



# Steppingstone Newsletter



April, 2024



## Maundy Thursday (3/28)

- ◆ 12:00pm—Service of Scriptures & Songs w/Communion
- ◆ 7:00pm—Service w/Fools for Christ Drama



## Good Friday (3/29)

- ◆ 12:00pm—"Seven Last Words"
- ◆ 7:00pm—"A Service of Darkness" w/Combined Choirs of Redeemer and St. Stephen Lutheran Churches



## Easter Sunday (3/31)

- ◆ 8:00am—Easter Sunrise Service
- ◆ 9:30am—Easter Festival Service

### Reception

- ◆ Please join us in the narthex for refreshments!



## Grace & Praise Worship & Community Meal (4/3)

Invite family and friends to join for a meal and worship!

- ◆ 5:30pm—Community Meal
- ◆ 6:00pm—Grace & Praise (GAP) Service

# CHURCH MATTERS

## Pastor Karri's Big Adventure

Several years ago when my sister lived in New Jersey, I went to stay with her while I was attending a conference in New York City.

"Now, tell me again. Which train are you going to take into the city?" "The NEW! JERSEY! TRANSIT!" I recited once again to my baby sister as I rolled my eyes. "Good grief", I thought, "how many times did she and my brother-in-law think I needed to be told which was the right train to take from the station at Trenton into New York City? After all, I was an adult, I'd been to New York City before, and if nothing else, I could certainly read!"



So, I kissed her goodbye, assured her once again I would be fine alone, jumped out of the car and proceeded into the station to spend a good ten minutes trying to buy my train ticket out of the machine that my brother-in-law had warned me the night before to avoid. "If you don't know how to use the machines it's usually faster to just wait in line at the ticket window", he had told me. "Big deal", I thought as I remembered his warning, "so it took me a few more minutes than it would have at the window. I still have plenty of time to get to the train. And besides it made me feel like a real New Yorker to use the machine!"

I took my ticket for the New Jersey Transit, bought a cup of coffee and a pastry, and I proceeded to the boarding area. As I started to board the train, I asked a businessman who was boarding if this was the train to New York City. He told me it was as he hustled past me onto the train and I followed him on. I found my seat, settled in and was pleasantly surprised by how nice the train was. It was very clean, there was a drop down table from the seat in front of me (just like they have on airplanes) where I put my coffee, and the seats reclined! There was even a place where I could plug in my laptop computer. As I sipped my coffee and watched the countryside glide by I thought to myself "Wow", I could sure get used to this if I had to take the train into work every day! A whole uninterrupted hour to read, sleep, work, contemplate" I wasn't quite sure why I had heard so many criticisms of the train ride into New York City. For me, this was absolutely wonderful!

After a few stops at other stations, the conductor finally came through to take the tickets. I watched closely to see what everyone else did so I could make it look like I too was an experienced train rider. When the conductor asked for my ticket, I casually handed it to him with a slight smile on my face. (I didn't want to look too Midwestern by having a big grin). "I'm sorry ma'am, but this isn't the right ticket." Immediately I started to panic, dropped my cool demeanor and pointed to the guy in front of me and cried, "But he told me this train was going to New York!" "Oh, this train is going to New York alright, but this is the Amtrak, not the New Jersey Transit."

Panicked I asked him, "Now what do I do?" "Well", he said, "normally I would make you buy a ticket for this train (only about \$50.00 more than the ticket I had!) but... I'll let it go. Just make sure you board the New Jersey Transit for your trip back." I took a deep sigh and you can bet I paid close attention to which train I boarded for the ride back to Trenton!

The whole experience was extremely humbling...especially when I had to admit to my sister and brother-in-law that I hadn't really followed any of their very specific directions!

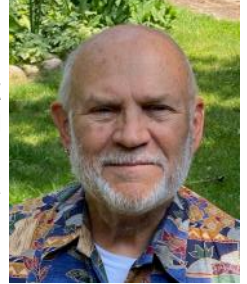
We do this a lot in life don't we? We think we know where we're going and how to get there and we don't really need God's help. We don't always listen to God's words of loving guidance for our life's journeys, words that are meant to make it easier for us. The good news is, however, that even if we get on the wrong train, our God is there to help us get back on the right one and through grace the price of our ticket has already been paid.

In this time of discernment, I hope this community at St. Stephen will realize that we need God's help. I hope we will closely listen for God's direction for the future. And along the way, I hope we will find the joy that comes with knowing we are on the right train.

