



December, 2023

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

A Christian community bringing
God's love to the world.



Worship with us!

Sundays

9:30am Worship
(live-streamed & online)
9:30am Sunday School

Wednesdays

5:15pm Community Meal
6:00pm Grace & Praise Worship
6:00pm Faith Education

Dec. 20—Wednesday GAP Worship, Choir, Faith Ed, Fellowship Group, and Meal are ON BREAK

Special Events:

Living Nativity

Saturday, Dec. 16
4:30–7:30pm

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, Dec. 24
9:30am Children's Program
4:00pm Family
9:00pm Candlelight

CHURCH MATTERS

Final Message from Interim Pastor Kelly

Hello St. Stephen Members and Friends.

As the St. Stephen Executive Council Team and I conclude this interim ministry, please receive my continued prayerful blessings for completing your call process!



You may have noticed I have been wearing a chasuble. This historic ecumenical practice of wearing chasubles before and during the consecrating (praying) and distributing the celebrated Sacrament of Holy Communion is a liturgical action shared by clergy among the Anglican (Church of England), Episcopalians (U.S.), Orthodox and Roman Catholic communions. The liturgical colors emphasize the seasons of the church year the way the St. Stephen worship windows teach the ancient biblical stories without words. Given that all online worship is considered digital evangelism, the liturgical colors not only show what season of the church year we are in, but also are another message for welcoming online worship participants.

I want to thank everyone for the great outpouring of support for the White Bear Area Food Shelf. As of August this year, St. Stephen, with the help of the VBS parents and guardians, donated 83 pounds of food. Now we are having a contest with Redeemer Lutheran to donate children's cereal. We have been challenged to donate 68 boxes of children's cereal in honor of St. Stephen's 68 years of ministry. Redeemer has been challenged to donate 64 boxes in honor of their 64 years of ministry. Let's see who can raise their total number of boxes first!

The youth and family partnership ministry with St. Stephen and Redeemer Lutheran congregations has a new and renewing endeavor. Melissa Whitman, our shared youth ministry director, will be at St. Stephen before worship every 4th Sunday of the month starting January 28.

Bountiful blessings to you, yours, and the world we share this Advent season!

Former Interim Pastor, The Rev. Sharon F. Kelly

COMMUNION ASSISTANT TRAINING SUNDAY JANUARY 14 (10:30 am)

You are ALL WELCOME to be a part of the Communion Assistant team. No prior experience necessary! You will need to participate in training prior to being part of the team. Please gather in the sanctuary following service on Sunday, January 14, around 10:30 am. The training will take no longer than 30 minutes.

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Advent Worship Services



Advent 1

(Sun., Dec. 3, 9:30am)
Lessons & Carols

Advent 2

(Dec. 10, 9:30am)
Senior Choir
Advent Service

Advent 3

(Sun., Dec. 17, 9:30am)
Hymn Sing

Advent 4

(Dec. 24, 9:30am)
Christmas Eve
Children's Program
Service

Cut out to invite others!



2023 Christmas Garden

Be part of our Christmas Garden by ordering a Poinsettia plant for your family's Christmas celebration or as a memorial to someone special. *Please place this form with payment into the office door mail slot or into an offering plate during worship.*

Orders must be received by Sunday **Dec. 10**

Red____ + White____ + Pink____ = Quantity____

(please indicate "Christmas Garden" on check)

Amount enclosed (\$20 each) = \$_____

(check a box)

- ☐ I wish to **KEEP** my plant
☐ I wish to **DONATE** my plant

(circle one)

This plant is in... **[memory]** **[honor]** **[celebration]**

Of... _____

Your Name _____

Phone _____



ST. STEPHEN
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Join us Christmas Eve!

All are welcome to
worship with us on
Christmas Eve!
Please remember to
invite family, friends,
neighbors...



1965 East County Rd E, White Bear Lake, MN 55110, 651-777-1107 www.StStephenWBL.org

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (11/28)

Please feel free to join our group for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month (11:30am). RSVP (required) on Sunday before event by contacting Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122. On November 28, we will be gathering at Sak's Sports Bar (1460 Co Rd E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55110) – RSVP by 11/26. On Dec. 26, we are on break.

