

Summer 2026 News

Pastor's Update

"But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.¹⁶ But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray." Luke 5: 15-16

It's that time of year again where people look to get away. To get rest, to have an adventure, or maybe just a change of scenery. A time to go swimming and fishing; a time to go on a road trip to visit friends and family; a time to set work aside and to recharge the batteries, so to speak.

There are many instances in the Bible when Jesus withdrew from his ministry, to take some rest, to find some kind of Sabbath time. Some say that keeping the Sabbath is the hardest commandment to keep; we certainly like to be busy and it can be so hard sometimes to just slow down and take rest. There are many reasons why Jesus would withdraw from the crowds as well. Sometimes he withdrew to prepare himself for ministry, as in the 40 days after his baptism. Sometimes he withdrew because he needed rest after performing many healings. Sometimes he would withdraw to grieve, as in when he had heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Sometimes he withdrew in times of distress, as in the scene on the Mount of Olives prior to his arrest. And sometimes, Jesus would withdraw simply to pray, to connect with God, having emptied his cup he would withdraw to fill it up again, so that he could continue his important work.

These are but a few good examples for us to follow, to take time to withdraw from the hustle and bustle. It's as if Jesus gives us permission to take rest when sometimes we refuse to give it to ourselves. Yes Jesus worked very hard, but he also took rest so that he could do more work. He would have been no use to the world if he was burnt out and overstretched, unable to perform the tasks of his unique ministry. Jesus ate like us, slept like us, got tired like us and took rest like us. If you're someone who struggles to take rest, consider time to withdraw as a spiritual discipline, a requisite practice to strengthen your faith.

My family and I will be away on vacation for two weeks and we want to thank everyone in the congregation for supporting us throughout the year. We understand how privileged we are to serve at St. Stephen and we don't take it lightly.

This time of rest is much needed and we're very much looking forward to it. Beyond that, I'll be eager to come back afterwards refreshed and renewed for ministry. Until then, peace be with you!

FINANCIAL REPORT – August 2026 Finance Notes - Submitted by Kirsten Boucher

Thank you for your continued generosity! July returned to a more typical level of giving following an exceptionally strong month of June. Our July income was \$17,337, while expenses were \$22,711, resulting in a monthly deficit of \$5,374.

Our year-to-date operating deficit at the end of July is approximately \$18,800. While this is an increase from the end of June, it remains an improvement over where we expected to be earlier this spring.

	<u>July</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
<u>Income</u>	<u>\$17,337</u>	<u>\$153,024</u>
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$22,711</u>	<u>\$171,815</u>
<u>Income – Expenses</u>	<u>–\$5,374</u>	<u>–\$18,791</u>

I would also ask you to join us in praying for wisdom and new ideas. Please pray for guidance as we seek ways to strengthen our ministry, reduce expenses where appropriate, increase income through new opportunities such as building rentals, and attract new people into the life of our congregation. If you have ideas that could help, I would be delighted to hear them.

Music Notes Submitted by Elizabeth Hackett

The summer always seems to go by too fast and before we know it, it's time to prepare for fall activities. Choir rehearsals have been on Wednesday afternoons at 4 pm. We would love to have more voices added to our group. If you're interested, please let me know. If the time doesn't work for you, also let me know and we'll see what we can do. Choir rehearsals will begin again on Wednesday, September 23.

ELW NEWS

Layettes for CAMC: Watch for a chart in late September with needed items for the layettes. The congregation can help with this project by taking a tab from the chart and purchasing that item, or by donating money toward the purchase of necessary items. The ELW appreciates your help.

Marillac Baby Bottle Campaign:

If you still have a baby bottle, please return it to the church as soon as possible. They are welcome at Marillac Place at any time.

COMMUNITY LIFE TEAM UPDATE

Happy Summer Time!

Just wanted to remind you again of the various events we have scheduled.

The next Birthday Sundays will be held on:

August 16 & September 20

Woodland Cultural Centre Visit - Brantford

Interested in learning more about the indigenous people who we acknowledge at our services? We need to listen and learn and then we can take action towards reconciliation. Join us on October 3, 2026 for a visit to the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford. Cost for entrance to the Former Mohawk Institute Residential School and Museum is \$27 for adults. \$26 for seniors and 15-24 year olds, \$23 for children (aged 4-14) More information can be found at <https://woodlandculturalcentre.ca/>. We will carpool, have a self-guided audio tour, then go to a local restaurant for lunch and a visit to Irocraft if there is interest. Sign up on our community life board soon so we can ensure we have spots on the day.

Upcoming Dates to mark on your calendar:

Wednesday August 12 - Spaghetti Supper

Sunday September 13 – Annual BBQ & Bocce ball tournament

Saturday October 17 – Annual Sausage & Sauerkraut dinner

Saturday October 24 – Fall hike/walk – more details to follow

Saturday November 14 – Craft & Bake Sale

Saturday December 5 – Annual Christmas Dinner

Remember to always check the Community Life Team bulletin board for more details and sign-up sheets.

