

Our prayers and condolences go to the family of Mary Norby who passed away on December 20<sup>th</sup>; and to the family of Virginia Reed who passed away on December 29<sup>th</sup>.

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I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Pastor Jim and everyone at St. Stephen for your visits, cards, and continued prayers and support after my surgeries. Thank you all so much.

God Bless, Brenda Drimmel

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## LIBRARY FUNDRAISER

Thank you to everyone who stopped by the Library Fundraiser table. We sold 30 books and were able to add 46 new books to the St. Stephen Library. We also raised over \$100 to be used for purchasing books and DVDs for the Library. Please stop in the Library and check out a wide selection of books, magazines, videos and DVDs for your enjoyment. Thank you.

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## CAMPERS

This year's Family Camp Weekend at Father Hennepin State Park will be July 20 to 22. Keep this weekend open as you plan your summer schedule. Sign-up will be in April.

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## New Evening Bible Study

beginning on Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>

See Pastor Larry's article for details.

The next Steppingstone will go out on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Articles need to be turned in to the church office by Sun, January 21<sup>st</sup>.

## QUILTS FOR CHARITY

Come January, after the Christmas decorations are put away and our houses are in order, it's time to start a project. How about coming and helping make quilts for charity. The days for making quilts are:

Thursday & Friday - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
January 11, 12, 18 & 19

Thursday & Friday - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
February 8, 9, 15 & 16

Thursday & Friday - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
March 8, 9, 15 & 16

We need to get those sewing machines humming. See you there. Questions? Call Caroline Felland (651)777-7622.

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## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month, at 3 p.m.,  
beginning on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

The group will be facilitated by  
Jackie Colaizy

If you have questions,  
contact Karen Schultz at 426-9128

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## Wednesday Evening Worship

Do you play an instrument? Do you like to sing? We would love to have you join the Wednesday Worship Team. You would not have to commit to every week, as we would like to have several teams. (All ages are welcome!) Please leave your name and phone number with the church office or speak with Deb Nelson, at the piano, before the service begins.

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## NEW MEMBER GROUP

The next group of new members will be received on Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>. A new member dessert and orientation session will be held on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 7 p.m. If you are interested in being a part of that group, please talk to one of the Pastors or call the Church Office (651-777-1107).

## PUPPET MINISTRY

Anyone interested in joining this new ministry is welcomed to join us, starting January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m., in Classroom D. 4<sup>th</sup> graders to adults are welcomed to join. For more information talk to Karron Tarr or Bill Krannich.

## LIVING NATIVITY

Our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Living Nativity community outreach event was a huge success again this year, and I would like to thank all the individuals and families of St. Stephen who made the event happen. Thank you to everyone who filled a part in a shift, helped behind the scenes, and helped with construction of our wonderful new stage setup. Thank you to everyone who hosted the inside open house, donated baked goods and treats, and warmly greeted all visitors. Your gift of your time and your talents is greatly appreciated and necessary to the event being successful. The Living Nativity shares the powerful message of Christmas with our church and our community and we have heard from many people how moving the simple presentation is. That presentation doesn't happen without your support and your talents. Thank you and God Bless.

2007 Fools for Christ Drama Group  
Matt Millard, "head fool"

## FROM THE IRINGA TASK FORCE Help Needed to Alleviate Hunger

Many in the Iringa region are experiencing famine because of crop failure. In some areas there has been complete crop failure—nothing harvested—and in many others, the harvest was 10-20 percent of normal. The area around Ilula has been most heavily hit. Pastor Lambert Mtatifikolo writes to let us know that 16,876 households (more than 100,000 people) in two districts have been identified as having acute shortages. While this is less than 10 percent of the population of the region, it's very real to those going hungry. The Tanzanian government is providing some food aid, but cannot begin to meet the need. Without help, most affected children will be stunted physically and their mental development affected. Adults may lack strength to properly work their fields, even if it rains during the rainy season, December through March. We can provide effective and immediate help. The government will sell the Iringa Diocese maize (corn) at a very preferential rate from the depot in Makambako. In recent years, the diocese has learned a lot about how to distribute emergency food efficiently and fairly. If congregations and individuals in the Saint Paul Area Synod could quickly raise \$30,000, ten thousand families would get three buckets (15 gallons) of corn, enough food to help a family through one month. Moreover, our assistance helps encourage the Tanzanian government and aid agencies to do their part.

