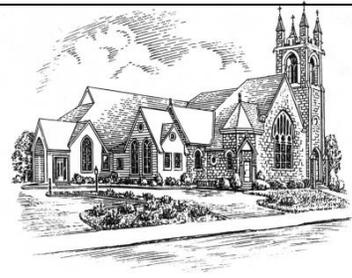


The Sounds of St. Stephen's

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ
110 N. Sixth Street - Perkasie, PA 18944
Phone: 215.257.6460
www.thessperkasie.org office@thessperkasie.org



September 2021

From the Pastor's Desk...

"To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven..."
--Ecclesiastes 3

These words of scripture are attributed to King Solomon in the Old Testament. They are words of wisdom; words that speak of transitions and the ebb and flow of life.

We have been learning something about that over these many months.

For many, it feels like we are a church in exile—separated from routines and traditions and all-too-familiar and plopped down in the middle of a new way of church—one that feels different and brings a sense of grief even in the midst of connection.

I understand. When summer began, it seemed we were at a turning point and it was just getting better and better. Mask mandates were lifting, vaccination levels were growing and COVID-19 red maps were turning green. Folks were anticipation of new life and new beginnings.

Now here we are just weeks later and we are in the thick of it again. The Delta variant of COVID-19 is rapidly overtaking many of the gains we have made—and even infecting those who have been vaccinated. Our children are now getting sick when they were once the ones who seemed immune to it all. Mask mandates are returning; schools are facing new consternation over the coming return in September and we are once more being cautioned about getting in large groups.

As I write this, numbers in Bucks County are growing by the day. Folks I know have gotten very sick with COVID even though they did everything right and were vaccinated. Children are in ICU beds, not only in the south but close by and dissension continues among those who are anti-mask, anti-vaccine, and those who are not.

Since March 2020, I feel like we have been riding a slow moving pendulum and have now experienced the ebb and flow and the high and low of COVID-19. What seasons they have been!

In all of that, the wisdom that God is still here has carried through—the divine being found in health care workers, vaccine developers, caretakers, essential workers and so on. The Divine being found too in our new incarnation of church.

These last few months, we have transitioned from online church to in person church outdoors and have navigated through wind, rain, heat and humidity with a few Sundays indoors due to weather.

What started with an intention of just trying something different for the summer because folks enjoyed it, by the end of July turned into “we should keep doing this because it is safer for everyone as Delta develops around us.”

COVID has continually shifted our plans and is doing so again.

A fall that was looking optimistic in terms of reverting to some sense of new normal is now up in the air. Like many of the churches around us, the plans we were all making now have footnotes behind them of “this may and probably will change.” And talk of even more variants that evade vaccines entirely are even being whispered.

It begs the question, if for everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven, what is the time and purpose now?

Well, for me, I am learning to get outside myself. My wants; my needs; my wishes; my planning; my comfort zone; my desires---all these things have been upended and continue to be recalculated almost daily with COVID-19. I feel as if this pandemic has forced me to “do a new thing” as Isaiah would say. I

cannot control what is around me, but I am working on doing the best I can to navigate what God has placed before me—taking time for personal care; being grounded in what’s important, and giving thanks for the small blessings along the way.

For us, as a congregation, I have seen many blessings in these last weeks. The reconnection of people in community (albeit outside), the continued phone calls and checking in on one another, the continued worship tablet initiative, mission outreach, a new form of worship outdoors, and a rekindling of our Faith Formation ministries. I am sure I have even missed some of those blessings.

Now we loom in on September and, once again, a return to “normal” is on hold. Our Consistory decided unanimously to continue to err on the side of abundant caution and remain outdoors as long as necessary. This decision was partly made in order to make worship as safe as possible for folks with good air circulation and the ability to distance as folks feel comfortable. It was made to allow us to continue singing without the concerns singing indoors brings for some. It was made to care for those who are unable to be vaccinated at this time due to immune issues, underlying conditions, or age. It was also made to allow for the booster shots recommended for folks to begin going in arms and giving us even more of a chance to fight off Covid-Delta.

