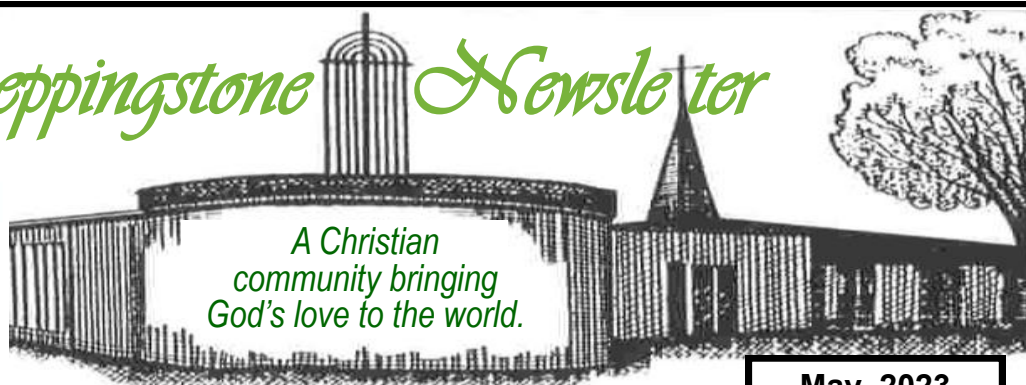




Steppingstone Newsletter



May, 2023

Farewell Gatherings



Sunday, May 21

Pastor Jim's
30th Anniversary Celebration
& Retirement Party

9:30am Worship Service
& Choir Performing

12:30pm Meet & Greet
1pm Catered Luncheon
2pm Program

*Tickets (\$20)
(details on page 6)

Sunday, May 28 Pastor Jim's Last Sunday

Farewell Reception following 9:30am Pentecost Service

Wednesday, May 31 Pastor Jim's Last Day

5pm Farewell Picnic & 6pm GAP Service

CHURCH MATTERS

A Stewardship Message About the Joy of Giving

God blesses us for our giving. He doesn't regard our gifts as money. We might, but it's better that we see them as He does, as *investments* of ourselves.

By faith, we understand that the best investment we can make with our ourselves—and our money—is to invest in God's work to build the Christian community around us, no different than our investment to build something vital in our community like a road or a school or a homeless shelter. Basic to all investments is the expectation of a *return*, and in return for gifts to God the giver receives numerous blessings to enjoy. These blessings come in many forms.

Proverbs 11:25 says, *"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."* In Proverbs 19:17 Solomon tells us: *"He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and [God] will reward him for what he has done."*

God has ordained that when we give generously we are to receive generously. As Christians, we should give without expectation of receiving anything in return. However, our gracious God, who loves us so much, thrills to bless us. He has put within us the joy of giving and finding reward in another's pleasure. When we contribute to God's work in our community, we don't celebrate with vanity for ourselves, but with a sense of *Well done, look what we did together*.

Through Malachi, the Lord offered a double blessing to those who gave generously. First, he promised to reward them materially through plentiful harvests. Their crops would produce abundantly and none of their fruit would spoil on the vine. The second part had nothing to do with their crops but pertained to what surrounding nations would see in them, the special blessing that God bestowed on them for their gifts, described in Malachi 3:12. *"And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of sparkling happiness."*

Sparkling happiness. As a return on an investment goes, it's a good one.

God pours out spiritual blessings on us when we least expect them. When you are giving out of a desire to obey God's command and help others, you will find blessings heaped up and running over. These are blessings not understood by those outside the faith.

How To Give

We give to see a change in the world. Because of our generous gifts, we can fulfill our mission and vision. Thanks to everyone for being good stewards of St. Stephen ministries.

There are numerous ways for you to give, from mailing or dropping your gift off at the church, to regular and automatic gifts through Simply Giving (contact Brad Wilm at ruthabrad@gmail.com to set it up.) You can give online at <http://www.ststephenwbl.org/impact/giving.cfm>. Or you can check with your online banker to set up electronic giving. Finally, you can scan our QR code or the **Donate** button to be directed to the church's donation page.



COUNCIL CONNECTION

Church Council Updates

Painting the Fellowship Hall – A bid has been made to have the fellowship hall and adjacent hallway areas painted and some repair work done to the walls. Council approved using capital funds to pay for it, with the expectation that some of the cost will be covered through memorial money. We are hoping to have the painting completed prior to Pastor Jim's farewell celebration May 21.

