



SUMMER 2021 Issue No. 15
Stories of God at work in our lives

ANASTASIS | ἀνάστασις

[Greek for 'Resurrection' or 'Rising Up']



PHOTO CREDITS: Cover and this page—Stacy Schroeder; Next page—Brett Jordan for UNSPLASH

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

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Our congregation responds to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit. 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 (both online and onsite following social distancing protocols) or through any other of the programs and events listed throughout this publication.

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God works through each of us and uses us to help each other.

THIS ISSUE'S SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Acts 2: 42-47 (NRSV)

Life among the Believers

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

GRATITUDE & BLESSING

In A Year of Healing



PHOTO CREDIT: Aaron Blanco Tejedor for UNSPLASH.

If I were to ask you what you needed most this year, I wonder what you would say? How about as a community? I wonder if healing would be up near the top of your list for either yourself or the greater community. Throughout the pandemic, we, as individuals and as communities, have suffered great trauma. And healing is needed.

Healing comes in a variety of forms. Sometimes it comes in the form of medication and medical care. Sometimes it comes through counseling.

Sometimes it comes by time alone, or time with others. But did you know that healing can come through gratitude and blessing? This might seem counterintuitive. Gratitude and blessing are usually thought of as giving, rather than receiving. And sometimes that's exactly what we need to heal. To give – to give thanks for how we are blessed and to be a blessing to others.

Throughout this edition of *Anastasis*, you'll read about the variety of ways in which healing comes through gratitude and blessing. This isn't about some kind of hokey "make yourself happy" type of thing. Offering gratitude and blessing causes us to shift our focus away from how problems consume us to seeing how God has blessed us so that we can be a blessing to others.

It is my hope that you will be blessed as you read these pieces.

Pastor Matthew Best

AN INVITATION TO COMMUNITY

by Rev. Matthew Best



Acts 2:42-47, shown here in NRSV translation, is probably one of the most heavily debated and ignored passages of Scripture:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The debate usually goes along these lines:

This is wishful thinking! It never really happened. Therefore, we can dismiss it.

This sounds like communism! As Americans, we can't possibly consider this passage in any type of serious way because it goes against our societal values.

Which side do I fall on? Neither.

I think we miss the point of the passage if we fall into these ways of thinking. What exactly are we afraid of when it comes to this passage and what God is up to?

Here's something you might not expect a pastor to say about such a passage – it doesn't matter if it's literally true. That's not the point.

Scripture isn't about a news account telling us exactly what happened when, with who, and how. Rather, scripture is the proclamation of Good News and an invitation to community and new ways of living. This passage of Scripture is really not all that controversial when we look through the lens of proclamation and invitation.

What is it telling us?

It shows that God's way of being in community looks different than our own ways.

Our society is hyper-focused on individualism – that the most important thing is *you*.

You determine what your worth is.

You pursue your desires.

Companies cater to *your* wishes.

You have to seek out your purpose on your own.

You should care for *yourself* first.

When the focus is all on you, you, you, it doesn't leave much room for anyone else, does it?

Yet none of us are an island. If the pandemic has taught us anything – it's that we need each other. We can't do this thing called life on our own.

This passage from Acts tells us about what being in community is all about – caring for each other, providing for each other, eating together, growing in faith and community. All of these things come from a sense of hope, trust, and gratitude.

If there is more than enough, then we don't worry about ourselves – we know that there will be plenty for everyone. And isn't that what God's message is always about? We have a God of plenty. There is no need to hoard. We can share because there is more than enough to go around.

And when we care for others, we are not just benefitting them, we also benefit as well. When a community is healthy, everyone is healthy. And that means there are fewer costs – in terms of money, stress, mistrust, violence, and even trying to protect what is mine.

We can bless others because we trust them. We don't have to worry about how they will hurt us.

Acts 2:42-47 teaches us a great lesson, something our society could use – trust.

But Pastor, this seems unrealistic.

There is plenty of division, mistrust, violence, anger, fear, and more to go around, that's for sure. Acts 2 calls on us to tap into something else – holy imagination.

Holy imagination is all about envisioning what the Kingdom of God is actually like and living into it.

That may sound crazy. But honestly, is the way we are doing things sane? I'll take Acts 2's vision any day, regardless of what you want to call it. It sure sounds better.

There is trust in Acts 2.

There is intentional community.

There are committed relationships.

There is care for people.

There is awe.

I'm grateful for Acts 2:42-47 and what it offers – a holy vision of what is possible for a world that is addicted to a different way of living.