# CHURCH MATTERS

## President's Message

Transition is the word we apply to much of what is going on at St Stephen. Last year was certainly a year of huge transition, with Pastor Jim's retirement after a long tenure as our lead pastor. Then we transitioned through two interim pastors and made changes to our stewardship and finance ministries. And this year, without question, we will witness even greater transition as by midyear we will be accustoming ourselves to the new lead pastor.



Transition is coming in other ways, too, and that is what I want to share with the congregation in this message. There will be changes in how we *outreach* and how we *in-reach*.

Even before a great number of our members participating in the cottage meetings and survey for the church's mission site profile last year responded by insisting that better outreach be included in our future, your church council had targeted it as a goal that provided multiple benefits for the church. Better outreach will expand our mission and ministries. It will make positive impacts on our surrounding community and more people in the community will know about us. It will grow our membership. And with greater membership the resources we need to serve our mission—financial *and* people resources—will increase. Outreach needs more attention and is to be a focus of your church council in 2024.

But so is *in-reach*. By this I refer to the attention we give each other.

When the pandemic struck it knocked us off our game and we've been slow getting back to where we once were. We don't come together enough in fellowship or learning or service like we used to. We need more purposes for gathering. We need to put events back on the calendar, like Nordic walking, the progressive dinner, game nights like Bunco Night, fellowship outings, and more forums at which our members share stories about themselves like the presentations Brad & Ruth Wilm and Tom & Cindy Scott gave about Costa Rica. This is the *in-reach* we used to have and now wish to transition toward.

St. Stephen's mission statement includes a vision: *to move forward in faith together by living lives of worship, fellowship, service, and learning*. It's great when we see each other at worship each week. It's how we grow in faith. But we grow in faith also when we gather for the other three parts of our vision.

### Kingdom Restoration Ministries

For several months we have been providing space in our building for Kingdom Restoration Ministries to hold its worship services and other gatherings. KRM is a church that shares our traditional Christian values as it seeks to establish itself with a greater presence in the community. On Saturday, March 9th, KRM held a 3-hour meeting and workshop in our fellowship hall to share its goals with its followers,



one of which is to encourage immigrants to integrate into a strong and cohesive community and raise children that won't become a burden and liability to society. We look forward to continuing our relationship in faith with KRM and its pastor, Thomas Dowie.



# CHURCH MATTERS

## Pastoral Transition Update



## CALL COMMITTEE UPDATES

Greetings to our St. Stephen family during this season of Lent. Work continues towards our goal of calling a new pastor in early summer. In the past few weeks we've been busy! Our mock interview, conducted on February 13, provided good feedback which will help assure our interviews are successful. We met with Rolf, our Synod representative, on February 29. Two recommendations were made by members of the congregation, however, upon reaching out Rolf learned they are both happy in their current calls. He provided us with the names of four Synod recommended candidates. These folks have been contacted and we have interviews scheduled via Zoom between March 10 and March 25. After these interviews are completed, the committee will determine which candidate(s) will move on to a second, in-person, interview. As always, please contact any member of the committee with questions, comments or concerns.

Thank you for your continued support of this work.

With Easter Blessings, Kathy, Karen, Marla, Lee, Robin, Ted, Mike, Brad, and Deb.

## CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE

At the March 11 church council meeting the following items were discussed:

- ◆ The February treasurer's report reflects the success of the Generosity Challenge in its first two months, reducing our General Fund deficit from \$50,408 to \$30,260.
- ◆ A Call Committee report was given, highlighting the progress of the pastoral call process. One candidate interview has been completed and three more are scheduled before Easter. The expectation is that one or two candidates will be chosen for second interviews in early April and an offer will be extended to the committee's selected candidate by the middle of the month.
- ◆ The council gave its support to a program called a Youth Covenant Partnership in which St. Stephen youth will develop relationships with other church members to seek spiritual and financial support on their faith journeys.
- ◆ The council retreat will be held on March 21<sup>st</sup>, with its focus on brainstorming ideas for becoming a more welcoming church and growing in our outreach in 2024.
- ◆ The council continued its discussion of ways church expenses can be reduced to make our finances more sustainable.
- ◆ Representatives to this year's Synod Assembly were identified, to be held at St. Andrews Church on May 10-11. The May 10<sup>th</sup> agenda includes a worship service to which all our church members are invited.

Contact information for council members and church leadership is located on page 11 of the newsletter each month.