Hanging of the Greens (12/2)

Come help St. Stephen get ready on Saturday, Dec. 2 (8:30am-12:00noon)! The tasks are simple... attach bows to wreaths, hang wreaths in the sanctuary, and decorate the Christmas tree. **All hands (little or big) on deck!**



Faith Formation Topic (12/10)

Look for further information about this Faith Formation event in Weekly Update e-blasts and announcements during worship services.

Cookies for Homebound Members Drop-off (12/10) Packaging (12/11)



We will be packaging cookies for our homebound members on Monday, December 11 (9:00-12noon) in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is welcome to help package. Please drop off your donation of two dozen cookies on/by Sunday December 10 (9:00am-12noon). Left-over cookies will be donated to the Living Nativity event on December 16th.

Beer & Carols (12/12)

You and your guests are invited to join us for a night of fellowship and fun at Quinny's Pub 6:30pm (3140 Century Ave. N.) There will be an ugly sweater contest with prizes! While Minnesota state law allows children in pubs, this is a 21+ church event. Contact Melissa Whitman for more information or to request a specific carol at mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org



OWL's Christmas Gathering (12/6)

Please contact Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122 if you wish to join other OLDER WISER LUTHERANS for a Christmas Luncheon on Wed., December 6 (11:30am) at the Lake Elmo Inn. Space is limited so please RSVP before November 29th.

Christmas Garden Orders DUE (12/10)

If you wish to help decorate the sanctuary with a beautiful Poinsettia plant, please submit a completed order form, along with payment of \$20 per plant (indicate "Christmas Garden" on checks). Let us know of your dedication (in memory, celebration, or in honor...). Also let us know if you wish to keep your plant or donate it to one of our homebound members. Forms are located in bulletins, the December Steppingstone, or in the narthex and must be received in the church office by Sunday, Dec. 10th.



Retiree's Breakfast (12/14)

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.



God's Word Bible Discussion

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

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Living Nativity (12/16)

This year's Living Nativity is on Saturday, December 16 (4:30-7:30pm). We encourage everyone to sign up for a 30-minute (or longer) time-slot to fill the character roles of Joseph, Mary, Angel, Wise Kings, and Shepherds. The sign-up display is in the narthex. We're looking forward to another year of presenting this meaningful event to the community.



Mitten Tree

This year's focus for the Mitten Tree will be for water-resistant mittens for children and water-resistant gloves and wool socks for adults. We will deliver items for children to a local school and the items for adults to the Union Gospel Mission. *³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.* -Matthew 25:36-40



Church Office Closed (12/22, 12/25, 1/1)

The church office will be closed at noon on Friday, Dec. 22, closed all day on Monday, December 25, and closed on Monday, January 1, 2024. Regular office hours are Monday through Thursday (9:00am-3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am-12noon).

Christmas Gift for the Pastor

Please consider contributing this year towards a monetary Christmas gift for Visitation Pastor Juli Thompson. Contributions may be dropped off in the church office door mail slot, or placed into an offering plate/basket during worship. Please make checks out to St. Stephen with "**Pastor's Gift**" in the memo line. Thank you for your gifts to our pastor and have a blessed celebration of Christ's birth.



Worship With Us!



Sundays 9:30am

www.StStephenWBL.org

"A Christian community bringing God's love to the world"

Sunday Greeters Needed

Please sign up in the narthex or let Judee Bramscher know if you would like to be a greeter on *any* Sunday. Simply be here around 9:00am to say "hello" to folks entering the church.



GAP (Grace & Praise) Worship & Community Meals

Wednesday is a perfect time to invite family members or friends to join you at our community meal (5:15pm) and GAP (Grace & Praise) casual worship service (6:00pm) in the sanctuary. There are many people who say they would go to church if they were invited!

Cooks Needed for Wednesday Meals

We are in need of volunteers to prepare, cook, and serve (FOR 25 PEOPLE) Wednesday evening community meals. Get reimbursed for up to \$50. Mealtime is 5:15-6:00pm before our Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship Service. Choose one or as many Wednesdays as you like (through May of 2024). Sign up in the kitchen or contact the church office at 651-777-1107 or office@ststephenwbl.org to get onto the schedule.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

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.



