



St. Stephens Bethlehem

United Church of Christ

July & August Newsletter

Hello Church Family & Friends,

Do you ever wonder where did the time go? I can't believe it is summer. It seemed like yesterday it was 60 degrees for so long with rain every other day. Now it's 90 degrees and we have to keep watering our gardens. I can't believe our country will be celebrating 250 years. St. Stephens Bethlehem will be 173 years old. That is a long time. Some days I feel that old! Stress can take a toll on the body. Did you ever think about how our country and church became that old? Doing some research, where did the saying "We The People" come from? The Preamble to the United States Constitution, beginning with the words We the People, is a brief introductory statement of the Constitution's fundamental purposes and guiding principles. We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. This reminds me of the saying we say in church, "We are the Church". Staying united and working for a common cause made our country and church last for all these years. Thinking of our fore fathers, the amount of work it took to accomplish their goals. Technology really benefited the growth of both. On the 4th of July I like to honor and think about all the dedicated individuals that committed their lives for fighting for our freedom as we celebrate the anniversary/ birthday of our country. We also need to take time to remember all our dedicated church members both past and present who worked tirelessly to maintain our church physically and socially. Special requisition needs to be given to all the finance teams who save and invest our church funds to create the endowments that we rely on so much today. Thank you to all the church members who organized events/ services to bring in the community to show them the love and care of our God out to the world. We need everyone to step up and fill the shoes of our past members so we can continue our great future together. Take time this Fourth of July to celebrate and be thankful for all the great things that come our way.

Joy In Christ,

Bill Chapman, John Frenning, Joy Tedeschi, Phil Starr, Joe Tricoli, & Kim Wilson

Your SSBUCC Leadership Team Members:



By now, you know the results of St. Stephen's Bethlehem's June 28 vote. Twenty-six people voted in favor of moving forward with a merger with Kenilworth United Church of Christ, including a new name to be determined; twenty voted against. Because the Joint Leadership Team had decided that this important decision required at least a two thirds majority, the motion did not pass.

In response, Kenilworth Church has decided there is no longer a shared future with St. Stephen's Bethlehem and is pursuing other possibilities. A few members may choose to remain. In the days ahead, KUCC will arrange to remove from the SSB building the piano, copier, sound system, and other items that belong to them.

Personally, I am saddened by the vote. As I have said from the beginning, Christianity is changing, and churches that want to survive—and, by God's grace, thrive—need creative responses to declining worship attendance, membership, financial resources, and available clergy. I had hoped a merger between SSB and KUCC might be such a solution for both congregations. That is no longer possible. There are times when what we hope and pray for does not happen. Sometimes God says "no" to us; sometimes we say "no" to God.

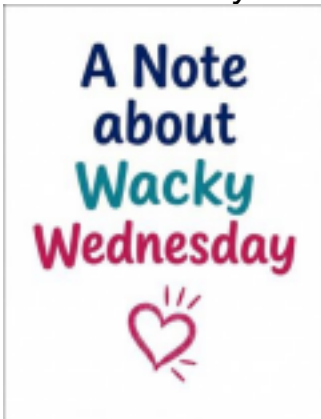
Although the merger will not move forward, I am deeply grateful to the Transition Team and Joint Leadership Team, who worked tirelessly and engaged in challenging conversations in hope of moving forward together. I am also grateful to everyone who participated in Thanksgiving Aisle Conversations, Calendar Small Groups, Graced History Story Telling, Listening to God Bible Study, Church Creations, and Wacky Wednesday. Each was designed to foster conversation, listening, and community building. I hope these experiences were meaningful, even though they did not lead to the result we had hoped for.

As we move forward, I will no longer serve as Interim Pastor at SSB or KUCC. My contract with both congregations concluded on June 30. I am returning to retirement, though I will continue to preach at SSB twice a month, usually on the second and fourth Sundays. I am grateful to have made this journey with both congregations, and I hope some of what we did together will help each church move into the future.

As I write this, Kate and I are enjoying a week's vacation at the Chautauqua Institution, a community of inspiration and renewal. On Sunday evening, during the Sacred Song Service, the Chautauqua Choir sang a hymn/anthem by Jacqui G. Jones. It was the evening of the SSB vote. My heart was heavy, and the music helped me remember the questions God asks us as followers of Christ—and asks our congregations as well: Will we listen for God's voice? Will we remain willing to follow? Will we speak with grace, serve with courage, and trust God with the disciples of tomorrow?

As we move forward, may our answer be "yes." God's blessings and peace,

Pastor Ruth Snyder



Many thanks to the fifty-two people who came out on June 24 for Wacky Wednesday, including members and friends from Kenilworth, St. Stephen's Bethlehem, and the wider community. It was a wonderful two hours of good food, silly games,



lively conversation, family time, community connection, and friendships formed and deepened.



