



# The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

May 2026



## THE MAY MARATHON AND THE EXHAUSTION OF "FINE"

May is notoriously exhausting. As we sprint toward the end of the school year, a familiar fatigue settles over teachers, students, and parents alike. Between final projects, spring performances, and the sheer momentum required to cross the finish line, we often push through by simply putting on a mask. When asked how we are doing, the default answer is a quick, cheerful, "I'm fine!" But pretending we are limitless is exhausting.

There is a hidden, massive cost to constantly smiling through fatigue and answering late-night emails. Living as if we have no needs, no wounds, no fears, no dependency, and no weakness takes a profound physical and emotional toll. We are finite creatures, yet we burden ourselves with the expectation of infinite energy, demanding superhuman performance from ourselves and others.

In this season of burnout, we face an ancient temptation: the desire to escape our creaturely boundaries. We desperately want to believe that if we just find the right schedule or muster enough moral willpower, we can finally do it all.

When we look to the wilderness, we see Jesus facing the ultimate version of this temptation. He was invited to avoid human limitations entirely; to turn stones into bread, to bypass the struggle, to take a shortcut out of his finite reality. But Jesus repeatedly refused to use his divine power to exempt himself from the limits of the flesh. He rejected the divine loophole. Instead of escaping, Jesus chose the "human option." He opted to stay hungry, vulnerable, and fully human, standing in

complete solidarity with our fragile and limited condition.

Certain physical realities, like thirst, hunger, and weariness, level us all. They are daily proof that we are not entirely self-sufficient. The Gospel of John deliberately highlights that Jesus experienced this exact exhaustion. Arriving at a Samaritan well during the hottest part of the day, Jesus was worn out. He was thirsty, the sun was beating down, and he lacked even a simple bucket to draw water for himself. When the Samaritan woman approached, Jesus didn't project an aura of invincibility. He didn't pretend he had it all together. Instead, he started the encounter by admitting he needed help. He looked at her and simply asked, "Give me a drink."

Just as Jesus' admission of thirst opened the door to a profound relationship and ultimately transformed a community, our shared vulnerabilities can break us open to one another. When we admit we are tired, we build systems of support that value human dignity. We often think that following Jesus means becoming a superhuman who never fails, never tires, and never needs a break. But the Gospel reveals the exact opposite: to follow Christ is to become fully human. It means making room for our inherent weakness, embracing our need for rest, and rejecting the lie that our worth depends on endless strength.

As the school year wraps up and the May marathon reaches its peak, you have permission to stop trying to carry the burden alone. This week, find one trusted person and share a need you haven't spoken aloud. Ask for a small kindness, request a moment of quiet, or admit that you need help with a task. Choose the human option, embrace your limits, and let yourself be cared for.

In Christ,  
**Pastor Jon**

## CONGREGATION COUNCIL



### What's Happening at Congregation Council

The Congregation Council last met on Tuesday, April 14 and a number of ongoing and new topics were discussed.

Paul Reier reported that the HVAC replacement is going through the "fine tuning" stage primarily with adjustment of thermostat placement and settings but the project will be fully complete very soon.

Sandy Croushore gave a report that the website committee is making progress toward a new Church website.

The Call Committee has met and is pursuing assignments.

Pastor Gerry Johnson had hoped to be able to hire a William & Mary Student as a Summer Intern for the Church Summer Programs but it turned out that the students were all committed to other summer activities by the time the program was designed. This may be a program for next summer, but not for this year.

Vacation Bible School will be July 27-31 from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Josiah Hallman will have Affirmation of Baptism on May 17.

Four members of Council [Sandy Croushore, Roberta Sulouff, Julie Meeks, and Jeffrey Berry (youth representative)] will all complete terms on Council this year and the Nominating Committee will be looking for new volunteers to serve on Council.

There was discussion of "Luke 10" Congregation Training to learn to confront racism and Christian Nationalism. The program is designed to train leaders who would return to the Church and devote four to eight hours a month to help the Church lead in those areas. The training session is to be held in Baltimore.

