

SUMMER 2019 Issue No. 7
Stories of God at work in our lives



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



PHOTO CREDIT: Stacy Schroeder (this page and cover photo)

..... *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

Follow us on Facebook: 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 throughout this publication.

PASTOR: *Pastor Matthew Best*

pastor@StStephenLC.org

www.pleasepraywith.me

www.laceduplutheran.com

@Laceduplutheran — Twitter

MAGAZINE EDITOR: *Stacy Schroeder*

magazine@StStephenLC.org

PARISH OFFICE MANAGER: *Kevin Stafford*

office@StStephenLC.org

ORGANIST & CHOIR DIRECTOR: *Abby Best*

organist@StStephenLC.org

CUSTODIAN: *Michael Wogan*

Contents

05

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

06

The Milan "Marys" *by Sally John.* Encountering hospitality in faraway places.

08

The Wittel Farm Growing Project *by Rev. Matthew Lenaban.* Food for the hungry.

10

Empowering Pathways *by Social Ministries Team.* Update on community work.

12

Meeting God at the Truck Stop *by Lori Haugen.* National feature on local truck stop ministry.

14

Christian Civics *by Greg John.* We are called to witness.

15

A Tale of Two Sisters *by Stacy Schroeder.* Modern take on the well-known story of Mary and Martha.

17

Difficult Conversations *by Rev. Matthew Best.* Difficult conversations can move us toward truth.

18

Witness through Service *by Caroline Sheaffer.* Learn more about the inspiring life of Ida Sponsler.

20

Tending our Roots *by St Stephen's R3 Team.* Our congregation is grounding itself in a new way.

22

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! *(More details on many of these events are featured throughout the magazine.)*



PHOTO CREDIT: Allison Schroeder

NEW

BIBLE STUDY

on the

BOOK OF REVELATION

WEDNESDAYS, STARTING SEPTEMBER 11

Two locations:

10:30AM at St. Stephen, 30 West Main St, New Kingstown.

7:00PM at Wegmans's Café, Carlisle Pike

Epistles. Apocalypse. Prophecy. You may have heard about these concepts but have you ever actually *read* the book of Revelation? It's full of crazy images. People have tried to interpret its meaning for centuries.

These too are trying times. It's perhaps easy to think they are the end times. But many times in history people have lived through days as difficult as these. What can we learn in these times through the lens of the book of Revelation?

Join in a lively and broad discussion of this controversial final book of the Bible Wednesdays this fall.

While you will benefit most from attending each week, feel free to join in at any time. If you need a Bible, call the church office at 717-766-2168.

THE **TRAVEL** through **SERVICE & OUTREACH** ISSUE

The theme for this quarter's magazine is Renewed to Serve. As we close out summer, we start to look towards the fall and all the activities that go with it – school, sports, work routines, the end of vacations, changes in the weather, etc. It reminds us that there are rhythms – ebbs and flows.

Scripture is full of verses that speak of the ebb and flow of life. One of the most commonly known passages is from the book of Ecclesiastes – “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NRSV).

As we move into a season that increases in activities, let us remember *why* we are doing these activities. As disciples, we are called on to serve – to serve our neighbors, our communities, and even our enemies.

We serve those in need – and need comes in a variety of forms. There is material need that goes with poverty, hunger, and homelessness. There are other needs as well – human connection, being heard, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and

being recognized as having value not because of the things we have, but because we are made in the image of God.

As you read these stories, ask yourself these questions – how am I being served and by who? And how is God calling me to serve others?

Blessings!



Pastor Matthew Best





Greg and I recently took a long-awaited trip to Italy. We had spent seven months thinking about and planning for this vacation, which would involve us traveling on our own for eight days. We went to the library and checked out travel guides and history books. We watched tv shows about Italy, read travel blogs, and listened to audio tours. We talked to people who had been to some of the places we planned to go. We studied maps, researched trains, planes and automobiles, and sketched out an itinerary. We looked up weather forecasts and packed accordingly. We even went to see a movie about one of the Renaissance artists whose paintings we hoped to see in several museums. We were prepared. Or so we thought.

Within the first two hours of arriving in Milan, even with map in hand, we were stuck. Looking at the unfamiliar street signs, checking out the angle of the sun, peering into the heavens for a divine sign, we got nothing. So I grabbed the first person who looked like she knew the lay of the land, pathetically pointed to the address on my paper, and with shoulders shrugged asked, “Scusi, English?”

Our self-appointed guide Naomi first tried to give directions in broken English, then decided it would be easier if we would just walk along with her since she lived in that area of the city. So we set off at a very brisk pace, bumping along with suitcases in tow, up over curbs, across cobblestones. In places where we could only go single file, Naomi turned around to make sure we were still bustling along behind her. She even put herself in harm’s way several times stopping traffic in this busy city so we could cross the streets. It turned out to be a twenty minute hike and I don’t know if she really did live close by or not, but she ended up taking us right to the doorstep of our small rooming house before wishing us well with a smile and a wave. We never would have gotten there without her.

Day two we confidently headed out for the well-known Brera Museum, thinking we had things well in hand. Au contraire! Coming out of the Metro station, we could not get our bearings so once again grabbed the first person who looked like a local. Giancarlo was dressed in business-casual garb, probably on his way to work, but quite graciously stopped to

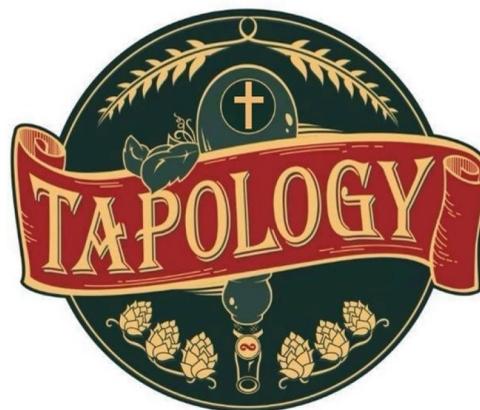
help us, then went on his way. So we set out in the designated direction, taking our time since the museum was not quite open yet any way. As we neared the intersection where we needed to make a right, there was Giancarlo waiting for us, to make sure we didn't miss our turn!