Special thanks go to the team who worked so hard to pull it all together. I intentionally invited people who were not already overextended by serving on the Transition Team or Joint Leadership Team. The following people willingly said “yes” when asked to lead this event: from SSB, Debi Johnson and Gary Reese; from KUCC, Donna Miller and Linda Miller; and from the community, Karl Gee. This enthusiastic team planned the event, cleaned up the patio on Father’s Day—no less—hosed down the siding and floor (thank you, Gary), shopped, grilled, served, and cleaned up afterward. Additional thanks go to Christina Jarlenski, who helped with cleaning and clean-up on the day of the event, and to Kate Snyder, who organized and led the wacky games. By all reports, “a good time was had by all.”

Pastor Ruth Snyder



JULY

July & August Worship Schedule/ Events



Sunday, July 5: Worship/ Communion at 10:30am, Don't forget to wear your RED, WHITE & BLUE. Guest Minister Rev. Faith Schaut.

Saturday, July 11: Wedding Sanctuary(Mindy & Mary)

Sunday, July 12: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder, Private party in the social hall (Starr)& on the Garage patio(Graser).

Saturday, July 18: Christmas in July Vendor & Craft Show. 11 - 4pm.

Sunday, July 19: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Ralph Anderson Private party in the social hall (Tearga).

Wednesday, July 22: Wacky Wednesday, 6 - 8:30pm

Saturday, July 25: A Night In the Garden Fundraiser to benefit our Food pantry 6pm.
See Kim Wilson for tickets.

Sunday, July 26: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder,

Saturday, August 1: Church Workday, 9am - 12pm

Sunday, August 2: Worship/ Communion at 10:30am, Guest Minister Bob Fleming

Sunday, August 9: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Monday, August 10: Leadership Team Meeting at 6:30pm

Wednesday, August 12: Wacky Wednesday at 6pm

Saturday, August 15: Memorial service and luncheon. Sanctuary & social hall (Joyce)

Sunday, August 16: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Jan Hubbard,
Quarterly Congregational Meeting during coffee hour.

Saturday, August 22: Polka Party 4 - 9pm on church's picnic grounds.

Sunday, August 23: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Wednesday, August 26: 3-8pm, Church Yard Sale Set-up

Thursday & Friday August 27 & 28: 9 - 5pm Church Yard Sale

Sunday, August 30: Worship at 10:30am, Guest Minister Rev. Krista Ulrich



Our next scheduled church work day will be **Saturday, August 1 from 9am - 12pm.** We have some painting projects and touch ups that need to be done; along with some heavy duty summer cleaning. Donuts and coffee will be served. Many hands make light work. Remember with church volunteers doing the maintenance and cleaning, we are saving \$20,000 in our 2026 budgets.

**Christmas in July Vendor &
Craft Show**

Saturday, July 18, 2026

11am - 4pm

Basket & 50/50 Raffle

Call or text Becky for a table(\$20) & for more information and ways to help out at 716-314-3797 or 716-632-4226



Don't forget, when you are away on vacation this summer, SSBUCC is always open:



You can check out our worship services live on Sundays at 10:30am on our YouTube Channel

[@st.stephensbethlehemucc](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Or a taped version on Facebook.

Remember our sanctuary is air conditioned.

Church Yard Sale



When: Thursday & Friday, August 27 & 28th

Time: 9am - 5pm

We are in need of items to sell. Please contact Bill (716-989-9255) to donate items and to work this event. Set up will be Wednesday from 3 - 8pm. Start praying for nice weather.



When: Wednesday, July 22th & Wednesday, August 12th

Time: 6pm - 8pm

Church will provide the hotdogs, hamburgers, paper products and beverages. Please bring a dish to pass and a comfortable chair. Invite all your family, friends & community to join us! The volleyball court

is ready and Ann B will have kids carnival games to play.

Ronnie's Polka Party

Saturday, August 22, from 4 - 9pm.

Music by Polish Pride, Polish Villa Food Truck

Come out and raise some money for our church and remember Joy's father at the same time.

Please See Joy Tedeschi(joyelletedeschi@live.com) to help out at this event. Baked Goods & Theme Baskets/ Gift Cards are needed for August 22.

Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, August 16, 2026 at 11:30am

It was recommended that we bring back our quarterly meetings so the leadership team can keep the congregation up to date on important topics that are happening and to ask the congregation for help. The congregation can bring their questions and concerns. This keeps the transparency open during this transition period.

SSBUCC Treasurer Report: (AS Of June 8, 2026)

Checking: _\$8,169.15_ Savings: __\$55.62__

SSBUCC Pledges Year to Date: \$21,903

Fundraising Income: \$10,094

Building Rental Income Year to Date: \$19,405

MAJOR EXPENSES (Jan 1 - June 1)

Maintenance Expenses: \$3,779

Insurances: \$8,407

Taxes: \$2,883

Utilities: \$8,382

Maintenances Contracts: \$6,900

PayRoll: \$18,947

Food Pantry Outreach Expenses: \$24,433

Please note with Kenilworth leaving us at the end of July, we will be losing \$835 in a monthly rent payment.