New Voices Welcome Come Join the Choir!

Choir members and anyone who may wish to join the choir are invited back to the church on Wednesdays (7:00-8:00pm) for practice. If you wish to participate or have any questions, contact Kari at ballatahosmer@gmail.com

Annual Reports DUE (1/7/23)

Please promptly submit your **2023 annual ministry reports** to office@ststephenwbl.org by Sunday, January 7, 2024. Thank you!

Pledges for 2024

Thank you to all who have turned in your pledge cards; committing your support of our mission for the coming year. If you haven't yet submitted your pledge card and need one, Stewardship Packets for 2024 are available on the Welcome Desk in the narthex. Please place your pledge card in an offering basket or in the church office door mail slot.



Getting Events Onto the 2024 Calendar

Please contact Tami in the church office at office@ststephenwbl.org or 651-777-1107 to get all special events, gatherings, meetings, groups, etc. onto the church's 2024 calendar.

Welcome Kingdom Restoration Ministries

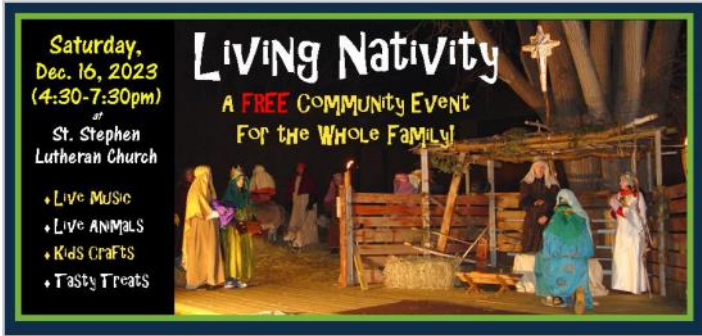


St. Stephen is proud to begin what we hope will be a long and meaningful multi-cultured relationship with Kingdom Restoration Ministries. For more than 30 years Reverend Thomas Dowie and his wife Reverend Christine have experienced God's grace to raise an indigenous ministry from the rubble of civil war in Liberia, West Africa, from where it grew into many churches in West Africa, East Africa, and the US. They made a transition into a new phase of ministry in the US with a mission thrust, leading to the formation of Kingdom Restoration Ministries, International. When they approached us in search of a spiritual place to conduct their weekly worship services, we saw more than just the opportunity to offer a welcoming space to a scripture-based church that shares our faith in Christ, but perhaps a partner with whom we would serve the missions of both churches. We feel blessed to have met them on our journey with Christ.

KRM is conducting worship services in our sanctuary twice a week, on Sunday afternoons at 2 pm and on Thursday evenings at 6 pm. With regards to how we might complement and help serve each other's mission going forward, we will figure that out as we go. For now, we are getting to know each other better, and towards that end we have invited Reverend Thomas, Christine, and their worshippers to be part of our worship and ministries, and they have extended the same invitation to us. Thomas and Christine have worshipped with us and expressed interest to be part of our Live Nativity next month. So that we may learn more about KRM, they perhaps may honor us in an upcoming adult forum to tell us more about KRM's mission and vision. They have a wonderful story to tell.

Welcome Reverend Dowie, Christine, and KRM to our Christian community!

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



National Lutheran Choir (12/8 & 12/9)

In Christ's birth we see, hear, and feel a sense of renewal. Christmas connects us to the roots of our faith, healing us in the frigid, dark months of each year. This year's Christmas Festival will celebrate old beside new; the program will include works from the 16th century to the present. Dec. 8, 2023 (4:30pm), Dec. 9 (1:30pm), and Dec. 9 (8:00pm). The Basilica of Saint Mary 1600 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, Minnesota. Tickets: Adult - \$35. Youth under 18 - Free. Student with valid ID - Pay as you are able. Groups of 10 or more -

Call the office at 612-722-2301 for information on reduced tickets. Not able to join us in person? The 1:30pm CT performance on Dec. 9th will be livestreamed for those who are unable to physically attend. Visit NLCA.com for tickets and more information.