Later that day, following our trusty map, we sought out a pretty church along the canals that I had read about. The further we walked the more we questioned our direction and once again had to ask for help. A nice young gentleman told us we were headed the wrong way, pointing back in the direction from whence we had come, then he proceeded across an arched bridge to the other side of the canal. Not long after changing direction, we heard someone frantically calling. When we turned around, we saw our new friend running back across the bridge, gesturing wildly, as Italians are known to do. He had just realized that the church we were looking for was not the one he had directed us to, but was instead located in the direction we were originally going - we just hadn't gone far enough.

In all three cases, people went out of their way to help us. Even with all the planning we still found ourselves humbly asking for directions – over and over again. While people in the hospitality industry (those you would think would be trained to be hospitable) were not extremely helpful, the Italians on the street were oh so sweet. It wasn't a big thing, however it was something that helped us at the time and it left a lasting impression - a tiny telling tidbit that said, "Italy is a friendly country, with helpful people."

I am reminded of the story of Martha as she prepares to host Jesus. She spends a great deal of time and effort making sure everything is in order for her guest. She plans so very carefully to make sure the visit goes smoothly, getting the house ready, cooking food. She was prepared. Or so she thought. Then the road-weary Jesus arrives and Martha's plans go out the window. Instead, Mary is the one who caters to what he really needs and is present with him in the here and now. She is able to see beyond the usual preparations so she can tend to more immediate needs.

No matter how much we prepared for our trip, there were things we could not have known ahead of time. We needed to be present in order to experience the actual essence of Travel. We needed to be flexible enough to accept that not all will go as the "Martha in us" had planned. Thankfully there were "Marys" in Milan who were willing to set aside their plans in order to graciously tend to the needs of a couple of road-weary travelers. †



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 ... 9/1, 10/6, and 11/3



Hosted at:

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

Tapology was founded in 2017 by two local churches: St. Paul Lutheran Church in Carlisle and St. Stephen Lutheran Church in New Kingston. Since then, more and more people have joined to enjoy food, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages, friendship, and fellowship. Each month, we discuss a different topic related to faith. We invite the questioners, the doubters, the believers, and all people from all walks of life, denominations, and faith traditions to join for this monthly event. Find details about upcoming events and more at:

www.facebook.com/TapologyCarlisle



WITTEL FARM GROWING PROJECT

by Rev. Matthew Lenahan/ Wittel Farm Growing Project Coordinator



Ever since the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made.

Romans 1:20

Already in our fourth growing season, the Wittel Farm Growing Project is a labor of love and a significant part of my life's work as a pastor and mission developer. Everyday, in countless ways, the works of God are abundantly manifest. The abundance of food that we harvest together is, perhaps, the most obvious blessing. Over three growing seasons, the farm has produced



just under 50,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables for Lancaster County food relief. Even during the wettest year on record in central PA, the farm yielded abundantly and thousands of food-insecure Lancaster residents received the gift of farm fresh produce. The farm has untapped capacity to produce food. Currently, only about nine acres out of forty are under production. Our plan is to continue to increase acreage, grow more food, and serve more people. Ultimately, our goal is to end hunger in the county by reducing food insecurity through community food production and sharing.

Another way that God is seen and heard on the farm is in the small creatures. We take the time to notice the little things that God is doing to sustain creation. Last year, North Lancaster Confirmation campers planted a Monarch Butterfly garden area to support the monarch population and increase pollinator activity. Within two weeks of planting, monarchs appeared to rest, feed, and reproduce. We harvested caterpillars to insure their survival in protected habitat. Many times, we watched metamorphosis from egg to full grown monarch, releasing new butterflies to continue their annual migration. The garden itself is beautiful with its many types of attractive native flowers and milkweeds (the required plant for monarch butterflies). But the process of transformation is, itself, a gift from God and a wonder to behold.



invite people to become curious, to wonder, and to learn about planting, growing, and harvesting food. So few of us have any real connections to the sources of our food and the land from whence it came. Most people don't know what a potato plant looks like. We are learning together about food production and the challenges of growing good food well. One of the biggest challenges has been rainfall, a symptom of climate change affecting many American farmers. Nevertheless, we persevere because we are called to serve.

We have eight honeybee hives at the farm. Observing their activity can be meditative—the droning sounds and repetitive flights to and from the hives by thousands of bees working in harmony to make honey and pollinate plants. We teach children not to be afraid of bees and not to kill them. They support life in ways we hardly understand. And they are under population stress because of climate change and pollution. This year, our hives produced ninety pounds of honey. But more importantly, the bees are thriving and pollinating plants.

This season, I have been watching an Eastern Bluebird appear to me every time I am working in the lower part of the field. I like to think he is watching me work and somehow comes to me as a gift from God, reminding me on hot and frustrating days that God's creation is a gift to be enjoyed as much as a farm to produce food.

These beautiful small reminders of God's presence in the transforming monarch (a symbol of the resurrection), the droning honeybee, and the blue and orange-tufted Eastern Bluebird invite us to consider our place in the whole ecosystem of God's work. We, too, are small and brief reminders of God's eternal and abundant presence. Made in God's image, we reflect the beauty, truth, and goodness of the creator. Called by the creator to till and keep, serve and protect the earth, the church is sent to the land to become ourselves, to feed the hungry, and to care for creation—especially the small things.

