

December, 2024

# St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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



## Worship with us!

### Sundays

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

### Wednesdays

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

## Special Events:

### Living Nativity

Saturday, Dec. 14  
4:30-7:30pm

### Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, Dec. 24  
4:00pm Family  
9:00pm Candlelight

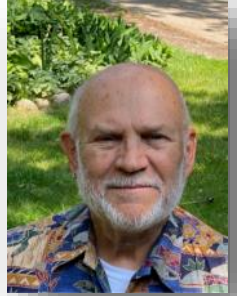
*December 25 and January 1—Wednesday GAP Worship, Choir,  
Faith Ed, Fellowship Group, and Meal are ON BREAK*

# CHURCH MATTERS

## Church Council Highlights

At the church council meeting on November 11<sup>th</sup>, the following matters were addressed:

- ♦ A first draft of a 2025 church budget was presented by Treasurer Mary Beth Skunes and discussed by council members. The budget, which will be finalized at next month's council meeting and brought to the annual congregational meeting in January for final approval, is approximately 10% higher than 2024's budget, with two notable reasons to cite. One is a full year will a full-time lead pastor. Another is the monthly premium and interest payment for the parking lot replacement.
- ♦ Cheryl Skrypez and Ron Johnson, members of the nominating committee, reported the names of three new council members for the congregation to approve at January's annual meeting.
- ♦ Kathy Stickler led a discussion about the council's appearance at the Trunk-or-Treat event at South Campus last month, which was heavily attended by parents, children and youth in the community. Our pastors and several members also decorated cars and participated. We discussed that next year St. Stephen's participation in the event would be heightened with greater notice if we parked our vehicles together in a campus-like cluster.



Respectfully submitted, Ted Field, Council President



### 2025 Stewardship Drive

Thank you to all who have already returned your 2025 pledge card to the church office as a means of committing your support to the missions of St. Stephen Lutheran Church. If you haven't returned your pledge card yet, we encourage you to do so this month as your promise to continue your partnership with the church. Extra pledge packets are available on the Welcome Desk. Please place your pledge card in an offering basket or in the church office door mail slot. All pledges are greatly appreciated!

### Church Office Closed (12/24, 12/25, 1/1)

The church office will be closed at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 24, closed all day on Wednesday, December 25, and closed on Wednesday, January 1, 2025. Regular office hours are Monday through Thursday (9:00am-3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am-12noon).

### Getting Events onto the 2025 Calendar

Please contact Tami in the church office at [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) or 651-777-1107 to get all special events, gatherings, meetings, groups, etc. onto the church's 2025 calendar.

### Annual Reports DUE (1/5/23)

Please promptly submit your 2024 annual ministry reports to [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org)  
By (or before) Sunday, January 5, 2024. Thank you!

### Winter Weather and Church Closings

It's that time of year! Just a reminder that if WHITE BEAR LAKE school district cancels school or cancels evenings activities, St. Stephen will close for the day/evening as well. In the event that it snows and school is not canceled please use your own judgement on whether or not you should drive to church. It is rare that we have to close on a Sunday (it's only happened once in 35 years), but if we feel we need to cancel a Sunday service we will do everything we can to relay the message to our members, including posting a notice on our website.

## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Advent Worship Services



#### Advent 1

(Dec. 1, 9:30am)

Lessons & Carols

#### Advent 2

(Dec. 8, 9:30am)

Senior Choir  
Advent Service

#### Advent 3

(Dec. 15, 9:30am)

Hymn Sing

#### Advent 4

(Dec. 22, 9:30am)

Advent Worship  
Service

*Cut out to invite others!*



**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](http://www.StStephenWBL.org)



# 2024

## 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. 8**

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 \_\_\_\_\_





## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (11/26)

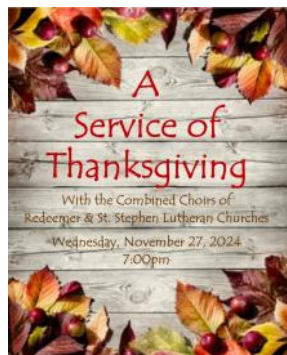


Please feel free to join our group for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month (11:30am). RSVP (required) on Sunday before event by contacting Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122.

On November 26, we will be gathering at the Olive Garden (1749 Beam Ave, Maplewood) – RSVP by 11/24. Dec. 31 – ON BREAK.

### A Service of Thanksgiving (11/27)

Join us for a very special Service of Thanksgiving featuring the combined choirs of Redeemer and St. Stephen Lutheran Churches on Wednesday, November 27 (7:00pm). ***With our whole hearts we will give thanks and sing!*** Donations for the White Bear Area Food Shelf are appreciated.



