



Steppingstone Newsletter



September, 2024

September 8

Service Project

ELCA God's work. Our hands.

Join us on **September 8 (the Sunday before Rally Day)**
to bag lunches for **Union Gospel Mission (10:30am-12noon)**!
(food paid for by a Thrivent Action Team grant)

September 15

Rally Sunday



&



9:30-10:30 **Outdoor Worship** (Bring a lawn chair!)
10:45-12:30 **Community Picnic & Games**



Register Children & Youth for Faith Education

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ◆ Sunday School (weekly) | (9:45-10:30am) | Preschool thru Grade 4 |
| ◆ Wednesday School (weekly) | (6:00-6:45pm) | Preschool thru Grade 4 |
| ◆ Pre-Confirmation (Each Wed) | (5:30-6:15pm) | Grades 5 and 6 |
| ◆ Confirmation (1st & 3rd Wed) | (6:30-8:00pm) | Grades 7 and 8 |
| ◆ Youth Group (2nd & 4th Wed) | (7:00-7:45pm) | Grades 7 thru 12 |

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JAMES



Greetings, fellow siblings in Christ!

I am so grateful to be called as your newest pastor! For those who couldn't make the meet and greet back in June (and a refresher for those who did), here is a little autobiography:

Born in 1980 to Corrine and John Muske, I lived in Fargo, ND until moving down to Spencer, Iowa around the age of eight. Thereafter, most of my childhood was spent down in northwest Iowa, but I also regularly spent time up in Hutchinson, MN with my dad, stepmother, and brother. Most of my extended family resides in southern and central Minnesota as well.

When it came time for college, I wanted to explore another part of the country and so I ended up at Cornell University in upstate New York. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the beautiful Finger Lakes region and, through participation in the marching band, I got to travel around the NE region. I graduated with a degree in History, with additional concentrations in American Indian Studies, Southeast Asian Studies, and International Relations.

After I graduated, I spent a year in western Pennsylvania participating in an internship with the National Park Service at the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site. This gave me the chance to flex my history muscles some more, but also gave me time to reflect on what I wanted to do next in life.

While exploring teaching, law school, and graduate school options, I began to discern a call to ministry. However, I didn't feel ready yet, so as the internship ended, I began to look for jobs back in the Twin Cities, eventually landing a job in fundraising at Lutheran Summer Music, which hosts a yearly music academy.

I spent the next few years working for LSM and connecting more deeply with my faith, nurtured in part by the lovely folks at Grace University Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. By 2008, I felt ready to begin my call process and seminary education at Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

I deeply appreciate my time at Luther, such a wonderful community of faculty, staff, and students. In addition to my studies on campus, I also served as an intern chaplain at the hospitals by the U of M campus for several months and I served for a year of internship at the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Unlike a more typical internship in a congregation, serving in Pine Ridge meant working both with the local community and with groups we would host for cross-cultural education experiences. While I never preached in a Lutheran church that year, I did preach at the Center, at local Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, and an area senior center. It was a year filled with both challenges and incredible blessings!

Graduating from seminary in 2012, my first call was to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, PA. Situated in the Lehigh Valley in NE Pennsylvania in the old Bethlehem Steel hometown, I was off on a new adventure to a new place. By the end of my six years, our congregation completed a merger with another church. While it was not always an easy transition, overall, it was a very hope- and faith-filled moment in the life of both communities.

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JAMES (CONTINUED)

Looking to move back closer to family, in 2018 I was called as the new pastor at Bethesda Lutheran Church in Malmo, MN. Near the shores of Mille Lacs Lake, Bethesda is a lovely community of faithful and active Christians nestled in the heart of vacationland. While a few folks have lived in the area their whole lives, many came there first as weekenders before later retiring there fulltime. If you are ever up at the lake, I encourage you to check it out!

While I enjoyed my time up in Malmo, in early 2023 I met the lovely Mary Hendrickson, and we will be getting married September 1! So, in search of a new call, I didn't find the right fit until I had a chance to meet the lovely folks of your call committee and get to know the congregation of St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Even though August will be a time of numerous tasks and transitions, I am so excited to begin this next chapter of my life and so grateful to God that part of that transition involves all of you!

I can't wait to get to meet more of you and learn more about your own life stories and how God has been with you along the way. I certainly thank God for his guidance in my life and his continued support. May God be with you this day and always!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor James Muske

PS. As you may have heard, while my first Sunday with you will be August 18, due to my wedding, I will be gone on a honeymoon from September 1-13. So don't be worried that you scared me away, ha!