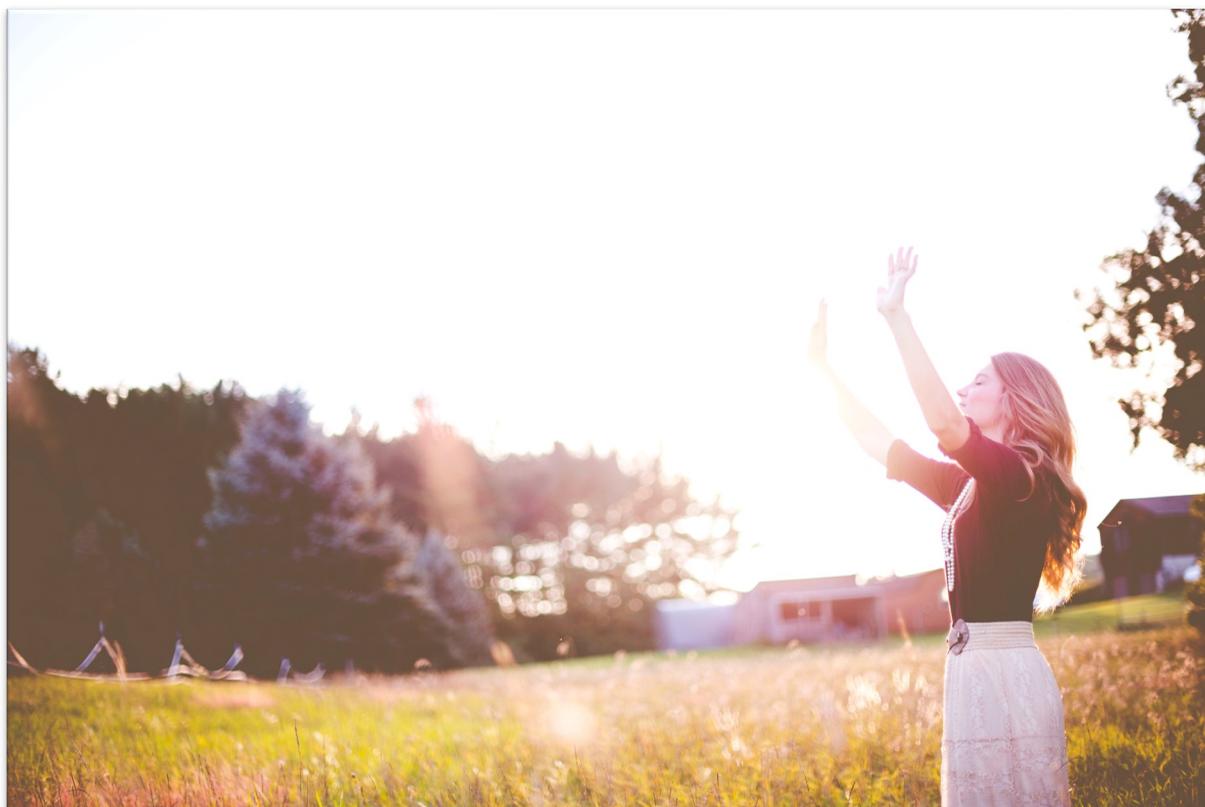
Acts 2:42-47 is a blessing to those willing to embrace it.

Acts 2:42-47 is really about healing.

Healing from the effects of a broken society that values toxic individualism at the expense of everyone else. We all need healing from that.

Acts 2:42-47 offers us a way. †

PHOTO CREDIT: Ben White for UNSPLASH.



BROKEN EGGS

by Mike Kulikauskas

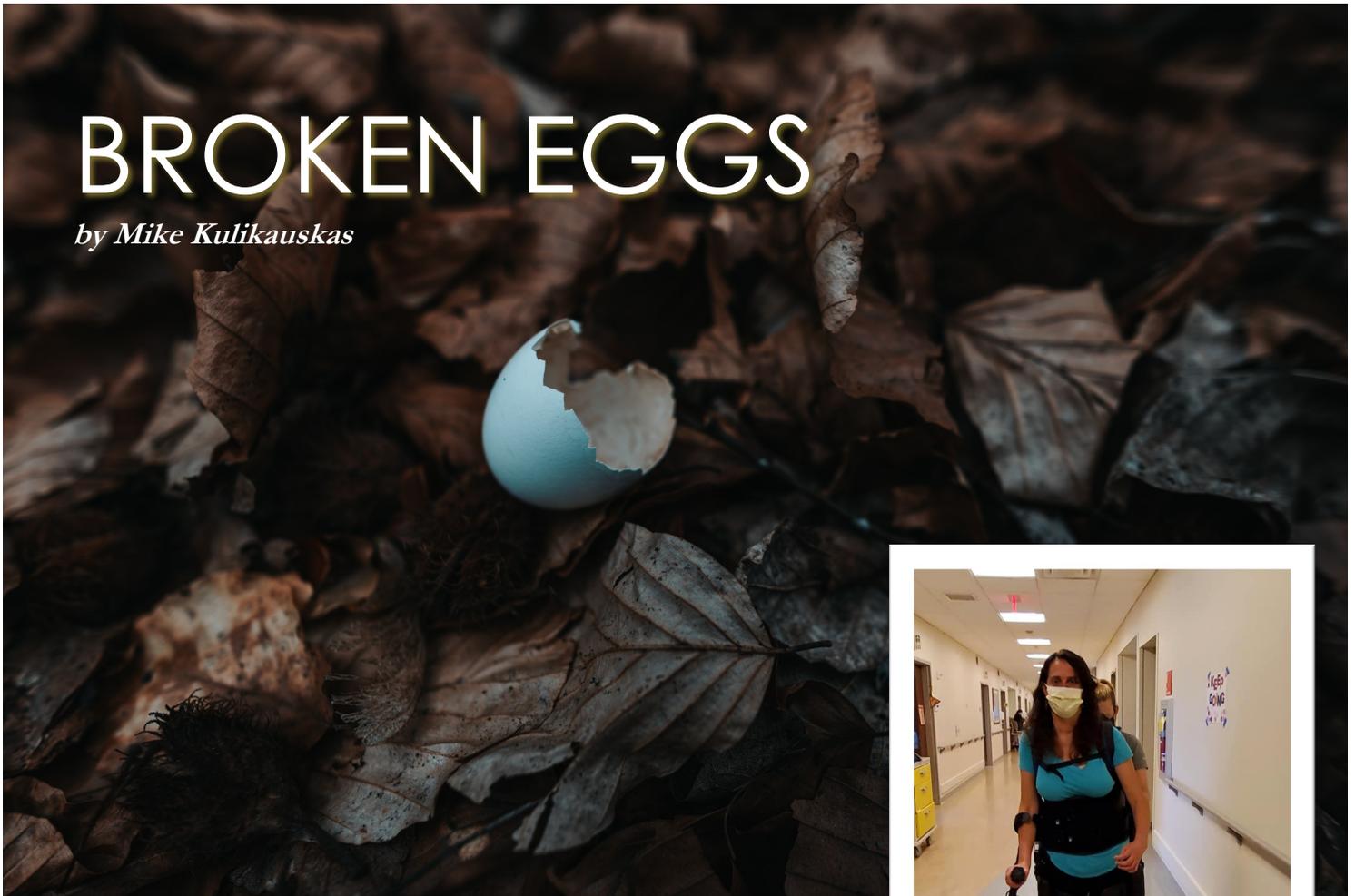
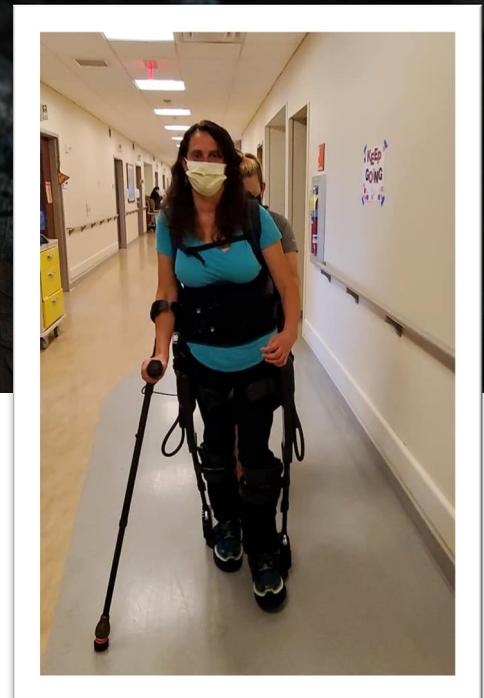


