

Highlights



Nordic Walking **BEGINS**

Tuesday, April 30 (7:00-8:00pm, details on page 5)



Spring Church Clean-up Day

Saturday, May 4 (9:00am-12noon)



All Music Sunday & Mother's Day!

Sunday, May 12 (details on page 6)



Quilts For Sale (details on page 6)

Sun, May 12 (10:30am) -and- Wed., May 15 (5-6pm)



OWL's Luncheon at VFW

Thursday, May 16 (11:30am, details on page 6)



Volunteer Appreciation & Pentecost

Sunday, May 19 (Reception following 9:30am service)

CHURCH MATTERS

Pastor Karri's Message

The earth has started its springtime awakening. As she stretches and yawns from her winter slumber, whispers of green have begun to color the landscape and the excited voices of long sleeping creatures reverberate through the air. After the long dark days of winter, we are ready for the growing hours of daylight and the promise of what is to be. We are in the season of Easter and spring is the perfect time for Easter; a time of birth, of hope, of promise and an assurance of the resurrection.



But not all the world experiences Easter as we do. If you go south of the equator the seasons are reversed, and so while we here in White Bear Lake, Minnesota anticipate the new life and possibility of springtime, others are now experiencing the autumn of their year. They are witnessing the dying off of life and the retreat of animals to their sanctuaries of winter sleep. Easter there is experienced in a whole different context than what we are used to here in the northern hemisphere.

All our familiar Easter images of new life and resurrection don't easily fit in a season that is turning to slumber and dying. In the far south, when trees give up their leaves and their greens turn to brown, the familiar promises of springtime surrender to the realities of endings and death.

Easter in springtime is deeply meaningful, but I've been wondering if the meaning of the Easter promise is most fully realized in the autumnal moments of our lives. Though the image of an autumn Easter may seem foreign to us, isn't it in the season of dying that we experience most completely the true meaning of Easter? Isn't it in the autumn moments of our lives that the immense joy that is felt at an empty tomb is greatest?

Mary and the disciples came to the tomb in the midst of an autumn experience, expecting to find nothing but darkness. But instead they found promise and hope in the light of the resurrection. And like them, God comes into the autumns of our lives with a springtime promise through the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is in an empty tomb that we can find our despair turned to hope, our suffering to peace, our anguish into comfort, our darkness into light, our death into life, our autumns into spring.

May the Easter promise of God's love and light fill you with hope in all the seasons of your life!

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Pastor Karri

SCAM ALERT— BOGUS EMAILS & TEXT MESSAGES

Several people have received bogus emails and/or text messages claiming to be from Pastor Karri Anderson, but they are from a SCAM gmail account or phone number. If you receive any such emails or text messages, do not open them or respond. Please check any emails you question to be legit and make sure they come from ststephenwbl.org (ex: ipk@ststephenwbl.org).

Pastors will NEVER ask you for favors in secret.

Here is a screenshot of one such scam text messages.

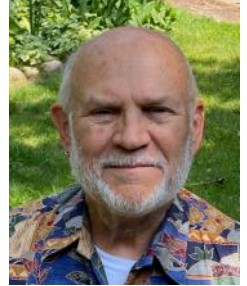


CHURCH MATTERS

President's Message—Church Council Update

The church council met on Monday, April 8, and discussed the following:

The Generosity Program is moving forward as planned. Thank you to all our members who have contributed. We are over 75% toward the goal of an additional \$30,000 in special giving.



Also, the council has identified \$22,660 in budget savings that do not adversely affect the success of our ministries. More budget reductions will follow.

At its retreat three weeks ago the council identified two important goals for 2024:

- ◆ to become a more welcoming church and
- ◆ to conduct better community outreach.

At this week's meeting we conducted further conversation on these important matters.

We have created a St. Stephen team to meet with representatives of Redeemer to explore ways the two churches might share ministries, not just to save costs, but to improve the quality of the ministries. There was discussion at the meeting about the status of the ministry sharing initiative.

The council elected not to seek a lease from an outside church to use the Neighbors Helping Neighbors building for its worship services.

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



The Generosity Challenge

Thanks to all who have given so generously to the Generosity Challenge to improve our finances. Currently, we have achieved \$25,570 of the \$30,000 goal. We ask that anyone giving to the challenge use one of the special envelopes found on the Welcome Desk in the narthex to help us track our progress at meeting the goal.



When Someone Approaches You at Church Asking For Cash

Lately, we've been experiencing more people showing up at the church needing assistance. Although we do **not** have the funds to help folks with bills, the pastor does have a "Pastor's Discretionary Fund". We use some money from this fund for gas cards. When someone comes to the church and asks for help, we have a couple requests: 1) they live in the White Bear area. 2) they bring a valid ID. 3) they fill out an Assistance Request form. 4) they must wait six months before returning again for help. Unfortunately, when strangers approach us (staff and church members) and ask for cash specifically, it makes us vulnerable to theft and harassment. If someone you don't know asks you for money, please direct them to speak to a pastor.