## Budget Reduction

Anyone who has any ideas for reducing the budget this year is welcome to share their ideas on one of the forms located on the Welcome Desk. We invite all members to participate in this process. Please put forms into the office door mail slot.

## The Generosity Challenge

Anyone wishing to give to the Generosity Challenge is asked to use one of the special envelopes found on the Welcome Desk. We have already achieved \$20,010 of the \$30,000 goal! Together we can meet this challenge.



## WORSHIP



### The Power of an INVITE!

*Results from a study conducted by churchtrainer.com:*

**QUESTION:** What brought you to church?

**RESPONSE:** 70-85% Invited by a relative or friend!

### Maundy Thursday

This evening our Lenten observance comes to an end, and we gather with Christians around the world to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection. Tonight we remember Christ's last meal with his disciples, but the central focus is his commandment that we live out the promise embodied in this meal. As Jesus washed his disciples' feet, so we are called to give and receive love in humble service to one another. Formed into a new body in Christ through this holy meal, we are transformed by the mercy we have received and carry it into the world. Departing worship in solemn silence, we anticipate the coming days.



### Good Friday

Life and death stand side by side as we enter into Good Friday. In John's passion account, Jesus reveals the power and glory of God, even as he is put on trial and sentenced to death. Standing with the disciples at the foot of the cross, we pray for the whole world in the ancient bidding prayer, as Christ's death offers life to all. We gather in solemn devotion, but always with the promise that the tree around which we assemble is indeed a tree of life. We depart silently, and we anticipate the culmination of the Three Days in the Easter Vigil.



### Easter Sunday

Christ is risen! Jesus is alive, and God has swallowed up death forever. With Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, we may feel astonished and confused, unsure of what to make of the empty tomb. But this is why we gather: to proclaim, witness, praise, and affirm the liberating reality of Christ's death and resurrection. In word and feast, we celebrate God's unending love, and depart to share this good news with all the world. Alleluia!



## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Adults Needed for Vacation Bible School

We are anticipating a large turnout for Vacation Bible School this year (June 24-28) and we cannot run this program without you! If you would like to volunteer, please click on this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACA829A2F4C07-47185133-vacation#/> or contact Melissa or Paul...



### Register NOW for VBS!

Please contact Melissa Whitman at [mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org](mailto:mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org) or Paul Schultz at [childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org) or look for online registration information in upcoming Weekly Updates.

VBS will be held at Redeemer Lutheran Church this year (June 24-28).

# HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Pastor-led Bible Study

Join us (*and invite others*) on Wednesdays in the library (9:00am) for Bible Study led by Interim Pastor Karri. We are exploring Genesis through Exodus.

## God's Word

God's Word Bible discussion group, led by Phyllis Ballata meets in the Library on Thursdays (1:00-2:00pm). We are ON BREAK on March 28.

## Pick Up Your Simple Simon Pies! (3/31)

Bakers: Have those baked goods at church Easter Sunday (March 31) for pick up. Call Anne Jackson at 612-269-2915 to make arrangements for early drop off if necessary. Thank you for supporting this fundraiser to pay for our subscription for *Christ in Our Home* devotional booklets. Feel free to share them with others who might benefit from these daily devotionals (available every three months).



## Church Office Closed (4/1)

The church office is closed on Easter Monday. Regular office hours are Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm and Friday 9:00am-12:00pm.

## Fellowship Group - Resumes (4/3)

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



## Faith Ed – Resumes (4/3 & 4/7)



## Cooks Needed (April & May) 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 (April through May of 2024). Sign up in the kitchen or contact the church office at 651-777-1107 or [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) to get onto the schedule.

## Retiree's Breakfast (4/11)

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.



## Quilting for a Cause (4/18, 4/19, 4/25, 4/26)

Please join us in making quilts for battered women shelters, homeless shelters, the Holly Boutique, and to support this important ministry. We meet in the A-B Room (9:00am-3:00pm) on the following dates in April: Thurs-4/18, Fri-4/19, Thurs-4/25, Fri-4/26.

## Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (3/26, 4/30)



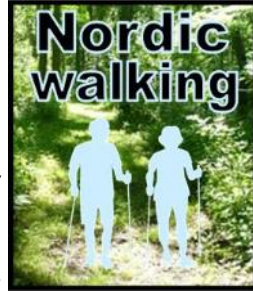
Please feel free to join our group for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month (11:30am). RSVP (required) on Sunday before event by contacting Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122.