PHOTO CREDIT: Above—Jan Kopriva for UNSPLASH; Right—submitted by Diane Pelletier



Deacon Diana Pelletier was a student at the Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary when we met in 2001. She was one on my wife Bernadette's classmates. Spouses were encouraged to participate in group activities so many of the pastors and diaconal ministers in training became friends. What Diana may not remember is that she and Bernadette share a common experience: an automobile accident. Their accidents had very different results.

Bernadette's was part of her call story—a potentially deadly, high-speed accident where a voice literally told her, *Do not touch the brake*, likely saving her life and allowing her to suffer only minor injuries. Her accident caused her to take her foot off the brake and follow God's call to go to seminary. (Though Bernadette's ministry was cut short by cancer, not letting cancer rule her life by following God's call and living life to its fullest is her enduring witness to living faithfully.)

Diana's accident on June 16, 2007, instantly and completely altered the world as she and her family knew it. The crushing memory of hearing that news is still painful to me. Diana's accident resulted in a broken neck, spinal cord injury, and head trauma that left her initially paralyzed and in an induced

coma. She spent seven weeks in a titanium halo, unable to turn her head.

After four weeks in intensive care, she was transferred to a rehabilitation hospital four hours from her home, which meant she was only able to see her two young kids on the weekends. Diana slowly began to regain function. She was able to move her shoulders, followed by her elbows, then wrists and the fingers of her right hand one at a time. When she was being turned from side to side by a nurse or an aide, she felt her right leg was helping to push her over. Her physical therapists confirmed there was movement in her right leg and started trying to have her stand.

Today she can use a walker with some help and uses a powered wheelchair as her primary means of ambulation. She drives and, along with her husband Jeff, she manages most of the tasks required to run a home, raise her children, and work in ministry.

In an article written in 2011, *To Rot or Not: The Art of Reclaiming Brokenness*, Diana states, “I have come to realize that an egg is never meant to be just an egg. If it is left unbroken its only possible fate is to rot. In order to become a bird or a reptile or an omelet (depending on how you prefer to think of eggs), an egg must be broken. A creature growing inside an egg must come to a point in its development when it realizes it needs to break free from its shell in order to keep growing.

So perhaps the question for Humpty Dumpty, and for those of us suffering from brokenness, should not be, ‘Can I be put back together again?’ but rather, ‘How can I use this experience of brokenness to grow into something new?’...”

The day of her accident, the simple tasks that most of us do without thinking—things that we take for granted—became mountains to climb for Diana. Ever since her accident, she has continued to climb those peaks, regaining abilities and remaining faithful to God’s call.

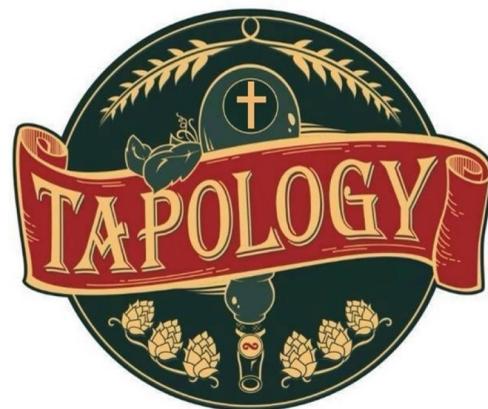
Diana has worked as a youth minister in a UCC congregation and as a called youth pastor in a Lutheran congregation, both in New York State. Today she is Director of Children and Youth Faith Formation at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sinking Spring, PA.