CHURCH MATTERS

Pastoral Transition Update



Call Committee Updates

Since our update in the April Steppingstone, a lot of things have happened! We interviewed four candidates recommended by the Synod. Since some of those folks were from out-of-state the interviews were conducted via Zoom.

All candidates were asked the same questions, and the call committee then evaluated them using a rubric, or scoring guide, which we designed specifically for our call process. We agreed that three of the candidates were not good fits for our congregation, however, we extended an invitation for an in-person second interview to candidate #4. Unfortunately, this person decided he did not feel called to St. Stephen and withdrew his name from consideration.

At this point, Rolf Lowenberg DeBoer, our Synod representative, will be sending us one or two additional names the week of April 22. The committee will reconvene on April 25 to begin reviewing resumes (rostered minister profiles) and scheduling interviews.

Although we are beginning the process again with new candidates, we have made a lot of progress since January. We have a good process in place, thoughtful interview questions prepared, and a strong evaluation tool created.

We will find the right person. It may take longer than we had expected, but we do not want to rush the process. Let's all take time to pray about this, ask God to continue to guide our process and connect us with just the right person to serve as St. Stephen's pastor for the next phase of our ministry.

God will guide us as we continue to faithfully do the good work needed to call the next pastor.

Your Call Committee

Karen, Kathy, Deb, Robin, Marla, Ted, Lee, Brad and Mike

North Lawn Project

We are smoothing and upgrading the north lawn from the manhole cover on the east side, to the building on the south side, to the berm of the raingarden on the west side, to the curb to the north. The renovation area is about 800 square yards. In mid-April, weed killer was used to kill Creeping Charlie patches, 15 yards of screened black dirt was delivered and spread by volunteers (with the help of a rented Bobcat). The yard was then graded and dragged, seeded, and rolled. Finally, sprinklers have been set up on timers. Many thanks to Ken Smith for overseeing this project and to the volunteers who helped along the way. The yard will hopefully be ready for a GAP summer outdoor worship service beginning on Wednesday, June 12th. ***Please stay off the north lawn until June 12th.***



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Fellowship Group

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 and walk-ins are welcome. Contact Judee Bramscher (651-269-6122) if you have questions.

Progressive Dinner Reminder (5/4)



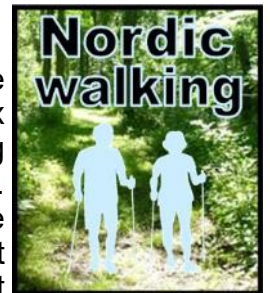
For those who signed up in April... We will meet in the narthex on Saturday, May 4th (5:00pm) for appetizers before we "progress" to dinner and dessert. Any questions, call Pam Prokosch (651) 748-3661

Faith Ed – Sunday & Wednesday School - FINAL

For children (preschool thru grade 4): Sunday School's final session is on May 5 (9:45-10:30am), starting up again in the fall on September 15. Wednesday School's final session is on May 8 (6:00-6:45pm), beginning again on September 18.

Nordic Walking Club

Please sign up on the Welcome Desk in the narthex if you are interested in joining our Nordic Walking club. All ages welcome. Dogs are welcome too. We meet Tuesdays (7:00-8:00pm) at different locations. Season dates: April 30 - August 27. Flyers (with schedule and directions) are available on the Welcome Desk or here:



chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcqjclefindmkaj/https://www.ststephenwbl.org/Nordic_Walking_Schedule_2024_1.pdf



Spring Church Clean-up Day (5/4)

It is time to clean up from winter's effects on our grounds. Our annual Spring Church Clean-up Day will be Saturday, May 4 (9:00am-12noon). Please come and help Diane & Paul Swanson in sprucing up the church (inside and outside) and help us avoid contracting this work to an outside company. Bring a rake and a friend. Many hands make light work! Tasks include: removing trash/debris from grounds and under bushes, sweeping the parking lot, raking lawn on west side of building, dusting woodwork, cleaning counters and tables, dusting pews, cleaning windows and screens.