### Church Office Closed (11/28 & 11/29)

On Thursday, November Nov. 28 (Thanksgiving Day) and on Friday, Nov. 29, the office will be closed. Regular office hours are Monday-Thursday (9:00am-3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am-12noon).

### Williams Syndrome Fundraiser & Jason Gray Concert (11/30)

All are welcome to attend a Williams Syndrome Fundraiser and a Christmas Stories Concert (4:30pm) featuring Jason Gray at Redeemer Lutheran Church (3770 Bellaire Ave., White Bear Lake). Doors open at 4:00pm. Please call 651-429-5411 for more information.



### OWL's Christmas Gathering (12/5)



Please sign up in the narthex or contact Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122 if you wish to join other **OLDER WISER LUTHERANS** for a Christmas Luncheon on Thursday, December 5 (11:15am) at the Lake Elmo Inn.

### Hanging of the Greens (12/7)

Come help St. Stephen get ready on Saturday, Dec. 7 (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!**



### Christmas Garden Orders DUE (12/8)

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. 8th.



### Cookies for Homebound Members Drop-off (12/8) Packaging (12/9)

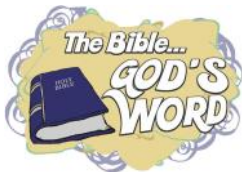


We will be packaging cookies for our homebound members on Monday, December 9 (9:00-12noon) in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is welcome to help package. Please drop off your donation of two dozen cookies on/by Sunday December 8 (9:00am-12noon). Left-over cookies will be donated to the Living Nativity event on December 14th.

## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Retiree's Breakfast (12/12)

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.

### Living Nativity (12/14)

Our annual Living Nativity will be held on Saturday, December 14th (4:30-7:30pm)! Please plan to participate. You can play a Nativity role, no experience is necessary. We need Mary, Joseph, angels, wisemen, and shepherds for 30 minute shifts. Invite your friends and family from the wider community to volunteer with you and/or attend. Come inside for coffee, apple cider, tasty treats, kid's crafts, live music and caroling. Bring a cellphone or camera and use our holiday vignette as a backdrop for a photo. If you are unable to volunteer, you can still participate by sponsoring an animal to help defray the cost. Please sign up when you see the Living Nativity display in the narthex or contact Tami in the office: 651-777-1107 or [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org)



### 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.



### 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. Hats are appreciated too. We will deliver items for children to a local school and the items for adults to the Union Gospel Mission. <sup>36</sup> *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



### Hymn Sing at Dubliner Pub (12/16)

Fleishpots of Egypt (Lutherland's Most Acclaimed Bluegrass Band) leads this hymn sing (7:00-9:00pm) on the **THIRD** Monday of every month at Dubliner Pub (2162 University Ave., St. Paul, 55114) at University and Vandalia. Get there early (6:30pm) to get a table. Beer and pizza available and/or bring your own snacks. More info at:



<https://www.facebook.com/share/PKH9NJufre7PSWsk/?mibextid=JRoKGi>

### Christmas Gift for the Pastors

Please consider contributing this year towards a monetary Christmas gift for Pastor James and Pastor Juli. 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 pastors!



**"Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love"**

- Hamilton Wright Mabie



## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



### Volunteer Opportunity To Be Church Treasurer

Put your accounting skills to good use by volunteering to be our church treasurer!

Responsibilities include: processing bills, vouchers, assigning expenses to accounts, designated fund accounts entries, making checks, payroll administrator, preparing financial and designated fund account reports, preparing and maintaining budget, monitor church's cash flow, proof ledger entries, prepare for audits, and report to Church Council. If you are interested or have questions, please contact Mary Beth Skunes ([treasurer@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:treasurer@ststephenwbl.org)) or Ted Field ([fieldjackson@msn.com](mailto:fieldjackson@msn.com))

### Anniversary Reception for Pastor Juli (1/5/25)

Immediately following worship, please join us for a reception to celebrate Pastor Juli Thompson's 25<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversary!



### Communion Assistant Training (1/12/25)

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 12, around 10:30am. The training will take no longer than 30 minutes.

### Communion Kits Available for At Home Worshippers

If you are not able to attend worship services in person and wish to participate in communion at home, please contact Pastor Juli at [julia.a.thompson@gmail.com](mailto:julia.a.thompson@gmail.com). She can deliver pre-filled communion cups (with wafers) to you so you can self-serve as you follow along online.

### 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) with any questions.



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



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 2025). 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.

## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



### National Lutheran Choir (12/13 & 12/14)

This hallmark National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival will once again fill the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis with a joyous call to gather for Christmas favorites "Healing of the Nations". Dec. 13, 2025 (4:30pm) and Dec. 14 (1:30pm or 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. 14th will be livestreamed for those who are unable to physically attend. Visit [NLCA.com](http://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. 24—Jan. 6) and will re-open on Tuesday, Jan. 7.



**N**eighbors  
**H**elping  
**N**eighbors

### Volunteers Needed!

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



## APPRECIATION

### Trunk or Treat

Over 400 trick-or-treaters attended this year's Trunk-or-Treat event which was held in Mariner Middle School's parking lot. A dozen people from St. Stephen decorated five trunks and both the police and fire departments showed up! The neighborhood participation was strong! Thank you to Melissa Whitman and all the volunteers who worked to make this a great event!



### Making Lefse

Once again, the Lefse group (left) showed up with their weapons of massive dough construction. The sweet smells of Lefse permeated the building and a good time was had by all.



**Holly Boutique & Bake Sale...** The 25th Annual Holly Boutique & Bake Sale was a great success. Over \$4,600 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.”**

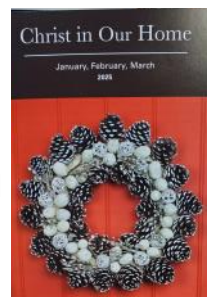



### Help Keep Us Informed

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 Jan/Feb/Mar are available in info racks near both entrances. Please feel free to take as many as you like and offer them to others who may find comfort in reading them.



**Prayer Request** (add or remove from the Prayer List)

ADD

This person is... ☐ Member ☐ Family ☐ Friend ☐ Self

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for prayer \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


May we share this with the congregation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

REMOVE

Update \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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



### Prayer Request Cards

Prayer Request Cards are located in the sanctuary pews. Feel free to place your request in an offering plate/basket, drop into the church office door mail slot, or cut out and mail this one to the church. Please keep us updated on those you have asked us to add to our prayer list.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## APPRECIATION



### Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater

Thank you to all the actors, behind the scenes people, volunteers, attendees, kitchen staff, musicians, food servers, and cooks, for your participation in this year's Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater on Oct. 25 and 26 for "Raiders of Noah's Ark!" The food was delicious and the play was a lot of fun!



### All Saints Remembrance

Thank you to everyone who made this service so special!





## GENERAL INFORMATION

### In This Issue

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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](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) by Tuesday, Dec. 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

### Council & Leadership

### 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 Service  
**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

- 11/26 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 11/27 Thanksgiving Service w/Blended Choirs (Wed/7:00pm)
- 11/28 Thanksgiving Day (Thurs—NO service, office CLOSED)
- 11/29 Church Office CLOSED (Fri)
- 11/30 Williams Syndrome Fundraiser & Jason Gray Concert at Redeemer (Sat/4:30pm)
- 12/1 **Advent 1: Lessons & Carols Service (Sun/9:30am)**
- 12/1 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 12/4 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 12/5 OWL's Christmas Gathering (Thurs/11:15am)
- 12/5 Worship & Music Mtg. (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 12/7 Hanging of the Greens (Sat/8:30am-12noon)
- 12/8 **Advent 2: Senior Choir Advent Service (Sun/9:30am)**
- 12/8 DROP-OFF Cookies for Homebound (Sun/9:00am-12noon)
- 12/8 Christmas Garden Orders **DUE** (Sun)
- 12/9 PACKAGING Cookies for Homebound (Mon/9:00-12:00noon)
- 12/9 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 12/10 Content **DUE** for January Steppingstone (Tues)
- 12/12 Retiree's Breakfast (Thurs/9:00am)
- 12/14 Living Nativity SET-UP (Sat/9:00am-3:00pm)
- 12/14 Living Nativity EVENT (Sat/4:30-7:30pm)
- 12/15 **Advent 3: Hymn Sing (Sun/9:30am)**
- 12/15 Baptism: Evelyn Burbach (Sun/9:30am)
- 12/16 Monthly Hymn Sing at Dubliner's Pub (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 12/22 **Advent 4: Worship Service (Sun/9:30am)**
- 12/24 Church Office **CLOSES AT NOON** (Tues)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve—Family Service (Tues/4:00pm)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve—Candlelight Service (Tues/9:00pm)
- 12/25 Christmas Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Wed)
- 12/25 All Programming and Activities **ON BREAK** (Wed)
- 12/31 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch **ON BREAK**
- 1/1/25 New Year's Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Wed)
- 1/5/25 Pastor Juli's Anniversary Reception (Sun/10:30am)
- 1/5/25 Annual Reports **DUE** (Sun)
- 1/12/25 Communion Assistant Training (Sun/10:30am)