There are no experts at the Wittel Farm. I was raised on a family farm in central NY but left it to enter seminary and become a pastor. I never thought I would be farming land to serve God. As director, an important part of my role is to

Finally, we encounter God on the farm in the diversity of people who participate with us. The farm has welcomed a law firm, Rotarians, students from Milton Hershey School, summer campers from Camp Kirchenwald, a marching band, and youth groups from LCBC and Christ Lutheran, Elizabethtown. Last year we welcomed over 400 volunteers to the farm. This season, Rabbi Jack Paskoff from Congregation Shaarai Shomayim, Lancaster brought a wonderful group of children from their summer day camp to the farm. Just before they arrived, it poured rain. I was worried that the day would be rained out. But the sun came out and we harvested over 100 pounds of fresh lettuce. We shared scripture and prayer together too. The Wittel Farm is supported by neighbors—some who come because of their faith, others because of their curiosity, and others because of a desire to serve. Currently, I am developing connections with court-adjudicated and at-risk youth in the community. We hope that the Wittel Farm can become a place of sanctuary, of growth, and of fellowship: a church of the land and of the people. †

The Wittel Farm Growing Project is a ministry of the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central PA in partnership with Hunger-Free Lancaster County. The farm is volunteer supported and all produce is donated to and distributed through many food relief partners in Lancaster County.

To find out more, visit our website at www.wittelfarm.org. Or contact Pastor Matthew Lenahan, director of the growing project at pastormattl@dejazzd.com.

EMPOWERING PATHWAYS

An Update from St Stephen's Social Ministry Team

In the past year our congregation has been fortunate to receive several grants. The first two are hunger-related grants, earmarked specifically to provide assistance to local people in need. The applications we submitted identified goals of helping homeless individuals with the costs of laundry and showers at Flying J Truck Stop (*learn more about this ministry on page 12*), as well as furnishing meals for participants both at the Flying J and during our monthly Dinners with Friends (*details next page*) in the church's Fellowship Hall. Also included was the stocking of our emergency food bank and buying ingredients to make casseroles for those who are unable to cook for a variety of reasons. And lastly, this grant money provides gas cards and personal care kits for emergency situations. All

of these things are necessary for basic day-to-day subsistence. We have learned a great deal since this ministry's inception. Circumstances have a way of piling up when a medical issue causes a breadwinner to lose his or her job. The resultant medical bills start adding up and rent payments become difficult, sometimes ending in eviction. Without a stable health situation, finding and holding a job isn't an option. Car repairs, car payments, insurance, and even buying gas become insurmountable burdens. Unpaid utility bills and a history of late rent payments make you too much of a risk in the eyes of a landlord. Living temporarily day to day at a cheap hotel is extremely expensive and actually then results in a double



whammy, because this technically rules you out of having the label “homeless” and you lose any services that might have been available through that classification. This also misrepresents the census count of homeless people in our area, which negatively affects the amount of government funding available.

Now the questions become: How do we help people not only survive but *move forward* out of this downward spiral? How do we help unburden people of the crippling circumstances of homelessness so they can transition into a self-sustaining lifestyle?

So we decided to assign the third grant a different focus that goes a step beyond aiding day-to-day survival. This \$5,000 grant, awarded by Community Aid, was written specifically to pave a fresh road for those who are sincerely attempting to move in a positive direction. With the name “Empowering Pathways” we are helping to provide a route to independence by focusing on job readiness and home readiness.

Our first goal is to provide money for transportation to job interviews, buy the necessary “tools of the trade” that people may need to start a job (like work boots, steel-toed shoes, uniforms, certifications, professional tools, etc.), and even pay for haircuts. It also allows funding of health and wellness on the job, including physicals and doctor co-pays.

Our second goal is to help people who are trying to escape homelessness by wiping the slate clean in order to start over. By paying outstanding utility bills and initial hook-up fees for phones, gas, etc. people who are struggling can become “current.” Included in this goal is helping people outfit an apartment with necessary furnishings, utilizing non-profit thrift shops when possible. And lastly, money has been set aside to stock kitchen pantries with cooking staples.

The Social Ministry Committee works very diligently to discern how to spend our grant money and to make sure we stay within the set guidelines. We contemplate the benefits of providing aid, without falling into the trap of becoming a crutch for people to depend upon. Some days there is a very fine line between the two. Sometimes we have lively discussions about how to judiciously serve this struggling population. We don’t always agree with each other, we don’t always get it right, but we are learning from our mistakes and have faith that we are making a difference.

In June, we hosted a conversation with a social work professional who has a great deal of education and experience working with clients in the Philadelphia area. He was extremely helpful in suggesting guidelines for us to implement in order to establish boundaries going forward. While these grant funds enable us to provide awesome ministries, we do unfortunately receive some requests that may not be legitimate or may cause dependency. Our goal is to graciously help those in need, but we also must make sure that we don’t place ourselves in the position of being taken advantage of.

In pondering the word “grant,” I discovered that its Latin roots come from the word “credere” – to believe. Our modern word “creed” also finds its roots here. The noun form of the word “grant” is defined as “a gift given for a particular purpose.” And synonyms of the verb form are “bestow” and “unburden.” How very appropriate that our grants are quite literally being used to help *unburden* the overwhelming circumstances of the marginalized in our community.

We are truly blessed with these gifts that have been bestowed upon us and we are striving to use those gifts wisely. †



... Third Saturday of each month at 5:00PM ...

ST STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

30 WEST MAIN ST., NEW KINGSTOWN, PA 17072

Upcoming dates: 9/14*, 10/19, 11/16

** Please note that September's meal will be on the second Saturday as part of our Harvest Festival. Meal served from 10:00AM-1:00PM.*

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 closer to each event.

MEETING JESUS AT THE TRUCK STOP

by Lori Haugen/ *Living Lutheran*



Lela McKee (left), Scott Houser, Crystal Houser and Lynne Immell, members of St. Stephen Lutheran in New Kingstown, Pa., arrive at a local truck stop where the congregation assists people who are living in their cars there. PHOTO CREDIT: Nick Gould Photography.

Before Matthew Best even set foot in St. Stephen Lutheran, New Kingstown, Pa., on his first day as pastor, he saw what would become an important mission for the congregation: homelessness.