Cyber Sunday School will return for the first quarter of the fall. Zoom Bible Study will resume in mid-late September on Thursdays. And we will continue to offer God our praise and blessing in whatever way we need to worship in order to be connected in the Gospel’s love.

I pray that you and your family are safe and healthy in this time.

I know that this season of COVID will pass and a time of new beginning will emerge.

May God grant us peace and patience until it arrives.

In Christ,

Pastor Jeff



Used Bicycle & Sewing Machine Drive

(RAIN or SHINE)

**Saturday Sept. 25, 2021
9 am – 12 pm**

**St. Stephen's
United Church of Christ
110 N 6th St
Perkasie, PA 18944**

We're collecting adult & kids' bikes and sewing machines to send to Thailand, Albania, Tanzania, and Guatemala. Do your part to put used bikes and sewing machines to good use in the developing world.

Bikes should be rust free. No children's trikes, but bikes with flat tires in need of some repair are accepted. Portable sewing machines should be in working condition.

A donation toward shipping costs is necessary for our continued success (suggested \$20 per donated item, minimum \$10). All material and monetary contributions are tax deductible and a receipt will be provided on site.

SPONSORED BY:

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

For more information contact:
Patricia Kimbel at the church office
(215) 257-6460 office@thessperkasie.org

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Putting used bikes to good use™

www.p4p.org -- lori@p4p.org -- 908-638-8893

FAITH FORMATION

*We are seeking your help with Faith Formation ministries. If you are willing to be part of this important piece of the church's life, there is a Google Doc form you can fill out in the Weekly Sounds or you can contact Wendy Bosco.

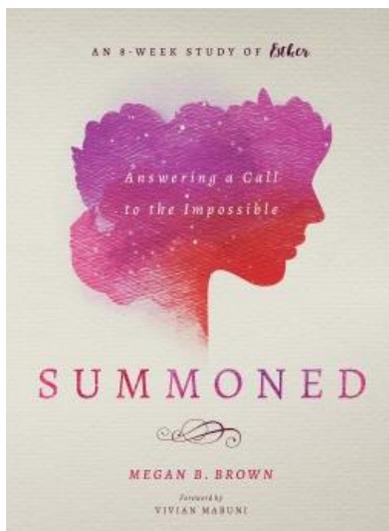
*We are asking parents and grandparents to be sure that your child(ren) and grandchildren have their information updated in our system. A Google Doc is also available for this through the Weekly Sounds.

*Cyber Sunday School is resuming for the Fall. If you are willing to help, we would love your support. Contact Wendy Bosco to get involved with this important part of the church's life.

*Pastor Jeff is interested in hearing from parents if they would rather have kids chat on Sunday in church or via ZOOM through the week starting in September. Please email, call or text him to let him know your preference.

***ZOOM Adult Bible Study:**

Thursdays at 10 am beginning September 23rd



SUMMONED: An 8 week study of the book of Esther by Megan B. Brown

Study book is available on Amazon or you can contact the pastor to have one ordered for you.

We will prepare the introductory material and week 1 for September 23rd. All are welcome!

Ringers Needed

Our bell choir would be overjoyed to welcome a couple additional ringers this season! Bell ringing experience is not necessary; basic music reading ability is a plus! Come share in the joy of making music as a church group! Rehearsals are Thursday 6:30 to 7:30 PM, and we play in church six Sundays between November and May. Please contact Eileen Ericsson at e388keys@comcast.net with any questions!

A Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, September 26 after worship to discuss the Technology Report. The report can be found at the end of this newsletter.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 09/04 Betty Hentz, Holly Ketterer
- 09/05 Joyce Rosenberger
- 09/08 William Thompson
- 09/09 Caryln Cressman, Augusta Long,
Rosalie Argue, Emma Gall
- 09/11 Jewel Rufe
- 09/14 Julian Wimmer
- 09/16 Truman Althouse, Janet Hager
- 09/17 Norman Godshall,
- 09/19 Joseph Parker
- 09/23 Joan Suess
- 09/25 Ruth Carver, Robert Ockenfuss,
Julie Camburn
- 09/26 Nancy Gerhart
- 09/27 Nicole Boytin, Margo Gall