Space Rental – The Evergreen Team has been working on finding ways to close the gap between our income and expenses. They are working with a realtor, Kevin Peck, who specializes in helping churches find suitable tenants to rent some of the excess space in church buildings. Kevin came to the council meeting and made a presentation and answered questions. The council agreed to authorize Kevin to find tenants to rent some of our excess space. He would be paid a small portion of the rent if he finds a suitable tenant. Any prospective renters would be presented to the church council and the council would decide whether or not to agree to having them as tenants. Rental income would increase our revenue with funds from outside the congregation, giving us more resources to support St. Stephen's ministry. The right tenant could enhance our ministry as we host another organization with an aligned mission.

May 6 Spring Clean Up – It is time to clean up from winter's effects on our grounds. Our annual Spring Clean-up will be May 6, 9 AM to Noon. Please come and help spruce up the church grounds. Bring a rake and a friend. Many hands make light work!

It's Hard to Say Goodbye – As we are in this leave-taking time, preparing for Pastor Jim's retirement, it is bittersweet. He has been our pastor for 30 years. That's a long time! He has been there for us as a congregation faithfully preaching and leading worship on Sunday

mornings and Wednesday evenings for as long as some of us can remember. He's shared his gifts of music and teaching in groups large and small. He's traveled with us on mission trips near and far. He's been there for us as individuals and families at our baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals – so many important milestones of our lives. He has visited us and loved ones in our homes and nursing homes and at our hospital bedsides. He has served with joy!

Soon his ministry will come to an end. Someone else will fill that role. At first there will be an interim pastor who will be with us for a limited time, doing the important work of preparing us for what comes next. And then we'll welcome a new pastor. We pray that God sends us faithful leaders who will serve well. It will be good to get to know the new pastor when that time comes and we're hopeful for what they have to offer. But whoever he or she is, it won't be Pastor Jim.

In recent years the synod has become much more adamant about the expectation that when pastors leave their calls their role with that congregation is done. Pastor Jim will need to sign a document promising not to participate in the life of St. Stephen and not to do any pastoral acts for those who are part of St. Stephen. He's not planning to move, so we may see him around town. Friendships can continue. But he will no longer be our pastor. He won't be officiating for our weddings or funerals. And he will not be attending worship at St. Stephen. We won't hear him whistling, coming down the hall!

There will be time to celebrate his 30 years of ministry as a whole congregation on Sunday, May 21, and he will lead a final worship service on Wednesday, May 31. But between now and then, find time to reach out to him individually and express your personal appreciation for what his ministry has meant to you and what you have appreciated about ways he has touched your life. And pray for him as he enters this new phase of life, that it may be a time filled with many blessings.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (4/25, 5/30)

Please feel free to join our group for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month (11:30am). To RSVP, please contact: Judee Bramscher (651-269-6122).



- ♦ **April 25** - we will be meeting at Olive Garden (1749 Beam Ave, Maplewood, MN 55109). RSVP (required by Sun., April 23).
- ♦ **May 30** - we will gather at the Blacksmith Lounge and Broaster (17205 Forest Blvd N, Hugo, MN 55038). RSVP (required) by Sunday, May 28.

Food Shelf Collection

Thank you for your food shelf donations on the first Wednesday or Sunday of the month. All donations go to the White Bear Area Food Shelf to be distributed to those who need assistance in the area.



Bookkeeper/Treasurer Needed

Patsy is retiring therefore we are seeking someone to fill this role.

Duties of the Bookkeeper:

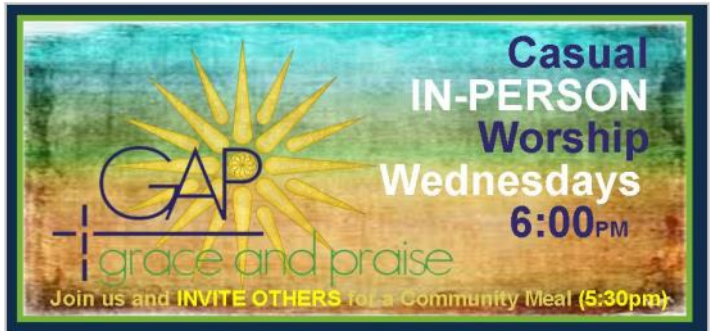
processes bills, vouchers, assigns expenses to accounts, designated fund accounts entries, makes checks, payroll, and opens emails (usually bills). **Duties of the Treasurer:** prepares all financial and designated fund account reports, prepares and maintains budget, monitors church's cash flow, proofs ledger entries, prepares for audits, and reports to Church Council. If you are interested in volunteering as the Church Bookkeeper/Treasurer, please contact Pat-



sy Olson at treasurer@ststephenwbl.org

Fellowship Group

All are invited to gather in the narthex on Wednesdays (10:30am) to share news, lift each other up with encouragement, and simply just visit! This is an informal group and walk-ins are welcome. Contact Judee Bramscher (651-269-6122) if you have questions.