The Williamsburg Pride Festival was discussed. Council voted to provide \$250 support for the Festival as part of our mission of inclusion. We will have a table at the

event. The funds will come from those who would like to contribute toward this effort.

Council also discussed our aging fire alarm system and the fact that it is badly in need of new parts. Usually, these funds would come from the building fund, but this was used in the past year to pay down the mortgage, giving the Church substantial savings. This was discussed at the Endowment Fund Committee Meeting earlier in the day and they agreed to supply half of the funding (\$7,600) from the Endowment Fund. The remainder of the funding can be paid from the building fund as it rebuilds during the coming months.

Jane deSolms reviewed Church collections which have been healthy during the first few months of 2026.

Pastor Jon will be on Medical Leave during the latter part of April.

After a closing prayer, the meeting was adjourned.

**Written by Bill Dichtel from notes compiled by Russ Dabel**



## MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **May 5** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.
- **May 7** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** 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.



# STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



## Thoughts on Stephen Ministry

When I go on walks by myself, I sometimes listen to podcasts. Being out in nature and getting exercise always feels good to me, and listening to podcasts while I walk can get me thinking in new ways.

The podcast “Abiding Together” was recommended by a dear friend. A Lenten episode got me thinking about Stephen Ministry as I learned the concepts of transactional living, and familial living.

### Transactional Living

If you are like me, you probably want to be self-reliant. Sounds good, right? But what might this look like, if taken a bit too far? We may want to manage our lives to be the “best,” excel in every area, accomplish every goal we set, fix all the problems that arise, embrace the “we can do hard things” mindset, all of that, all by ourselves.

What if, when we are focused on doing it all ourselves, we demonstrate through our beliefs that we don’t need anyone else? What if we lose our way, having the sense that we don’t even need the Lord God? We may tell ourselves, “I’ve got this,” or ask ourselves, “Why trust or need others?” Perhaps we only go to God when we need or want something, otherwise preferring to be on our own; self-reliant. The Abiding Together podcast hosts refer to this way of living as a “transactional” way of living.

### Familial Living

Another way is to be part of a family of love; the podcast hosts call this the “familial” way of living. In this way of living, love and trust reign. In this way of living, we can experience a life where hard things are talked about, weaknesses can be admitted, and we can freely share tears, pain, joy, love, and laughter. The podcast hosts reflect on how we can have “the gift of community in helping us clearly see our lives.” Learning about this way of living reminds me there is no reason to go it alone; I want to choose love and trust in familial relationship with God and others.

It seems to me that Stephen Ministry is aligned with this familial way of living. We can be honest with ourselves

and one another about the grace and love we need. We do not need to pretend to have it all together. We need good people on our life journey, people who know who we are. We need each other, and we need God, who loves us completely. God loves us through our struggles, worries, difficult relationships, and internal conflicts.

Talking things over with a Stephen Minister may be just what you need to get on the path of familial living. In Stephen Ministry, a trained Stephen Minister “caregiver” meets one-on-one with a “care receiver” for an hour each week, to provide Christ-centered care and support. Each Stephen Minister commits to being fully present, and to listen, care, and pray for his or her care receiver. No matter what is on your heart and mind, you (as a care receiver) can be safe and certain that what you share remains confidential. Facing life challenges alone may feel brave or admirable, but God truly knows our hearts; God sees us and loves us, and wants us to be God’s own.

To inquire about Stephen Ministry, contact **Stephen Leader Bill Dichtel** or **Pastor Jon Nelson**.

Peace,

**Alison Carney, Stephen Minister**

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” - James 4:6

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” - Mark 12:30-31



# 1956 SOCIETY DINNER

**Save the Date: 1956 Society Dinner – June 18**



The Endowment Fund Committee warmly invites members of St. Stephen Lutheran Church to the annual *1956 Society Dinner* on **Thursday, June 18**, beginning at **5:30 p.m.** at **Ford's Colony**.