About a decade ago, Diana also began the annual tradition of Reclaiming the Day every June 16. The date had always been a struggle—in addition to being the anniversary of her accident, it closely coincided with her son’s birthday and she wanted to keep that day happy for him. Personally, the tradition also grew out of a desire to do something normal. The first Reclaimed Day was a motorcycle ride with her husband. Since then, Diana has done a number of things including a hot-air balloon ride, flying an airplane, horseback riding, a family trip to Walt Disney World, sailing, whitewater rafting, and jet skiing. Last year’s activity was a family picnic in the woods that her children helped to plan.

This year’s “Reclaiming the Day” was different. Diana has been continuing her rehabilitation at Reading Hospital Rehabilitation and has been walking with the assistance of an EksoNR robotic exoskeleton or, in Diana’s words, “Eddie.” This Reclaiming the Day became a challenge to walk a mile using Eddie. The goal, 5280 steps, expanded to become a fundraiser to help others who needed Eddie’s help but didn’t have the funds or insurance to pay for it. The word went out through her congregation, friends, and social media of the goal that Diana set for herself this year.

On June 12, 2021, Diana took Eddie for a walk through the hallways and exceeded her goal by taking 5285 steps. As of June 30, \$12130.20 (enough to pay for at least 150 sessions) has been donated to help others use Eddie as they rehab from injuries.

Deacon Diana keeps inspiring others as she keeps climbing those mountains, one step at a time. She continues to heal and to teach others how to do so with thankfulness and grace. †



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

FIRST SUNDAYS 5:00-7:00pm



Hosted at:

**DESPERATE TIMES BREWERY
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Tapology was founded in 2017 by two local churches: St. Paul Lutheran Church in Carlisle and St. Stephen Lutheran Church in New Kingstown. 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:

[Facebook.com/TapologyCarlisle](https://www.facebook.com/TapologyCarlisle)



WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE

by Karen Kretschmann

Gratitude. A word with the power to improve your health, both physical and mental; give you more and better friends; help you realize more, develop stronger family ties, and perhaps even increase generosity and giving. Gratitude can do all this, and more!

We know from research that yes, gratitude can and will do everything from improve our health to improve your relationships, help you complete more, empower you to more fully engage, enhance your satisfaction with life, and even sleep better, ahhh.

Henri Nouwen in *The Spirituality of Fundraising* says it so well:

“Gratitude flows from the recognition that who we are and what we have are gifts and what we have are gifts

to be received and shared. Gratitude releases us from the bonds of obligation and prepares us to offer ourselves freely and fully for the work of Kingdom.”²

For me, gratitude is grounded in knowing that everything I have and am is a gift from God. God is with me in all the moments of joy, the moments of pain, the moments of wonder and the moments of deciding what to do next. This is why gratitude is so valuable to me. During this last year of isolation, uncertainty, illness and loss, God still equipped me to be grateful, to be open to new things and new ways, and to be in awe.

The words from Acts 2:43; “Everyone felt a sense of awe”, make my heart swell with gratitude. Can you feel it? Even in

a time of adversity, this first community of believers is amazed to be learning, gathering, sharing, and praying - together! Their generosity means everyone has what they need, and they hold everything in common. This must have been a place full of gratitude. Gratitude to be able to share, gratitude to have enough, gratitude to be in community, gratitude to host meals, and gratitude to worship and praise God.

Nouwen's words again fit so well:

“Gratitude goes beyond the 'mine' and 'thine' and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.”³

In our world focused on what we can get, I am reminded that as part of the community of believers in Christ, we are called to be grateful and in awe. Our gratitude grounds us in the understanding that all we are and do is a gift from God, given not only to be filled but also share. To share so that all will have what they need, and the gift can be passed on and on and on.

My hope is that today, each of us can feel that sense of gratitude that brings us in loving relationship with God, each other, and those still unknown. Knowing that gratitude equips us to live into whatever may come and bids us to “offer ourselves freely and fully for the work of Kingdom.”²

¹Scott McKenzie & Kristine Miller, *The Generosity Challenge: 28 Days of Gratitude, Prayer and Faith*, 2019 and Scott McKenzie, *Generosity Rising*, 2016

²Henri Nouwen, *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, 2004, pg. 44

³Henri Nouwen, *The Choice of Gratitude*, <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/the-choice-of-gratitude/> †