Endowments:

Marie Smith Scholarship: \$27,928 Backus Fund: \$172,005

General Endowment: \$138, 496



Thank you to everyone who helped make our June 7st Theme Basket & Strawberry shortcake Luncheon such a HUGE success. We had over 185 people attend this event. 149 baskets or gift cards were donated. A HUGE thank you goes out to all our workers, bakers and people who donated baskets/ gift cards. It was our BEST fundraiser ever making the church **\$4049**. Thanks again for all you do for our church family.



Coffee hours are a great time for the congregation to bond and to grow together. If you can help us out by volunteering to host a coffee hour, please sign up from across from the church office. The church provides the coffee, juice and paper products, we just need you to provide the goodies.

Open slots are:

Sunday, July 5: Hosted by Christina & Gary

Sunday, July 12: OPEN SLOT

Sunday, July 19: OPEN SLOT,

Sunday, July 26: OPEN SLOT

Sunday, August 2: OPEN SLOT

Sunday, August 9: OPEN SLOT

Sunday, August 16: Hosted by the LT, Quarterly Congregation Meeting

Sunday, August 23: OPEN SLOT

Sunday, August 30: OPEN SLOT

LITURGISTS & USHERS ARE NEEDED:

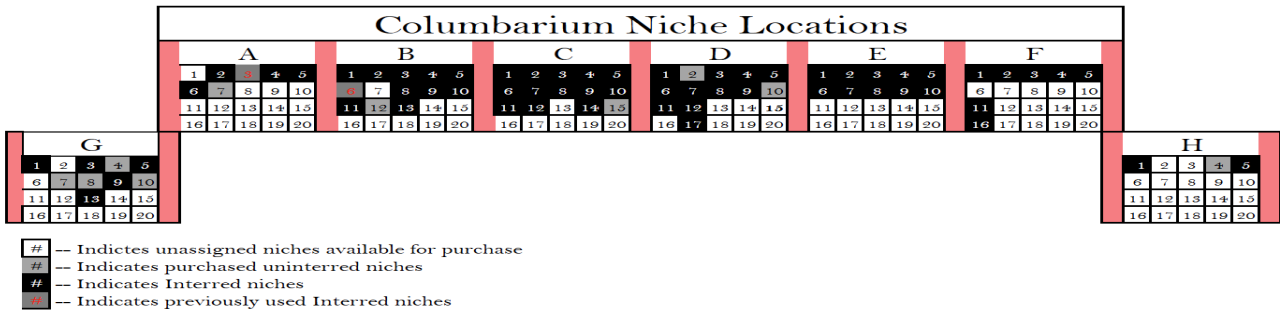


With the majority of Kenilworth members leaving us to find another church home, we are in need of many more Liturgists & Ushers. Please lend your voice to our worship services! We're looking for liturgists for Sunday mornings. The liturgist leads the congregation in the Call to Worship and Prayer and reads the scriptures. We also need ushers to help collect offering and serve communion. Please see Bill

Chapman or email the church office if you are interested in helping out. Email: ststephensbethlehemucc@gmail.com

Columbarium Report: 2026 Mid-Year

Many members of our congregation may not be aware that our church has a Columbarium located alongside our building on Churchcroft Drive. The Columbarium is the brick wall visible as you approach the driveway to our parking lots. Below is a snapshot of the available niches:



Purpose and Capacity

The Columbarium was established around 1995 in response to the needs of church members seeking an affordable way to inter their loved ones and have them nearby. It has the capacity to hold up to 160 urns. As of now, approximately 80 niches are available for purchase.

Costs

Each niche is priced at \$500 and can be purchased by church members and their families. The current cost for interring a loved one is \$350. This fee covers the removal and replacement of the panel, engraving, and the interment of the remains. Please note that the engraving and interment costs are charged at the time of interment and may vary according to prevailing market rates.

Recent Interments:

The following individual(s) were interred: Theresa A Michaelski

Pamphlets with detailed information about the Columbarium are available in the church office or by contacting any member of the Columbarium Committee listed below. Please reach out if you are interested in joining our team.

John Frenning (Chair), Sue Fleming, Rob Seth, Phil Starr

July:

Jeff Wilson (2)
Rob Czora (9)
Marion Andrus (9)
Ruth Reese (9)
Ken Seth (12)
Joy Tedeschi (13)
Dorothy Seth (17)
Sue Fleming (18)
Don Seth (25)

August:

Brett Hammond (8)
Cindy Starr (9)
Sylvia Brown (17)
Tom Marchese (22)



Sorry if your name is missing above. We don't have it in our church records, Please contact the church office so he can include you. Thanks



Please Keep the Following People In Your Prayers

Pastor Arthur Davis
Doug, Carolyn Son.
Wendy, Marion Daughter
Donna Sauer
Marion Tedesco
Our friends from Kenilworth UCC

Planning Ahead:



**Theme Basket & Gift Certificate Raffle/
Trunk or Treat Event**

Sunday, October 18, 2026

11am - 3pm. Worship at 10am.

Baked Goods will also be needed.