CHURCH MATTERS

Parking Lot Update

The church council has identified better community outreach and a greater neighborhood presence as vital to the future sustainability of St. Stephen. By far, our most noticeable appearance issue is with respect to the condition of our parking lot. Besides our own displeasure with it, the parking lot's worn condition creates an undesirable first impression to visitors. It has been more than 30 years since the current parking lot was upgraded. The church council, based on a recommendation from the property committee, approved moving ahead with replacing the parking lot surface at their August 19th meeting. More details are available at the church office in a parking lot report which was reviewed and approved by the church council. Allied Asphalt has been selected to mill, overlay and stripe the entire lot including the entrance driveway. Work will likely take place in early October during weekdays. The work should be completed without impacting Sunday services. Some curbing as well as a portion of the north sidewalk will also be replaced. Drainage will be improved near the north sidewalk to minimize or eliminate ice buildup in the winter. Total cost will be \$91,796 and will be funded with a combination of capital funds and a \$70,000 ten year term loan. Monthly payments on this loan will be finalized once the loan is approved but are expected to be about \$800.

A congregational meeting to vote and approve this work has been scheduled for Sunday, September 8 (610:30am), immediately following the 9:30 service. This meeting is required by the church constitution since the cost of the proposed work exceeds 5% of our annual budget. Please feel free to contact Ken Smith or Ted Field should you have questions about this planned work.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

33rd Annual Music Festival and Auction

Saturday, October 12, 2024
(11:00am—2:30pm)

Get ready for our 33rd annual Music Festival and Auction.
All proceeds raised by this event will be used to reduce
St. Stephen's budget deficit.

**Auction Donations
&
Volunteers Needed!**



Schedule of Events:

Live Music (11:00am-12:45pm)
Food for Sale (11:00am-2:30pm)
Silent Auction (11:00am-1:30pm)
Live Auction Begins (1:00pm)

Ideas for Auction Donations:

- ◆ Sporting event tickets
- ◆ Weekend (or longer) retreat at your cabin
- ◆ New or gently used items (NO clothing)
- ◆ Your services to someone in need or to promote your business (examples: website creation, computer work, auto work, raking leaves, washing windows, snow plowing, lawn mowing, yard work, electrical work, carpentry, painting, house cleaning, plumbing, etc.)
- ◆ Home-made items (such as arts & crafts items, edible items, you name it!)
- ◆ Donate your hobby time to create something with that lucky winner (make jelly, sew, quilt, photography, bake, give singing or instrument lessons, etc.)
- ◆ Provide themed dinner in your home for a group of lucky winners
- ◆ Make soup or dessert every month for 6 or 12 months (you pick the number of months)
- ◆ Themed Gift Baskets

Donation Instructions:

- ◆ Have some extra baskets? Please donate them to be used for our gift baskets.
- ◆ Please leave items in the church office and mark "Auction" on them.
- ◆ **You may begin dropping off items AT ANY TIME STARTING NOW!**
- ◆ Start thinking now about that "special" item or service you would like to donate.
- ◆ FIRM deadline for dropping off items: **Sunday, October 6.**

Volunteer Needs:

- ◆ Solicit items or services from local businesses (please talk with Betsy Clark)
- ◆ Making desserts to sell day of event, set-up of tables and auction items, volunteer shifts the day of the event, clean-up, and more.
- ◆ If you have volunteered in the past to assist with the auction, you may be contacted in September.

**Please contact Betsy Clark at 612-554-3925 or at
eaclark001@comcast.net if you have any questions, and thank you!**

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Preparing for Rally Day



Please sign up in the narthex to help with our Rally Day celebration and the start to a new church year. We look forward to a special outdoor worship with a new lead pastor, surrounded by our new trees, a community picnic, and much more. Many hands make light work, so please sign up to help with set-up, food prep, cooking, baking, family games, tear-down, clean-up, and **INVITE OTHERS** (family, friends, and neighbors) to join us on this fun day! Rally Day will be on Sunday, September 15th this year!



Food Collection (9/1 & 9/4)

Thank you for your food shelf donations on the first Wednesday or Sunday of the month. Donations go to the White Bear Area Food Shelf for distribution to those needing assistance in the area.

Church Office Closed (9/2)

On Monday, September 2, the church office will be closed in observance of the Labor Day holiday. Regular office hours are Monday-Thursday (9am-3pm) and Friday (9am-12noon).

Sing, Sing, Sing - Join the Choir! Rehearsals Resume (9/4)

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. Rehearsals begin again on Wed., Sept. 4th! If you wish to participate or have any questions, contact Kari at ballatahosmer@gmail.com



Community Meals & GAP Worship Services

Join us and invite others on Wednesdays for a Community Meal (5:15pm) and GAP (Grace & Praise) Worship Service (6:00pm). We will be monitoring the weather conditions to determine if GAP is held indoors or outdoors throughout September. Remember to bring a lawn chair or blanket!