Gifts should be given directly to the Saint Paul Area Synod and marked Iringa Hunger Relief Fund. Mail to Saint Paul Area Synod, 105 West University Avenue. St. Paul, MN 55103-2094.

## Children's Ministry Calendar

January 21– Camp Sunday  
February 4– First Food Shelf Sunday  
February 8– 6:30 Committee Meeting

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### Toys for Iraqi Tots

We are collecting new, or gently used, toys for our soldiers to give to Iraqi children. Any toys are welcome, however if you have any dolls, beanie babies or soccer balls to donate they would especially be appreciated as they tend to be the most requested toys. On Sundays, you may place your donations in the box by the piano. At other times please leave your donations with the church secretary or with the Children's Ministry Director.

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### Children's Ministry Committee Meeting

If you have a desire to support children in their faith walk, or you would like to know what is happening in our children's program, or better yet, you would like to have input in our programming, please join us in the Library, on Thursday, February 8, at 6:30 pm for the next Children's Ministry Committee Meeting. We welcome everyone.

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### Sunday School Christmas Program

Thank you to everyone who helped with the "ABCs of Christmas" Sunday School Christmas Program. Thank you to everyone who shared in our celebration of the "Christmas Spirit." Thank you to Karron Tarr for providing puppets and faithfully practicing with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes for many weeks in preparation for the "Manger Zone." Thank you to Chris and Rob Allickson and Andy

Sommers for practicing with and being responsible for the readers. Thank you to Paul and Karen Schultz for being responsible for costumes, and dressing and directing the actors. Thank you to Judy Gelderman and Joe Ternus for directing, and being responsible for, the "Poster" Team. Thank you to Music Director, Anne Jackson, guitarists and music leaders, Ted Field, Jim Johnson, and Mike Skunes, pianist, Randy Amborn, and organist, Cindy Bittner. Thank you to Sue Lemon for suggesting the "theme." Thank you to all of the Sunday School Teachers and children for your hard work and dedicated attendance. Thank you to all of the parents who faithfully brought your children to church on Sundays and on Saturday for the practice. Thank you to the confirmation and Sunday School students and teachers, for tracing and coloring posters and to the Nancy Lemon family for taking posters home to color. Thank you to Ken Smith for providing our ABC letters. Thank you to Diane Bresin, Secretary for ordering and preparing our bulletins. (Birthday Party for Jesus; Parent's Day Out.) Thank you to Gayle O'Reilly, Kate Spilman, Amanda Olafson, Amanda O'Reilly, Kelly Skunes, and Emily Tako for planning, and providing, our Sunday School Birthday Party for Jesus and our extended "Parents Day Out." Thank you to Paul Swanson and Wendell Peck for their support, set up, and clean up for the program, the practice, the party, and the "Parents Day Out." An extra special thank you to Michon Sommers for finding the ABC script, for planning, for writing, for selecting artwork and coordinating poster creation, and for being the director in charge of the many, many facets of the program.

### Christmas Program Media Needed!

If you have a videotape of the Christmas program Children's Ministry would like to purchase a copy as the program was not recorded. In addition, we did not have a photographer this year so any copies of pictures would also be appreciated. Please contact Michon Sommers at 777-8868.

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### Children's Christmas Program – Thank You from Michon Sommers

I would like to express sincere thanks to the Children's Ministry Committee members; Chris Allickson, Judy Gelderman, Deb Nelson, Charisse Schlueter, Paul Schlutz and Nicole Ternus for their many contributions to the Children's Christmas program. They are a hard working, dedicated group of individuals and without their tremendous help, it would not have been possible to put on this wonderful program.

A special thanks to husbands: Rob Allickson, Joe Ternus and Andy Sommers for their "willingness" to help out! Thanks to Solveig Hansen for her calm presence and insight. To Anne Jackson, thank you for sharing your musical talents and enthusiasm for children.