- ⇒ On March 26<sup>th</sup>, we are meeting at Blacksmith (17205 Forest Blvd. N. in Hugo). RSVP by 3/24.
- ⇒ On April 30<sup>th</sup>, we are gathering at Chili's (1800 Beam Ave. in Maplewood). RSVP by 4/28.



## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Nordic Walking Club (4/30-8/27) ((( Sign Up Now )))



The Nordic Walking Club is for all ages of members of St. Stephen and their friends. Dogs are welcome, too. What is Nordic Walking? It's a hiking option—not a requirement—popular in Scandinavian countries in which walkers hike with the help of some kind of poles, like those used in Nordic skiing.

The club will meet this year on Tuesdays (7:00-8:00pm), starting on April 30<sup>th</sup>, with a projected season-end-date of August 27<sup>th</sup>. Our walks are between 2 ½ and 3 miles in length. Each week we choose a different walking location to vary scenery and terrain. Some locations have advantages with respect to bird watching or appreciation of flora.

ALL walking speeds and fitness levels are accommodated. We use “group compaction”, which means if we get spread out our pace is adjusted to keep the group together. One of our favorite routes is out-and-back on Lake Avenue starting at Kowalski's, allowing members in the group to choose their turn-around point.

More detailed information, including a schedule of where we will walk each week and directions to find the walking spots, can be found in a packet on the welcome desk. Please stop at the desk to pick up a copy. The information has advice about shoes, clothing, sunscreen, etc. There is also a sign-up sheet so we know who to contact with weekly reminders and further information as it develops, such as cancellations due to weather.

We hope to see many of you on the walks this summer. Please come for the exercise, fresh air, and fellowship. Questions? Ask Ted Field. If you are in need of hiking poles, he can advise you where they can be purchased.

### We Might Have Your Ring

If you lost a ring in the last five years, please contact Tami in the church office with a description.

### Sponsor Altar Flowers

If you wish to sponsor flowers in 2024, please sign up in the narthex or contact Tami in the church office at [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) or 651-777-1107 and let us know the date (any Sunday in 2024) and your 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.

### Sign Up to Sponsor Snacks!

If you wish to sponsor snacks for Sunday, please sign up in the narthex. If you wish to bring your own snacks (ex: cookies, bars, fruit, donuts, muffins, etc.), indicate that on the sign-up sheet by checking the yellow box and fill out a small reminder for yourself. If you wish for the church to provide snacks, please use a snack envelope. The cost is \$20. Fill out an envelope with your name, let us know what your dedication is, the date you wish to sponsor, and drop envelope with your \$20 into the office door mail slot.



### Be a Worship Disciple: Lector!

We are in need of Lectors to read the scripture lessons during Sunday services. We welcome any age. No experience necessary. Individuals or pairs are encouraged to volunteer. Please choose any Sunday, sign up in the narthex and fill out a reminder card for yourself. Thank you for being a ministry disciple!

### Be a Greeter on Sunday!

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.

### Help Us Find Music Sheets

If you have seen a stack of music copy sheets that were on the organist's cabinet behind the organ, please leave them in the church office or return back to the cabinet. The misplaced music has great sentimental value to Cindy Bittner.

## EASTER GARDEN MEMORIALS

### Our Easter Garden Flowers

#### Were Given By:

**MAY THE GOD OF HOPE**

**FILL YOU  
WITH  
ALL JOY  
AND  
PEACE  
AS YOU  
TRUST  
IN  
HIM.**



- Bob & Joyce Alexander** in memory of family.  
**Bev & Ev Ammons** in celebration of the Risen Lord!  
**Kathy & Milt Anderson** in memory of Milt & May Anderson and Jack & Gerry DeLand.  
**Curt & Darlene Blegen** in memory of our granddaughter Maren and other loved ones.  
**Lee Branwall** in memory of Arlene Branwall (wife), Lee Branwall Jr. (son), and Davin Branwall (son).  
**Jackie & Paul Colaizy** in memory of our parents Ruth & Fred Wilm and Alta & Art Colaizy.  
**Nancy Erickson** in memory of David Erickson.  
**Karen & Terry Ford** in honor of children and grandchildren.  
**Linda Hetland** in celebration of family!  
**Anne Jackson & Ted Field** in celebration of our Risen Savior!  
**Carole Jensen** in memory of Arnie Jensen and Nancee Jensen.  
**Lawrence Family** in memory of Annette & Charles Johnson.  
**Jeff & Nancy Lemon** in celebration of Jesus' resurrection!  
**Betty Rombach** in memory of my mother and grandparents.  
**Anita & Loren Schreader** in memory of Horkey and Schreader families.  
**Karen & Paul Schultz** in appreciation of the caregivers who work in Jason's home. The terrific staff allows us to travel and live our best in retirement!  
**Cheryl Skrypez & Mike Dignin** in celebration of family!  
**Karen & Ken Smith** in celebration of family!  
**Bonnie Stewart** in memory of parents Leland & Minnie Knight.  
**Diane & Paul Swanson** in celebration of Jesus' resurrection and family!  
**Matt and Mercy** in thankfulness for everything.  
**Gretchen & Mike Trendera** in memory of Scott Michael Trendera.  
**Brad & Ruth Wilm** in honor of our children Dallas and Melissa!  
**Zenner Family** in celebration of the Risen Christ!