SEPTEMBER DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

September 7: **Faith Formation** Format TBA

September 12: **Fall Worship begins.** 9:30 am
Rev. Lorraine Sell, Guest Minister

September 14: **Stewardship Ministries** Format TBA

September 19: **Fall Back to Worship** 9:30 am

September 21: **Consistory** 7 pm Format TBA

September 25: **Pedals for Progress Bike Collection** 9 am to 12 noon

September 26: **Congregational Meeting** after Worship to Discuss the
Technology Dream Team's Bid Presentation

OCTOBER DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

October 3: **WORLDWIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY**
(we will be using prepackaged communion elements)

1 PM The Blessing of the Animals

Bring your pets, pet rocks, mementos of passed pets, or your favorite stuffed animal, for a special blessing. Pastor Jeff will be at the Arch St. Portico from 1 pm to 2 pm to offer personal blessings. All are welcome

October 17: **North Penn Association Fall Meeting** via ZOOM

October 31: **Jack O' Lantern Sunday**...celebrate the holiday by bringing your favorite carved pumpkin to Sunday worship!

September 2021

September 2021

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

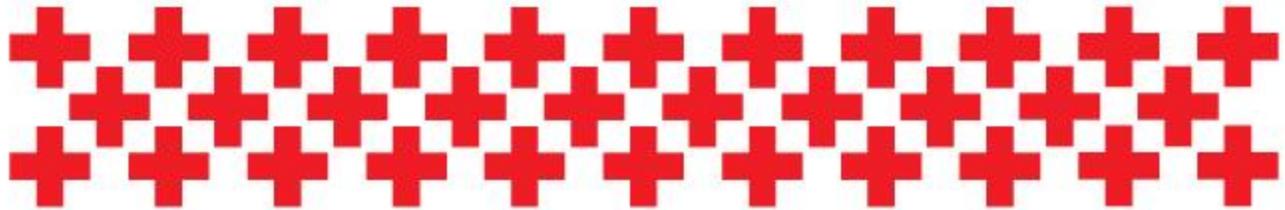
October 2021

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Aug 29	30	31	Sep 1	2 6:30pm Girl Scout Troop 2549 Meeting	3	4
5 9:30am Outdoor Worship	6 Labor Day - Office Closed	7 7:00pm Faith Formation	8 6:30pm Worship & Music	9	10	11
12 9:30am Outdoor Worship	13	14 7:00pm Stewardship Meeting	15	16 6:30pm Girl Scout Troop 2549 Meeting	17	18
19 9:30am Outdoor Worship	20	21 7:00pm Consistory Meeting	22 2:00pm Red Cross Blood Drive 7:00pm Missions Ministry Meeting	23 7:00pm Facilities Meeting	24	25 9:00am Pedals for Progress
26 9:30am Outdoor Worship 10:45am Congregational Meeting	27	28	29	30	Oct 1	2

American Red Cross

Give blood. Help save lives.



Blood Drive
Perkasie Community

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ - Hall
110 N. 6th Street
Perkasie, PA 18944

Wednesday, September 22, 2021
2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: perkasie to schedule an appointment.



Get gameday ready with the Red Cross! Come to give Sept. 13-30 for a limited-edition college football T-shirt, while supplies last!

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | redcrossblood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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Technology Report

Touching the Future Today



Dreaming...

The pandemic, and the virtual services that have accompanied it, has given us an opportunity to examine the type of service and the audio-visual needs of St. Stephen's as we return to worship in the sanctuary. Can we take some of the things we have appreciated virtually and have them be part of our service? What will a service look like 10, 20 years from now? How can we begin moving to that service?

We started dreaming about the future. We remembered trying new things like recording scripture readings at home to watching the stories of the Bible being acted out to watching and listening to music videos from a variety of churches and choirs. We began to look at ways to add these items to the services of St. Stephen's so that the services will be a better experience for both those in attendance and those who were viewing the services online. We started dreaming.

We dreamed of the possibility to...

- ... continue having individuals record at home various sections of the service that are typically read by lay readers such as Scripture and the call to worship (especially for those who are hesitant to read in front of the congregation when in person or for those who may not be able to attend the service in the sanctuary)
- ... adding music videos to the service
- ...sharing the stories of the Bible visually

We brainstormed additional items that could be added. These included...