Under a picnic pavilion behind the church, Best spotted a man who appeared to have moved in. Cooking equipment, cushions, and other odds and ends were scattered around. When he met the office administrator, Best asked about the man and learned this was how the congregation was helping him because area shelters were full.

Best soon discovered he knew the man—Michael (last name withheld)—from his time working at a food pantry after his career in politics and before starting seminary. After re-establishing a relationship with Michael, he asked what items would be the most useful in an emergency homeless bag. Michael listed several things and went on to tell Best about people who live out of their cars at the nearby Flying J Truck Stop because of its showers and laundry facilities.

Best shared what Michael told him with the congregation's social ministry committee. "This tidbit of information sent our committee into action," said Crystal Houser, a member. "I personally wanted to run to the Flying J. I felt like God was calling me to action and he did not want me to walk—he wanted me to run."

Best and Houser went to the Flying J—just 2 miles from the church on Interstate 81—to tell the manager what they had learned. The three agreed the congregation and the Flying J would partner to offer assistance.

St. Stephen members sewed waterproof drawstring bags, filled them with personal care items and arrived at the Flying J to meet with people. But no one they were hoping to reach showed up. "We knew they were just outside in their vehicles, but nobody came," Houser said.

Months went by, they changed the time, they put signs up around the truck stop, and still—nobody. But committee members continued to show up. "We laughed together, we

talked, we prayed and we bonded,” she said. “Then, one day, people came, and they have been coming ever since.”

Two years later, with grant support from the Lower Susquehanna Synod and ELCA World Hunger (elca.org/hunger), parishioners go to the truck stop twice a month where eight to 20 people receive emergency bags and help with laundry. The Flying J donates showers.

After they get the laundry going, they go to the Denny’s restaurant attached to the Flying J to eat together. “The meal is the opportunity for everyone to just relax,” Best said. “People experiencing homelessness are just like everyone else. They have good days and bad days. They get angry and sad. They have joys and sorrows. And we get to share ours with them too.”

Months into St. Stephen’s ministry, one of the people they had met at the truck stop asked if they could share a prayer before the meal. “I said yes and asked if the person would say the prayer, and they did,” Best said. “At that point I knew they were ready to add in worship.”

Best said worship was always a component he had hoped to incorporate, but he knew they had “to build a level of trust with people first.”

Ministry of presence

Today about a dozen from St. Stephen are involved in the ministry at the truck stop and more help out behind the scenes, including members of a nearby Methodist church. “That core group has grown as people have seen lives changed in ways no one ever imagined,” Best said.

One story is about Ebony (last name withheld), who had just gotten out of jail and was staying at the Flying J with her boyfriend. “Ebony didn’t trust us,” Best said. “Why should she trust a group of white people? Every other group of white people had screwed her over.”

When parishioners invited her to join the meal, she declined. But eventually she joined them, sitting at the end of the table, away from everyone. After a few more times, she began to join in voluntarily and shared her story with them.

One evening Best arrived to find Ebony in the middle of the group, inviting new people to join them. “She was say-

ing, ‘Come on over here. This is great. It feels like family,’” he said. “That’s what transformation is all about. That’s what an encounter with Jesus looks and sounds like.”

St. Stephen started incorporating social service agencies into the ministry to help people find housing and sign up for medical or food assistance. Through this they were able to help a man who was denied worker’s compensation for a shoulder injury. When he couldn’t do his job because of the injury, the man was fired. With no income, he lost his apartment. He came to the Flying J on a night when the medical assistance representatives were there and signed up so he could get treatment and get back to work.

“We were able to supply him with a bus ticket to pick up his [medical assistance] card,” Houser said. “He said he had never received so much help and really seemed to be amazed by it.”

Houser said the congregation has learned a lot about homelessness and the difficulty of getting out of its cycle. Some people had been renting and the owner sold the building. Others had a major medical event that kept them from working and couldn’t pay their rent. Many have an income that doesn’t cover the first and last month’s rent and a security deposit.

“Many of these individuals find themselves in a hotel cycle,” Houser said. “They pay for hotels, but this eats up all their resources and they’re unable to save what they need to find permanent shelter. If they are paying for the hotel rooms

..... *continued on page 19*



Harvey (left) and Deirdre (last names withheld) gather for a meal with the St. Stephen ministry team at a diner connected to the truck stop. The mealtime gives the group a chance to relax and get to know each other. PHOTO CREDIT: Nick Gould Photography.

CHRISTIAN CIVICS

by Greg John

Ephesians is one of my favorite books of the Bible and definitely one of my two favorite Pauline letters (the other being his letter to the Romans). Unlike Paul's other letters, Ephesians does not address issues and problems found in a specific Christian community; in this epistle, Paul provides broad guidance for any group of believers seeking to live godly lives.

This summer, I decided to once again read Paul's Letter to the Ephesians -- beginning to end -- with this read-through providing an opportunity for some deeper, more critical Bible study. I assumed that my overall impression of the letter would not change, that I would end my reading with a reaffirmation of what I thought I already knew. My study had not proceeded very far before I had my first "a-ha" moment.

In the New International Version (NIV), Ephesians 2:19 reads, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household ...". As *The Theology of Work Bible Commentary* states, "Paul uses the civic term 'citizens' to describe Christians, rather than the religious term 'worshippers.'" Trying to ensure that I was grasping Paul's real intent and not just this particular English translation or the thoughts on one commentator, I looked at several other versions of the passage. Sure enough, I found the word "citizen" common to all. That got me to thinking further.

Merriam-Webster defines civics as "a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens." Many folks bemoan the ignorance of our country's constitution, its laws, and our expectations of its citizenry, blaming this lack of understanding (at least partially) on the deletion of the study of civics as a specific educational requirement in many of our

schools. But what about Christian civics?

