friday, April 19**

*12:00PM (noon) worship at St. Stephen followed by walking prayer through New Kingstown.*

*7:00PM community worship service with Trinity United Methodist. Service is at St. Stephen.*

**EASTER VIGIL/ Saturday, April 20**

*7:00PM. Worship followed by a light reception as we celebrate the risen Christ.*

**EASTER SUNDAY/ Sunday, April 21**

*9:00AM Service.*

Saul's default reaction was disgust at another religious imposter but that was followed by a quick memory of the visitor's hesitant entry and gentle tone. He was also startled to feel what could only be called curiosity and a sort of hope. He found himself welcoming the visitor and telling him to sit.

Ananiyeh turned out to a friendly older gentleman who ordered the nurses away and got Saul a soda and a doughnut from the cafeteria. Saul chatted with him, skirting details about his work but opening up about the experience of being struck by lightning and of spending three days in the hospital. He ended up talking about his childhood church and all the hypocrisy he remembered there. He even talked about his pet dog Rascal, whom he had loved deeply but not thought about in years. Ananiyeh was a good listener and made Saul laugh several times. The afternoon sped by and soon a chime announced that visiting hours would end soon. Saul realized that he was not yet ready for his new friend to leave. "Ananiyeh," he said, trying to draw out the visit just a bit more. "I forgot to tell you one thing that happened to me in the parking lot. Right after I was struck by lightning, I heard a voice speak to me yet the ER crew said no one else was there. It's strange."

Ananiyeh was quiet. Then he took a deep breath and spoke.

"Saul, you are not who I expected you to be and I must confess I am not the hospital volunteer you assumed either. I am a pastor at The Way to Damascus. God sent me here. It was God who spoke to you that night about persecuting him.

I understand now that you were hurt by church experiences when you were young but you are wrong to use your gifts to bring down good people. I was scared to even meet you.

Yet God sees good in you and sent me to bring back your sight. You have been chosen to do great things in God's name."

Before a stunned Saul could speak, Ananiyeh placed his thumbs on Saul's eyelids and cupped his head in his hands. He prayed and blessed Saul. The scent of

rosemary filled the room and Saul felt a brief pull and release before being flooded with light. Ananias' face swam into view.

The two men stared at one another, neither noticing the urgent buzzing of the intercom announcing the end of visitor hours. "Well ...?" Ananiyeh finally queried.

Now it was Saul who paused before answering. He could not explain all that had happened the last few days. He knew what he was about to say was ridiculous. And yet, it felt completely right. He did not want to go back to the way things had been before.

He grinned at Ananiyeh and said: "Where do we begin? †



## POINTS TO PONDER

Saul was at a waypoint in his life. Crazy as it was, God chose *him*. It might be hard to imagine someone like Saul changing so much in three days but God has the power to do amazing things. God also sometimes uses dramatic stories to help us see the truth in our own lives.

Have you experienced a waypoint in your own life or perhaps observed it in someone else? Have you gone through times when you have noticed signs pointing you in a particular direction? How have you reacted to those moments? What has driven your decisions during those times?

In what ways has God spoken to you? Does your "busyness" sometimes keep you from listening to God?

What things can you do to create more time for self-care, prayer, and reflection?



*by Stacy Schroeder*

# The Art of Making Tea

In my kitchen  
I grind cardamom pods with a pestle  
green shells crunching as they are crushed.  
The pungent kick of  
freshly zested ginger fills the room.  
Water boils  
and I add the cardamom, ginger,  
a cinnamon stick, and some rose water.  
Soon I gently stir in oat milk.  
The scent is heavenly.  
I feel pampered, which is funny because  
I made this myself.  
+++  
I cradle my mug and  
taste its creamy, spicy goodness.  
My friend Sarah taught me to make this tea.  
To me, it is prayer in a cup.  
Healthy and pure and simple  
in a world that often is not.  
+++

The art of making tea  
is to slow down and savor  
each step and  
each ingredient.  
Set aside past regrets and future worries,  
engage all the senses, and  
p a u s e  
to treasure this moment in time.  
+++  
The world may be brutal  
but it is also full of wonder and grace  
gifts from God we often miss  
because we do not spend enough time  
making tea.