Help Local Charities by Shopping <<< Gift Certificates Available >>>

Gift certificates are available for Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) and make great stocking stuffers for friends and family. When someone uses their gift certificate to purchase clothing at NHN, they are helping local charities. Since NHN is run by volunteers, all proceeds beyond operating expenses are given to local non-profits in White Bear Lake and surrounding area. If you haven't shopped there before, you are missing out on great deals and some really nice clothing! The thrift store is located in the building behind the church! Hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs 10-4 and Sat 10-1. (NHN is closed for the holidays (Dec. 22—Jan. 1) and will re-open on Tuesday, Jan. 2.



Neighbors
Helping
Neighbors

Volunteers Needed!

Do you have **THREE** hours per month to volunteer?
If so, please contact Mary Beth Skunes at 651-497-1927.

APPRECIATION



Fools for Christ Dinner Theater

Thank you to all the actors, behind the scenes people, volunteers, attendees, MC Paul Schultz, and cook Jodie Millard for your participation in this year's Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater on Oct. 27 and 28 for "The Gospel of Matthew (Abridged)." Both performances were sold out and the food was great!

Tree Trimmers

Thank you to our tree trimmers who cut back limbs as we prepare for plow trucks.



Trunk or Treat

34 Trunks, fire department, police department, and over 250 trick-or-treaters. This year's event at Sunrise Middle School was a great success. Although St. Stephen was a sponsor, only three trunks from our church participated, so please consider decorating your trunk next year!



Holly Boutique & Bake Sale... The 24th Annual Holly Boutique & Bake Sale was a great success. Over \$5,600 was raised from the sale of food and crafts. The money will be donated to the White Bear Area Food Shelf, Lutheran Social Services, homeless teens shelter, women's shelter, and projects at St. Stephen. We had a wonderful assortment of hand-made and wood items, along with great baked goods and food. The "Christmas Remembered" shop nearly sold out of gently used Christmas decorations. Thank you to all who crafted, sewed, baked, wood-worked, canned, and cooked. You are talented and very appreciated! Thank you to all the volunteers who packaged, priced, cashiered, arranged, and helped with clean-up. You are the best! To everyone who shopped, ate, and supported the boutique—a big "THANK YOU". Hope you had fun!

PRAYERS

Jesus said “My Father’s House shall be a House of Prayer.”



Volunteer Helpers for St. Stephen Funerals

Please consider volunteering to help with funeral luncheons at St. Stephen Church. Positions to choose from include food prep and set-up from 9:00-11:30am. Serving food and clean up 11:30am-2:00pm. Making a pan of bars and/or cookies to serve at funeral lunch. Please contact Judy Ruth at 651-426-0869 to volunteer or for additional information.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Do You Wish to Be Baptized?

If you wish to be (or have your child) baptized, please contact the church office at office@ststephenwbl.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

December Birthdays



CHURCH MATTERS

“Church Council Meeting Highlights”

1. The Nominating Committee has identified individuals who are willing to serve on council beginning in 2024. The committee has filled 3 three-year terms and 2 one-year terms.
2. The Call Committee has been approved by Council and will be: Marla Amborn, Robin Eberlein, Ted Field (members of the Mission Exploration Team), Lee Branwall, Karen Smith, Kathy Stickler, Mike Trenda, Brad Wilm, and Deb Yusuf.
3. Members of the Council, Mission Exploration Team and the newly formed Call Committee met with a representative from Holy Cow via ZOOM on Sunday November 19 to hear the interpretation of the Holy Cow survey and receive the official report.

APPRECIATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

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The Steppingstone Newsletter...

Is distributed monthly. If you have any items for the **January** issue, please send them to office@ststephenwbl.org by Sunday, Dec. 10.

