

December, 2025

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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



Worship with us!

Sundays

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

Wednesdays

5:45pm Dinner Church
(Meal during Worship Service) and
Faith Education – at Redeemer

Special Events:

Living Nativity

Saturday, Dec. 13
4:30–7:30pm

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, Dec. 24
Candlelight Services
4:00pm & 9:00pm

Dec. 24 & 31—Fellowship Group at St. Stephen—ON BREAK
Dec. 24 & 31—Dinner Church and Faith Education at Redeemer—ON BREAK

CHURCH MATTERS

Church Council Highlights

At the church council meeting on November 10th, the following matters were addressed:

1. A “preliminary” draft of the 2026 budget was presented for discussion. Council members were given 10 days to fine-tune budget figures for various items related to individual ministry team budgets. At the Council’s December meeting the revised draft will be presented, with perhaps last minute adjustments made before being brought to the annual congregational meeting in January for final approval.
2. The November treasurer’s report was presented, showing we are carrying a \$20,000 general fund deficit. The forecast is that we will face an income challenge in the next two months, with \$85,000 in revenue needed between now and the end of the year to avoid a year-end deficit.
3. The shared Wednesday GAP service with Redeemer was discussed. The service is switching to a dinner-church model this week, and during Advent the service will move to Redeemer where it will be held until Easter.
4. Required amendments to our constitution were presented and approved. The next step is Synod approval, after which they will be shared with the congregation before being brought to the January congregational meeting for approval.



2026 Stewardship Drive

Thank you to all who have already returned your 2026 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 Wednesday, Dec. 24, closed all day on Thursday, December 25, and closed on Thursday, January 1, 2026. Regular office hours are Monday through Thursday (9:00am-3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am-12noon).

Annual Reports DUE (1/4/26)

Please promptly submit your 2025 annual ministry reports to office@ststephenwbl.org by (or before) Sunday, January 4, 2026. Thank you!

Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars to attend this year’s Annual Meeting of the Congregation scheduled for Sunday, January 25, 2026 (10:45am-12noon).

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 and Redeemer 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 cancel a worship service or close, but if we feel we need to, 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

(Nov. 30, 9:30am)

Lessons & Carols

Advent 2

(Dec. 7, 9:30am)

Advent Service

Advent 3

(Dec. 14, 9:30am)

Choral Service

Advent 4

(Dec. 21, 9:30am)

Christmas Carols

Sing-a-long

Cut out to invite others!



2025 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. 7**

Red____ + White____ + Pink____ = Quantity____

(please indicate "Christmas Garden" on check)

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

(check a box)

☐ I wish to **KEEP** my plant

☐ I wish to **DONATE** my plant

(circle one)

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

Of... _____

Your Name _____

Phone _____



ST. STEPHEN
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Join us Christmas Eve!

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



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

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (11/25)

Please feel free to join our group for lunch on the last Tuesday of each month (11:30am). RSVP (required) on the Sunday before event by contacting Judee Bramscher at 651-269-6122. On November 25, we will be gathering at the VFW (4496 Lake Ave. S., White Bear Lake) – RSVP by 11/23. Dec. 30 – ON BREAK.



Christmas Garden Orders DUE (12/7)

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. 7th.



Cookies for Homebound Members Drop-off (12/7) Packaging (12/8)

We will be packaging cookies for our homebound members on Monday, Dec. 8 (9:00-10am) in the Fellowship Hall. All are invited to help package. Please drop off your donation of two dozen cookies on/by Sunday Dec. 7 (9:00am-12noon). Left-over cookies will be used for the Living Nativity event on Dec. 13th.



Thanksgiving Meal (11/27)

On Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 27, those who have no specific dinner plans and no family in town, are invited to a Thanksgiving meal at St. Stephen at 1:00pm. Donations are appreciated to help cover costs. Please sign up in the narthex or contact the church office to let us know that you are coming. Thanks to Melissa Whitman for organizing this gathering.



Reminder—Church Office Closed

The church office is closed on Thursday, Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving Day) and on Friday, Nov. 28.

Good News On Tap (12/8)

All are invited (bring friends and family too) to the Dugout Bar (96 Mahtomedi Ave. in Mahtomedi) on Monday, Dec. 8 (7:00-9:00pm) for food, faith, drinks, Christmas Karaoke, and Carols. If you wish to order dinner, please arrive at 6:00pm. You must be 21+ to attend. This is a shared ministry event of Redeemer and St. Stephen Lutheran Churches.



Hanging of the Greens (12/6)

Come help St. Stephen get ready on Saturday, Dec. 6 (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!**



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.



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Preventing Fraud & Scams (12/11)

Fraud and scams are on the rise, with some scammers specifically targeting older adults. But there are ways you can protect yourself and your personal information. This presentation includes info. about fraud prevention. You will learn how to detect and report fraud and scams, so you can keep your personal information and yourself safe. Join us on Thursday, Dec. 11 in the Fellowship Hall (10:00-11:00am). Come early for Coffee Plus (9:30am).