GAP Worship & Community Meal

Join us (and invite others) to attend our Wednesday casual Grace & Praise (GAP) worship service (6:00-6:45pm) and Community Meal (5:30-6:00pm).

Wednesday Meal Assistants

We are in need of volunteers to help prepare, cook, and serve our Wednesday evening community meals - **assisting Primary Cook Jodie Millard**.

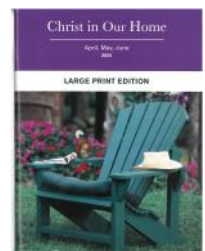
Mealtimes are 5:30-6:00pm before our Grace & Praise (GAP)

Worship Service. Choose one or as many Wednesdays as you like. Please sign up in the kitchen or contact Tami in the church office (651-777-1107, office@ststephenwbl.org) to get onto the schedule. We especially need help on 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, and 5/24!



Christ in Our Home

Devotional Booklets for April/May/June are available in the narthex in the info racks. Please feel free to take as many as you like and offer them to others who may find comfort in reading them.



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Faith Ed—Confirmation (5/6)

Confirmation is at St. Stephen on Saturday, May 6 (9:00am-12noon). This is the FINAL class until fall. We meet again on Saturday, September 9 (9am-12noon) at Redeemer.

Spring Church Clean-up Day (5/6)

It is time to clean up from winter's effects on our grounds. Our annual Spring Church Clean-up Day will be Saturday, May 6 (9:00am-12noon). Please come and help spruce up the church grounds. Bring a rake and a friend. Many hands make light work!



Mother's Day & Youth Hospitality Sunday (5/14)



Youth from St. Stephen will be in charge of hospitality on Mother's Day. All donations they receive will be used toward their mission trip.

Quilts on Display & For Sale (5/14, 5/17)

Quilts will be on display in the sanctuary on Mother's Day - Sunday, May 14. They will be offered for sale following services as a fundraiser on that day and also on Wed., May 17.



Choir Schedule

Choir's final practice is on May 7 and will be singing on May 21. We resume practices on Wednesday, September 6 (7:00-8:00pm). If you are interested in joining the choir in the fall, please contact Kari at

ballatahosmer@gmail.com



A Gift for Pastor Jim (5/15)

On Sunday, May 21st at Pastor Jim's 30th Anniversary & Retirement Celebration, we will be giving him a gift of money from the congregation. If you would like to contribute to this gift, please do so before Monday, May 15th. Checks should be made out to **St. Stephen Lutheran Church**, include **"Retirement Gift"** in the memo line, and may be dropped off in an offering plate/basket, the church office door mail-slot, or mailed to the church.

Youth Group

For youth (grades 6-12), our final gathering is on May 10 (7:00-7:45pm). We begin again in the fall on Wednesday, September 13th at Redeemer.

Retiree's Breakfast (5/11)

Attention all retirees! You are invited to join other retirees from church for breakfast (Thurs/9:00-10:00am) at Perkins in Maplewood on County Road D.



Lost & Found

If you have lost any jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, watch, earrings) in the last two years, please contact the church office and describe what you are missing. We have keys too! 651-777-1107 or office@ststephenwbl.org

OWL's Luncheon (5/18)

The OWL's (Older Wiser Lutherans) Group will be meeting at the White Bear Lake VFW for lunch on Thursday, May 18 (11:30am). Please SIGN UP in the narthex if you wish to go.