On behalf of your Community Life Team - Debbie

BOOK AND PRAYER GROUP

We will be resuming the women's prayer and book club on September 14 and meet every other week except for holiday Mondays. Our meetings will continue on September 28, October 19, November 2, 16, 30, December 14. We will resume in the new year on January 11, 25, February 8, 22, March 8, 22, April 5, 19, May 3, 17, 31, and June 14.

New members always welcome. We read books we borrow from the Kitchener Public Library so there is no cost. Books are good as is the discussion that we have about the books and the issues that come up because of them. See Lori if you would like more information or a list of likely books we will be reading this fall.

Prayer for Wildfires - Created to share by Lana Moses June 2026

Together, we come together in heartfelt prayer for all those profoundly impacted by the devastating wildfires. We grieve for the families who have lost their homes and cherished properties, as well as for those who are being forced to evacuate their sacred lands and traditional hunting grounds. These lands are not just places; they are a part of their identity, history, and culture, intertwined with the lives of the creatures that rely on them for survival.

In our prayers, we remember the trees, brush, flowers, and the wealth of insects, birds, and butterflies whose lives are being turned to ash. Their existence, essential to our ecosystem, will take years to restore and regenerate, and we hope for a swift healing of nature. We ask for the restoration of clean air and water, which are vital to both the environment and our well-being.

We also extend our gratitude and support to the brave first responders and dedicated volunteers who are on the front lines, battling the flames and risking their own safety to protect others. We pray for the medics and hospital staff who are tirelessly tending to the needs of those affected, ensuring that everyone receives the care they require during this challenging time.

Lastly, we pray for the strength and courage to help our neighbours who are in desperate need of support. May we offer them everything from a safe shelter and a warm hug to nourishing meals and comforting places to rest as they navigate this difficult journey of recovery and rebuilding.

Amen

CARING FOR OTHERS

Thank you for your generous support of the Blessing Box. People ask "What do you need?" and the answer is lots of everything. The community is taking what we are giving. As September nears, I am sure they would appreciate back to school supplies along with the regular offerings of non-perishable food, small toys and clothing like socks and hats, personal hygiene items, menstrual management supplies, and books. Especially children's books. Gently used items that your kids or grandkids no longer use or need, all of these items are quickly taken from our blessing box, showing that they are appreciated by the community. You can also donate to the "Caring for Others" fund in our envelopes or monthly giving and we will do the shopping for you.

Member Perspectives

Do Not Be Daunted – Submitted by Jan Hansen

I have long loved the starfish story. In it, a child is walking on the beach one morning and sees that the tide has left it strewn with starfish. When the sun dries them out, they will die. So the child starts picking up a starfish and throwing it into the water. Picking up a starfish and throwing it into the water. An adult comes along and says, “What are you doing? There are so many starfish, and you will get to so few of them before it is too late. You can’t possibly make a difference.” The child looked at the starfish that the child was holding, threw it into the water and then said, “I made a difference for that one.”

The story reminds me that I can’t fix everything in the world, but I can do something.

A Jewish friend pointed me to a thinker from some 1900 years ago named Rabbi Tarfon who wrote, “Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”

When I look at the world in those terms, I feel empowered. I can’t support all of the starfish, but that is not what I am being invited to do. You see, there is not just one child on this beach, but there are loads of us. I will grab some starfish, and you can grab some starfish, and the world is changed.

A Life of Faith: Reflecting on Pastor Henry’s Final Witness Submitted by Kirsten Boucher

If you didn't know Henry Fischer, you may know Jean Fischer, who has joined our card-playing group over the years with her triplet sister, Edee Schmitt. Jean's husband, Pastor Henry Fischer, passed away on July 9, and I recently attended his deeply moving funeral service at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Kitchener. Pastor Ronnie and I also knew Pastor Henry well from our years at Peace Lutheran Church in Pickering, where he was a longtime member of the congregation. Pastor Henry had designed his own order of service, and as I listened to the readings and hymns, I found myself wondering about the meaning behind each choice. Knowing Pastor Henry’s deep faith, his love of Scripture, and his thoughtful approach to ministry, I felt that these selections were not simply familiar funeral readings and hymns. Each one seemed to carry a message—a reflection of the faith that had guided his long life—and I wanted to spend some time exploring what that message might have been.

The first reading was the story of Samuel’s call from God in 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Samuel hears God calling him, but at first does not recognize the voice. When he finally understands, he responds: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

For a pastor, this is a profound passage. A life of ministry begins with listening: listening for God’s call, listening to Scripture, and listening to the people God places along the way. Pastor Henry’s life

reflected this calling. Throughout his ministry, he listened, served, and responded—whether through pastoral care, counselling, building congregations, or his work connecting faith and health ministries.

