

# leaders meeting

Sunday, February 2, 2025  
Fireside Room



STRATEGIC PLAN

WORSHIP

COMMUNICATION

DISCIPLESHIP

# **2025 St. Stephen Leaders Meeting**

Sunday, February 2, 2025, 6 p.m.  
Fireside Room

## ***Being a Leader is an Act of Worship***

### AGENDA:

- I. State of the Church
- II. Strategic Plan Review

*Welcome is Everyone's Job*

- a. "The 5-Star Welcome"
- b. Welcoming Culture is the Culture of its People
- c. Training Day: March 9

- a. Neighborhood Study
- b. Grow ENCOUNTER Worship
- c. Communication Plan
- d. Discipleship Pathway
- e. Creation Care

### ***Five Minute Break***

- III. Together We Lead: Expectations of Leaders
  - a. Making Disciples: Co-Chairs are Essential
  - b. The Nature of Worship and Deeper Steps
- IV. CCB Refresher
  - a. Online Training: February 26
- V. New Events Form & Process
- VI. New Communications Policy & Form
- VII. How the Church Works Together – "Org Chart"

## **State of the Church – Leadership Training**

Part of what we wanted to do is to celebrate what we have done over this past year as we also look ahead to what we hope to do this year. For the first time in several years we were fully staffed. We are seeing the fruits of that investment.

- Worship attendance has rebounded and grown by over 20% with the addition of our Encounter modern worship service.
- We constantly greet new faces every Sunday morning.
- Baptisms and professions of faith has increased even without a confirmation class this past year.
- Our reach into the community and beyond continues to expand. A great example of this is for the second straight year over 100 children participated in our Vacation Bible School and over 250 people recently attended our Halloween Festival.
- Our fresh expression, Common Table is reaching and connecting with people who may never step foot onto our campus.
- We've strengthened our partnership with Eastway Middle School and McAlpine Terrace Senior Living community.
- Our Creation Care Team continues to help the church be better stewards of our campus and God's creation in general with the goal in 2025 to be certified as a "green church" by the conference.
- Our children's ministry, Club 45 has grown in numbers.
- Our youth group is seeing the positive impact of our youth director, Shelby Wilkins with slow and steady growth.
- A new Sunday morning small group, "Faith and Practice", has been formed and is connecting with people who haven't been part of an ongoing small group.

As we look ahead to 2025 we hope to...

- Expand our Associate Pastor's position from half-time to full-time beginning in July with Jesse Enniss continuing in that role. We hope to also expand and grow our Common Table ministry. This is an important extension of our ministry and is helping us to connect, primarily with young adults in the Charlotte area.
- Strengthen our guest follow-up procedures with clear and intentional steps.
- Intentional development of future ministry leaders through a summer children/youth intern position.
- Grow and expand "Common Table", including leadership development and increased discipleship.
- Grow the encounter service to an average of 100 on Sunday mornings.
- Continue to build on the momentum St. Stephen is experiencing as we strive to be the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus.

- Rev. Ken Curtis

# SSUMC Strategic Plan - 2022



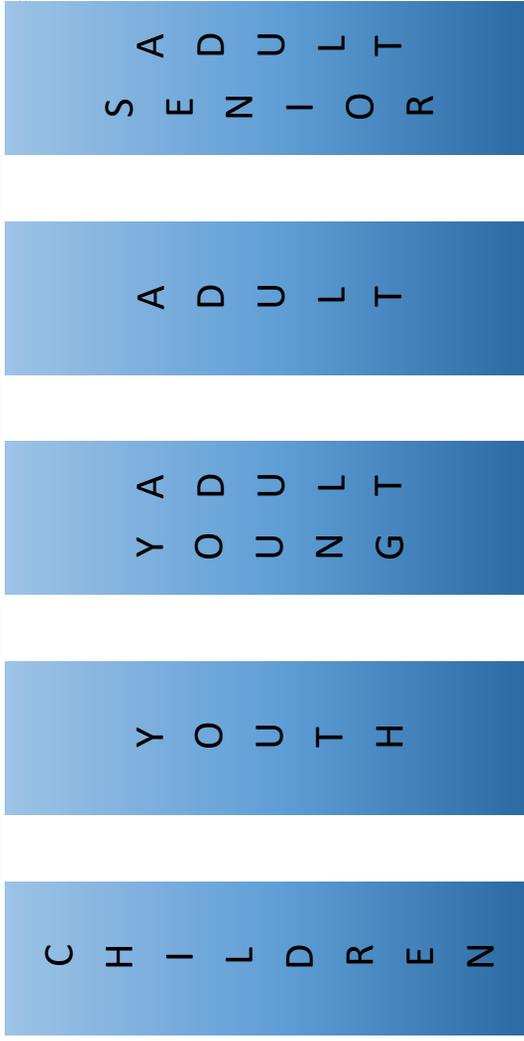
*Model of Strategies to illustrate Types and Relationships to one another.*