The pain that you've been feeling can't compare to the joy that's coming. - unknown



Retiree's Breakfast (5/9)

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.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Synod Assembly (5/10-11)



The Saint Paul Area Synod's 2024 Assembly will be held May 10-11 at St. Andrew's Church in Mahtomedi. With a theme of "Called to Show Up," we will

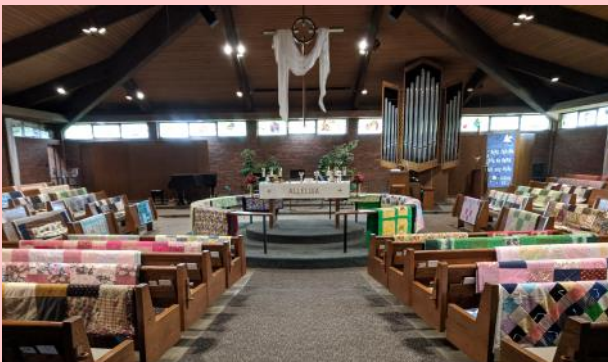
explore what it means to show up for each other, to show up in the neighborhoods where we live, and to show up as people of faith in contexts where our presence is both expected and unexpected. The assembly features poet, author and spoken word performer Joe Davis. During the assembly, we will worship together, consider resolutions, elect people to leadership roles, and experience being part of a wider church. We look forward to hearing feedback from several members from St. Stephen who will be attending this year.

Mother's Day & All Music Sunday (5/12)

Get the whole family together to celebrate Mother's Day and enjoy a very musical worship service on Sunday, May 12th (9:30am). We will hear a joyful noise from brass instruments and organ pipes. The choir will be singing and the Bells of St. Stephen will be ring-a-ding-dinging.

Quilts on Display & For Sale (5/12 & 5/15)

Quilts will be on display in the sanctuary following worship on Sunday, May 12 (10:30am) and on Wednesday, May 15 (5:00-6:00pm) before the Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship Service. This sale is a fundraiser which keeps this ministry going. Unsold quilts will be donated to local shelters.



Choir Schedule

The Senior Choir will be singing on Mother's Day/All Music Sunday, May 12. We resume practices on Wednesday, September 4 (7:00-8:00pm). If you are interested in joining the choir in the fall, please contact Kari at ballatahosmer@gmail.com

Pastor-led Bible Study FINAL (5/15)

Join us (*and invite others*) on Wednesdays in the library (9:00am) for Bible Study led by Interim Pastor Karri. Our final gathering is on May 15th.

Faith Ed—Confirmation FINAL (5/15)

For youth (grades 7 thru 8), Confirmation is at St. Stephen in the A-B Room (6:30-8:00pm). This is the FINAL class until fall. We meet again on Wednesday, September 18 at St. Stephen.

OWL's Luncheon (5/16)

The OWL's (Older Wiser Lutherans) Group will be meeting at the White Bear Lake VFW for lunch on Thursday, May 16 (11:30am). Please SIGN UP in the narthex if you wish to go.



Pentecost Sunday & Volunteer Appreciation Day (5/19)



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 19th. On this special day, we will also be honoring our volunteers with a reception immediately following the worship service.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Faith Ed—Pre-Confirmation FINAL (5/22)

For youth (grades 5 and 6), Pre-Confirmation is at St. Stephen (5:30-6:15pm). This is the FINAL class until fall. We meet again on Wednesday, September 18 at St. Stephen.

Youth Group – FINAL (5/22)

For youth (grades 6-12), our final gathering is on May 22 (7:00-7:45pm) at St. Stephen. We begin again in the fall on Wednesday, September 18 at St. Stephen.

Memorial Day (5/27)

The church office is closed on Monday, May 27 in observance of Memorial Day (honoring those who sacrificed their lives while serving in the U.S. military). Office hours are Monday thru Thursday (9:00am to 3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am - 12noon).



Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (4/30, 5/28)



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 April 30th, we are gathering at Chili's (1800 Beam Ave. in Maplewood). RSVP by 4/28. On May 28th, we gather at TGI Fridays (3087 White Bear Ave, in Maplewood). RSVP by 5/26.

GAP Worship & Community Meal

Join us (and invite others) to attend our Wednesday Community Meal (5:15-6:00pm) and casual Grace & Praise (GAP) worship service (6:00-6:45pm). The meal and worship service will continue to be inside until June 12th as we allow time for our new grass on the north lawn to grow. On June 12th, we will begin our BBQ's!



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.

Prepare/Cook/Serve Wednesday Meals/BBQ's

We are in need of volunteers to prepare, cook, and serve (FOR 25 PEOPLE) Wednesday evening community meals/BBQ's. 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. Sign up in the kitchen or contact the church office at office@ststephenwbl.org or 651-777-1107 to get onto the schedule.



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 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.



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.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



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!

BOREDOM BUSTERS

Be a Chaperone

Can you commit to driving/chaperoning once or twice this summer for our 1st through 6th grade activities "Boredom Busters". We will pay for your admissions and if needed your mileage (but we love when people can "donate" their mileage!). Please let Melissa know if you might be available (651-429-5411 ex 24 mwhitman@RedeemerWhiteBear.org).