This special evening celebrates the ministry and impact of St. Stephen's Endowment Fund and the generosity of those who help sustain it. It is also an opportunity for fellowship, reflection, and learning more about how the Endowment Fund supports meaningful outreach – both within our congregation and in the broader community.

We are honored to welcome **Wais Kharooti** as our featured speaker. Wais will share the story of his and his family's journey as Afghan refugees since arriving in the United States in **February 2025**. Through Wais's story, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how the Endowment Fund helps support refugee families and other initiatives that advance St. Stephen's mission of service, compassion, and outreach. His experience reminds us of the tangible difference our collective generosity can make in the lives of others.

Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us for this meaningful evening. Additional details, including RSVP information, will be shared soon.

**Paula Agor, Chair, Endowment Fund Committee**



What Is Faith5?

This question has been floating around recently at St. Stephen. According to Faith Inkubators, Faith5 is a set of practices that families can use at home. Families have been gathering on three nights a month to share a meal and engage in these simple practices.

1. **SHARE** your highs and lows  
What was the best part of your day? What was the worst? Name it. Claim it. Share it with those who love you. No judgement needed!

2. **READ** a Bible verse or story  
You can use a verse from Sunday's lectionary, or a favorite Bible verse.
3. **TALK** about the Bible reading  
Unpack the verse a bit. What does it mean in your own words? Wonder together about how it might relate to where you are today in your highs and lows.
4. **PRAY** for one another's highs and lows  
Offer your hearts and minds in prayer. Simply talk to God, thank Jesus for the good, and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in specific problems.
5. **BLESS** one another  
Trace the sign of the cross on one another's forehead or palm as a reminder that you belong to God and to one another. Make eye and heart contact as you share words of blessing such as "Jesus loves you and so do I" or "The Lord bless and keep you" or "You are a beloved child of God."

One family's response to this activity is definitely positive! **Jessica Kimball** says, "As my family has started our journey with the Lutheran church, we weren't sure what to expect. Change can feel big, especially with six-, eight-, and nine-year-olds asking thoughtful (and sometimes very deep!) questions along the way. What we've found has been such a gift.

"Through Faith5 and the guidance of Pastor Jon, our family is learning and engaging in conversations about Scripture, grace, and what it means to have a relationship with God through Jesus. The simple rhythm of sharing highs and lows, reading bible stories, talking about it together, praying for one another, and blessing one another has given us a format to explore our faith with our children while also building and feeling part of a loving community.

"Our children are really enjoying this experience and often get upset on weeks where we do not have Faith5. They are not at an age yet where they are able to enjoy Sunday service in the same way, and this program allows that connection to the church on their level."

**Terri Larsen**

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



July 27-31, 2026 from 9:00 -12:00 757-229-6688  
At St. Stephen, 612 Jamestown Rd, Williamsburg, Va 23188  
All children 6-12 yrs-old and Crew helpers 13-16 yrs- old.

Register at: [www.Saintstephenlutheranpreschool.net](http://www.Saintstephenlutheranpreschool.net)

### Summertime at St. Stephen

Originally, we had hoped to hire a student intern and provide a series of family and children events over the summer. We have scaled back to just offering a Vacation Bible School program. From our experience with that, we will spring into other family and children ministry opportunities next summer.

### Vacation Bible School (VBS) needs your help

We are excited to offer Emerald Crossing VBS this year from July 27-31 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. It will take 10-25 volunteers to staff the VBS this year. We need administrative support, Snack Preparers, Games leader, Craft leaders, Music helpers, Story tellers, and group leaders. It is often said that VBS is for children, but that is not entirely true. It is for us. It is a way for us to evangelize our community and its young families. It is a way for us to connect and have fun at the same time. So, consider being part of the fun group of volunteers and see and laugh and bless the young children that will be coming to our church (many for the first time). We definitely will make great memories. If you are interested in helping with VBS, please contact **Gerry Johnson** ([pastorgfj@gmail.com](mailto:pastorgfj@gmail.com)).