# AMALA TEA

by Sarah Sturgis of Sarah Amala Yoga & Meditation

*Makes about 2 servings*

## INGREDIENTS

1 knob fresh ginger (*about an inch, but use your discretion, the more you use the spicier*)

1 cinnamon stick

1 tbsp Rosewater (*again you can scale this up if you like, but be very careful. Too much and it will have an off taste*)

1 tbsp whole cardamom pods

12 ounces Oatly Milk (*You can use any milk of choice, but this particular milk is creamy and perfect for this tea*)

## TOOLS

Microplane grater or zester

Strainer

## STEPS

In a small saucepan, bring about 4-5 ounces of water to boil.

As water heats up, grate your ginger into the water.

Add the cinnamon stick.

Crush the cardamom pods with a mortar and pestle or grind in a coffee grinder. Add to water.

Let it all simmer for 1-2 minutes.

Add the milk, keeping it under a boil but letting it get nice and hot to allow all the spices to merge with the milk (about 2-3 min).

Add rosewater and let sit for 1-2 more minutes.

Strain into mugs and serve with desired sweetener.

+++++

*This is a very loose recipe. The ratio of water to milk will depend on how creamy you like your tea, so feel free to play around with proportions. The only thing that must be really watched is the rosewater. Too much will give your tea a weird taste. Also, if you are not using Oatly milk, your drink may turn out watery or have a bit of an aftertaste. Oatly Milk can be found at Wegman's and Target. Rosewater and cardamom can be found at the same locations as well as Giant and any ethnic grocery store in the Asian spice section.*

# LIFE IS HARD BUT



by Lela Ewell

Life is hard.

My parents were Christians. We had to get up every Sunday morning and go to Sunday school and church. We had to go to confirmation class and, eventually, be confirmed. After that, our religious instruction at home was complete. We were no longer obligated to go to church (though we were supposed to want to do so).

My parents were alcoholics, which brought with it a bushful of other realizations: family holidays would usually end up in a physical altercation between the parental units; dinner often got thrown to the floor in a fit of anger, so the dog(s) could feast; cigarette butts were put out on the dishes that sat around for days on end; at a very young age, you learn your family is different, so you didn't have friends for fear that they would want to come to your house to play; you rely on your older siblings for guidance, comfort, and love - who, by the way, took very good care of you; and you grow up ... dysfunctional.

My grandfather molested me for as long as I can remember. Did my parents not know because they were alcoholics? The rumors flew around throughout the family so, even as alcoholics, how could they not know? Was it that they just didn't care? I have a huge family (50 first cousins), and many of my female cousins were also molested. I knew it wasn't my fault but I didn't know how to make it stop. I blamed this God that I was forced to learn about because I prayed and prayed and prayed for God to make my grandfather stop. He never did.

As a child, the happiest day of my life was the day that my grandfather died.

God failed me, *God* was not someone I wanted to believe in, to have faith in. What kind of God would ignore the plea of a child? I turned from God; I boldly denounced God. I even secretly talked to Satan. This went on for many years.

As I came upon my teenage years, my older siblings were gone. My sister, and my oldest brother both married and started families of their own. My older brother, Ken, left me, for the Marine Corps. Thirteen years old and I was left all alone. Oh, don't get me wrong... I had parents! My mom would go to work every day, come home, drink, and pass out on the couch; my dad was in rehab (again).

A pastor came to our house one day to invite us to church. Although my mom was passed out on the couch, I thought for sure she would get up for him but I could not wake her. He left his

# GOD HAS GOT MY BACK

card with me and said that if I ever needed anything to call, no matter the time, day or night. I told him that I pray to Satan. He looked at me with love and compassion, as though he were going to cry. He spoke a blessing over me and reminded me that if I ever needed anything to just call.