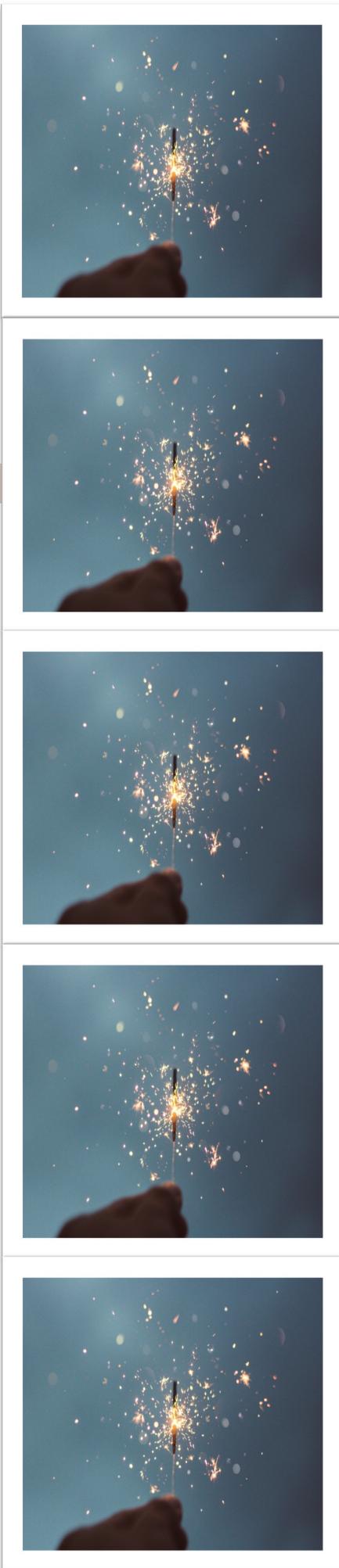
Karen Kretschmann is the Delaware-Maryland Synod Co-Director for Evangelical Mission focused on generosity, vitality, and vision. She is delighted to work with congregations, members, partner ministries and colleagues to explore God's abundant love and generosity and how this informs our faith and actions in God's mission. Karen finds joy in collaborating with others to focus on gratefulness, faith formation, engagement, and lifelong learning guiding us to live out our call as followers of Jesus Christ. Karen hails from the Mid-West where she has strong Lutheran roots. She and her husband took the challenge and moved east just over four years ago and are delighted their daughter and her husband now have moved to Baltimore. Her son and his wife continue in Wisconsin along with extended family. She answered the call to serve with the Delaware-Maryland Synod to help build a culture of abundance and awaken people to God's great love and grace.



ON HOLD due to pandemic safety precautions

ST STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH
30 WEST MAIN ST., NEW KINGSTOWN, PA 17072
Upcoming dates: TBD

While we are unable to host these delightful meals right now, our congregation remains committed to helping the hungry. If you are in need, contact the church office at 717-766-2168.



Little Bits of JOY

by Stacy Schroeder

*These musings are inspired by the Jewish practice of
bakarat batov, translated as “noticing the good.”*

Tell me how you are these days.

Does summer feel like a return to freedom
as fresh air touches your skin and
it is safer to gather in groups again?

Do you relish a morning run
the repetition of feet hitting the ground
beating a rhythm of peace into your heart
as you burn away those pandemic pounds?

Do you pause when a favorite song comes on the radio
swaying to its message or maybe, even,
dancing?

Are you transfixed by the giggles of a child
the long-awaited hug from a dear friend or
the wagging tail of a puppy?



PHOTO CREDITS: Above—Alex Alvarez; Previous page—Cristian Escobar; both for UNSPLASH

Do you thank the kind person who holds open a door
or bags your groceries with a smile?

Do you drink in the golden light of sunset
delighting in the way it bathes your garden and kisses
your flowers?

These little bits of joy are everywhere
gifts from God
to fill our souls and fuel our days.

When crisis strikes, when frustrations fester
we can forget to gather these gifts
stockpiling hurts and justifications
that instead pull us away from God.

We humans think we are wise but
ignore things simple creatures know.
We place our faith in our ability to conquer
rather than our trust in a loving provider.
Are we truly smarter than the sparrow
when we worry about tomorrow instead of
singing from the trees?

Amid our trials, we too can open our eyes
notice the good around us and
thank God for the blessing of
those little bits of joy. ✝



HEALING THROUGH BLESSING

by Nicole Grove, as interviewed by Sally John

Would you feel comfortable sharing some of the hardships your family has encountered over the past several years?

Over the years, I was diagnosed with multiple mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and bi-polar disorder. All of those require meds and therapy that I have not been able to afford. My three children are all autistic, which meant years of therapy for them. They are covered with government health insurance, thank goodness. My husband, Casey has PTSD and social anxiety disorder. With all of this added to financial issues, things have not been easy. I kept thinking God doesn't give you more than you can handle, and He helps those who help themselves. But it felt like we were living cursed. The bills kept coming, the vehicles kept breaking down, the small two-bedroom house the five of us lived in kept falling apart. No matter how many hours I worked we couldn't get ahead.

My kids are the reason I kept trying. Thanks to my upbringing I know enough to be creative and do DIY projects. I used

that model to make good memories for my kids. I pretended everything was fine for them, but cried myself to sleep at night. Because I knew it was important, I started bringing the kids to church. But my faith was in shreds.

I was working a mandatory 50-55 hours, 7 days a week at the post office, with no benefits. When I found out it would be another 5 years until I could be full time, I finally gave up. After looking for a while, I got a job at Dollar General. I became a shift leader and then assistant store manager, but I was making half of what I used to make. Casey was able to get into Amazon which paid \$2 an hour more than his previous job, but the bills continued to pile up.

Then I injured my back at work. My workmen's comp claim was denied and I was forced to find treatment on my own. I lost my job and we became dependent on others to survive. Things were dire. The church helped with food, our mortgage, car repairs and counseling. Our parents covered vehicle payments, took me to treatment appointments, and helped with

food and home repairs. My sister helped with bills and getting our water turned back on. My aunt (who was a nun) was able to get support from her convent to cover some mortgage payments.

Finally, things began to turn around. We put our house on the market, and it sold for more than expected due to covid housing prices. We bought a ranch style house, but boy, was it a fixer upper! We had to replace flooring, remove all the trash, and get rid of the unwanted pests. My dad completely replaced the water system, repaired the plumbing, and fixed the electrical issues. My mother, Jennifer (sister), and Austin (nephew) helped us lay flooring, paint, and take out rotted windows. There are still many things that need repaired, but we were able to start paying off our bills.