The reading from Psalm 37: 3-9, 22-31 continued this theme of faithful living:

“Trust in the Lord and do good.”

These words seem to capture the spirit of a lifetime of Christian service. Psalm 37 is not a promise that life will always be easy or that every path will be clear. Rather, it is an invitation to trust God through all circumstances.

Another verse says:

“The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.”

For someone who spent decades walking alongside others in faith, this image is especially meaningful. Pastor Henry’s physical steps may have become more difficult in his later years, but his faith remained steady. The psalm reminds us that even when our own steps falter, God continues to hold us.

The reading from Galatians 2:15–21 brought the focus to the heart of Lutheran theology:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

After a lifetime of ministry and service, Pastor Henry’s final message was not about personal accomplishments. It was about grace. It was a reminder that our hope does not rest in what we achieve, but in what God has done for us through Christ.

The Gospel reading from John 15:5–7 brought all of these themes together:

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

Jesus reminds us that our life comes from remaining connected to him. Like branches receiving life from the vine, we are sustained by Christ’s love and grace. The fruit we bear comes from that connection.

The hymns Pastor Henry chose echoed the same message. “If You But Trust in God to Guide You” reflects the trust of Psalm 37. “Just As I Am, Without One Plea” reminds us that we come before God not because of our own worthiness, but because of Christ’s mercy. “Beautiful Saviour” turns our eyes toward the One who is the source of our hope. And “I’m So Glad, Jesus Lifted Me” brings a joyful celebration of the resurrection promise.

Taken together, these readings and hymns tell a beautiful story:

God calls us.

God guides us.

God gives us grace.

God remains with us.

Pastor Henry’s funeral was not simply a farewell. It was a final sermon—a testimony that the God who called him, guided him, and sustained him throughout his life was faithful to the very end.

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

May we all continue to listen for God’s voice, trust in God’s guidance, and abide in Christ.

This Thing Called Grief Submitted by Carolyn R. Wilker

I couldn't have known last year (2025), after my husband's passing, that this year our family would have to say goodbye to two more people — brothers-in-law Dave and Bryan — husbands of two of my four sisters. Added to the "grief shoes" I still wear.

Grief is a huge emotional rollercoaster. Anyone who's gone through it knows. Anyone who's lost a child, or someone they cared for deeply, knows.

Retired minister Patricia Jackson shared a piece called Shipwrecks with me that she often used in times such as this with her parishioners.

The author wrote: "I wish I could say you get used to people dying. I never did. I don't want to. It tears a hole through me whenever somebody I love dies, no matter the circumstances. But I don't want it to "not matter." I don't want it to be something that just passes. My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love...."

It's like that when someone you love has died, whether young or old, sudden or after an illness. You know death comes, but you're never ready for it.

The author of "[Shipwrecks](#)" describes grief like high waves that keep coming at intervals. At first you can barely catch your breath before another wave comes, and you might feel like you're drowning.

There's a numbness initially, sometimes described like a fog. Authors of [Getting to the Other Side of Grief](#), by Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert De Vries Ph.D, think of that initial fog as a protective mechanism our bodies go through because there's so much to absorb. As minister and psychologist, they've each gone through the death of a spouse, so they understand it personally as well.

Jesus understands our grief. After all, he loved Lazarus as a friend. Think of this as a pause in his ministry when he wept.

He allows us to mourn too. I liken it to the camp song "You can't go over it, you can't go under it, you can't go around it. You have to go through it."

It means tears; it means longing for that person and going through memories. And it includes wading through the painful process of parting with things belonging to that person, necessary paperwork, and more. Grief takes a long while, as I am still learning.

August 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 10 am Worship	3	4 9:30 am Quilting 12:30 pm Cards	5	6 9:30 am Gentle Exercise	7 No Class	8
9 10 am Worship	10	11 9:30 am Quilting 12:30 pm Cards	12 Spaghetti Supper	13 9:30 am Gentle Exercise	14 1 pm Parkinsons Exercise Class	15
16 Birthday Sunday 10 am Worship	17	18 9:30 am Quilting 12:30 pm Cards 6-10 pm Fellowship Hall Rental	19	20 9:30 am Gentle Exercise	21 1 pm Parkinsons Exercise Class	22
23 10 am Worship 5:30 pm Youth	24 Reminder submissions for newsletter are due today	25 9:30 am Quilting 12:30 pm Cards	26 Council Meeting 7pm	27 9:30 am Gentle Exercise	28 1 pm Parkinsons Exercise Class	29 All Day Fellowship Hall Rental
30	31	SEPT 1	2	3	4	5
10 am Worship		9:30 am Quilting 12:30 pm Cards		9:30 am Gentle Exercise		