## Strategy Model

- \* Expand Depth of Neighborhood Focus
- \* Cultivate an Open, Welcoming, and Invitational Culture
- \* Enhance Communications & Digital Engagement
- \* Focus on the Environment

### Culture & Capabilities

Implement a Coordinated Discipleship Framework & Engagement Process for all Participants



### Discipleship & Engagement Programs

Assess Evolving Worship Experiences

\* = New Strategies

## **Welcoming is Everyone's Job**

This only works if we all say, "Yes."

### **Welcoming / Friendly → CONNECTED**

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**Greeting people matters:** It takes interaction to establish a connection.

### **"The 5-Star Welcome"**

#### **Easy Steps for everyone:**

- 5 minutes before worship and 5 minutes after worship: Don't talk to people you already know.
  - Even if few guests are present, you can establish new connections with fellow members you don't already know.
- 5-foot rule: If you don't know someone within 5ft of you, then it's your job to meet them and find out 1-2 things about them.
- SHOW, Don't Tell: Walk people to their destination. This is an extended opportunity for conversation and connection.
- TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT: Let Mandy know what you know and keep us updated.

#### **Fellowship Friends Revamp — TRAINING: MARCH 9**

*What we'll learn at the revamp:*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Touch: Genuinely interested and invested friend. + Introduce them to one other person or family unit. (Be able to talk about something you enjoy at the church or stands out). No invitations / pressure to join a group or activity.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Touch: Include in a conversation, class, or outing. This is where the first gentle invitation occurs.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> touch: Invitation to next steps, a follow up if you will see them next week, or at a certain event. This is where the first deeper/meaningful invitation occurs.

Working together to make sure no one falls through the cracks.

## Neighborhood Focus Study Team Report

1. Neighborhood. Our Neighbors currently (and in general) mirror the St. Stephen congregation in many respects: predominantly White, older, relatively affluent, “white collar,” and highly educated. There are, however, ongoing demographic trends within our Neighborhood: it is becoming more diverse as to racial and ethnic makeup; young adults (25-34) are increasing; and older adults (55+) are increasing.
2. Religious Belief. Our Neighbors (a) identify God with love and His desire for a relationship; and (b) are concerned about the teachings and example of Jesus and rather less with theological doctrine. They want to see avowed Christians behaving in way that Jesus behaved toward individuals. They are concerned about social strife and racial injustice. They are looking for more tolerance and less judgment, a less “institutional” approach toward ministry, warm and friendly encounters, strong personal relationships, and opportunities to serve.
3. Religious Practices. Our Neighbors (a) want to see avowed Christians behaving in way that Jesus behaved toward others; (b) are concerned about social strife and racial injustice; and (c) are looking for more tolerance and less judgment, a less “institutional” approach toward ministry, warm and friendly encounters, strong personal relationships, and opportunities to serve.
4. Needs of the Neighborhood. Our Neighbors identified the following needs and concerns: (a) a sense of community or “belonging”; (b) mitigating isolation and loneliness through more meaningful personal relationships and service projects; (c) strengthening families through alleviating parents’ child-rearing burdens and providing instruction for children; (d) reliable transportation, particularly as to the elderly; and (e) volunteer support for the Neighborhood institutions, including public schools.

## Growing ENCOUNTER Worship

- AS WE WORSHIP, WE ARE MODELLING WORSHIP FOR THE COMMUNITY.
  - Worship is our way of giving God thanks for the blessings God has given us and our way of showing trust in God in difficult circumstances.

We have been giving God praise and worship through the Encounter Service for almost a year and a half now.

Since Encounter started on September 17, we have been averaging about 70 folks in worship.

We will set the capacity for that service at 115 based on the size of the room.