Faith Ed – Sunday & Wednesday School Schedule

For children (preschool thru grade 5: Sunday School's final session is on May 21, starting up again in the fall on September 17th. Wednesday School's final session is on May 24, beginning again on September 20.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Pastor Jim's 30th Anniversary Celebration & Retirement Party (5/21)

We will begin Sunday, May 21st with a special Farewell Worship Service at 9:30am. The Senior Choir will be performing as we celebrate Pastor Jim's 30th Anniversary. Following worship, we continue honoring Pastor Jim with his Retirement Party. We will gather for a Meet & Greet (12:30pm), enjoy a catered Luncheon (1:00pm), then continue with a special Program (2pm). On the menu: Donatelli's Baked Mostaccioli with Meat Sauce, Tortellini Carbonara, Caesar Salad, and Garlic Bread, Dessert, and Beverages. Tickets (\$20) are being sold to help cover the cost of food. Tickets are now on sale in the church office during weekdays and following worship services on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Pastor-led Bible Study

Led by Pastor Jim each Wednesday (9:00-10:00am) in the library. We're studying the book of Romans. Our final study will be on May 24.



God's Word

God's Word Bible discussion group, led by Phyllis Ballata meets in the Library on Thursdays (1:00-2:00pm).

We continue throughout the summer.

Pentecost Sunday (5/28)

The Christian holy day of Pentecost, which is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. We invite you to join us in celebrating the Spirit of God by wearing red, signifying the Spirit within on Sunday, May 28th.



Farewell Reception (5/28)

Pastor Jim's final Sunday worship service is on Sunday, May 28. Following worship, we will have a reception with refreshments as we say our farewells.

Memorial Day (5/29)



The church office is closed on Monday, May 29 in observance of Memorial Day. Office hours are Monday thru Thursday (9:00am to 3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am - 12noon).



Farewell Picnic (5/31)

Join us on Wednesday, May 31st on Pastor Jim's Last Day. We gather at 5pm for a Farewell Picnic (freewill offering), followed by our 6pm GAP (Grace & Praise) casual worship service. If the weather is nice, we will be outside, so remember to bring your lawn chair!

Readers Needed

We are in need of Lectors to read the scripture lessons during Sunday services. No experience necessary; we welcome any age. Individuals or pairs are encouraged to volunteer. Please choose any Sunday, sign up in the narthex on the table near the Welcoming Jesus woodcarving, and fill out a reminder card for yourself. Thank you for being a ministry disciple! Pictured right: Matt Tilahun.



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Vacation Bible School

Register now for FREE Vacation Bible School (VBS). VBS is open to children who turned three by September 1, 2022 and are "potty trained" thru children who completed the 6th grade this school year. Invite your friends and neighbors for our biggest summer event – coming August 7-11, 2023 (9am-12noon). Registration forms are located in the church narthex or can be downloaded from website at www.StStephenWBL.org

Register NOW for Camp WAPO

If you're planning on attending camp this summer at Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp (WAPO), NOW is the time to register your child/youth for camp - online at www.lakewapo.org. WAPO is filling up fast. St. Stephen has Seeds Summer Camp (completed Grades 1 – 3) June 16 – 18 and WAPO Youth Camp (completed Grades 4 – 8) June 18 – 23. If these dates don't work for you or the week fills up other dates can be attended. St. Stephen has camperships available; \$100.00 for Seeds week-end camp and \$225.00 for Youth week long camp. Any questions, concerns, need help or assistance see or talk to Paul Schultz (651-238-0610). Sign-up NOW!



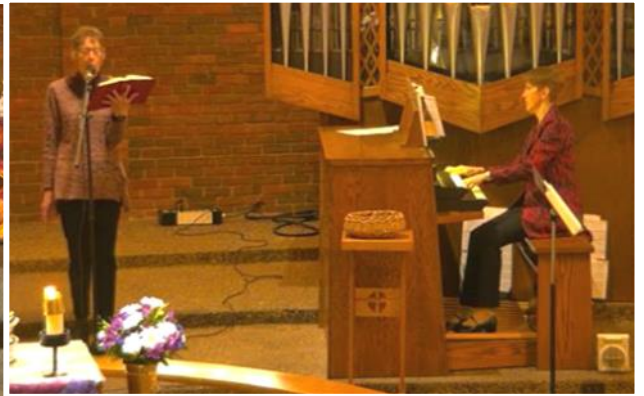
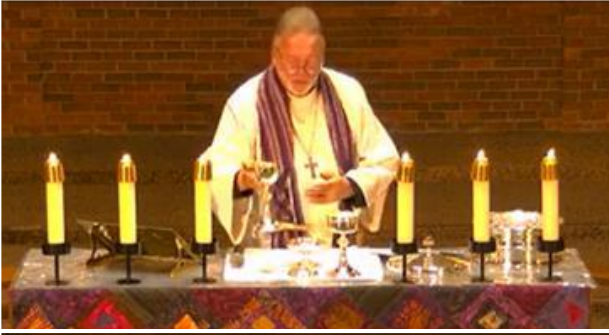
2023 Flower Sponsors... If you wish to sponsor flowers in 2023, contact Tami in the church office (651-777-1107 or office@ststephenwbl.org) to let us know the date and dedication (in memory, celebration, or in honor, etc.). The cost is \$20 per bouquet. Simply mail in (1965 East County Road E, White Bear Lake, MN 55110) or drop off your payment at least one week before the date you are sponsoring.