Thank you to the families that lit the Advent Candles:

Tim, Susan, Caitlyn, Sara Beth and Macy Anderson;

Alan, Mary, Olivia and Grace Kalhoff;

Tom, Cindy, Doug and Andrea Scott;

Barb Jorgenson, Jeff, Jane, Emily, Charlie and Aaron Olson; Rob, Chris and Issaih Allickson. Their participation put a very special family touch to our program.

What a wonderful program that incorporated many facets of our congregation. The children did an excellent job – everyone should be so proud of them.

The ABC's of Christmas is over, but I hope that we will keep the true meaning of Christmas in our lives 365 days of the year.

Sincerely, Michon Sommers

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Dear St. Stephen,

We at New Spirit Primary School send you our heartfelt thanks for your contributions this Christmas season. The hats, mittens, and books are much appreciated! Many of our students do not have sufficient winter gear and cannot afford books for reading and learning at home. We are happy to send them off for winter break with warm clothes and a good book to read. Your special touch of wrapping each book really made me feel like Santa Claus!

Our accomplishments are the result of a cooperative effort, a partnership between New Spirit Schools and friends like you. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Please keep us in your hearts and minds as you continue to share your good fortune and goodwill with those in the community.

Most sincerely,

Maja Flom, ELL

New Spirit Primary School

Walter J. Stull, Executive Director

New Spirit School

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Thank you! Thank you for the opportunity to be in ministry with you at St. Stephen! Thank you for your welcoming hospitality, encouragement, support, and prayers! Thank you for the recent Christmas cards, gifts, and well-wishes! Thank you for the many hours of voluntary service necessary for carrying out ministry in this place. Our faith community would be greatly diminished without those hours of service in Christ's name.

During one of my sermons in December I mentioned the need for help in dealing with the famine in parts of the Iringa region caused by crop failure. Please read the article that also appears in this newsletter regarding this famine and prayerfully consider what you can do to help our sisters and brothers in Christ. Thank you!

I want to extend a personal invitation to you to join me in a 6 week Bible study (over a 7 week period) on the Gospel of Luke. We will meet on the following dates at 7pm: January 9, 16, and 30; February 6, 13, and 20. It will be beneficial to you if you can read the entire gospel prior to the Bible study so that you can get an understanding of Luke's perspective of Jesus. Luke will be our primary Gospel text for scripture readings this church year. Participants will learn how the author of Luke has a different perspective than the other gospel writers. This Bible study will provide an opportunity for participants to grow in faith and to deepen our relationship with God and one another. I look forward to learning and growing with you.

Take care and peace be with you.

Your brother in Christ and partner in ministry,

Larry Johnson—Interim Pastor

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## CALL COMMITTEE APPOINTED

We had 11 people express interest in serving on the Call Committee for our new pastor. The Council has chosen the following 7 to serve on the Committee: Robert Allickson, Martha Clark, John Farmer, Steve Gelderman, Jeff Olson, Cindy Scott, and Karen Smith. They will be formally introduced at the Annual Meeting on January 28<sup>th</sup>. We thank all of the applicants for their willingness to serve.

## CAMP SUNDAY

January 21, 2007

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.” Deuteronomy 6:5-7*

Bible Camp engages and helps to fulfill this powerful promise that we have made as a people who love the Lord and love our children. We are commanded to share the life we have in Christ with the children in our care. Bible camping provides a wonderful way to “impress” this call to love the Lord and to live for God upon our children.

Summer is just around the corner and **now** is the time to plan on attending camp at **Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp**. On **Sunday, January 21**, stop by the narthex to look at the displays about St. Stephen's summer camping program at **WAPO**. At the information table we'll have all the brochures, registration forms and popcorn forms to help you send your child to camp. We'll also be there to answer any questions you may have about camp, camperships, financial aid or our popular **Rural Route 1** popcorn fundraiser sale, which kicks off that Sunday, that has allowed families to defray the expenses of camp. St. Stephen believes, supports and encourages each family to have their children/youth experience at least one summer of Bible Camp at WAPO.

