



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

April 2026



EASTER ORGANIZING

Easter Sunday falls early this year on April 5, which means most of April is part of the joyful Easter season. That's important to remember, because Easter isn't just celebrated in a single day. It's a special 50-day season that encourages the church to embrace a new way of living inspired by the empty tomb. Not just to reflect on the resurrection, but to actively live resurrection life throughout this meaningful time.

The lectionary emphasizes this point by placing the Book of Acts at the center during Eastertide. Acts demonstrates what resurrection faith looks like when it extends beyond personal belief and becomes a communal way of life. The early church responds to the risen Christ by forming a community: gathered in prayer, shaped by teaching, and committed to a public, collective witness.

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul... everything they owned was held in common... there was not a needy person among them... it was distributed to each as any had need." *Acts 4:32-35 (NRSV)*

We can see that their "common life" was not a vague spiritual ideal. It was concrete: they break bread together, share resources, and organize their community so that needs are named and met. Acts describes believers who hold possessions loosely, pool their resources, and distribute to each as any has need, so much so that "there was not a needy person among them." This is not just spontaneous generosity or occasional charity. It's coordinated mutual aid. It's a community refusing to let scarcity and isolation be the final word and building patterns of care that can actually hold people.

That's a stark contrast to how many of us feel today. Economic anxiety is widespread. People are stretched thin, just one unexpected expense from crisis. Isolation has become normal, and we're subtly and constantly conditioned to view life as something to handle alone: my stress, my bills, my problems. Even when we care, we often lack the relationships and structures that turn compassion into lasting, shared responsibility.

Easter challenges that. If Christ is risen, then the church is called to become a resurrection people. People who don't just celebrate hope but live it out in tangible ways. Resurrection isn't only comfort; it's a powerful catalyst. For St. Stephen, the 50 days of Easter can be a holy opportunity: time to strengthen relationships, listen to neighborhood needs, and organize care that lasts beyond a moment. That might mean shared meals that deepen belonging, mutual aid that reduces stigma, partnerships with local organizations already doing the work, and a shift from charity-as-an-event to care-as-a-community practice. It may also mean noticing who is missing, who is overburdened, and what systems keep neighbors one step from crisis.

Acts doesn't allow resurrection to become private spirituality. It demonstrates resurrection as creating a new social reality: people working together so that no one faces their needs alone. So this Easter season, let us embrace the 50 days not only as a time to rejoice but also as a call to reshape our shared life around the good news: new life is possible, and we are encouraged to live it out together.

In Christ,
Pastor Jon

CONGREGATION COUNCIL



What's Happening at Congregation Council

The Council met on Tuesday evening, March 10, for its regular monthly meeting. Jon Hallman led us in devotions and brought some of his history background when discussing Lincoln's "binding of wounds" which is so applicable in today's world in which neighbors may have such alienating opinions.

After prayer concerns and blessings, we next went over **old business** which included:

- HVAC update: Recent mechanical inspection revealed no major problems. We are slow-walking final payment on the contracting as we are making sure that the system works to everyone's satisfaction.
- Website update: The committee looking into updating the Church website has met with one candidate and is looking at other church websites for comparables. Council agreed that it would be good for multiple people to have access to modify the website. This continues to be a work in progress.
- Members of unknown status: Nancy Egloff has been leading a committee with four other members who have been contacting approximately 25 individuals or couples who used to attend St. Stephen but appear to be missing. Results have been mixed, but most have appreciated the efforts of the committee to call and check in when contact has been successfully made. Some have moved on to other churches. A few stated they would make an effort to return to our church. Some are forthright about reasons for being out, some are hesitant to provide details and some don't answer the calls. The group mentioned that it might be good for the Fellowship Committee to follow-up with cards and to continue to reach out.

Under **new business**, the Council discussed the following items:

- The All-Committee meeting was felt to be successful with good discussions although it was

noted that it was often difficult to tell who represented which committee in the sessions.