As fate would have it, the very next weekend my younger brother arrived home from a night of partying, tripping on LSD with the top part of a broken soda bottle through the palm of his hand and blood flowing down his arm. I tried to wake up Mom. That wasn't happening and I was starting to freak out. Blood was everywhere. Shawn was laughing, demanding that I look at the bottle stuck through his hand because it was "so cool," explaining how he had been running on the tracks with a train chasing him when he fell on the glass and how he was thrown off the tracks by the wind just as the train was about to run him over. (Mind you, he was tripping on LSD so I don't know what *really happened* but that was his story.) As I was panicking, trying to wake up my mom, I saw that pastor's card sitting on the coffee table. Two o'clock in the morning – but I remembered, "if you ever need anything, day or night" – I grabbed his card, ran for the phone, and said, "God, please don't let me down, again – this time it's my brother and I love him. Please take care of him!" The pastor came, took my brother, and told me everything would be OK. That pastor brought Shawn back the next morning, his hand was stitched and wrapped. He spoke to my mother (who was a delightful woman when she was sober) and everything was OK, just as he said it would be.

That was the first time that God had sent me an angel (although I didn't recognize it as that until years later).

I was pregnant at 17 and swore that *my child* would never have to live through any of what I did. I would love and protect *my child* and no harm would come to

him. I quit partying. No more drinking and no more drugs for me. My baby was going to be healthy and strong. I gave birth to my first son at 18, my second son not even a year later, and received my GED and married their father by the time I was 20 (but only because my dad told me I was living in sin).

Life is still hard.

Twenty years of raising three kids on my own. Financial struggles, relationship heartaches, poor choices. I desperately wanted to find that "Little House on the Prairie" lifestyle where the husband and wife are one and there is mutual respect and admiration. I wanted to find someone who would love and cherish my wonderful kiddos as much as I did. But more poor choices!

I had been back in relationship with God, but I was not close. I was living in the world. My sons were in Iraq during the War on Freedom, my daughter had cervical cancer ... if ever I needed God, it was then. I started reading scripture. I was going to school full-time and working full-time so I had no time to myself. My church was looking for volunteers, but I could not help because I had no time. I remember telling myself that when I was done with school, I would volunteer at church.

Through all this praying I was doing for my adult children, I drew closer to God. I came to realize that God didn't turn God's back on me when I prayed and prayed as a child to be released from my grandfather's tyranny. God made me a stronger woman, a stronger mom, and a stronger disciple. God shaped me into a woman who can listen to another's abuse and be empathetic yet faithful to God. I have had countless women and men confide their stories in me, being able to get it off their chest, saying the words that make it real enough to do something about. God didn't turn

God's back on me, God chose to use me—me of all people—to help others!

One day on my way to Buffalo, I was listening to the radio program *Living on the Edge*. Chip Ingram was giving a great sermon on stewardship, a sermon that was actually his personal testimony. I was at my wit's end with the boys at war and Brandi's cancer. My whole world seemed as though it could fall apart at any given moment. I had no savings and was barely getting by financially but Chip gave me hope. He spoke of a God of miracles, a God of mercy. It was a sermon on stewardship, so he was also focused on money.

He stressed the importance of tithing and trusting in God. At the end of the sermon, he challenged his audience to tithe for two months, just to see what would happen. I took him up on this challenge and started tithing at St. Stephen. I figured I was so rock bottom, I had nothing to lose.

Soon my whole world changed. I was promoted at work and received a 40% raise at my job. My daughter was told she was cancer-free and my sons were safe. I was reunited with Ira and we married, one of the happiest days of my life. I was growing closer and closer to God.

It occurred to me many, many, months later that this deep faith I now possessed all came from a challenge – a challenge to tithe and trust God.

Only after growing in my faith, did I notice how the men and women of St. Stephen had taken me under their wings and embraced me as a friend. I was done with school, my boys were safe, and my daughter's cancer ... well, that turned out to be a strange thing. She would be told that it was back, I would have our prayer warriors pray for her, she would have a biopsy, and nothing could be found. This vicious circle would continue for 10 years – she just recently had a checkup that said it was entirely gone. Praise God!

Shortly after Pastor John left to become a military chaplain, I truly felt I was on fire with the Holy Spirit. One of our interim pastors, Pastor Evan, made quite the impression on me. He would marvel at the fact that I rode motorcycle, telling me that he had always

wanted to do so but could not because of a sight impairment that he possesses.

I felt comfortable with Pastor Evan so I made an appointment to talk with him. I was somewhat embarrassed because by this time, I was a leader on church council, volunteering all over the place, and feeling quite at home in the congregation ... but I had a question that just kept eating at me.