How does Christian civics and thus Christian Education relate to our role of being Christian citizens? God calls us to Sunday worship. He also calls us to witness and *witnessing* -- like any form of endeavor -- can run amuck if we seek to learn what it means totally on our own. Christian education provides learning in a group setting. This venue gives us the chance to express our thoughts on witnessing as guided by the scriptures and receive feedback from others. In this setting, we can hear and learn from their perspectives on witnessing. Finally, in this environment, those with insights gained through study beyond our own can further nurture us, providing them with opportunities for their own witness.

Unfortunately, we do not have Mary's opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet and hear the Master's instruction. However, we do have the opportunity to sit among other believers and discuss Christian theology and Christian witnessing with the Spirit in and around our conversation. At the same time, we often share in Martha's misguided, somewhat conceited approach in defining witness purely from our own perspective. Be it through Sunday church school participation, corporate Bible study, and or other communal Christian educational experiences such as church camp, Christian education provides that opportunity to better learn the connection between learning Christ's ways and living, aka witnessing, Christ's ways.

As human knowledge advances, most of us grasp the idea that living longer, more vibrant lives depends on the stimulation that only continued learning can provide. Dare we expect our witness to grow absent sustained learning as well? †



PHOTO CREDIT: Creative Commons

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

based on Luke 10:38-42

by Stacy Schroeder

MerryMary: JESUS IS COMING JESUS IS COMING JESUS IS COMING!!!!!!

MarthaStew: Whaaaaaat? When?????

MerryMary: 2nite. :-)

MarthaStew: To our house?

MerryMary: Yep. I heard this morning.

MarthaStew: And you waited til now to tell me? We've got to sweep the floors and air out the bedding and get more oil and roast the meat and I don't know if the dough has time to rise ...

MerryMary: ...

MarthaStew: Mary??

MerryMary: Sorry. I was just thinking about the last time we saw Jesus and the story he told about ...

MarthaStew: MARY!!

MerryMary: What?

MarthaStew: Could you pick up some fruit at the market? And the olives Jesus likes?

MerryMary:

MerryMary:

MerryMary:

MarthaStew: Mary!!! Where are you?????

+++++

Two hours later, Mary strolls into the sisters' home. Martha is sweating profusely with three pots going on the stove.

Martha: Mary, where have you been and why didn't you answer my text?

Mary: Your text? Oh, sorry. My phone must have gone dead. I was just watching the new lambs. They have the cutest spring in their step ...

Martha: Seriously? Did you even stop at the market?

Mary: Oh no! I forgot. I'll run back now.

Martha: No, don't bother. The good stuff is already picked over and we don't have time. Can you sweep the front stoop?

Mary: Sure.

Mary leaves with broom, spots Jesus up the road, and drops broom in

her haste to greet him. She ushers him into the house and sits immediately at his feet. Martha, meanwhile, has no idea Jesus is there and is still rushing around the back of the house preparing the meal and setting the table. She steps into the front of the house, calling out ...

Martha: Mary, where in the world are you now? Surely it doesn't take that long to sweep a stoop. Jesus will be here any minute--- Oh! Jesus! You are here! So good to see you. Sorry I didn't get a chance to freshen up ...

Jesus: Martha, dinner smells delightful. Why don't you come sit a moment? You didn't need to do all this for me.

Martha: But of course I did! And it was no trouble, just would've been easier if Mary had helped just a little ...

Jesus: I always feel welcome and cared for in your home. That comes so easy to you, Martha. But sometimes you are so busy we don't get to visit. My time here is limited. Mary has chosen to spend it with me. Won't you?

Martha inhales a frustrated breath, shooting a glare at Mary, and then catches herself. She ponders Jesus' words and then smiles, takes another deep breath, and sits down beside her sister. Mary happily hugs Martha and says:

Mary: Martha, I'm so glad you joined us! I'll bring in dinner so we can eat together while we talk.

The table was already set and normally Martha does not like food in the living room but she nods her head anyway. Martha darts off to the kitchen to get the food and Jesus smiles at Martha. †

+++++

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? (Hint, it's not the sisters.)

Many casual interpretations of this story urge us to choose one sister over another, to identify with just one and select one as right while the other is wrong. Society often tries to force us into boxes that are more convenient than accurate.

Jesus is great at throwing those boxes right out the window. He reminds us life is not about competition but companionship. Mary and Martha each had gifts and they each had flaws. They could also both be distracted ... whether by lambs in the field or tasks to be accomplished.

Above all, it is time with God that is to be valued and sought out. It grounds us and feeds us in so many ways.

So ... whether you are having a "Mary" day or a "Martha" day, take time each day to connect with the Holy Spirit. What will that look like for you? †

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 14, 2019

9:00AM — 3:00PM

**ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
30 WEST MAIN ST, NEW KINGSTOWN, PA 17072**

BINGO				
4	26	44	53	65
2	20	35	58	70
15	22	FREE	51	74
7	17	37	56	67
3	30	40	50	62



QUILT AUCTION | Bingo | 50/50 RAFFLE | Cake Walk | KIDS' GAMES

BAKE SALE (pies, cakes, cookies, apple dumplings, bread, and more)

PRIZES | Horseshoe Competition | YARD SALE | Vendors

JAWS OF LIFE DEMONSTRATION | Bloodmobile

**Lunch by Donation/ Take-Home BBQ & Soup Sales
100% of proceeds goes to local families in need**

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

by Rev Matthew Best

One of the most interesting, fulfilling, and challenging parts of being a pastor are the conversations. No topic is off limits. Some people want to talk about current topics like immigration or sexuality. Others dive into deep topics like suicide and death. Others share their vulnerabilities and tell me about difficult decisions they have had to make and challenging relationships. These are holy conversations and I cherish them.

Difficult conversations are just that – difficult. They are often messy and full of gray areas because they involve people, and people are messy and complicated. Oh, how I wish many of these topics were cut and dry, black and white. But that's not how life works. Topics like immigration, sexuality, death, abortion, money, violence, and more are difficult because of how complex they are. We make a mistake when we go into a conversation on such topics thinking that we have all the answers about them. I am guilty of doing this too – maybe it's just another sign of our brokenness. I think some of our desire for easy answers to difficult questions has to do with our need for control over the world around us.