- Summer LSA Intern proposal: Pastor Gerry Johnson has provided two proposals to date in the hopes of securing an intern this summer who would create and lead one to two camps throughout the summer. It was mentioned that this needs to get out to the LSA students who are candidates for the position before their summer commitments are made elsewhere.
- Pastor Jon's upcoming medical leave: Our Pastor will be having shoulder surgery in the last two weeks of April and into early May and he was encouraged allow adequate time not only for surgical recovery but for adequate rest and family recovery as well.
- Committee update (finance): Jane deSolms mentioned that January/February 2026 was better for income than the same period in 2025 and 2024 even despite the poor weather which is a positive trend!

Having no other business, a prayer was offered and the meeting was adjourned.

Russ Dabel

HOLY WEEK



Thursday, April 2, 7:00 p.m. – Maundy Thursday worship *at St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 1333 Jamestown Road.*

Friday, April 3, 7:00 p.m. – Good Friday worship *at St. Stephen.*

Saturday, April 4, 7:00 pm – The Easter Vigil *at St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 1333 Jamestown Road.*

Easter Sunday, April 5, 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. – Festival Easter Worship.

STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



Stephen Ministry Course Update

In the January Quill, I had written about the Stephen Ministry Course being hosted at St. Stephen and offered to members of six churches. These churches are Congregations that all have separate Stephen Ministry Programs but that cooperate together to train Stephen Ministers and occasionally will share Stephen Ministers if a participating church is not able to meet the needs of those in their own church. At this time, the six churches participating together in this relationship are St. Stephen Lutheran, King of Glory Lutheran, Williamsburg United Methodist, Wellspring United Methodist, Hickory Neck Episcopal and Williamsburg Chapel.

As I mentioned in my previous article, the training is quite demanding. There are about 50 hours of class time with lectures, discussions, play-acting, thinking and prayer. What always amazes me is just how many individuals in our congregation have gone through Stephen Ministry training and who have served our church as Stephen Ministers. It is a testament to the dedication and giving nature of our church members.

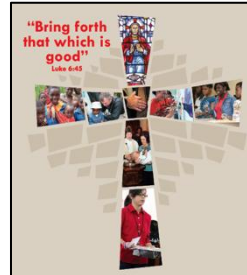
This year's class has nine students. We are VERY fortunate that three of the nine are members of St. Stephen. Our three are **Elara Strand**, **Chris Punchard** and **Larry Provence**. They are not only wonderful hosts for the other class members, but they have proven themselves to be class standouts and true leaders as well. They are doing a superb job!

The class has covered many difficult topics so far including such things as maintaining confidentiality, protecting boundaries in a caring relationship, proper assertiveness, and Christian caring contrasted with professional counseling, just to name a few. Upcoming topics include grief, depression, dealing with suicidal situations, dealing with impending death or poor health and other difficult crises. Most of the sessions are taught by Stephen Leaders from the six churches. Also, I am delighted that **Ellen Bushman** of our congregation will be speaking to the class about her extensive experience working with Hospice House and more recently with running an elderly daycare program.

The class will come to completion on May 25 with the new Stephen Ministers being commissioned in their own churches in the following weeks. We appreciate the hospitality of St. Stephen and the support by Pastor Jon and the Church Staff for this course.

Bill Dichtel, Stephen Leader

ENDOWMENT FUND AT WORK IN 2026



At its January meeting, the St. Stephen Lutheran Church Endowment Fund Committee approved a request for \$2,895 to cover the facility rental for the Women's Retreat, scheduled for March 20-21 in Virginia Beach. The Women's Retreat provides a meaningful opportunity for fellowship, reflection, and spiritual renewal among the women of St. Stephen. Funding from the Endowment Fund helps ensure that the retreat can take place in a comfortable and welcoming location that encourages conversation, learning, and spiritual growth. Support for programs like the Women's Retreat reflects the broader mission of the Endowment Fund: to enhance the ministry of St. Stephen Lutheran Church and expand opportunities for faith formation, outreach, and community building.