Things were improving and it felt like a dream. I ignored the doctor's instructions, and worked my butt off. When I couldn't move any more, I stopped. I am now able to walk almost normally for short distances. I still have days I can't get out of the chair, but they are fewer than before. I do what I can each day.

I'm still waiting for the other shoe to drop. We've had so much bad luck, I can't trust all the good we are experiencing. I keep feeling like I have to rush before the good luck runs out. Rush to get as much done as I can before the next major bad thing happens. Hurry up and buy things I want the kids to have. But I know it all happens in God's time. I try to make up for my questioning faith by constantly thanking him for all the good that's now going on. I'm trying to pay back all the people that have helped us.

What were some things you did to work through the issues you were facing?

I prayed, cried, and talked with trusted co-workers, family and pastor.

Do you feel like you are now on the road to healing?

I'm embarrassed to say my faith is still not great. But I continue to pray and talk with God, because I know it's the right thing to do. I have so much to pay back, so I have to do what I can, even if I struggle to accept what He's done for me. I live in fear of losing it all again, but try to live each day thanking Him for what we have.

How have you seen God working in your life to help you move forward?

I know God has worked through all the people who helped us stay afloat. We are living so much happier than before. He is giving me the chance to let my kids grow up happy and

healthy. Heck, I have kids, thanks to God. Doctors told me after five heartbreaking miscarriages, that I wouldn't be able to have kids without medical assistance. Yet I have my three miracles.

How has your new house given you opportunities for growth? Has planting and caring for your flowers and vegetable garden aided in the healing process?

We finally have space for everyone to have their own room now. We don't have to go to a park to play outside. I can try to give my kids the kind of childhood I experienced. We now have room to invite people over, and I can host more family events. Next week we are welcoming 2 dogs into our family - something we never had room or finances for. And for the first time in my life I have a swing - something I always wanted. I sit in it and enjoy my lunch, looking out over the farmland and horses nearby. It's so peaceful.

This is my very first garden. The flowers and landscaping are my way of making the most of what was given to us. We are so proud of what we have, and I want to make it look as nice as possible - yet another thing I thank God for letting us do.

Your grandparents were long-time members of St. Stephen, as are your parents, and you grew up here. Do you think that that family connection helped shape your faith?

When I think of my faith, I think of St Stephen. My family connections and memories attached to this church are why I bring my children here. We've attended other churches, but this church is my religious family. I don't feel that connection anywhere else.

How have your children been supported through St. Stephen's youth programs – ie. Sunday Church School, Vacation Bible School, youth activities?

My kids have been welcomed from day one. They are proud to attend and say hello to all the members. They loved the children's sermons, Sunday School, and VBS, and the financial assistance helped them attend Camp Nawakwa. They even liked helping with the Harvest Festival.

How have St. Stephen's ministries been a blessing in your life?

Without the prayers, assistance, and support we would not be where we are today. I will never be able to pay back all that this church family has done for us. †



PHOTO CREDIT: This page—Austin Chan, Next page—Alexei Skutari; both for UNSPLASH

LISTENING FOR GOD'S VOICE

quotes collected by Stacy Schroeder

Consider this article a meditation of sorts. Somewhere in this collection of quotes from women and men across time and country is at least one idea just waiting to convict you, to help you heal and grow. Somewhere in these musings a message from God awaits you. Find a quiet place, set aside a half an hour, and listen.

+++++++

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." *G.K. Chesterton*

"The best way to show my gratitude is to accept everything, even my problems, with joy." *Mother Theresa*

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them." *John F. Kennedy*

"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good." *Maya Angelou*

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some." *Charles Dickens*

"Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance." *Eckhart Tolle*

"Be like the flower, turn your face to the sun." *Kahlil Gibran*

"No matter what accomplishments you make, somebody helped you." *Althea Gibson*

"Blessed are those that can give without remembering and take without forgetting." *Elizabeth Bibesco*

"We are all more blind to what we have than to what we have not." *Audre Lorde*

"The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated." *William James*

"When you drink from a stream, remember the spring." *Chinese Proverb*

"Many people have the wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy cause." *Helen Keller*

"The power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes the home happy and life lovely." *Louisa May Alcott*

"Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts." *Henri Frederic Amiel*

"One can never pay in gratitude; one can only pay 'in kind' somewhere else in life." *Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

"Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude." *A.A. Milne*

"We should certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count." *Neal A. Maxwell*

"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." *Albert Schweitzer*

"You have to accept whatever comes, and the only important thing is that you meet it with the best you have to give." *Eleanor Roosevelt*

"In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich." *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

"Joy is the simplest form of gratitude." *Karl Barth*

"The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but the thankful heart will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings." *Harriet Beecher Stowe*

"Wear gratitude like a cloak, and it will feed every corner of your life." *Rumi*

"I truly believe we can either see the connections, celebrate them, and express gratitude for our blessings, or we can see life as a string of coincidences that have no meaning or connection. For me, I'm going to believe in miracles, celebrate life, rejoice in the views of eternity, and hope my choices will create a positive ripple effect in the lives of others. This is my choice." *Mike Ericksen*

"I lie in bed at night, after ending my prayers with the words 'Ich danke dir für all das Gute und Liebe und Schöne.' (Thank you, God, for all that is good and dear and beautiful.)" *Anne Frank*

"Gratitude also opens your eyes to the limitless potential of the universe, while dissatisfaction closes your eyes to it." *Stephen Richards*

"Gratitude goes beyond the 'mine' and 'thine' and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift." *Henri J.M. Nouwen*