- After that, we should start considering a new service.  
To achieve this, first, the Encounter Service needs to be as equipped as the
- Traditional Service. and volunteers should also commit to responding clearly.  
We are preparing to live stream the service.
- To prepare for that day, we encourage you to “like”, “share,” and
  - “comment” if you see a St. Stephen video/livestream on social media as you’re scrolling.
  - People check you out online before they come to your church; it’s the way of the world today. So, let’s put it in front of them.

Encounter is a service of St. Stephen; that means it’s an amalgamation of our

- people and aspects of our culture that make up our service.  
Please share your feedback with me. We will not be able to do
  - everything you want to see, but you never know until you let us know.
- Encourage people to join the tech team.
- We would like to send our volunteers out in twos as Christ did.
  - ■ And we have two services, which means we need 4 for every position.
  - We don’t need skill; we need heart and humility
    - We can teach, but only God can humble.

We have already had over 100 people in that service this year.

- We have already made major upgrades to the YMC, with more to come.
- The church council has supported funding it, and others in the church have given generous donations.

People are invested. Your tithes and offerings are invested. Let’s see what God will do this year!

# **2025 Communications Plan and Brand/Style Refresh**

*Your sneak peek at 2025 communications plans!*

## **Lent Devotional**

Inspired by last year's success, we will again have a Lenten digital devotional. Last year's daily digital Lenten devotional had 212 individual opt-ins/sign ups and with daily open rates between 77%-85%.

## **Digital Devotional Expansion**

Expand digital devotional offering into at least one more season (summer, fall, or Advent).

## **More Digital Resources for Devotion, Discipleship, and Study**

Focusing on the needs of members and regular attenders, along with guests:

- Stand-alone sermons on YouTube
- Centralizing current offerings and exploration of new digital study opportunities
- "From the Archives" series (continuing)
- "Faithfully Asked Questions" series (new/revamped)

## **Increased Ministry, Mission, and Programs Communication**

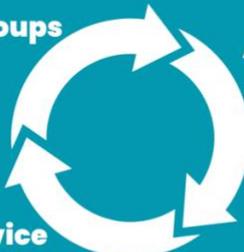
Expansion of twice yearly (Spring, Fall) "Next Steps" printed publication to include broader highlights on upcoming ministries, missions, and programs

## **Church Brand and Style Refresh / Communications Strategy**

- New or refined logo and branding package
- Move toward a story-based promotional model: highlighting ministry/mission successes and impact stories, instead of relying solely on routine meeting or event announcements

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**Small Groups**



**Acts of Piety  
Discipleship**

**Acts of Service**  
Mission work

- GPS
- Confirmation
- VBS
- Emmaus
- Mission
- Disciple Bible Study
- Volunteering
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**You're invited: Help form St. Stephen's discipleship pathways**

St. Stephen invites lay leaders and active members interested in discipleship to join this special six-week class to help form and shape our new discipleship pathways. **Beginning on Monday, Feb. 24 and hosted each week at 6:30pm in Room 32**, this six-week class will be led by Ascending Leaders, which works to equip churches for Christ-centered discipleship. They equip churches to grow individuals across all stages of their spiritual journeys, showing eternal outcomes. By deepening the faith of followers, they help restore your church to its core purpose. Results are measurable and outcomes lasting. Disciple Makers in particular focuses on the on-going spiritual journey of individuals and helps to cultivate our next steps and discern our role in guiding others. Resources will be provided before the first meeting. **Cost is \$30.**



**Interested? Sign up now!**



For questions, email Laura Campbell ([lcampbell@ststephenumc.net](mailto:lcampbell@ststephenumc.net))

## **Creation Care**

**In the 2022 Strategic Plan, there were four subtasks for “Focus on the Environment”:**

*Start a Creation Care Team using guidelines provided by the WNCC Creation Care Ministry*

The St. Stephen Creation Care Team was established in mid-2023 using the guidelines of the WNCC with St. Stephen clergy and servant leaders signing The Green Church Initiative Congregational Covenant.

*All groups, teams and committees should consider the effect on the environment in their decisions and actions.*

It is imperative that all actions at St. Stephen consider God's creation. This is accomplished by the make-up of the Creation Care Team which includes members of key committees within the church and the team to have a presence at Church Council.