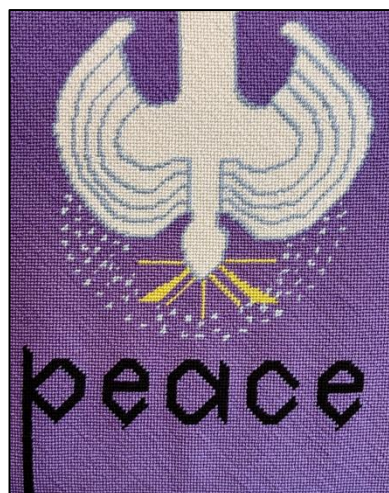


Welcoming Newcomers Since 1939

### ***Social Ministry Committee provides a way to help refugees through Global Refuge.***

In January 2024 Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service changed its name to Global Refuge. This organization was founded in 1939 to help Lutheran and Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. After World War II it continued to help displaced persons from Europe and around the world; and was particularly helpful to Vietnamese refugees from the Vietnam War. It has continued to help refugees and immigrants to find homes in the United States and has helped to settle more than 800,000 people in the United States. It continues to assist and advocate for legal immigrants now.

We at St. Stephen are presently helping an Afghan family as part of our concern for the immigrant and the refugee, and we need to continue that ministry; but our concern and support can and should be broader than one family. Our country is presently involved in conflict with Iran, and another tragedy of war is that it creates more refugees and displaced persons. Since Global Refuge has the whole globe as its concern our Social Ministry Committee wants to encourage our community to support the work of Global Refuge. Therefore, the Social Ministry Committee is willing to match any donations we make up to a total of \$1,000. You can contribute to St. Stephen and memo Global Refuge. If you have any questions, contact **Harvey Nelson** at 320-295-8854 or at church.





*Fellowship at the  
Easter Potluck Breakfast  
between services on April 5*





## ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

Spring is here, and our friends are having a wonderful time! Our caterpillars and ladybug larvae have arrived, bringing lots of excitement to the classroom. Over the coming weeks, students will explore the many changes that spring brings to our weather, environment, insects, and animals.

We'll be learning about the life cycles of butterflies and ladybugs as we observe them grow and transform right before our eyes. Once they are ready, the students will have the special opportunity to release them into the prayer garden.

We've had a busy and joyful season – celebrating Easter, taking spring pictures, and enjoying spring break with our families and friends. Now, we are looking ahead to more special events, including our Mother's Day brunch, the Giraffe moving-up ceremony, and graduation for our Hippo, Bear, and Frog classes.

Please mark your calendars to join us for **our last community meal of the school year on May 5 from 5:30-7:00 p.m.** in the fellowship hall. Donations from this event will support preschool maintenance and scholarships.

We are also currently seeking sponsors or donations to help one of our students attend summer camp. His family is working hard to provide for five children, and covering the full cost of camp is a challenge. If you feel led to support, you can donate using the QR code or sponsor a week of camp for \$185. Any amount is deeply appreciated. Thank you!



Jessica Kimball, Preschool Director





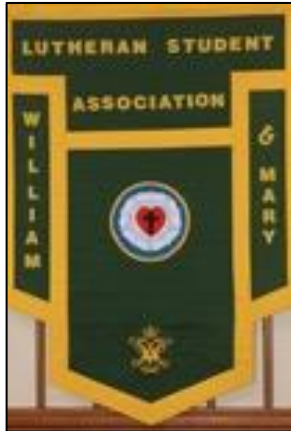
## STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

Spring is upon us and many of us will enjoy travelling or hosting friends and family. Some of the ministries of St. Stephen are seasonal, but our annual commitments are not. The water, electricity, maintenance issues, salaries and supplies are year-round expenses. The ministries we support depend on our contributions.

Rising energy and food costs affect all of us, but have the greatest impact on those on the edge. Your time and contributions are always welcome.