At the meeting, the Committee also reviewed the overall resources available for distribution in 2026. Based on the Endowment Fund's spending policy, \$25,845 will be available this year for ministry-related disbursements. The Endowment Fund Committee welcomes requests from members and church groups for projects that align with the purposes of the Fund. Eligible requests typically support outreach, educational initiatives, special ministry opportunities, or other activities that strengthen the life and mission of St. Stephen. Members of the congregation who have ideas for projects or ministry opportunities are encouraged to contact a member of the Endowment Fund Committee or submit a request form for consideration.

Paula Agor, Chair, Endowment Fund Committee



2026 WOMEN'S RETREAT RECAP

The St. Stephen Women's Retreat weekend in Sandbridge, VA, was a wonderful time of learning, sharing, and connection. Our group settled into the beachfront house on Friday, with wonder and gratitude for the beautiful ocean views. That evening we began the retreat with prayer and a dinner of chicken casserole (recipe from St. Stephen's Motel Ministry). Master organizer and emcee **Sandy Johnson** led us in fun icebreakers, followed by a detailed review of the retreat agenda and goals, as well as property amenities and rules.

Saturday morning more women arrived to join the group, for a total of 22. The program featured several key themes from the retreat book, *Gift from the Sea*, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Our Saturday schedule included sessions led by **Emily Morgan** (centering prayer, solitude), **Nancy Egloff** (simplicity), and **Chris Punchard** (women's roles, creativity), respectively, with Sandy keeping us all on track. Each session combined excerpts from the book, scripture, sharing, breakout groups, and discussions, ranging from thoughtful to spirited!

There was plenty of delicious food to eat, from the weekend's beginning to end. Chris led a team effort to create a lovely continental breakfast spread, a colossal salad bar for lunch, and a variety of lasagna and other pasta for dinner. Snacks brought by participants covered a long countertop between the kitchen and dining room, making them handy. Women took turns to help set up before and clean up after meals, and there were always helping hands in the large kitchen.

During the 90-minute afternoon break, women did their own things or gathered in small groups to talk, walk, explore, sit on the beach, read, puzzle, paint, or relax. A giant table on the deck overlooking the beach was home to **Trudi Arnold's**

array of art materials; she provided creative direction, while participants popped over to paint on canvas or lingered to create more detailed masterpieces. We were blessed to have **Christina Nelson**, a spiritual director, lead us in a vespers service of thanksgiving, praise, and song. Throughout the weekend there were opportunities to work on one of our favorite service projects, introduced by **Jeane Moore**: putting together "No Shame. Period." packs.

Saturday evening Sandy led an entertaining and interactive session followed by free time for talking, laughing, beach walks, hot tubbing, and continued growth in relationship with one another. Closing, cleanup, and checkout Sunday morning were timely, with some women heading directly back to Williamsburg. Others stayed in Sandbridge a bit longer to attend Sunday worship at St. Michael Lutheran Church, and stop for lunch afterwards, before heading home.

We give extra special thanks to the St. Stephen Endowment Fund Committee for considering and approving our grant request for funds to cover the cost of the beach house. The generous grant enabled the entire cost of the accommodations to be covered, which helped keep the per-participant cost of the retreat extremely reasonable. Registration fees were only required to cover the cost of food, books, retreat materials, and meals. A \$250 Thrivent grant also helped us pay for the contents of the "No Shame. Period." packs. This women's weekend provided a retreat, true to the meaning of the word, for which we are grateful.

Special appreciation goes to the retreat planning team and all who had a part in making the retreat come to fruition, including **Sandy Johnson, Nancy Egloff, Emily Morgan, Chris Punchard, Hollie Jones, Terri Larsen, Ina Berkey, and Alison Carney**.

Alison Carney





SUMMER FAITH AND FUN ARE COMING!