Difficult conversations are important and they should be happening more, not less. Difficult conversations make us uncomfortable – and they should. Often these conversations raise more questions than they answer and there is no resolution.

One of the reasons to engage in difficult conversations is to move us toward truth – not to convince the other person of how right you are and how wrong they are. Instead, we have an obligation to examine our beliefs, to question them, to poke holes in our arguments. That is how we learn and grow.

We have a choice. We can shy away from such conversations because of how uncomfortable they are and how they force us to question what we believe to be true. We may feel safer as a result, but we will have avoided growth and maturity. Or we can engage in such conversations, allow

ourselves to be vulnerable, to test our beliefs, and to learn and adjust. We may come away frustrated, angry, drained, or sad, but we will not be the same ever again.

I encourage you to have difficult conversations. You'll be better for it. †

Pastor Matthew is available to discuss, or simply listen to, your thoughts and to struggle through difficult topics together. He can be reached at the church office at 717.766.2168 or via email at pastor@StStephenLC.org.

PHOTO CREDIT: Stacy Schroeder



WITNESS THROUGH SERVICE

by Caroline Sheaffer



Ida with some of her unused Depression ration cards.

After I read that the scriptural theme for this edition is on Mary and Martha, it took me about three seconds to decide whom my story would be based upon. Ida Sponsler is one of St. Stephen's Marys. Her unwavering faith guides her every move making her a nonjudgmental listener. When someone has a challenge or problem to share with her, Ida asks if the person has prayed about it. She knows that will help. "I try not to be overly assertive with family members who disagree with me," she says, "but instead be available to listen."

Ida credits reading daily both her Bible and the small devotional booklet provided by our Educational Ministry program as keeping her grounded in her faith.

It is my privilege to give Ida communion monthly as part of our church Eucharistic Ministry team. She made me promise if she gets to the point of returning to worship that I will still come to visit her. That is a given!

Anyone who knows her, or even simply talks to her on the phone, is aware that Ida's soft-spoken, carefully-chosen words are always centered around her faith. She considers everyone in her life a blessing to her.

Ida is appreciative of phone calls, cards, and visits. The cards sit around her sunny living room along with her ever-blooming plants.

Besides working to earn a paycheck when she was younger, Ida always served as a caregiver to family members who required her compassionate, consistent care. She performed whatever tasks were necessary in order for the family member to remain in his or her home where he or she was most comfortable for as long as possible. Ida never complained about spending twenty-two years caring for her mother.

She appreciated the support of her pastor whom she would call often when she was frustrated or the pharmacist to explain a prescription she didn't understand or a doctor when she had a question.

As a child growing up on a farm, Ida did lots of cooking and baking to help her mother feed the farm hands. Every Sunday after church, they baked several pies, cakes, and batches of cookies to last throughout the week.

Ida was the Sunday School teacher for the three-year-olds' class at St. Stephen for many years. Her kind and gentle personality is the epitome of a first formal teacher every child should experience. Her students loved Miss Ida and eagerly looked forward to spending each Sunday morning with her. She delights in those former students who remain in touch with her after all these years. One former member, now an adult, still calls Ida regularly from her home in Wyoming.

Until recently, Ida sent greeting cards to church members for significant events in their lives such as their birthdays and anniversaries. Due to her arthritis, she has had to limit her card ministry this past year but continues to do so as much as possible.

She lovingly shares the cards she has received since my last visit, allowing me to read them. She now makes calls to check on others whom she knows are having medical issues or experiencing rough times in their lives.

Ida's phenomenal memory makes her a wonderful storyteller. It's fun for me to listen to her personal stories as well as sto-



PHOTOS FOR THIS ARTICLE PROVIDED BY: the author

ries about an early St. Stephen. And I believe sharing those stories is life-giving for Ida.

Ida makes handmade Christmas ornaments every year to give to special people she cares for. She apologizes that this year's is a simple design due to her fingers being stiff. I find the simplicity elegant and beautiful.

When I visit, Ida grabs me in a huge bear hug. She enjoys chatting with visitors immensely. Anyone who knows her, as I do, finds Ida to be a blessing in our life. She continues to live a life of service, adapting as she must, but continuing to serve in whatever capacity she can. †



PHOTO CREDIT Nick Gould Photography

..... *Truck Stop continued from page 13*

themselves, they are not technically homeless and cannot get housing assistance.”

As its ministry continues, St. Stephen is considering adding a second truck stop and resources such as haircuts, financial education, job training and job application assistance.

Although many factors play a role in homelessness, Houser said it's the simplest assistance that has the greatest impact. “What we have learned in this ministry is that the most valuable commodity we are offering is community,” she said. “Our participants have no place where they fit, where they are welcome, where they are cared for without judgment. No, we cannot solve all their problems. We work together to find the resources they need, but at the end of the day, we are present and listening.” †

This article was written by Lori Haugen and originally published in the July 2019 issue of Living Lutheran. Photos by Nick Gould Photography.

HELP STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Thursday, September 26 at 7:00PM

ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

Did you know that human trafficking is a growing problem in south central PA?

The intersection of the PA Turnpike from the east and west with the north/south Rt 81 corridor facilitates easy transfer of human “cargo.” Social Ministry is sponsoring an educational program by PAATH 15 (PA Alliance Against Trafficking in Humans: Route 15 Project) designed to raise awareness of human trafficking, services available, and teach safe bystander intervention techniques. Please take time to learn what you can do to help.