*Adopt the UMC Green Church Initiative by developing a ministry, education, and facilities plan to improve creation stewardship of St. Stephen's water and energy consumption, waste production, food, and landscaping.*

The Creation Care Team has been diligently working on 128 individual green initiative tasks under three main categories: Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Mission and Evangelism. In January 2025, the team submitted its annual report to the Conference that showed that St. Stephen has met 78 of these 128 initiatives which should result in St. Stephen being certified as a green church under the rules of the Conference. These initiatives range from energy savings to worship on creation care to recycling efforts to alternative material use to reduce waste.

*Responsibility - Church Council, new-green church initiative ministry and facilities.*

See above. Note that there are two people from the Facilities Committee on the Creation Care Team.

## **CCB: Church Community Builder**

CCB is the online tool St. Stephen uses to manage members, communicate with members and guests, coordinate the church calendar, reserve rooms and resources, and manage the church's various small groups and ministries. It is a powerful tool which will help your small group or ministry area function more efficiently.

***St. Stephen requires the use of CCB for the core digital functions of all committees, small groups, and ministries.*** For example:

- Use a CCB group, instead of using a private Facebook group to manage your small group members and events.
- Use your CCB group messaging to send messages to group members (or talk to Matt, Mandy, or Phyllis about a “mail merge”), instead of using your personal email to send a large bulk email.
- Use CCB's Serve or Needs Request functionalities for volunteer signups, instead of using a third-party service like SignupGenius.

**All St. Stephen leaders should understand the basic functionality of CCB, including:**

- Directory and People Search
- Calendar (Viewing / As a Resource)
- Tracking Event Attendance
- CCB Group Management
  - Member management, Messages, Files
- Serving & Needs Requests (if applicable to your ministry area)
- LEAD app

**Trained “super users” are leaders who have attended a training and are also able to:**

- Add events
- Reserve rooms and resources

### **CCB Training: Wednesday, Feb. 26**

- 6-6:45pm — General Training
- 6:45-7:15pm — “Super User” Training

**Register Now: [bit.ly/ststeph-zoom](https://bit.ly/ststeph-zoom)**



## **NEW! Events Form & Process**

Beginning in February 2025, we will begin rolling out a new Event Request Form and event approval process. This new form and process will streamline and simplify the complex calendaring and room/resource-booking needs of all church small groups, committees, and ministries. Additionally, church staff will be able to act as a kind of “quality control,” providing checks and balances for ensuring event organizers receive all they need for a successful meeting or event and helping to more quickly resolve meeting and event conflicts.

### **NEW PROCESS: All events must be submitted via the Event Request Form.**

- Does not apply to trained “super users”
- Does not apply to events not needing rooms or resources (e.g., off-campus events, virtual events utilizing personal Zoom/virtual meeting software or conference calling)

**New Form: [ststephenmc.net/eventform/](https://ststephenmc.net/eventform/)**



### **How to book an event and rooms/resources:**

1. Consult the church-wide calendar: Ensure your planned meeting or event does not conflict with another event or room reservation. When planning far out into the future, you can also consult with church staff, who have access to a long-term “master calendar” of planned events and programs.
2. Fill out the Events Request Form: You can find the form on the church website’s form page at [ststephenmc.net/forms/](https://ststephenmc.net/forms/) or directly at [ststephenmc.net/eventform/](https://ststephenmc.net/eventform/)
3. Phyllis will review: Your event submission will be reviewed, and Phyllis will work with you to resolve any conflicts and ensure you have what you need.
4. Phyllis will book rooms/resources: Once approved, Phyllis will book your room and any requested resources on the church calendar

*\* If your event or activity also requires marketing and promotion, you must also complete a Communications Request Form.*

### **Trained Super Users:**

Leaders who would like to learn how to book events, rooms, and resources, can join the Zoom training on February 26. We highly encourage live attendance during this training, but it will also be recorded and individual trainings can be set up. Once trained, you will know all of the ins and outs of the full event creation and room/resource reservation system.

## **NEW! Communications Policy & Request Form**

Beginning in February 2025, we will begin rolling out a new communications policy and Communications Request Form. This new policy is designed to accomplish several objectives, including:

- Put into writing the general and current practices of communications management
- Clearly communicate expected deadlines and timelines for completion of promotional materials
- Provide opportunities for more strategic and effective communications to, with, and among church members, guests, and the public
- Provide the basis for the creation and implementation of a new consistent church style and branding (to come later in 2025)

### **Communications Request Form**

This new request form will be used for all communications requests, including Weekly e-Bulletin requests, as well as other projects like fliers, posters, registration forms, etc. You can fill out the form on your own, but you may also schedule a time to discuss promotional and marketing needs with Matt in-person. Always happy to help!