The conversation went something like this:

“I know I am a Christian, I know I have much to learn, I know I am saved by Jesus' blood and by nothing of my own doing – but I am different than I was. I am not the person I used to be. When my aunt told me she could tell I'd been saved and taken Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I could only smile and agree because I know I'm saved and I know Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and gave his blood to die for me ... but, Pastor Evan, I did *not* invite Christ into my life. He was *always there*, welcoming me. I was saved at my baptism, and even before, I truly believe that – sooooo, if I am not born again or saved and have not specifically “accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior” what is it called that we Lutherans do, because I *have* changed!!!”

Pastor Evan excitedly told me “You are experiencing the process of sanctification.” (I had to go look up the word to find out exactly what he meant.)

Life isn't hard any more. It *is* tricky. It has its challenges, it has obstacles, it has heartaches and disappointments. Alcohol still pulls people I love away.

But, in it all, God has still got my back and, because God is my focus, even on the challenging days I can laugh, I can sing, I can rejoice. I appreciate the good, I feel love... but most of all, I have God's peace.

And you know what?

The piece of stewardship that involves tithing and offerings, the money part that no one ever wants to talk about ... *that* is what pushed me towards trusting in God and having this awesome relationship with God.

†

# Counting the Uncounted

by Chris Kapp/ Regional Coordinated Entry System Manager and Unsheltered County Coordinator

I don't know what was different this time. I have been doing the homeless census for over 10 years now, so I knew what to expect -- but last week felt...different. Maybe it was the rainy weather? The gloomy undercurrent of the government shutdown? The sheer number of people we found in cars and in camps? I don't know why, but it felt different. More urgent.

I'll admit, having been in social services for over 20 years, the work has a tendency to become routine. Even the census can start to feel rote. It's tempting to find someone, ask the survey questions, offer a supply bag, and move on ... but tonight, when we came across an older, balding man lying in the back of a beat up suburban with his dog, I stopped.

---

**This was the theology I was raised on – looking at the homeless, the hungry, those in need, and seeing the face of God, and then *doing something* about it for His sake. Tonight, Jesus looked like an older, balding white guy in flannel with an ancient golden retriever as His closest disciple.**

---

He was bedded down outside the “big” Walmart in Mechanicsburg. It was my last stop of the night. I could have just done the survey, passed him some supplies, and been on my way, but something told me that this man needed more.

So I crawled in the back of the truck with him and started to chat, going beyond just the survey questions. I looked around at his “accommodations” and realized he had virtually no supplies, so I asked him where his stuff was.

He burst into tears.

Turns out, he'd never been homeless before.

“What about going to the shelter?” I asked.

He wouldn't leave his dog – his only friend. So here he was in his suburban with the dog -- hungry, cold, and running out of hope.

In that moment, the words of William Booth, theologian and founder of the Salvation Army, pounded in my ears, “You've seen a need, now, for CHRIST'S sake, DO SOMETHING!”

This was the theology I was raised on – looking at the homeless, the hungry, those in need, and seeing the face of God, and then *doing something* about it for His sake. Tonight, Jesus looked like an older, balding white guy in flannel with an ancient golden retriever as His closest disciple.

I got out of his truck and ran back to my car, where I grabbed all the supplies I had left, along with a bag of food I had in the back seat of my car. I passed them into the truck, saying, “Here. Blankets. Stuff so you can clean up in the bathroom of the Walmart. Snacks and some water to get you through the night. You can get breakfast at My Brother's Table in Carlisle at 8.”

He stared at the bags, and then back at me.

“All this is for me? Thank you.”

“You're welcome. I wish I had more to give you.”

He broke into a grin. “You are an answer to my prayers.” Now it was my turn to grin.

I gave him some pointers on where to go for help, and then said my goodbyes.

As I walked away, he called from his truck....

“Hey! Say a prayer for me if you think about it?”

I nodded and, as I looked at him sitting there in the truck with his dog going through his bags of supplies, I knew that, without a doubt, I had seen the face of God. †



## ... Community Workshop Opportunity ...



### **SELF-CARE & BOUNDARIES IN RELATIONSHIPS**

Thurs, March 28 at 7:00PM

ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

Taking care of others, loving your neighbors, and giving with a generous heart are things we are called to do. But what happens when these come at the expense of you? What happens when we are afraid to ever say no? What happens when we are only doing things because we feel guilty if we don't? People everywhere struggle with this balance – selfish self vs healthy self. Often our loved ones put the greatest demands on us and we can lose ourselves in the desire to please others.