APPRECIATION

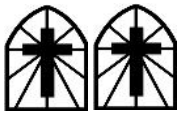
- ♦ **Newsletter...** Thank you to the Steppingstone crew for folding, sealing, labeling, and sorting the newsletters each month!!
- ♦ **Tanzania Fundraiser...** Thank you to all who purchased braided bread and donated money for the Tanzania fundraiser. \$567 was raised and will be used to support needs of our partner parish in Lukani.
- ♦ **Fools for Christ...** Thank you for the meaningful performances on Maundy Thursday; helping us to remember the solemn events leading up to the crucifixion of our Savior.
- ♦ **Good Friday...** Thank you to the combined choirs of St. Stephen and Redeemer and the Reader's Theater participants who contributed to a special Good Friday service at Redeemer.
- ♦ **Eastertime...** Thank you to everyone who prepared for and attended worship services. From re-stocking pew pockets, dusting, cleaning, preparing for and serving communion, singing, etc., there are too many people to thank, so please know that each one of you play an important role in creating meaningful worship.
- ♦ **From Susan Lemon...** *To our church family I wish to say thank you for all your support. Maybe you gave me a hug or special smile or said a little prayer. It helped me through a very hard time. God bless you all.*

WORSHIP



PRAYERS

Prayers Have Been Requested For the Following...



Help Keep Us Informed

Please help keep us informed of any concerns that you would like our congregation to be praying about, including those serving in the military and any deaths among family members, by contacting the church office at 651-777-1107 or office@StStephenWBL.org



A Departing Prayer

Father God, as Pastor Jim, who has served this church for 30 years departs for the next chapter of his life, let us know in our hearts and minds that although today may be hard, with you we will see a brighter tomorrow. We praise you, oh God, for bringing this loyal shepherd to lead us and we release him into your loving care. Just as he has ministered to us, now we minister to him through our prayers. We pray for his journey to be filled with joy. We pray for the well-being of his family. And, we pray for our church - that our faith in you will guide us onward and upward as we continue the work of bringing your love to the world. In the name of Jesus Christ,

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MAY Birthdays



Please let the church office know if your birthday is not listed so that we may correct the database.



GENERAL INFORMATION

In This Issue

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Happenings & Opportunities (4-7)
Appreciation (7)
Worship (8)
Prayers (9)
Announcements (10)
General Information (11)
Calendar (back cover)

The Steppingstone Newsletter...

Is distributed monthly. If you have any items for the **June** issue, please send them to office@ststephenwbl.org by Wed., May 10th.

Newsletters are also available in the narthex information racks or via email.

Please let us know if you have a change of address so that we can update our mailing list.

Staff

Lead Pastor • James Woodruff
jamesawoodruff@ststephenwbl.org

Visitation Pastor • Juli Thompson
visitation@ststephenwbl.org

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**Children & Families Ministry Director** • Paul Schultz  
[childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org)

**Communication & Administrative Coordinator** • Tami Heart  
[office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org)

**Custodian** • Paul Swanson

**Digital Ministry Director** • Zach VanDyke  
[zrv10000@gmail.com](mailto:zrv10000@gmail.com)

**GAP Worship Director** • Justin Woodruff  
[jwoodruff@homfurniture.com](mailto:jwoodruff@homfurniture.com)

**Nursery Caregiver** • Lisa Klingbeil

**Organist** • Cindy Bittner  
[cynthia.k.bittner@gmail.com](mailto:cynthia.k.bittner@gmail.com)

**Senior Choir Accompanist** • Cindy Bittner  
[cynthia.k.bittner@gmail.com](mailto:cynthia.k.bittner@gmail.com)

**Senior Choir Director** • Kari Ballata  
[ballatahosmer@yahoo.com](mailto:ballatahosmer@yahoo.com)

**Wedding Coordinator** • Missy Kneip  
[mothergoose2954@yahoo.com](mailto:mothergoose2954@yahoo.com)

**Youth & Families Ministry Director** • Melissa Whitman  
[mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org](mailto:mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org)