PAATH 15 is a 12 county project focusing on enhancing services, interagency collaboration, training, and awareness of trafficking along Route 15 in PA. PAATH 15 Human Trafficking Response Team provides direct services to victims including crisis intervention and response, emergency shelter, case management, advocacy, legal & medical accompaniments, information and referrals, and other services. PAATH 15 Team Members include the YWCA Greater Harrisburg, Transitions of PA, Survivors Inc., YWCA York, YWCA Northcentral, PIRC, and Friends of Farmworkers. Find more at [Facebook.com/pg/PAAgainstTraffickinginHumans](https://www.facebook.com/pg/PAAgainstTraffickinginHumans).





PHOTO CREDIT: Creative Commons

TENDING OUR ROOTS

by *St Stephen's R3 Team*

Picture a tree. What comes to mind, an evergreen or a deciduous tree? What colors ... greens or autumn reds and yellows or perhaps, even, dark branches topped with frosty snow?

This time of year, I imagine many of you visualized an oak or similar leafy tree with sun dappling through the deep shade its hefty branches provide. You may have seen a squirrel or bird's nest or even a swing on those branches.

It is unlikely the first image you saw was of the tree roots, partially protruding but mostly buried underground.

That is often true of our lives as well. We are people of action who respond to urgent needs and deadlines. We spend a lot of time in our virtual branches and not so much at our roots, which are just as important and perhaps even more so, for they literally ground us.

At St Stephen, we make a point to offer opportunities for you to ground yourself. The most foundational way to do so is through your relationship with God. Through worship and prayer, as well as through events like our September 19 workshop (*details next page*), you can further develop the practice of seeing God at work in your life and hearing the ways God might be nudging you that are different from the messages the world projects.

It is important for congregations to also take time to do this discernment. We are fortunate that our synod has created such a program, one that has been recognized on the national level for its excellence. Called the R3 initiative—reFORM,

reNEW, reVISION—this 18-month program aims to help “individuals and congregations explore how God is already at work in their mission fields and grow spiritually to bring the good news of Christ to a world that needs it more than ever.” Each participating church creates a team of 6-8 people who gather regularly for monthly training which they then take back to their congregations for more prayerful conversation and exploration. The program helps congregations to define their sense of “purpose and mission and to question how to move forward faithfully.”

In other words, it calls people temporarily in from the branches to tend to their roots. The healthier the foundation of the tree, the more the branches will flourish. The better the sense of mission, the clearer it is which branches need pruning and which need more care. Our congregation's tree is a beautiful one with many gifts and opportunities, many faithful members, and a rich history of people wanting to support those in need. An intentional, Spirit-led review of our circumstances will only improve upon our ability to respond to God's call to us in this time and place.

Our council has signed on for this opportunity. In fact, the monthly training events for all participating congregations will be held at St Stephen when they begin this September. Our R3 team includes Crystal Houser, Lela McKee, Randy Neidig Sr., Stacy Schroeder (*chair*), and Pastor Matthew Best (*at press-time, we were still awaiting several more responses, including a youth member*). Please hold us in prayer and be prepared to respond to the important conversations to come. †

Community Workshop Opportunities

RECOGNIZING GOD IN OUR MIDST ... 1 Corinthians 3:16a



Thurs, September 19 at 7:00-8:30PM
ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

God wants us to be aware of Christ's presence. If we want what God desires, we first learn how to recognize the presence of Christ. To do so, we slow down long enough to redirect our 'busyness' with opportunities that pay attention to Jesus' presence in our midst. Growing our awareness of Christ's presence requires a different rhythm to our life. A rhythm many of us were never taught, yet we deeply desire. In an effort to catch up to some of what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life, we invite you to take a few moments with God during this workshop. Together, we will gently become aware of where God has been with you in your own life and notice how God is moving in the lives of others. Come and see how you can encounter God in the ordinary.

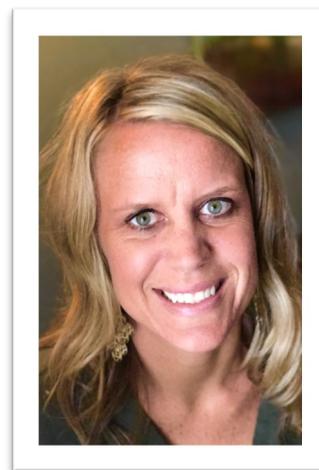
Deacon Marsha Roscoe desires to help others grow in faith and discipleship and serves on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as a deacon. She is currently under call with the Lower Susquehanna Synod as the Director for Mission Interpretation. In 2016, she founded Breathing in Christ. In ecumenical partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Central PA, she is also on the staff of the Stevenson School for Ministry. Marsha holds a master's degree in Ministerial Studies from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary) with concentrations in spiritual formation and missional outreach. She holds a certificate in nonprofit development strategies from Notre Dame University's Mendoza School of Business. As a minister, spiritual director, teacher, workshop presenter, and retreat leader, she has worked in all areas of spiritual formation for more than 19 years.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

Thurs, October 17 at 7:00-8:30PM
ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

Today's world can be busy, isolating, and stressful. Anxiety, depression, and suicide rates are higher than ever before. Because of the stigma, it is often hard for individuals, as well as their friends and family members, to acknowledge when someone is at risk.

This workshop will identify common warning signs (though signs are not always present) and discuss what to say and what not to say to someone who may be struggling. Participants will leave with a list of suggested steps to take to help someone they care about.



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.

CLOSING PRAYER

Please pray with me.

Holy God, you call us to a life of service.

This isn't easy. Many times, it isn't fun either. Service can be hard. It can be disappointing. It can be heartbreaking.

It can also bring great joy and fulfillment. Service brings us into others' lives and others into our lives.

Open us to being served and change us to be willing servants.

It is in service that we fully express our faith – a faith that you give us as a gift to be shared with many.

Thank you for touching each of our lives in ways we can't imagine.

Empower us to serve our neighbors.

AMEN.