Vacation Bible School (VBS)

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

Take kids deep into an amazing undersea adventure where they'll experience the ever-flowing, never-ending love of God.

At Scuba VBS, kids will be immersed in the Word and discover what living water is really all about!

Adult Volunteers Needed!

We are anticipating a large turnout for Vacation Bible School this year 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#/>

To Register Children Online:

<https://vbspro.events/p/events/545597>

Questions?

Melissa: mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org

Paul Schultz: childrenmin@ststephenwbl.org

Lutheran Night at the Twins (8/12)

You are invited to join us at Lutheran Night at the Twins against the Kansas City Royals on Monday, August 12. Tickets are \$38 (payable to St. Stephen). Transportation (gas) and parking costs are included for carpoolers and volunteer drivers. If you wish to carpool, arrive to the church by 4:00pm (we will be leaving at 4:15pm). Seats are in the 200 level. Sign up NOW! Private tour starts promptly at 5:30pm inside Target Field at Gate 14. Please arrive 15 minutes early. The tour is NOT wheelchair accessible. First pitch is at 6:40pm. This is a fellowship event for St. Stephen and Redeemer Lutheran Churches!



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



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.

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

APPRECIATION

Easter Garden... Thank you to all who purchased and donated flowers and those who decorated the altar!

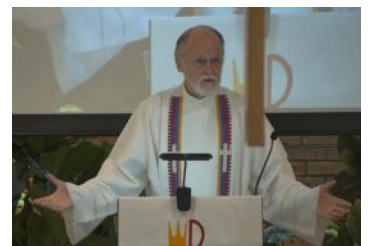
Guest Pastor... Thank you to Pastor Ben Coltvet for preaching on Sunday, April 7th!

Simple Simon Pies... Thank you to all who baked and/or purchased pies to raise money for our Christ In Our Home subscription. We raised \$277!

BUNCO Night... Twenty people joined us for Bunco on March 23rd. Medals went to JoAnn Ford for the Most Wins, to Lisa Klingbeil for the Most Losses, and to Brian Klingbeil for the Most Buncos. Thank you to everyone for a fun and successful fellowship event!

From Linda Hetland... *Thank you for all your prayers. I was able to get my epidural injection in my back and my pain level is much better.*

Office Volunteers... Thank you to the office volunteers who filled in while Tami was away visiting her dad on his 80th birthday!



GENERAL INFORMATION

In This Issue

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- Happenings & Opportunities (5-8)
- Prayers (9)
- Announcements (10)
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- 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 Friday, May 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.

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

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

- 4/30 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 4/30 Nordic Walking (Tues/7:00-8:00pm) **BEGINS**
- 5/1 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 5/2 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 5/3 Diane Sideen – Visitation (Fri/10:00am & Memorial (11:00am)
- 5/3 Kathy Schleusner Piano Recital (Fri/6:30pm)
- 5/3 ELCA Youth BINGO Fundraiser at Redeemer (Fri/6:00pm)
- 5/4 Spring Church Cleanup Day (Sat/9:00am-12noon)
- 5/4 Progressive Dinner (Sat/5:00pm).
- 5/5 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 5/5 Faith Ed: Sunday School (9:45-10:30am) **FINAL**
- 5/8 Faith Ed: Wednesday School (6:00-6:45pm) **FINAL**
- 5/9 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00-10:00am)
- 5/10 Content Deadline for June Steppingstone (Fri)
- 5/10 Synod Assembly at St. Andrews (Fri) *through Sat, May 11*
- 5/12 Mother's Day / All Music Sunday
- 5/12 Quilts on Display (Sun/9:30am) and For Sale (10:30am)
- 5/13 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 5/15 Pastor's Bible Study (Wed/9:00am) **FINAL**
- 5/15 Quilts For Sale (Wed/5:00-6:00pm)
- 5/15 Faith Ed: Confirmation (Wed/6:30-8:00pm) **FINAL**
- 5/16 OWL's Luncheon at VFW-WBL (Thurs/11:30am)
- 5/18 Pre-Confirmation Retreat at WAPO (Sat)
- 5/19 Volunteer Appreciation & Pentecost (Sun/9:30am)
- 5/22 Faith Ed: Pre-Confirmation (Wed/5:30-6:15pm) **FINAL**
- 5/22 Faith Ed: Youth Group (7:00-7:45pm) **FINAL**
- 5/23 June Steppingstone Distribution Day (Thurs/9:15am)
- 5/27 Memorial Day (Mon) Church office **CLOSED**
- 5/28 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 6/12 GAP Summer & Community BBQ (Wed/5:15pm) **BEGINS**