**New form: [ststephenmc.net/commsform/](https://ststephenmc.net/commsform/)**



### **MINIMUM PROMOTION TIME: 2 (TWO) WEEKS**

Always allow for a minimum of two weeks to promote your event or activity. This means having your materials needed for promotional creation submitted well in advance of the two-week mark.

### **General timelines for promotional creation**

The following are minimum required deadlines/turnaround times. Some projects may require additional time for ideation and completion.

- General e-bulletin announcements — Wednesdays, 9 a.m.
- Basic graphic design (e.g., fliers, online graphics, slides) — 2 weeks
- Major printed collateral (e.g., T-shirts, premium print products which cannot be printed/produced in-house): 6 weeks
- Video and other complex or multi-channel communications projects: 12 weeks
  - Consult in advance with the Director of Communications & Digital Engagement if your project is complex, multi-faceted or will require more advanced communications tools and strategies, such as videos.

**Read the full Communications Policy on [ststephenmc.net/forms/](https://ststephenmc.net/forms/)**

## Communication Tiers

St. Stephen has adopted three communication tiers to better conceptualize and plan communications requests. These tiers are descriptive, not prescriptive — meaning that each tier gives a general sense of the most likely communications tools required for successful promotion. Individual communication requests may require a slightly different or unique approach.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Tier 1</b> <i>Applies church-wide (at least 80% of regular attendees)</i></p>   |  |
| <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large church-wide or community events, major holiday services</li> <li>• Messages related to church vision, growth, stewardship, or strategic plan</li> <li>• Church-wide next steps, discipleship</li> <li>• New worship series/program launches</li> <li>• New guest messaging and first steps</li> </ul> | <p>Primary Communication Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website - feature, calendar</li> <li>• Social media - events, posts, reels</li> <li>• Weekly e-Bulletin feature</li> <li>• Printed mini-bulletin feature</li> <li>• Worship spoken announcement</li> <li>• Pre-worship and/or lobby slides</li> <li>• Other printed collateral</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Tier 2</b> <i>Applies to most, but not all attendees (30%-80% regular attendees)</i></p>  |  |
| <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large ministry events</li> <li>• Next step or discipleship opportunities</li> <li>• Missions or outreach opportunities</li> <li>• On-campus events open to the public</li> <li>• Activities of church or ministry partners</li> </ul>   | <p>Primary Communication Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website - feature, calendar</li> <li>• Social media - events, posts, reels</li> <li>• Weekly e-Bulletin - secondary feature</li> <li>• Pre-worship and/or lobby slides</li> <li>• Other printed collateral (if applicable)</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Tier 3</b> <i>Limited and audience specific (less than 30% regular attendees)</i></p>   |  |
| <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group/Sunday school activities</li> <li>• Smaller-scale ministries or missions</li> <li>• Audience-specific messages (women, men, youth, etc.)</li> <li>• Activities attracting less than 25 people</li> </ul>  | <p>Primary Communication Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCB calendar</li> <li>• e-Bulletin - calendar or blurb</li> <li>• CCB group messages, needs requests</li> <li>• Segmented/audience-specific emails</li> <li>• Word of mouth/personal invitation</li> </ul>  |

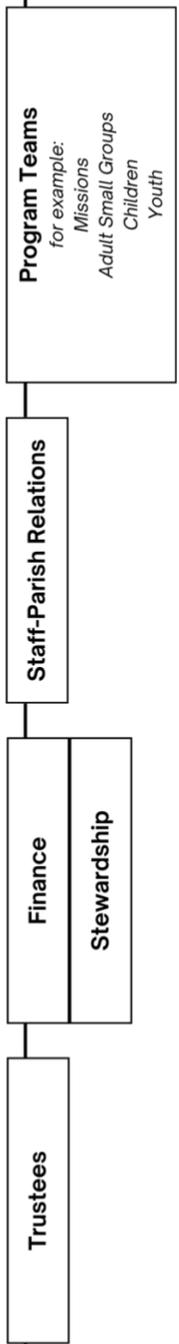
# The Entire Congregation

Making a difference beyond  
the walls of the church



Worship Making Disciples

## Church Council Using the Strategic Plan



**Making disciples for the transformation of the world.**

**Notes**