In this stewardship-sponsored workshop, we will talk about self-care and the importance of self-love. We will discover why boundaries are important, how to set them, and how to seek a balanced and happy life.

---

*Kara Vojcsik LCSW is a school social worker and a licensed clinical social worker in private practice in Lemoyne. She has over fifteen years of experience working with youth, adults, and families in a mental health setting. Her primary focus includes anxiety, depression, suicide prevention, parenting, creating healthy families, and helping others find their voice. Kara travels to schools and community groups to do parent trainings on mental health. She has created a youth mental health alliance which won a National Award in the fall of 2018. In her spare time Kara enjoys spending time with family and friends, working out, and playing the piano. You can find out more at [www.karavojcsik.com](http://www.karavojcsik.com).*

# BOUNDARIES

by Kara Vojcsik, LCSW

Have you ever seen the TV series *This is Us*? I love this show for so many reasons. The writing is excellent. The topics are intentional and make all of us take a closer look at our own relationships with loved ones.

Because I am a family therapist and I am drawn to family dynamics, I specifically am intrigued by the relationship Rebecca has with her mother. Every time her mother is about to come over, Rebecca becomes very anxious, wanting everything to look perfect, afraid that she will let her mother down or be a disappointment.

How often do we find ourselves with these same thoughts in our own lives?

Do you have that friend or family member that no matter how hard you try it feels like you always fail, or you always feel not good enough?

These feelings come from a place of shame, the idea that *who I am is not good*. Guilt says what you did was wrong and shame says who you are is wrong. After we spend time with these people we may say *I am not a good child/parent/friend*.

This line of thinking can be very detrimental. No one should make you feel this way. As we do our work and uncover where these thoughts are from, it is very important to begin to empower ourselves to say: Why do I always feel worse when I am around this person? Why do I become so anxious upon their arrival? Now, if this is a family member, it is often not easy to just choose not to be around that person.

Self-care would be so much easier if it was just bubble baths, candles and ice cream to help us cope. However, true self-care stems from the idea that *I will not allow others to treat me this way*. It is learning to identify and work through feelings of inadequacy. It is learning how to lovingly but firmly set boundaries.

Boundaries teach others how to treat us.

You are love and you deserve to feel loved.

You decide who deserves to sit at your table.

Take notice of that word *deserve*. This means that people have to work to get the honor of being a close intimate part of your life. You owe it to yourself to recognize the amount of time and energy you are spending trying to please others.

Setting boundaries can be one of the hardest and most rewarding things you have ever done. We are called to live a life of joy and peace.

My hope is that you take an inventory of your life and start identifying relationships that are making you feel “less than.”

I hope that you give yourself permission to learn how to set boundaries which will help to create a happier and healthier you. †

# Closing Prayer

*Please pray with me.*

Holy God, throughout time, you have sent people out on journeys – often to places they don't know about. You sent Abraham on a journey and told him to go in faith. You sent the Israelites on a journey through the wilderness with the promise of land. Through Jesus, you sent disciples and Apostles out into the world to proclaim Good News and the reign of God. You sent faithful men and women to the early church to lead and nurture it.

And you continue to send people. Sometimes your sending is not for a physical journey, but rather a journey into our very souls – an inner journey where we see how you transform us. Regardless of whether we are being sent to a specific location, or we are journeying inward, you encounter us in our travels, just like you did with Paul. Through that encounter, you transformed him and set him on a new journey to establish your church in new places.

Encounter us Holy One, transform us, and send us out. Make us ready for the journeys that you send us on. Amen.





## A FEW WAYS TO RECEIVE & RESPOND

1

You can hold our ministries and those who work in these ministries in prayer. In need of prayer yourself? We pray at every gathering and also have an electronic prayer list that goes out regularly with specific requests. If you would like people to pray for you, please call the church office or send a message to [prayer@StStephenLC.org](mailto:prayer@StStephenLC.org).