Yes, St. Stephen is making plans for the summer, and we hope that includes you! We will host the **EMERALD CROSSING Vacation Bible School** – an Irish Adventure through Psalm 23. Emerald Crossing is an amazing VBS that offers kids a soul-soothing journey through the green hills of Ireland. This VBS is designed to show our children the true peace of Jesus Christ and what that looks like in their world. The children will discover the Good Shepherd lovingly guidance, protection, and true love, which are foundational truths children can treasure. Through our bible stories, our games, crafts, music, and snacks, they will have fun, create, explore, and discover the peace and joy that Jesus’s promises us all. We are excited about this VBS and the children that we can invite to participate in it. A date has yet to be set, but we are busy organizing and developing the program for our community. We hope to announce a date soon.



And That is not all! Just in time for the FIFA World Cup 2026 we are working towards featuring a **St. Stephen Evening Soccer Camp** for boys and girls. This camp will be for children 8-14 and feature special soccer tips to make good soccer players great. We will have a fun practice, with short instructions, and plenty of time to try out the new skills learned. More information will be forthcoming.

And we are not stopping there! We look to have **Monthly Teen Events** during the summer. We hope to hit the beach for a luau party, to a Norfolk Tides game, to a museum (how can you not go to a museum in Williamsburg!), and featured family picnics. There could be other events planned as we work out the schedule and explore all the possibilities.



Summer should be fun and we at St. Stephen want to provide family opportunities to have fun and live out our

faith. If you have an idea for additional summer activities, let us know, maybe we can add them to the list. So spread the word and be on the lookout for more information as it becomes available.

Gerry Johnson



APRIL

3	Evon Crittenden	Marian Thies
5	Chris Einarsen	Paul Reier
6	Amber Jansson	
7	Christine Jacobs	
8	Pete Davis	
9	Gerri Bass	
10	Trudi Arnold	Ingrid Brown
11	Art Nelsen	
12	Jenni Punchard	
13	Christopher Turner	
14	George Bass Ellen LaPlace	Meghan Osborn
15	Steve Grant	
16	Christine Hallman	
17	Julie Meeks	Ken Spencer
18	Jo Hanny	Sandy Johnson
22	Sharon Jacobs	
23	Ellie Bailey	
24	Noah Delehanty	
25	Mary Swanson	
26	Jennifer Dabel	Sandra Witt
29	Alan Balma	Helen Nelsen



Heidi Flatin's Mother

Arne and Pat Janot (Afghan Refugee Program)



ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

The Winter Carnival was *snow* much fun, and we're just as happy that the snow left with it! A huge thank-you to our congregation, Girl Scout volunteers, and preschool teachers who worked together to make this annual event such a success.

In March, we celebrated Read Across America with a fun-filled Spirit Week and enjoyed some magical St. Patrick's Day festivities, including scavenger hunts and hands-on experiments.

We are currently seeking sponsors or donations to help one of our students attend summer camp. His family's financial situation makes it difficult to cover the full cost, as they are hardworking parents with four additional children. If you feel called to support, you can donate using the QR code below or sponsor a week of camp for \$185. Any amount is deeply appreciated.

Mark your calendars! In April, join us for a **Potluck & Board Game Night on April 18 at 4:00 p.m.** Then in May, we'll host our final community meal of the school year—**Taco Tuesday on May 5 from 5:30–7:00 p.m.** We hope to see you there. Thank you!

Jessica Kimball, Preschool Director





STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

Our winter weather resulted in many calendar changes. A representative of enCircle, formerly known as Lutheran Family Services, will be visiting our congregation either at the end of April or early May. The visit was originally scheduled in January.

enCircle offers a variety of services including Minnick Schools, which provide help for young students with emotional and learning disabilities, immigration services, advocacy, treatment foster care, and assistance to people with disabilities in all regions of Virginia. The Tidewater Region office is located in Newport News.

enCircle's mission is to "Empower communities, families, and individuals on their journey to well-being, guided by our belief in the inherent value of all people."

During March we had a visit from the head of Grace Inside, explaining the mission of that organization to bring prison chaplains to Virginia's incarcerated population.

The various ministries we support as a congregation offer us an opportunity both collectively and individually to care for our fellow humans in the ways in which Jesus directed, providing food, shelter, companionship, compassion and love for all of those in need.