- ... improving the audio capabilities to the system so that when groups like the Back Bench Boys perform, they can be better heard
- ... the ability to stream and record services like weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other celebrations for viewing by those who cannot attend and for future viewing

We also realize that as we move forward, new members often become aware of our church and our programs by first checking the church's website. By improving the streaming of the services, the services become more inviting to others.

What have we done?

John Binde, on behalf of the church, contacted four companies and asked them to visit the church to evaluate and suggest improvements to the sound system (the microphones and the speakers), the video display, the lighting, and the ability to stream the service on the internet.

We were visited by four companies. They included Blue Chip Sound (Bethlehem, PA), Dennis Grafton (Souderton, PA), Dave Phillips Music (Phillipsburg, NJ), and Entertainment Services Group (Allentown, PA).

After evaluating the bids from each, we decided to continue the discussion with Entertainment Services Group (ESG) and their representative, Sam Kemmerer. We first asked Sam to recommend a church that had made changes like we were proposing, so that we could see what might be possible.

Sam contacted The Church of the Good Shepherd UCC, Alburtis, PA. We visited and saw the video screens that had been added, heard the quality of the new sound system, discussed the streaming, and examined the technology that was needed to run the system. The pictures at the top of this report are from that visit.

We followed that visit by a visit by Sam to St. Stephen's to answer questions and to make any changes that we recommended to ESG's bid.

The bid...

The bid includes five components: camera(s) with control, flat panel displays, sound system upgrades, lighting upgrades, and choir lighting.

Camera(s) with control: We are looking to add two cameras. One would be mounted in the back of the sanctuary and one would be on the side. The cameras would be operated by joysticks and would have the capability of panning, tilting, and zooming. We would be able to have several presets for the cameras to quickly change views: of the Pastor with different angles or closeups, of the choir, of the lectern, of children's chat, etc. These options provide a more professional recording and the streaming will be more interesting and attractive to the viewers online.

Flat panel displays: We hope to add three 70" screens to the sanctuary. Two would be hung on either side of the altar and one would be in the back of the sanctuary so that the Pastor and the choir could watch what was on the display.

Sound system upgrades: We plan to add additional microphones, new speakers, and a new 16 input mixer so that the quality of the spoken voice and music would improve. We want to support the videos that would be played on the displays.