+++++

2

You are invited to worship and engage in the life of ministry. Our worship services and other gatherings listed on the back page of this newsletter. There are many opportunities to learn and participate as well as to volunteer your time and skills. For more info, contact Pastor Matthew at 717-766-2168/[pastor@StStephenLC.org](mailto:pastor@StStephenLC.org).

+++++

3

You can also contribute financially in any of the following ways (all tax-deductible):

- Cash or check
- Online at [www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org) using the Donate button on bottom of home page
- Text the dollar amount to 717-259-2393
- Use the GivePlus app on a smart phone

**ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072  
717-766-2168  
[office@StStephenLC.org](mailto:office@StStephenLC.org) / [www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org)

# YOU ARE INVITED ...

## WEEKLY GATHERINGS

**Worship:** 9:00am

**Sunday School:** 10:30am

## ADDITIONAL EVENTS

*All activities held at church unless otherwise noted.*

**Sun, Feb 10 – Chocolate Fest.** If you love chocolate, this is your opportunity to indulge. 100% of the proceeds will be used to help families in need in our area. 10:00am.

**Wed, Feb 13 – Bible Study.** Jump in as we continue discussion of 1 & 2 Peter, and 1, 2, & 3 John. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans's Café, Carlisle Pike.

**Sat, Feb 16 – Dinner with Friends.** Come eat, talk, build relationships, serve, and have fun. 5:00pm.

**Sun, Feb 17 – Communion Class.** A great class for people interested in learning about Communion, or just want a refresher. We'll talk about what Communion means and practical things like how to receive communion. 10:30am.

**Wed, Feb 20 – Bible Study.** Jump in as we continue discussion of 1 & 2 Peter, and 1, 2, & 3 John. *Two locations:* 10:30am in the parlor at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans Café, Carlisle Pike.

**Tues, Feb 26 – Hunger Education & Advocacy Workshop.** 7:00pm.

**Wed, Feb 27 – Bible Study.** You are invited to jump in as we finish up our discussion of 1 & 2 Peter, and 1, 2, & 3 John. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans Café, Carlisle Pike.

**Sun, Mar 3 – Tapology.** Desperate Times Brewery, 1201 Carlisle Springs Rd, Carlisle. Join in the conversation as we talk about interesting topics while we eat and drink. 5:00pm.

**Wed, Mar 6 – Ash Wednesday.** Come worship as we remember we are dust and to dust we will return. 7:00pm.

**Wed, Mar 13 – Midweek Lenten Soup Supper & Worship.** We gather at 6:30 for a light meal and then worship at 7:00pm.

**Sat, Mar 16 - Dinner with Friends.** 5:00pm.

**Wed, Mar 20 – Midweek Lenten Soup Supper & Worship.** Meal at 6:30pm and worship at 7:00pm.

**Wed, Mar 27 – Mid-Week Lenten Soup Supper & Worship.** Meal at 6:30pm and worship at 7:00pm.

**Thurs, Mar 28 – Self-Care & Boundaries in Relationships Workshop.** 7:00pm.

**Sun, Apr 7 - Tapology.** Desperate Times Brewery, 1201 Carlisle Springs Rd, Carlisle. 5:00pm.

**Wed, Apr 3 – Midweek Lenten Soup Supper & Worship.** Meal at 6:30pm and worship at 7:00pm.

**Wed, Apr 10 – Midweek Lenten Soup Supper & Worship.** Meal at 6:30pm and worship at 7:00pm.

**Sun, Apr 14 – Palm Sunday.** Celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem; receive palms. 9:00am.

**Thurs, Apr 18 – Maundy Thursday Worship & Agape Feast.** 7:00pm.

**Fri, Apr 19 – Good Friday.** *Two events:* Noon worship at St. Stephen followed by walking prayer through New Kingstown. 7:00pm Community Worship service with Trinity United Methodist (held at our church).

**Sat, Apr 20 – Easter Vigil Worship.** 7:00pm.

**Sun, Apr 21 – Easter Sunday.** 9:00am.

+++++

*Need more information? Contact:*

**ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

30 West Main St,  
New Kingstown, PA 17072  
717-766-2168  
office@StStephenLC.org  
www.StStephenLC.org