Susan Williamson

**Giving Statements for 2025
are available for pick-up in
the Gathering Space or at
the Church Office.**



MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **April 2** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** of this month.
- **April 7** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.

Both gatherings take place at **8:00 a.m.** at the Colonial Pancake House, at the corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, Williamsburg, VA. The get-togethers promote conversation and friendship in a casual setting.

CHURCH CLOSED FOR REPAVING



St. Stephen will be closed the week of April 6-10 as the driveway will be repaved. The preschool and office will both be closed during that time as well as use of the building. We will still have Sunday Services on April 12.





APRIL BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES



The significance of baptism, Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, is “that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Your baptismal anniversary is an opportunity to light a baptismal candle and to give some prayer time to reflecting on your experiences during the past year on your journey in faith!

Pastor Jon Nelson

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----------------|
| 2 | Daniel Owens | |
| 4 | Cyndy Touhsaent | |
| 5 | Karen Chenault | |
| 7 | Tobias Janke | |
| 10 | Paul Black | Brad Jefferson |
| | Brandon Jefferson | Brock Jefferson |
| | Justice Jefferson | |
| 12 | Gretchen Osborn | |
| 13 | Karen Nester | |
| 14 | Bob Achenbach | Brian Bergh |
| 16 | Quill Agor | |
| 17 | Ingrid Squires | |
| 20 | Nancy Egloff | Elliot Lawson |
| 22 | Chris Einarsen | |
| 23 | Phyllis Spencer | |
| 25 | Jim Mayfield | |
| 27 | Karen Einarsen | |

Others who were baptized in April:
Bob Hanny

Were you baptized in April but your name isn't on the list above? Let us know!

PRAYERS

Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Kristin Carter, Ginny Cummings, Craig Eichfeld, Edith Haecker, Dave Hoyer, Jim Ivey, Sharon Jacobs, Terri Larsen, and Jim Mayfield.**

Pray for those unable to come to worship: **Ailene Bartlett, Ed and Ingrid Brown, Pat Janot, Marilyn Johnson, Jon Lund, Carole Meyer, Jeanne Nelson, Darlene Simon, and Kay Wasaff.**

We hold the family and friends of **Marcie Clark**, especially **Dave**, in prayer as they grieve her death.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Randy Altona, Phyllis Andrews, Lori Bardey and family, Kristin Carter, Carol Baum, Robi Bayard, Jeffrey Berry, Sr., Lila Bradley, June Brantley, Carol Bergh, Mary Bloom, Doug Bolick, Bob Britcher, Raymond Bunn, Ruth Ann Coski, Amaree Cluff, Dru Dowdy, Judy Drezek, Hollis Fulton, Joan Goodhart, Charee Hampton, Sue Hassan and family, Andy Havola, Nick Havola, Kim, Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Bob Hirsch, Lisa Hill, Doris Hillenbrand, Michelle Holdsworth, Jaxon Ireland, Sawyer Jenick, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, Jenn Kramer, Bob Loubach, Layton, Marnah Lund, Keara Mahony, Trish Macerelli, Laura Margolin, Barry and Mabel Martin, Ellen Martin, Mabel Mater, Jackie Mazzone, Tom Mifflin, Jimmy Mitchell, Liz Montalvo, Bob Myers, Jim Ogborn, Jeanette Osborn, Maricel Paulin, Janet Popelas, Coral Pumley, Scott Radley, Kurt Recktenwald, Carol Sue Repass, Brian Ritter, Ruth Sandoval, Lou Schuster, Pamela Sharp, Kelsey Slay, Valerie Smith, Helen Soultoukis, Vasili Soultoukis, Kenneth and Laura Spencer, Chad Strausbaugh, Al Stern, Monika Stern, Lara Templin, Lenorah Thomas, Karli Wallace Thompson, Jenn Tyson, Matt Weilmuenster, Elaine Wrich, and Lynda Wright.



Virginia Lutherans

FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**St. Stephen Lutheran Church
612 Jamestown Road
Williamsburg, VA 23185**

The Quill www.saintstephenlutheran.net April 2026

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