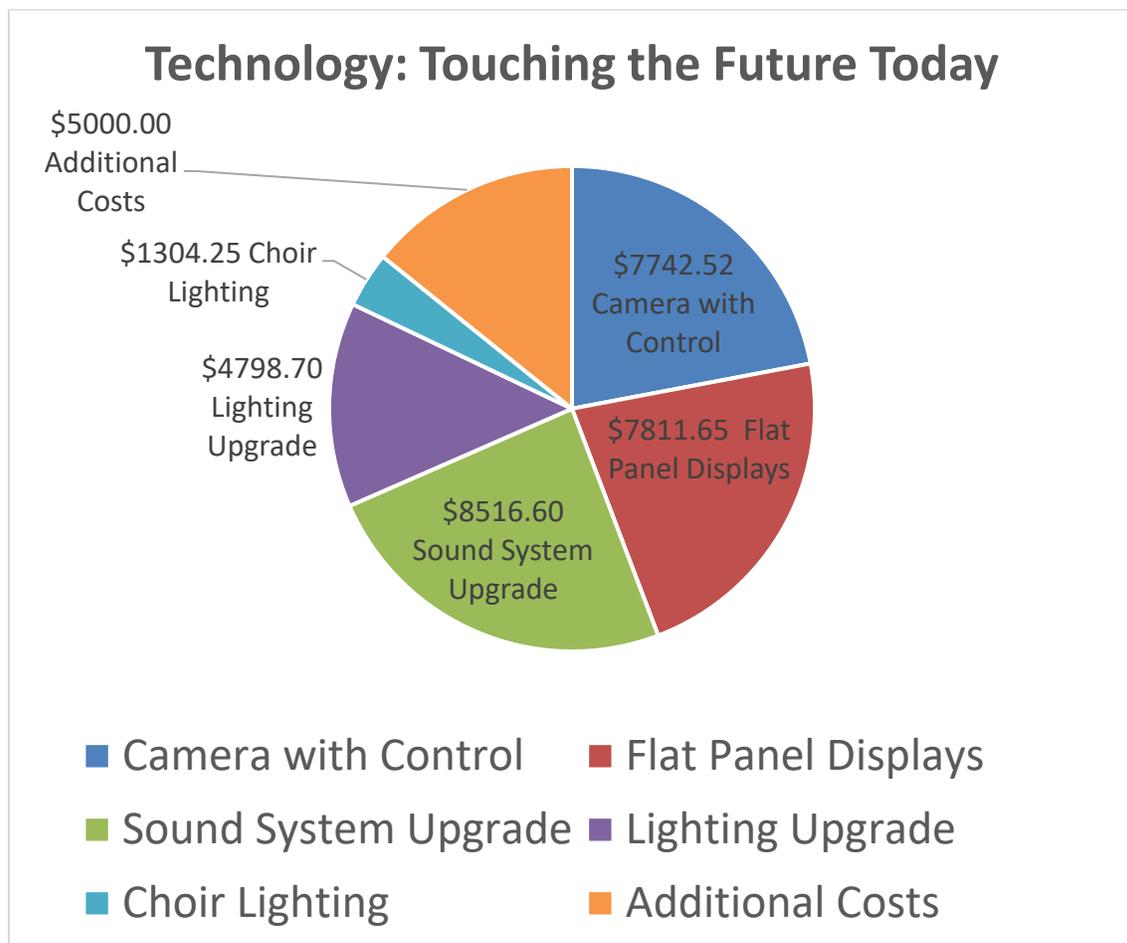
Lighting upgrade: In the sanctuary, we plan to replace the light bulbs with LED lights. LED lights are brighter, last longer, and are not as hot when in use. The chandeliers need to be retrofitted so that they may hold the LED lights. (Note: the bid does not include replacing the light bulbs in the arch above the altar and the arch above the choir. Since all we need to do is replace those bulbs with LED bulbs, no retrofitting is needed, ESG is willing to replace those bulbs with LED bulbs as long as we supply the bulbs. The additional cost would be the cost of the time needed to make the replacement.)

Choir lighting: When talking with the members of the choir, we decided to add additional lighting for the choir loft. Presently it is hard to read the music. The lighting is presently not appropriate.

Additional costs: To the bid we added two additional costs: a 10% increase in case of possible price increases and the cost to purchase a new laptop computer to run the system.

Total cost of the project: \$35,175.72.

Here is a chart to show the breakdown of the costs.



What's next?

We need the **approval of the congregation** to sign the bid and move ahead. A Congregational Meeting is being planned for **Sunday, September 26, 2021** after the service.

We need the financial support for the project. We presently have commitments from two families to cover \$15,000 of the expense (thank you to the Schaefer and the White families). We need to raise the rest. The Stewardship Ministry has looked at the additional costs and believes the church can finance a lot of the remaining amount by using part of our investments. We are hoping there are many families, like the Schaefer's and the White's, who would also like to make a contribution to the Touching the Future Today project.

Once the project is completed, we will need volunteers to guide the cameras and operate the system during the service. We are told that this it is not difficult to do, but we will need volunteers to take full advantage of the project.

Thanks to the Technology Committee:

I want to thank members of the congregation who have been part of the journey from dreaming to a proposal. Our members include Marilyn and Ken Schaefer, Brian Taylor, Judy and Bob Ockenfuss, Curt Mann, Sparkie Heckler, Glen and Pat Snyder, Richard Bosco, Pastor Jeff, John Binde, Eileen Ericsson, and Lucy and Mike White.

I particularly want to thank John Binde who spent quite a bit of time checking with the original companies for their bids.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike White

St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

110 N. Sixth Street
Perkasie PA 18944

Return Service Requested

Time Sensitive Materials

Mailed:

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www.thessperkasie.org
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Email: pastor@thessperkasie.org

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Eileen Ericsson – Handbell Director

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