Cooks Needed for Wednesday Meals

We are in need of volunteers to prepare, cook, and serve our Wed. evening community meals. Mealtime is 5:15-6:00pm before our Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship Service. Choose one or as many Wednesdays as you like. Please sign up at the kitchen counter or contact Tami in the church office office@ststephenwbl.org or 651-777-1107) to get onto the schedule.

Rally Day w/Pastor James Muske & Community Picnic (9/15)

A new church year begins on Rally Day - Sunday, September 15th! Pastor James Muske, our new lead pastor, will be preaching. Come and celebrate with us! This is a free event. We invite folks to worship on the north lawn (9:30), a community picnic with live music and games (10:45-12:30), Christian Faith Education registration is open for children!



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Retiree's Breakfast (9/12)

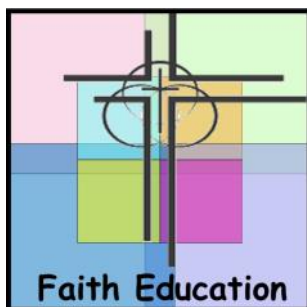
All retirees are invited to join other retirees from church for breakfast Thurs/9:00-10:00am) at Perkins in Maplewood on County Rd D.



Faith Education Resumes

Registration is now OPEN for Faith Ed. Registration forms are available in the narthex or online via our website: www.StStephenwbl.org

- ♦ Sunday School - Sept. 22 in the Old Nursery (now Classroom C).
- ♦ Wednesday School - Sept. 25 in the Old Nursery (now Classroom C).
- ♦ Pre-confirmation - Sept. 25 in the Youth Building.
- ♦ Confirmation - Sept. 18 in the Library.
- ♦ Youth Group - Sept. 25 in the Youth Building.



- ♦ **NOTE:** All Faith Ed is on break on 5th Wednesdays.

See the newsletter cover for more details.

Youth Faith Education Location

Faith Ed for YOUTH (grades 5 thru 12) meet at St. Stephen in September and October. In November and December, they meet at Redeemer. In January and February - back at St. Stephen.

Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (9/24)



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 September 24, we will meet at Jimmy's Food & Drink (1132 Co Rd E East, Vadnais Heights). RSVP by 9/22.

CD Sales Benefit St. Stephen

Church member Rebecca Drimmel has won online awards with her musical talent and is offering five different CD's as a fundraiser for St. Stephen. CD's are \$3/each or \$10 for all five (*payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church*). CD's are located in the narthex, along with envelopes for donations. Please place envelopes into the church office door mail slot. Thanks for your support of Rebecca and the church!



Gloria's 12th Annual Shortest Marathon (9/28)

Gather at 10:30am on the corner of 3rd Street and Bald Eagle Av. on Saturday, Sept. 28th.



The race begins at 11:00am! Proceeds from Gloria's Shortest Marathon (one block in length) benefit the White Bear Area Food Shelf. Register at www.whitebearfoodshelf.org. Donations are tax deductible, \$35 adults and \$15 children under 12. Register by Sept. 16 to get an event t-shirt. Pictured above is Gloria herself, who visited the church to promote her marathon. If you have questions, contact Peggy Parenteau at athenawbl@comcast.net if you have any questions.

Save the Date!

The Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater will be on Friday and Saturday, October 25-26. Details coming soon.



Crafts Needed for Holly Boutique

Please remember the Holly Boutique will be November 9th and it's not too early to start making items to be sold. We are accepting hand-made crafts and hope you would consider donating for our sale.



APPRECIATION



- ◆ To the leaders, volunteers, and attendees of the Vacation Bible School ministry in partnership with Redeemer, church members, and the community (VBS class pictured above).
- ◆ To the Call Committee who worked diligently to prepare for and find us a new lead pastor.
- ◆ To the leadership, chaperones, and all who supported our youth who attended a wonderful ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans in July (pictured upper right photos).
- ◆ To Michael (a neighbor) and his dog, Freya (pictured above), for contributing to and keeping our Little Free Library stocked with "Christ In Our Home" devotionals.
- ◆ To all the people who helped with Wednesday meals throughout the summer, including Marla A., Kathy A., Jen H., Ken & Patsy O., Cindy R., Cheryl S., Diane S., and Chad & Melissa W.
- ◆ To Randy A., Betsy C., and Brent C. for bringing their talent into the sanctuary on Gospel Music Sunday on July 7th.
- ◆ To Kari Ballata, Sandy Smaker, and Brenda Steady for leading our Hymn Sing on Sunday, July 14th!
- ◆ To all participants in Relay for Life (a follow-up article with pictures will be in October newsletter).
- ◆ To all of our guest preachers and speakers this summer, including Justin Woodruff, *Pastor Marla Amborn, *Pastor Emily Rova-Hegener, *Rev. G.K. Rufus, Joy McElroy, Pastor Dana Nelson, Pastor Chris Bellefeuille, Melissa Whitman, Rev. Scott Simmons, *Robin Eberlein, Julie Hoff, and Rev. William Siong. (*pictured lower right)
- ◆ All those who volunteered to run our Marketfest booth this summer (pictured right - Ted Field and Sue Lemon).
- ◆ To Jill Sandvik for coordinating the sales of many items that were collecting dust in the building.
- ◆ To Ron Johnson for mowing and lawn care!
- ◆ To Gretchen & Mike Trendera for trimming the bushes!
- ◆ To John Strand for delivering donated items to the White Bear Area Food Shelf and to all who contribute to this cause.
- ◆ *Friends, thank you for the prayers, cards, and good wishes for my recent surgery. I am healing well. - Eleanor Strand.*