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

Interim Pastor ▪ Sharon Kelly
ipk@ststephenwbl.org

Visitation Pastor ▪ Juli Thompson
julia.a.thompson@gmail.com

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Children & Families Ministry Director ▪ Paul Schultz
childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org

Communication & Administrative Coordinator ▪ Tami Heart
office@ststephenwbl.org

Custodian ▪ Paul Swanson

Digital Ministry Director ▪ Zach VanDyke
zrv10000@gmail.com

Funeral Luncheon Coordinator ▪ Kathy Anderson
kathleen856@q.com

GAP Worship Director ▪ Justin Woodruff
jwoodruff@homfurniture.com

Nursery Caregiver ▪ Lisa Klingbeil

Organist and Senior Choir Accompanist ▪ Cindy Bittner
cynthia.k.bittner@gmail.com

Senior Choir Director ▪ Kari Ballata
ballatahosmer@yahoo.com

Wedding Coordinator ▪ Missy Kneip
mothergoose2954@yahoo.com

Youth & Families Ministry Director ▪ Melissa Whitman
mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org

Council & Leadership

President and Staff Relations

Marla Amborn—MarlaAmborn@gmail.com

Vice President, Finance & Stewardship

Ted Field—FieldJackson@msn.com

Previous President and Church Council Secretary

Betsy Clark—eaclark001@comcast.net

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Adult Learning

Scott Ziemann—scott.ziemann@century.edu

Bookkeeper

Cindy Bittner—treasurer@ststephenwbl.org

Children, Youth, & Families

Bethany Zenner—bethanyzenner@hotmail.com

Congregational & Community Care

Phyllis Ballata—pballata@msn.com

Evangelism

EVERYONE

Fellowship

Cheryl Skrypez—cskrypez@gmail.com

Financial Secretary

Brad Wilm—RuthaBradj@gmail.com

Mission and Benevolence

Pastor Sharon Kelly—ipk@ststephenwbl.org

Property

Kathy Stickler—kstickler23@gmail.com

Treasurer

Mary Beth Skunes—treasurer@ststephenwbl.org

Worship & Music

Denise Ashley—deniseashley1@yahoo.com

Church Office Hours

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



www.StStephenWBL.org ♦ office@ststephenwbl.org ♦ 651-777-1107

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

What's Happening

Sundays

Worship (with band, organ, or piano)
& Faith Ed **9:30am IN-PERSON**
(Services are live-streamed and online)

Wednesdays

Grace & Praise Worship (casual)
& Faith Ed **6:00pm IN-PERSON**
(Community Meal at 5:15pm, \$5/pp)

Calendar Highlights

11/28 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
11/28 Evergreen Team Mtg. (Tues/7:00pm)
12/2 Hanging of the Greens (Sat/8:30am-12noon)
12/3 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
12/3 **Advent 1:** Lessons & Carols Service (Sun/9:30am)
12/4 Executive Team Mtg. (Mon/3:30pm)
12/6 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
12/6 OWL's Christmas Gathering (Wed/11:30am)
12/7 Worship & Music Mtg. (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
12/10 Content **DUE** for January Steppingstone (Sun)
12/10 Christmas Garden Orders **DUE**
12/10 **Advent 2:** Service with Senior Choir (Sun/9:30am)
12/10 "Faith and the Theatre Arts" (Sun/10:45-11:30am)
12/10 DROP-OFF Cookies for Homebound (Sun/9:00am-12noon)
12/11 PACKAGING Cookies for Homebound (Mon/9:00-12:00noon)
12/11 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
12/12 Beers & Carols at Quinny's Pub (Tues/6:30pm)
12/14 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00am)
12/16 Living Nativity (Sat/4:30-7:30)
12/17 **Advent 3:** Hymn Sing (Sun/9:30am)
12/18 Executive Team Mtg. (Mon/3:30pm)
12/22 Church Office **CLOSES AT NOON** (Fri)
12/24 **Advent 4:** Worship with Kids' program (Sun/9:30am)
12/24 Christmas Eve—Family Service (Sun/4:00pm)
12/24 Christmas Eve—Candlelight Service (Sun/9:00pm)
12/25 Christmas Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Mon)
12/26 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch **ON BREAK**
12/27 All Programming and Activities **ON BREAK** (Wed)
1/1/24 New Year's Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Mon)
1/7/24 Annual Reports **DUE** (Sun)