Susan Williamson

## WHAT IS HAPPENING AT LSA?



The month of April has been a busy month for the students of the Lutheran Student Association (LSA). We hosted their first every campus event: Easter Egg Painting. This is an opportunity to engage other students on campus. On April 12, Pastor Colleen Hetrick visited us at Sunday Dinner to talk about vocations to the ministry. We had the honor to lead worship

at both worship services on Sunday April 19. Special thanks to the LSA President, Jared Dewey, who preached for us. In the days ahead, the students will be studying for final exams and saying congratulations and good-bye to the graduating seniors. On **Sunday May 3 during worship**, we will have a Congratulations and Godspeed to the graduating seniors: **Mia Ryan, Ellie O'Neil, Kimberlee Tozier, and Adeline Steel** as we wish them well in their future adventures.

## On the Horizon: St Stephen will host an LSA Alumni Homecoming.

To coincide with William & Mary homecoming weekend, we are gathering names and planning now for a LSA Alumni homecoming scheduled for **October 24-25, 2026**. We are planning to host a Homecoming Tailgate party and evening dinner that will enable LSA friends to gather and the current LSA students to meet Alumni and share precious memories. We are very excited about these events and hope that we can host many LSA Alumni at the events and at Sunday worship. Keep posted for more information.

Gerry Johnson



## MAY

4	Dorothy Hinders	
5	Lindsey Fisher	
6	Karen West	Lisa Bushmire
8	Jim Larsen	
11	Jon Lund	
13	Brian Agor	Joshua Cosby
14	Alex Ogborn	
15	Laura Bergh	
20	Kylen Saunders	
22	Theo Bergh	
23	Jim Weilmuenster	Harvey Nelson
24	Regina Root	
26	Sandy Johnson	
30	Tim Crittenden	



## MAY 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

- |    |                 |                |
|----|-----------------|----------------|
| 1  | Benjamin Berry  | Jeffery Berry  |
| 2  | Anne Schone     |                |
| 6  | Walker Beatty   |                |
| 8  | Jean Gulesian   |                |
| 12 | Marilyn Mallue  | Sue Voigt      |
| 14 | Jan MacQueston  | Chris Punchard |
| 18 | Julie Meeks     |                |
| 19 | Helen Nelsen    |                |
| 25 | Mathias Hallman |                |
| 26 | Coleman Beatty  |                |
| 28 | Jennifer Dabel  | Brett Powers   |
| 29 | Ellen LaPlace   |                |

### Others who were baptized in May:

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Trudi Arnold    | David Gamble |
| Patricia Gamble | Mary Swanson |

Were you baptized in May 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, Donna Kittelson, Terri Larsen, Jim Mayfield, Pastor Jon Nelson and Marie Nelson.**

**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.**

**Pray for the family and friends** of **Bob and Angie Groom** as they greave their deaths.

**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, David Carr, Ruth Ann Coski, Amaree Cluff, Dru Dowdy, Judy Drezek, Hollis Fulton, Danny Gass, Keith and Debbie Glenn, Joan Goodhart, Charee Hampton, Sue Hassan and family, Andy Havola, Nick Havola, Kim, Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Char Henry, Lisa Hill, Doris Hillenbrand, Michelle Holdsworth, Jaxon Ireland, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, Jenn Kramer, Bob Loubach, Layton, Marnah Lund, Doug MacKenzie, Keara Mahony, Trish Macerelli, Laura Margolin, Barry and Mabel Martin, Ellen Martin, Mabel Mater, Jackie Mazzone, Jimmy Mitchell, Liz Montalvo, Bob Myers, Jim Ogborn, Jeanette Osborn, Rodger 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 Soutoukis, Vasili Soutoukis, Laura Spencer, Chad Strausbaugh, Al Stern, Monika Stern, Lara Templin, Lenorah Thomas, Karli Wallace Thompson, Jenn Tyson, Matt Weilmuenster, Elaine Wrich, and Lynda Wright.





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612 Jamestown Road  
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	email	Pastorgfj@

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