APPRECIATION

Night to Unite—Success!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2024 Night to Unite on Tuesday, August 6th. We served 135 people for dinner. The Liechtenstein Nein Band band played throughout the event, the White Bear Lake Fire Department showed up, and children played games! Thanks to the volunteers who made this a GREAT neighborhood event!



GENERAL INFORMATION

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The Steppingstone Newsletter...

Is distributed monthly. If you have any items for the **October** issue, please send them to office@ststephenwbl.org by Tues., Sept. 10. Newsletters are also available in information racks near both entrances 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 Muske
pastorjames@ststephenwbl.org

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

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Children & Families Ministry Director ▪
Paul Schultz
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**Communication & Administrative
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Custodian ▪ Paul Swanson

Digital Ministry Director ▪ Zach VanDyke
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Funeral Luncheon Coordinator ▪ Kathy Anderson
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GAP Worship Director ▪ Justin Woodruff
jwoodruff@homfurniture.com

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

Senior Choir Director ▪ Kari Ballata
ballatahosmer@yahoo.com

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

Church Office Hours

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

Council & Leadership

President, Staff Relations, and Stewardship
Ted Field—FieldJackson@msn.com

Vice President and Property
Kathy Stickler—kstickler23@gmail.com

Previous President and Evangelism
Marla Amborn—MarlaAmborn@gmail.com

Council Secretary
Betsy Clark—eaclark001@comcast.net

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Adult Learning
Scott Zieman—scott.zieman@century.edu

Bookkeeper
Cindy Bittner—treasurer@ststephenwbl.org

Children, Youth, & Families
Sue Lemon—651-429-5861

Congregational & Community Care
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Finance
Nancy Finley—nfnsammi2022@gmail.com

Financial Secretary
Brad Wilm—RuthaBradj@gmail.com

Mission and Benevolence
James Muske—pastorjames@ststephenwbl.org

Treasurer
Mary Beth Skunes—treasurer@ststephenwbl.org

Worship & Music
Denise Ashley—deniseashley1@yahoo.com

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

What's Happening

Sundays

Worship Service & Faith Ed
9:30am IN-PERSON
(Live-streamed and online)

Wednesdays

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

Calendar Highlights (*Resuming *Weekly events)

- 9/1 Sunday Worship (9:30am) *also on 8, 15, 22, 29*
- 9/1 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 9/2 Labor Day / Church Office CLOSED (Mon)
- 9/4 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 9/4 Fellowship Group (Wed/10:30am) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 9/4 Community Meal (Wed/5:15pm) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 9/4 Summer GAP Worship (Wed/6:00pm) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 9/4 Choir Rehearsal **RESUMES** (Wed/7:00-8:00pm) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 9/5 Bible Discussion (Thurs/1:00pm) *also on 12, 19, 26*
- 9/8 Congregational Meeting (Sun/10:30am)
- 9/8 God's Work Our Hands Outreach Project (Sun/10:30am-12noon)
- 9/9 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 9/10 Content Deadline for October Steppingstone (Tues)
- 9/12 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00-10:00am)
- 9/14 Virginia Sundeen Memorial:
(Sat/10:00am-visitation, 11:00am-service, 12noon-luncheon)
- 9/15 Rally Sunday Worship Service (9:30am)
- 9/15 Rally Sunday Community Picnic (10:45am-12:30pm)
- 9/18 Confirmation **RESUMES** (Wed/6:30-8:00pm)
- 9/18 Confirmation Parent & Child Meeting (Wed/6:30pm)
- 9/19 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00pm)
- 9/22 Sunday School **RESUMES** (9:45-10:30am) *also on 29*
- 9/24 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 9/25 Pre-Confirmation **RESUMES** (Wed/5:30-6:15pm)
- 9/25 Wednesday School **RESUMES** (6:00-6:45pm)
- 9/25 Youth Group **RESUMES** (Wed/7:00-7:45pm)
- 9/28 Gloria's 12th Annual Shortest Marathon (Sat/11:00am)