Summer 2007 **Gifted!!** We all have spiritual gifts! In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us a lot about spiritual gifts and, most importantly, that we are all gifted in different ways that can be used to impact God's kingdom. At camp this summer we will study God's greatest gift to us, Jesus, his life, death and resurrection which brings salvation for all. We will then study the various gifts each of us has and how we can share them to proclaim the Good News, Jesus is Lord! We can bless others and the church through the gifts we have been given. Through the week we will sing, study, play games and celebrate outdoor life in Jesus' name. Come and spend a week at **WAPO** with us! Let's appreciate all the gifts God has given and share them!

Important camping dates to mark on your calendars:

2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Weekend SEEDS	August 3-5
4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Youth Camp	August 5-10
7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Youth Camp	August 5-10
T.I.M. Team Camp	August 3-10

Other dates, camps (Journey of the Cross, Horse Camp, Fishing Camp, International Village, Wilderness Island Camp, Wilderness Canoe Base) and opportunities are available. Stop by the information table in the narthex on **Sunday, January 21** to learn more.

## **Adult Forum to Discuss the Congregational Mission and Vision: Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 and 10:30**

The Council urges all active members of the Congregation to attend the Congregational Meeting Sunday, January 28 at 1:00. Members of the Congregation will be asked to vote on the appointment of Pastor Jim to be Lead Pastor. It is important that the vote reflect the desire of the Congregation. On January 14<sup>th</sup> at the 9:00 and 10:30 services, there will be an open forum to discuss the recommendations that came out of the visioning process and recommendations of the Council regarding Lead Pastor and the calling of an Associate Pastor.

### **BUBOBC Visioning**

On November fourth, St. Stephen held a “Day of Visioning” to which all members of the congregation were invited. Out of that meeting, participants identified over sixty goals for the congregation. Participants were then invited to prioritize the goals by identifying their top three. Following that meeting, a group met to write a mission statement for the congregation and to develop a plan for implementation of the highest priorities in two key areas, staffing and stewardship.

### **Staffing**

Most immediate was appointment of Pastor Jim to the position of Lead Pastor and beginning the call process for an Associate Pastor. Roles and responsibilities for each of the pastors were identified and reflect issues that were identified in the visioning process.

A motion was approved at the Council meeting on Dec.18, recommending that the Congregation approve the appointment of Pastor Jim to be Lead Pastor. The Congregation will be asked to vote on this motion at the Congregational meeting in January. The primary responsibilities of the lead pastor are to:

- Articulate the vision
- Mentor/supervise the Associate Pastor
- Provide spiritual leadership to the congregation
- Lead the Congregation in worship
- Provide for pastoral visitation both directly and through supervision of the Stephen Ministry program (**Note: Stephen Ministry is a lay program in which volunteers from the congregation are trained to assist the pastors in meeting the pastoral needs of the congregation. Before beginning their work, all of the volunteers will satisfactorily complete a Stephen Ministry training program.**)

Second, was a motion, authorizing the formation of a committee to call an Associate Pastor. The primary responsibilities of the Associate Pastor are to:

- Be responsible for Christian education programs including oversight of children’s ministry, confirmation, and family and adult education
- Provide leadership for the youth ministry program (**Note: The Council has recommended that the part time position of Youth Director be eliminated and that those responsibilities be part of the Associate Pastor’s regular duties.**)
- Assist the Lead Pastor in worship and pastoral visitation

Additional staffing needs, including a part time administrator, part time volunteer coordinator, part time parish nurse, and part time office assistant were identified. It was recommended that these possibilities be considered when feasible.

### **Stewardship**

The group working on a vision for stewardship recommended the adoption of a year round stewardship program focused on joy and discipleship rather than obligation. To support the stewardship committee, the Council has approved the engagement of a stewardship ministry specialist to help develop a year-round stewardship program and a campaign to pay off the mortgage and roof loan.



### Special Concert with

Lennart & Emma Johansson  
from Luleå, Sweden,  
Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>  
from 6:15-7:00 p.m.

A door offering will be received.

St. Stephen  
Annual Congregation Meeting  
Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.  
(dessert potluck at 12:30)

Receive 2006 Reports  
Approve Budget & Ministry Plans for 2007  
Elect new Council members  
Vote on Pastor Jim as lead pastor  
Affirmation of Call Committee