OWL's Christmas Gathering (12/17)

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 Wednesday, Dec. 17 (12noon) at the Lake Elmo Inn.



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!



Christmas Party for Kids (12/20)

Would your children love to decorate a tree and give it to a family who might not otherwise get a tree? Children will make decorations to bring home also. Fun, laughter, and a Christmas lunch (a Happy Meal from McDonalds) is included. Group size is limited. We can accommodate children ages 2 through 9 (no infants or children under 2). Pre-registration is required by Monday, Dec. 15th. Please call 651-777-1107 to sign up.

Blue Christmas Service

The Blue Christmas service is designed for people having a difficult time during the holiday season. This can be from the death of a loved one, being estranged from family, not having family nearby, or other issues making the holiday focus on family closeness painful. Join us for a time of quiet contemplation and music that addresses these often overlooked aspects of the season. We are planning this service and will send out an e-blast with further details when the date and time are finalized.



Communion Assistant Training (1/11/26)

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

Getting Events onto the 2026 Calendar

Please contact Tami in the church office at office@ststephenwbl.org or 651-777-1107 to get all special events, gatherings, meetings, groups, etc. onto the church's 2026 calendar.

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

- Hamilton Wright Mabie

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

**Saturday,
Dec. 13, 2025
(4:30-7:30pm)**
at
**St. Stephen
Lutheran Church**

- ♦ **Live Music**
- ♦ **Live Animals**
- ♦ **Kids Crafts**
- ♦ **Tasty Treats**

Living Nativity

**A FREE COMMUNITY EVENT
For the WHOLE FAMILY!**



Living Nativity (12/13)

Our annual Living Nativity will be held on Saturday, December 13th (4:30-7:30pm)! 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.

Sponsoring an Animal for the Living Nativity!

If you would like to sponsor an animal for the Living Nativity, please use the envelopes on the Welcome Desk in the narthex and/or write a memo on your check. You can choose to sponsor a donkey, sheep, llama, Alpaca, cow, or pony. A donation of \$15 is suggested, but any amount is appreciated!

| | |
|--|---|
| Name _____ |  |
| Address _____ | |
| City _____, MN Zip _____ | |
| Sponsor a Living Nativity ANIMAL | |
| Suggested amount \$15 (but any amount is appreciated) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donkey <input type="checkbox"/> Sheep <input type="checkbox"/> Llama <input type="checkbox"/> Alpaca <input type="checkbox"/> Cow <input type="checkbox"/> Pony | |
|  | |

Volunteers Needed

Thank you to all who have already signed up! We continue to need some 30-minute shifts filled on Saturday, December 13. *We need...*

- ♦ Joseph (4:30-5 & 5-5:30)
- ♦ Angel (5-5:30)
- ♦ Wise Men (4:30-5, 5-5:30, & 6:30-7)
- ♦ Shepherds (4:30-5, 5-5:30, 6:30-7)

We also need...

- ♦ Entrance Door Greeters (4:30-6 & 6-7:30)
- ♦ Children's Activity Coordinator (4-8)
- ♦ Children's Activity Assistants (4:30-7:30)
- ♦ Inside Host/Hostess (4:30-6 & 6-7:30)
- ♦ Inside Beverage Servers (4:30-6 & 6-7:30)
- ♦ Kitchen Workers (3:30-5:30 & 5:30-7:30)
- ♦ Inside Clean-up (7:30-8:30)
- ♦ Wardrobe Coordinator (4-8pm)
- ♦ Wardrobe Assistants (4:30-6 & 6-7:30)
- ♦ Outdoor Host (4:30-6 & 6-7:30)

No experience is necessary. Please sign up at the Living Nativity display in the narthex or contact the office: 651-777-1107 or office@ststephenwbl.org

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Wednesdays
6:00PM

DINNER CHURCH

GAP
+ grace and praise

At Redeemer (3770 Bellaire Ave) December 2025 until Easter 2026



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

Experience the National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival "Come Dwell With Us" at the Basilica of Saint Mary (1600 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis) featuring the beauty of the NLC, the NLC Children's Ensemble, instrumental chamber ensemble, and narration by Brian Newhouse on Friday, Dec. 12 (4:30pm) and Sat., Dec. 13 (8:00pm). 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. The 1:30pm performance on Sat., Dec. 13th will be livestreamed for those who are unable to physically attend. Visit NLCA.com for tickets and more information.

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

Gift certificates are available for Neighbors helping Neighbors (NHN) and make great stocking stuffers for friends and family. When someone uses their gift certificate to purchase clothing at NHN, they are helping local charities. Since NHN is run by volunteers, all proceeds beyond operating expenses are given to local non-profits in White Bear Lake and surrounding area. If you haven't shopped there before, you are missing out on great deals and some really nice clothing! The thrift store is located in the building behind the church! Hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs 10-4 and Sat 10-1. (NHN is closed for the holidays (Dec. 24—Jan. 5) and will re-open on Tuesday, Jan. 6.



