

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

2024 DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



A special thanks to Virginia Fulginiti and Jay for this new church photo.

[Church Calendar](#)

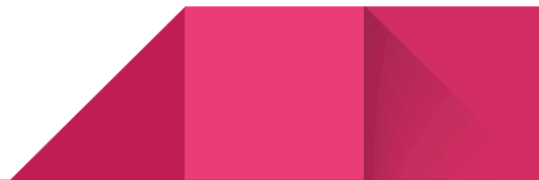
When clicking the link above you will be directed to our church calendar. Maria will be maintaining the calendar of all church activities. Please notify her of events that you would like posted and/or any revisions needed. Remember, schedules remain a moving target so always check for current updates. Thanks, Maria.

You can reach Maria at saintstephensucc@gmail.com

Updates of Current Church Activities

END OF NOVEMBER REMINDERS...

Monday, November 25th @ 10:00 a.m We will gather at the church to decorate the Christmas trees in the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to be a part of dressing the church in preparation for the Advent season.



DECEMBER EVENTS

- **Hanging of the Greens, Advent Service**, December 1st @ 10:30
(Communion Service has been moved to the following Sunday, December 8th)
- **First Fridays of the Valley**, Friday, December 6th, 2024; from 6 - 7 p.m.
Concert - Gustavo Ballesteros Pedroza will perform. Gustavo holds a BM in Piano and a MM in Composition from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is currently a doctoral assistant at James Madison University, being mentored by Dr. Paulo Steinberg. His discography consists of the EP *Cinco Poemas de Fernando Pessoa*, (2022) and the album *Prelúdio à Brasileira* (2016), with his award-winning piece *Tocata*, as well as his own arrangements of traditional gospel hymns for piano, most of them inspired by various Brazilian musical genres. Other award-winning works are *Devaneios*, for piano and two percussionists, and the song *Ninguém Pode Calar Esse Amor*, which he co-authored and arranged for a cappella groups. Other venues and events scheduled throughout downtown can be found [here](#).
- **Communion Sunday**, December 8th @ 10:30
- **Youth Sunday School**, December 8 and December 22 @ 9:00 a.m.
- **Advent Bible Study**, December 8 after worship service
- **Council Meeting**, December 15th @ 9:30 a.m. New members should attend. Election of officers.
- **Christmas Eve Service**, December 24 @ 5.00 p.m.
- **Fifth Sunday**, details to be determined



Update & Schedule of Mission Outreach Projects

Please mark your calendars and become a part of the joy of giving. Contact DD Dawson with questions and opportunities in which to serve or contribute; dddawson63@gmail.com

Gift Cards for the Department of Social Services. We are once again collecting \$25 gift cards (Walmart, Target, etc.) to give to the Harrisonburg Department of Social Services for distribution to local children and elderly people. Please bring these to church or let DD Dawson know where she can pick them up from you.

Saturday, January 25th, 2025 (*this was changed from the original date of January 4th*) - Community Lunch at our church. Hot meal being served at 10:30

Prayers, Concerns and Praises



Let us continue to offer our prayers and well wishes to the following people in our church family and those associated with members of our church:

Eric Ruple, Howard Pratt, Ray Clary, Scott Zane Smith, Justin Smith, Bobby Deyton, Reagan Eshelman and family, the family of Elizabeth Stone, Amy Snider and family, and the family of Rosemary Loveland.

Please share any updates as appropriate.

Psalm 56:8 says, "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book" (NLT). These are beautiful words written by David when he was undergoing a dark time in his life.

December Birthdays

John King - 1	Bay Liskey - 11	Virginia Fulginiti - 12
Jamie Smith - 12	Liz Wells - 17	Heath Carter - 26
Ed Williams - 27		



News from the Christian Education Committee...

The Advent Study, "Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation" by Will Willimon will begin the second week of December following the church service. The study will take place December 8, 15 and 22 after worship. For the first meeting on December 8th, the first and second chapters will be discussed. We invite everyone who would like to take part. We enjoy having many different views! The cost of the book is \$16.00. If you would like a book, please let the office know.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 1, 2025, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. if you would be interested in taking part in a one day study of "Women of the Bible". This will be a one day event and will be led by Rev. Katherine Low. More information will be forthcoming.

Lenten study will begin the first Sunday of Lent, March 9th. More to come closer to the event.

Missions at St. Stephen's

At the core of the Christian faith is the call of Jesus to be servants in the service of others. At Saint Stephen's, our mission outreach extends to the community we call home. Among our missional efforts, there are several ministries to which we focus our attention.

Patchwork Pantry - <https://www.patchworkpantry.org/>

Alcoholic Anonymous - <https://harrisonburgaa.org/>

Community Counseling Center - <https://hbccc.org/>

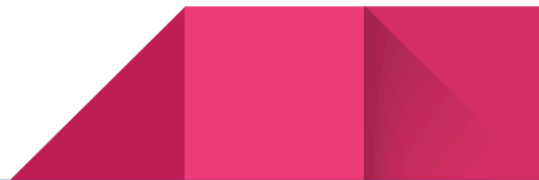
Habitat for Humanity - <https://www.habitat.org/>

Open Doors - <https://www.valleyopendoors.org/>

People Helping People - <https://phpharrisonburg.org/>

"Rerun" A Thin Slice of Joy

On Sunday, November 10th, St. Stephen's held its Annual Congregational Meeting which included the election of two new members to the church council. The Church is happy to announce the new Council members for 2025 - 2028 are DD Dawson and Hunter Woodard. We extend great appreciation to them for being willing to serve the church in this capacity. Also, we offer heartfelt "thanks" to Nancy Cornwell and Tom Dawson for their leadership these past three years. Our church could not function without the faithful efforts and commitments of the whole; united we are greater.