PHOTO CREDIT: Julie Grove

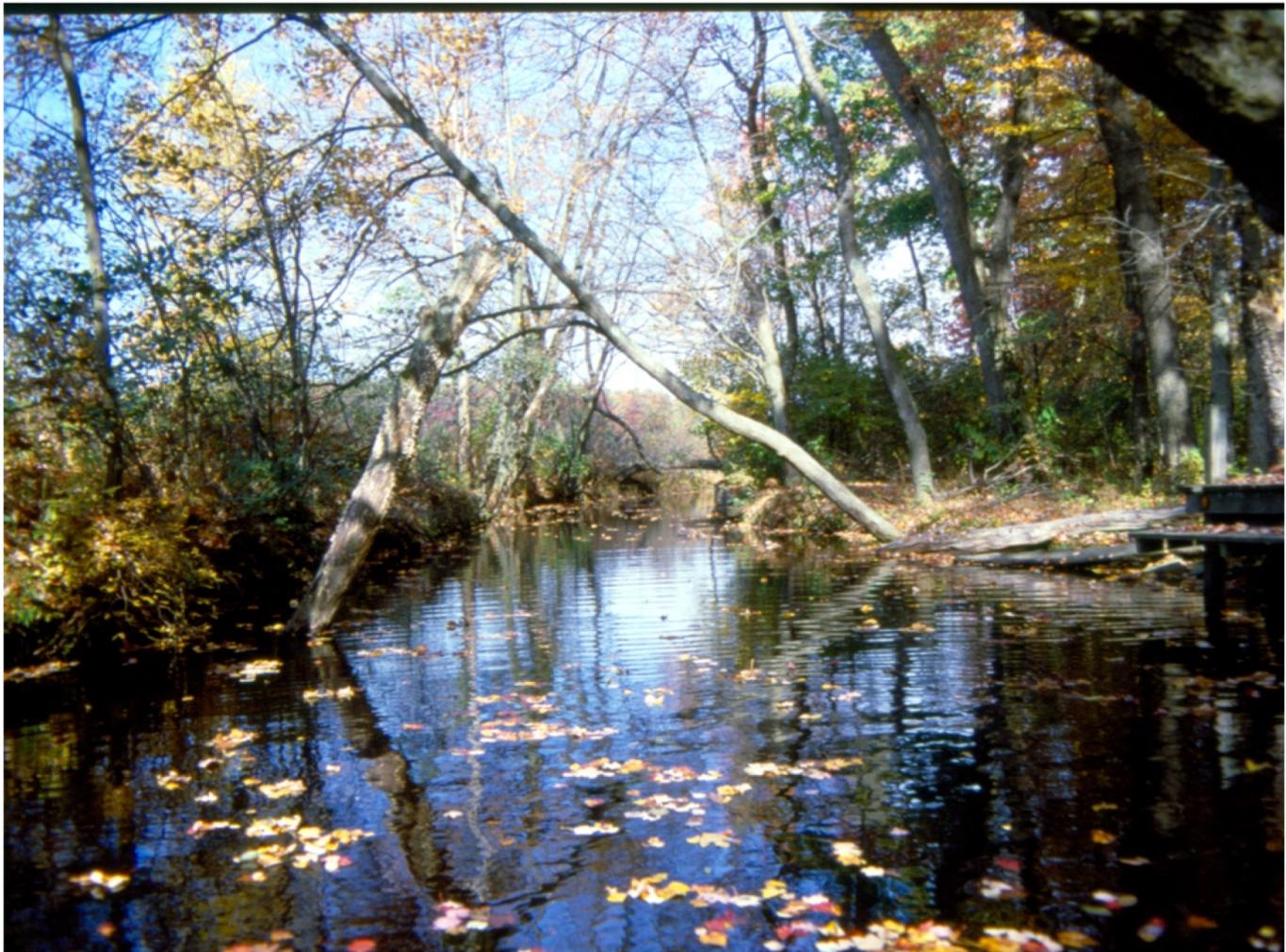




PHOTO CREDIT: Julie Grove

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.

+++++

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.

+++++

3

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

- Cash or check
- Online at www.StStephenLC.org using the Donate button on the bottom of our homepage
- 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/ www.StStephenLC.org

ST STEPHEN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

30 West Main St

New Kingstown, PA 17072

WEEKLY GATHERINGS

Worship: 9:00am

Sunday School: 10:30am

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

All activities held at church unless otherwise noted.

Sat, Aug 17 - Dinner with Friends. Details/p 11. 5:00pm.

Sun, Sept 1 - Tapology. Desperate Times Brewery, 1201 Carlisle Springs Rd, Carlisle. 5:00pm.

Mon, Sept 2 - Labor Day. Church office is closed.

Sun, Sept 8 - Rally Day. Kick off of school-year Sunday school activities. 10:30AM.

Wed, Sept 11 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Sat, Sept 14 - Harvest Festival. Details/p 17. 9:00AM-3:00PM.

Wed, Sept 18 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Thurs, Sept 19 - Recognizing God in our Midst. Details / page 21. 7:00-8:30pm.

Wed, Sept 25 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Thurs, Sept 26 – Workshop on Stopping Human Trafficking. Details/ p 19. 7:00pm.

Wed, Oct 2 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Sun, Oct 6 – Tapology. Desperate Times Brewery, 1201 Carlisle Springs Rd, Carlisle. 5:00pm.

Wed, Oct 9 & 16 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Thurs, Oct 17 – Mental Health & Suicide Prevention in a Chaotic World. Details/ p 21. 7:00-8:30pm.

Sat, Oct 19 - Dinner with Friends. Details/p 11. 5:00pm.

Wed, Oct 23 & 30 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Sun, Nov 3 - Tapology. Desperate Times Brewery, 1201 Carlisle Springs Rd, Carlisle. 5:00pm.

Wed, Nov 13 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

Sat, Nov 16 – Dinner with Friends. Details/p 11. 5:00pm.

Wed, Nov 20 – Bible Study. *Two locations:* 10:30am at St. Stephen. 7:00pm at Wegmans’s Café, Carlisle Pike.

+++++

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