"When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the morning light, for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food, and the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies with yourself." *Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief*





PHOTO CREDITS: Above—30 Days Replay, Germany; Below—Debby Hudson; both for UNSPLASH

"'Enough' is a feast." *Buddhist proverb*

"The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings." *Henry Ward Beecher*

"This a wonderful day. I've never seen this one before." *Maya Angelou*

"I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"For my part, I am almost contented just now, and very thankful. Gratitude is a divine emotion: it fills the heart, but not to bursting; it warms it, but not to fever." *Charlotte Brontë*

"In life, one has a choice to take one of two paths: to wait for some special day--or to celebrate each special day." *Rasheed Ogunlaru*

"If you cannot be grateful for what you have received, then be thankful for what you have been spared." *Yiddish Proverb*

"For me, every hour is grace. And I feel gratitude in my heart each time I can meet someone and look at his or her smile." *Elie Wiesel*

"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings." *William Arthur Ward*

"Be grateful in your own hearts. That suffices. Thanksgiving has wings, and flies to its right destination." *Victor Hugo*

"When eating fruit, remember the one who planted the tree." *Vietnamese Proverb*

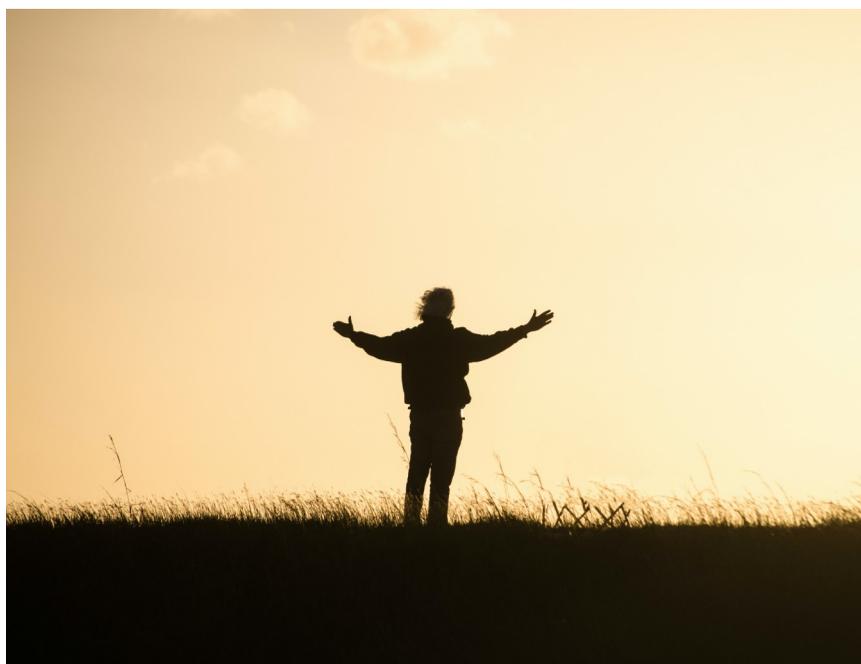
"The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated." *William James*

"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures." *Thornton Wilder*

"'Thank you' is the best prayer that anyone could say." *Alice Walker*

"The real gift of gratitude is that the more grateful you are, the more present you become." *Robert Holden*

"Whatever we are waiting for—peace of mind, contentment, grace, the inner awareness of simple abundance—it will surely come to us, but only when we are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart." *Sarah Ban Breathnach*



"It's not happiness that brings us gratitude. It's gratitude that brings us happiness." *Unknown*

"Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." *Melody Beattie*

“Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It’s the spark that lights a fire of joy in your soul.” *Amy Collette*

“I don’t have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness – it’s right in front of me if I’m paying attention and practicing gratitude.” *Brene Brown*

“Being thankful is not always experienced as a natural state of existence, we must work at it, akin to a type of strength training for the heart.” *Larissa Gomez*

“Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” *Marcel Proust*

“The invariable mark of wisdom is to seek the miraculous in the common.” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is.” *Ernest Hemingway*

"Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary." *Margaret Cousins*

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To close, some additional wisdom directly from scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 9:1

I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 100:4-5

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. †

Gratitude Practices

Looking for ways to weave more thankfulness into your life? Here are a few ideas:

- **Open or close each day by thanking God for all you have been given.** If you like to pray when you are more alert, consider devoting the time you spend walking, jogging, or even sitting in traffic or folding laundry to prayers of thanks.
- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Choose a pretty book that makes you smile and keep it and a pen in a handy place. If writing isn't your thing, you may prefer to sketch an image or take a photo each day of something for which you are thankful.
- **Each week, write a thank you card to someone for whom you are grateful.** If you prefer actions to words, pick one nice thing to do for someone each week. This can be in response to something you received or a random act of kindness that pays it forward.
- **Make a collage of photos and images of things for which you are thankful.** Place it in a spot where you will see it regularly. If it starts to blend in with the surroundings, move to a new location. If you do not enjoy art, simply gather a few representative framed photos and objects on a table or bookshelf.
- **Reclaim mealtime prayers as an opportunity to really speak to God instead of repeating the same words every day.** If you need more time and contemplation than that, reserve a few quiet minutes as you enjoy your morning coffee or tea.
- **Combine catching up with friends with sharing gratitude.** Start a visit, meeting, or phone call with each person sharing a few things for which they are grateful.

Longsdorf Cemetery

201 N. Locust Point Rd, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050



PHOTO CREDITS: Tom Burson

LOTS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

Contact custodian Guy Eckert at 717-795-9107

Interested in serving on the cemetery board? Contact St. Stephen Lutheran Church at 717-766-2168.