Neighbors
Helping
Neighbors

Volunteers Needed!

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

APPRECIATION

Trunk or Treat... 34 trunks from church and community members, including local organizations, served approximately 475 trick-or-treaters at the Trunk-or-Treat event at Mariner Middle School. \$320 in cash and 72 pounds of food donations for the White Bear Area Food Shelf, which was doubled by an anonymous donor. Thank you to all who contributed and participated!



Haunted Hayride... The kids had a spooktacular time!

Little VanGoghs... Thanks to Melissa for holding a guided paint class!



Making Lefse... Once again, the Lefse group 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 26th 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!



Bounce Back... Thank you to Brad Wilm for organizing the Bounce Back speaker, Kelly Nygard and to Kathy & Milt Anderson for setting up the room, coffee, and treats!

Wednesday GAP & Community Meals...

Thank you to everyone for the meals, music, and meaningful worship! We will be rotating to Redeemer for a few months and all are invited to Dinner Church (5:45pm).



PRAYERS

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

Prayers Have Been Requested For the Following...




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 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



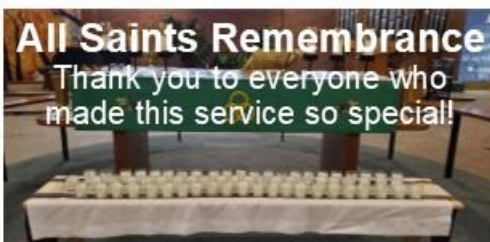
Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater

Thank you to all the actors, support crew, volunteers, attendees, kitchen staff, musicians, food servers, and cooks, for your participation in this year's Fools for Christ Fall Dinner Theater Murder Mystery on Oct. 24 and 25. Food and mocktails were great and the interaction between characters and attendees was fun!



All Saints Remembrance

Thank you to everyone who made this service so special!



GENERAL INFORMATION

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The Steppingstone Newsletter...

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

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

What's Happening

Sundays

Worship Service 9:30am
 (In person, live-streamed, and online)
 Faith Ed: 9:45am

Wednesdays

Dinner Church (worship and meal)
 at Redeemer - 3770 Bellaire Ave.
 (Meal begins 5:45pm, Service 6pm)

Calendar Highlights

- 11/26 Thanksgiving Service at Redeemer (Wed/7:00pm)
- 11/27 Thanksgiving Meal (Thurs/1:00pm)
- 11/27 Thanksgiving Day (Thurs—NO service, office **CLOSED**)
- 11/28 Church Office **CLOSED** (Fri)
- 11/30 **Advent 1: Lessons & Carols Service** (Sun/9:30am)
- 12/3 Dinner Church **BEGINS** at Redeemer (Wed/6:00pm)
- 12/3 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 12/4 Worship & Music Mtg. (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 12/6 Hanging of the Greens (Sat/8:30am-12noon)
- 12/7 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 12/7 Christmas Garden Orders **DUE** (Sun)
- 12/7 **Advent 2: Advent Service** (Sun/9:30am)
- 12/7 DROP-OFF Cookies for Homebound (Sun/9:00am-12noon)
- 12/8 PACKAGING Cookies for Homebound (Mon/9:00-10:00am)
- 12/8 Church Council Meeting at Skunes' Home (Mon/6:00-7:30pm)
- 12/8 Good News on Tap at Dugout (Mon/7:00-9:00pm)
- 12/10 Content **DUE** for January Steppingstone (Wed)
- 12/11 Preventing Fraud & Scams (Thurs/10:00am)
- 12/13 Living Nativity SET-UP (Sat/9:00am-3:00pm)
- 12/13 Living Nativity EVENT (Sat/4:30-7:30pm)
- 12/13 Living Nativity CLEAN-UP (Sat/7:30-8:30pm)
- 12/14 **Advent 3: Choral Service** (Sun/9:30am)
- 12/17 OWL's Christmas at Lake Elmo Inn (Wed/12noon)
- 12/20 Christmas Party for Kids (Sat/10:00am-1:00pm)
- 12/21 **Advent 4: Christmas Carols** (Sun/9:30am)
- 12/24 Church Office **CLOSES AT NOON** (Wed)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve—Daytime Candlelight Service (Wed/4:00pm)
- 12/24 Choir Call Time (Wed/8:45pm)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve—Evening Candlelight Service (Wed/9:00pm)
- 12/24 Faith Ed and most activities **ON BREAK** (Wed)
- 12/25 Christmas Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Thurs)
- 12/30 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch **ON BREAK** (Tues)
- 12/31 All Programming and Activities **ON BREAK** (Wed)
- 1/1/26 New Year's Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Thurs)
- 1/4/26 Annual Reports **DUE** (Sun)