### Council & Leadership

**President and Staff Relations**  
Marla Amborn—[MarlaAmborn@gmail.com](mailto:MarlaAmborn@gmail.com)

**Vice President, Finance & Stewardship**  
Ted Field—[FieldJackson@msn.com](mailto:FieldJackson@msn.com)

**Previous President and Church Council Secretary**  
Betsy Clark—[eaclark001@comcast.net](mailto:eaclark001@comcast.net)

**Adult Learning**  
Scott Ziemann—[scott.ziemann@century.edu](mailto:scott.ziemann@century.edu)

**Children, Youth, & Families**  
Bethany Zenner—[bethanyzenner@hotmail.com](mailto:bethanyzenner@hotmail.com)

**Congregational & Community Care**  
Phyllis Ballata—[pballata@msn.com](mailto:pballata@msn.com)

**Evangelism**—OPEN

**Fellowship**  
Cheryl Skrypez—[cskrypez@gmail.com](mailto:cskrypez@gmail.com)

**Financial Secretary**  
Brad Wilm—[RuthaBradj@gmail.com](mailto:RuthaBradj@gmail.com)

**Mission and Benevolence**  
Pastor Jim Woodruff—  
[jamesawoodruff@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:jamesawoodruff@ststephenwbl.org)

**Property**  
Kathy Stickler—[kstickler23@gmail.com](mailto:kstickler23@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**  
Patsy Olson—[joellyo@netscape.net](mailto:joellyo@netscape.net)

**Worship & Music**  
Denise Ashley—[deniseashley1@yahoo.com](mailto:deniseashley1@yahoo.com)

### Church Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 9am-3pm; Friday 9am-Noon

St Stephen Lutheran Church  
1965 East County Rd E  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

# What's Happening

## Sundays

Blended Worship Service  
& Faith Ed **9:30am IN-PERSON**  
(Services are live-streamed and online)

## Wednesdays

Grace & Praise Casual Worship  
& Faith Ed **6:00pm IN-PERSON**  
(Community Meal at 5:30pm, \$5/pp)

## Calendar Highlights

4/25 **Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)**

5/3 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)

5/3 Pastor's Bible Study (Wed/9:00am) *also 10, 17, 24*

5/4 Worship & Music Meeting (Online, Thurs/7:00-8:00pm)

5/6 Faith Ed: Confirmation (Sat/9:00am-12noon) **FINAL**

5/6 Spring Church Cleanup Day (Sat/9:00am-12noon)

5/7 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)

5/8 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)

5/10 Content Deadline for June Steppingstone (Wed)

5/10 Baptism: Harlow Garay-Triviski (Wed/6:00pm)

5/10 Faith Ed: Youth Group (7:00-7:45pm) **FINAL**

5/11 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00-10:00am)

5/14 Mother's Day / Youth Hospitality Sunday

5/14 Quilts on Display (Sun/9:30am) and For Sale (10:15am)

5/14 Baptism: Zachary Degayner (Sun/9:30am)

5/15 Contribution Cut-off date for Pastor Jim's gift (Mon)

5/17 Quilts for Sale (Wed/6:45pm)

5/17 Senior Choir Practice (7:00-8:00pm) **FINAL**

5/18 OWL's Luncheon at VFW-WBL (Thurs/11:30am)

5/21 Special Farewell Worship Service with Betsy Clark and Choir Performing (Sun/9:30am)

5/21 Faith Ed: Sunday School (9:45-10:30am) **FINAL**

5/21 Pastor Jim's 30th Anniversary Celebration & Retirement Party: Sun / 12:30pm-Meet & Greet; 1pm-Catered Lunch; and, 2pm-Program. (Tickets: \$20)

5/24 Pastor's Bible Study (Wed/9:00am) **FINAL**

5/24 Faith Ed: Wednesday School (6:00-6:45pm) **FINAL**

5/25 June Steppingstone Distribution Day (Thurs/9:15am)

5/28 Pentecost Sunday (Sun/9:30am)

5/28 Farewell Reception (Sun/10:15am)

5/29 Memorial Day (Church office CLOSED)

5/30 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)

5/31 Farewell Picnic (Wed/5:00-6:00pm)

5/31 GAP Farewell Service (Wed/6:00pm)