St Stephen is affiliated with this historical local cemetery, est. in 1771.

(Longsdorf was the original name of our church prior to 1844.)

MONDAYS @ 10:00AM

**Stroll
Through
Scripture**

**Preview next Sunday's
scripture readings with
Pastor Matthew Best**

Follow us on Facebook

@

[Facebook.com/StStephenLC.org](https://www.facebook.com/StStephenLC.org)



PHOTO CREDIT: Above—30 Days Replay Germany for UNSPLASH

GIVING THANKS FOR OUR FAITHFUL TEACHERS

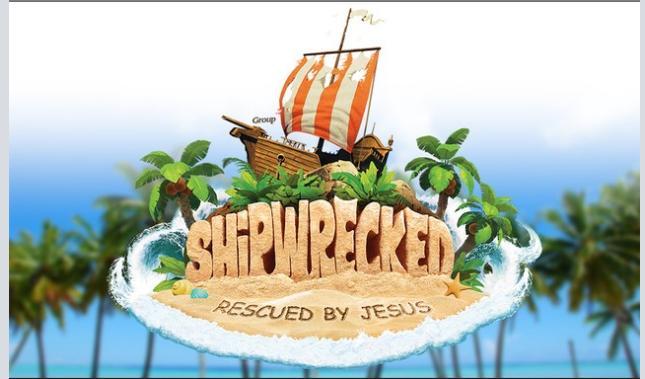
by *Laura Wills*

This issue on Gratitude and Blessing is the perfect opportunity for the Educational Ministries Committee to thank our Sunday Church School teachers. We have always been grateful for their dedicated service (many of them have served in this capacity for YEARS), but over the past sixteen months we have also appreciated their flexibility!

Yes, Jennifer Batcheler, Tom Burson, Greg John, Mike Kulikauskas, and Lloyd Sheaffer all continued to engage with their Sunday Church School participants

virtually during the pandemic. Their teaching didn't skip a beat when we were no longer able to meet together in person. And, although our curriculum is designed to be taught in person, they adapted their lessons and styles to work in our new digital world.

One definition of blessing is "the acts or words of a person who blesses." They are certainly blessings to St. Stephen. Through their words and deeds they follow the Gospel's call to teach and learn, and we are grateful for that!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Shipwrecked – Rescued By Jesus

August 1-5, 2021

Age 3 through Grade 5

5:30-7:30PM, including a light meal

St. Stephen, New Kingstown, PA

VBS will take place outdoors at the pavilion with all CDC guidelines being followed. Expect stories, crafts, games, dancing, and a snack to take home. It is sure to be oceans of fun!! For more information and to register, contact the church at 717-766-2168.

Day 1 — Sunday

Theme: When you are lonely ... Jesus rescues

Bible Story: Jesus tells parables about lost things

Day 2 — Monday

Theme: When you worry ... Jesus rescues

Bible Story: Martha worries and complains

Day 3 — Tuesday

Theme: When you struggle ... Jesus rescues

Bible Story: Jesus' friends try to rescue him in the garden of Gethsemane

Day 4 — Wednesday

Theme: When you do wrong ... Jesus rescues

Bible Story: Jesus welcomes a criminal before dying and coming back to life

Day 5 — Thursday

Theme: When you're powerless ... Jesus rescues

Bible Story: Peter and John heal a lame man in Jesus' name

CLOSING PRAYER



PHOTO CREDIT: Sally John

Please pray with me.

God of blessing, you give us so much – thank you. Even when we struggle, your blessing is right there with us. We are never truly alone. And that is what we fear the most – being alone, lost, and out of control.

Thank you for the gift of gratitude and blessing. Like any gift, it is best experienced when it is given away to someone. We give, not to receive something in return, but to be changed. To be a blessing. We can only give that which we already possess. And when we offer blessing and gratitude it means that we have already received blessings. Thank

you for the gifts you give us – gifts that go far beyond material things. We thank you for the gift of our lives, relationships that offer us meaning and fulfillment, and for your creation. We thank you that you dwell with us. Help us to be a blessing to others.

AMEN.



PHOTO CREDIT: Sally John

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 contact the church office or send a message to prayer@StStephenLC.org.

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2

You are invited to worship and engage in the life of ministry. Our worship services and other gatherings are listed throughout this magazine and our website. 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 or pastor@StStephenLC.org.

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3

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

- Cash or check
- Go to StStephenLC.org and use the Donate button at the bottom of the page
- Text the dollar amount to 717-685-6947
- Go to the URL <https://engage.suran.com/sslc/s/login>

ST STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

30 West Main St, New Kingstown, PA 17072

717-766-2168

office@StStephenLC.org

StStephenLC.org

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

30 West Main St
New Kingstown, PA 17072

.... We respond to **Christ's love** by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit



PHOTO CREDIT: Elaine Casap for UNSPLASH

YOU ARE INVITED TO WORSHIP

We now offer hybrid worship (both in-person and online) on Sundays at 9:00AM. Call 717-766-2168 or visit StStephenLC.org for the latest gathering options for worship and summer Sunday School in terms of pandemic restrictions.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

If you are hungry or in need, please contact our church office at 717-766-2168. We have meals, gift cards, personal hygiene kits, and more to share.

For more information, contact:

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

..... Save the Date

RALLY DAY

Sunday, September 12

10:30-11:30 a.m.

You are invited to this kickoff for the fall Sunday School program, live in the sanctuary and online via Zoom