Grace & Truth: A Pastor's Perspective

This Advent season, I invite you to join me on a meaningful journey from anticipation to celebration with a special Advent to Epiphany Daily Calendar. Each day from December 1st through January 6th, you will find a short prompt designed to deepen your faith, spark gratitude, and prepare your heart for the coming of Christ Jesus. These daily prompts will also be delivered to your email inbox, providing you the opportunity to pause, reflect, and center yourself in the hope, peace, joy, and love of the holidays.

Here's wishing you and your family a meaningful Advent, a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year!

Pastor Craig



ADVENT TO EPIPHANY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
01 Play "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" and groove with God as your dance partner.	02 Put a band aid on your hand to remind you of God's healing.	03 Write "tiny hope" on a small object; put it where you can see this season.	04 Be the sign of God's advent. Send a card, call a friend, or decorate.	05 Why did you do your last good deed? Accept your reason and do it again.	06 Adorn yourself with a shiny piece of jewelry, nail polish, or sparkly shoes.	07 Sit in the dark, pray for what is dead or dying, then count the light sources.
08 Take 1 thing off your Christmas to-do list. The world will survive.	09 During a setback today, listen to a child's voice say, "It's all right, it's just a mess."	10 Recall a sleep dream (good or bad) that recurs; ask what it has to tell you.	11 Put a sacred object in your pocket as a Christ-with-you reminder.	12 What Christmas song give you joy? Play three versions of it right now!	13 Identify 1 money myth ruling your life. Then, give some money away.	14 Google how to fold an origami star. Give it a try and display your artwork.
15 Give thanks for the miracle of the body that birthed you into the world.	16 Someone wants to change your holiday tradition this year? Say OK with peace.	17 Instead of calming down today, get riled up and go! Add upbeat music.	18 Take a detox day. Abstain from overdoing it at work, with food, drink, etc.	19 Count all of your Christmas interruptions and make them a prayer bouquet.	20 Draw the world's continents by memory without borders. Pray for earth's migrants.	21 Light a candle and pray for all earthly leaders – for their humility and conscience.
22 Swaddle in a quiet, comfy space. Listen for the breath of God.	23 Make a slow-mo or fast-mo video with your phone. What do you notice?	24 Go to church tonight and avail yourself to God speaking to you.	25 Savor the grace of God-with-skin in every flesh-pressing hug and handshake.	26 Pick up and put away just 5 things and stop. Five is enough for today.	27 Do a little God-job today. Give, love, forgive, mend, heal, or reconcile.	28 Make a list of 3 times things got worse before it got better. Brace with grace.



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

29

Pray for a young person in your life. See them with God's eyes and rejoice!

30

Go to be a half-hour early tonight. Rest easy; let God care for you.

31

Go outside and stare at the stars tonight. Pay attention to their beauty.

01

Look at baby pictures today. Slowly let the images speak to you.

02

Spend 5 minutes today kneeling (literally, if you can) in adoration and praise.

03

It's still Christmastide! Sing "Joy to the World" at the top of your lungs!

Take 10 slow, deep breaths. Ask what your body knows that you don't realize.

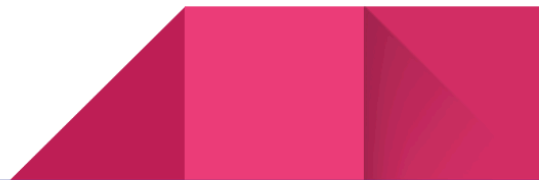
05

Wrap the word "grace" in a gift box and leave it for a stranger to find in public.

06

Be like the magi. Give someone a happy gift to show your love.

These daily prompts were adapted from the work of Molly Baskette and Quinn Caldwell.



“Tell me something Good...”

As a reminder, if nothing is submitted for this space, I will offer a poem or quote for our reading enjoyment. May these words ‘ring’ true in 2025. Happy New Year to All.

Ring Out, Wild Bells



By Alfred Tennyson [more Alfred Tennyson](#)

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.



Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be



I wish to extend my sincere thanks to DD for her patience and continued help in making this newsletter better each month.

Message to All:

We invite you to share your personal activities/events/joys/memories under the 'Tell Me Something Good' section. Please send it to me, at kay.acker@comcast.net in a PDF file. Pictures are welcomed but need to be in a jpeg or png format.

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, please contact Maria at saintstephensucc@gmail.com; or respond accordingly to this email.

Serving St. Stephen's UCC in 2024 ...

- Nancy Cornwell, President
- Tom Dawson, Vice President
- Jane Garber, Secretary
- Patti King
- Kay Acker
- James McHone, Treasurer
- DD Dawson, Financial Secretary
- Craig A. Janney, Pastor
- Maria Blair, Church Secretary

Minutes of Council Meetings can be found posted in the Garrison Room. (Current Minutes are subject to approval and acceptance at the following Council meeting)

Rejoice, our Redeemer Lives!