## PRAYERS

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



### 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](mailto:office@StStephenWBL.org)



### Christ in Our Home

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

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Progressive Dinner – Save the Date (5/4)

We will meet in the Narthex on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> (6:00pm) for appetizers before we “progress” to dinner and dessert. It’s a really fun night of socializing and eating – a great way to get to know people from St. Stephen.



Couples and singles welcome. Any questions, call Pam Prokosch (651) 748-3661

### Twins Game at Target Field – Save the Date (8/12)

We’ve purchased a block of reduced-price Twins tickets for the game on Lutheran Night at Target Field, Monday, August 12th. We’re teaming with Redeemer to share transportation costs. More information to follow. Time will be approximately 6:00pm.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## APPRECIATION

### **Community Resource Center...**

*Dear St. Stephen, Your gift to the Community Resource Center helps bless the many families we serve who need help with the basic essentials in life. We appreciate you! Our guests are blessed to have the support of your congregation! - CRC Staff*

**Pastors...** Thank you to Pastor Karri, our temporary interim pastor, and Pastor Juli, our visitation pastor, for their flexibility, willingness to step up during this time of transition, their commitment to the congregation, and their smiles. We appreciate you both immensely!

**Call Committee...** Thank you to our Call Committee members who are working hard to find a permanent pastor!

**Communion Servers...** Thank you for your help with serving Communion and being an important part of ministry discipleship.

**Braided Bread...** Thank you to all who purchased braided bread; supporting our Tanzania mission projects.

### **White Bear Area Food Shelf...**

*Thank you for your donation [15 pounds from Soup'er Bowl Sunday]... to make it feasible for neighbors to stretch limited budgets and feed their families. With great gratitude on behalf of those we serve. - Perry Petersen, Executive Director*

**Simple Simon Pies...** Thank you to all who baked and purchased pies to support our subscription to "Christ In Our Home" daily devotional booklets.

**Easter Garden...** Thank you to all who purchased plants to beautify our altar for Easter and to those who donated plants for our homebound members.

**Quilters...** Thank you to our wonderful quilters who have been very busy making quilts for area shelters.

**BUNCO...** Thank you to all who attended our BUNCO Night at church and those who made it happen!



**ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BRINGING GOD'S LOVE TO THE WORLD.

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

## Calendar Highlights

- 3/28 Maundy Thursday Service w/Communion (12noon)
- 3/28 Maundy Thursday Service w/Fools Drama (7:00pm)
- 3/29 Good Friday Service "Seven Last Words" (12noon)
- 3/29 Good Friday Service w/Combined Choirs (7:00pm)
- 3/31 Easter Sunrise Service (Sun/8:00am)
- 3/31 Easter Festival Service w/Choir Singing (Sun/9:30am)
- 3/31 Simple Simon Pies—PAY & PICK-UP your pies (Sun)
- 4/1 Easter Monday—Church office CLOSED
- 4/3 Faith Ed **RESUMES** (Wed)
- 4/3 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 4/3 Fellowship Group **RESUMES** (Wed/10:30am)
- 4/3 Community Meal **RESUMES** (Wed/5:15pm)
- 4/3 Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship **RESUMES** (Wed/6:00pm)
- 4/4 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 4/7 Faith Ed **RESUMES** (Sun)
- 4/7 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 4/8 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 4/10 Content Deadline for May Steppingstone (Wed)
- 4/11 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00-10:00am)
- 4/18 Quilting Group (Thurs/9:00am-3:00pm) *also 25*
- 4/19 Quilting Group (Fri/9:00am-3:00pm) *also 26*
- 4/25 May Steppingstone Distribution Day (Thurs/9:15am)
- 4/30 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 4/30 Nordic Walking **BEGINS** (Tues/7:00-8:00pm)