



## *Steppingstone Newsletter*



**Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!**

January, 2026



**And the PEACE of God, which transcends all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

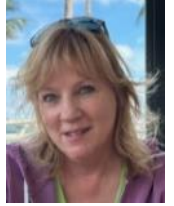
Philippians 4:7

# CHURCH MATTERS

## Church Council Highlights

Submitted by Church Council President Kathy Stickler

- ◆ Our General fund balance at the end of November was negative, -\$15,080.33. Income for December needs to be at least \$50-55K to break even for the end of 2025. Pastor James is working on an end-of-year appeal letter to mail out.
- ◆ Overall, pledged income increased. Pledge results as of the council meeting: one-third families increased their pledge, half kept their pledge the same as 2025, and the rest lowered their pledge for various reasons.
- ◆ The budget was thoroughly reviewed due to expenditures exceeding income. Council members will provide further suggestions to MaryBeth and further discussion will be needed prior to preparing the materials for the annual meeting.
- ◆ Pastor James reported the WIFI installation is progressing with three WIFI points already installed.
- ◆ Shared Ministry reported both Presidents attended a special session for updates and review of the covenants between the two churches. The committee stressed the importance of them being an oversight brainstorming committee that is not responsible for implementing ideas. Rather, they would review the ideas and if it aligns with the mission, they would pass along to the council or appropriate committee. Redeemer also agreed to share their committee diagram with us as we need something similar and this would be a good start.
- ◆ Additional changes to our constitution were approved in order to bring our constitution fully up-to-date from the 2022 Synod Assembly.
- ◆ We will need to identify delegates for the 2026 Synod Assembly held May 15-16 at St. Andrews in Mahtomedi. This is a big year as we will be electing a new SPAS Bishop.



### Annual Reports DUE (1/4/26)

Please promptly submit your 2025 annual reports to the church office at [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) by Sunday, **January 4th, 2026**. Thank you!

### Annual Meeting (1/25/26)

Attention all congregants, please be sure to join us on Sunday, January 25 (10:45am-12noon) for a very important Annual Meeting of St. Stephen Lutheran Church!

### Potluck Desserts

Please sign up in the narthex if you are able to bring a dessert to the annual meeting (and let us know what you will be bringing)!



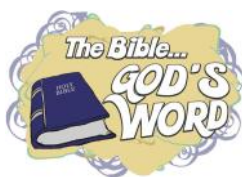
## Winter Weather and Church Closings

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

### Office Closed (1/1, 1/19)

The church office is closed on Thursday, Jan. 1 and Monday, Jan. 19 in honor of New Year's Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Regular office hours are Monday-Thursday (9:00am-3:00pm) and Friday (9:00am-12noon)



### 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 New Year's Day, but resuming on January 8<sup>th</sup>.

### Annual Reports Due (1/4)

Please promptly submit your 2025 annual reports to the church office at [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) anytime **before** Sunday, January 4.

### Christmas

#### Clean-up Day (1/5)

All hands on deck! Simply show up on Monday, Jan. 5 (9:00am) to help us put the decorations away and tidy up the church.



### Quilting for a Cause (1/15, 1/16, 1/22, 1/23)

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 January: Thurs-1/15, Fri-1/16, Thurs-1/22, Fri-1/23.

### Quilters Need Sheets

The quilting group will be gathering in the A-B Room to work on quilts and are in need of top sheets of all sizes. Please drop sheets (new and like new) off at the church office. Thank you for your donations!

### Communion Assistant Training (1/18)

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

### Annual Meeting w/Potluck Desserts (1/25)

Attention all congregants, we strongly encourage you to attend this year's **ANNUAL MEETING**

on **Sunday, January 25, 2026**. We will gather in the Fellowship Hall for desserts immediately following worship. Annual Meeting Time: **10:45am - 12noon**.



### Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (1/27)

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 January 27, we will be gathering at The Little Village Pub (2670 Co Rd E East). RSVP by 1/25.



### Pastor-led Bible Study

Led by Pastor James on Mondays (10:00-11:00am) in the library. Walk-ins are welcome!



## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



### Wednesday GAP Worship & Community Meal

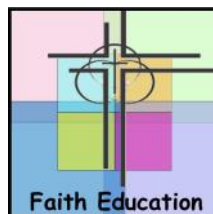
**((( At Redeemer Until Easter )))**

On Wednesdays, the GAP (Grace & Praise) worship service and community meal is at Redeemer (3770 Bellaire Ave.) until Easter. This is a new shared ministry experiment, where we will rotate worship locations every few months, keeping it connected with our shared Christian education classes. Dinner begins at 5:45pm and overlaps worship which begins at 6:00pm. All regular GAP and Community Meal attendees are strongly encouraged to attend to support this new arrangement.

### Faith Education Sunday School

(9:45-10:30am) at St. Stephen  
in Classroom "I"

September through May  
for Preschoolers thru grade 5.



### Wednesday School

*Wednesday Faith Education alternates every few months between Redeemer and St. Stephen (classroom "I"); currently meeting at Redeemer (3770 Bellaire Ave).*

- ♦ **Nursery...** (6:00-6:50pm) on Wednesdays. For Preschoolers thru Kindergarten.
- ♦ **KICK'n It!**... (5:30-6:15pm) each Wednesday (except for 5th Wednesdays).
- ♦ **Pre-Confirmation...** (5:30-6:15pm) each Wednesday (including 5th Wednesdays) for grades 4-6.
- ♦ **Confirmation...** (7:00-8:30pm) on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Wednesdays for grades 7 thru 9.
- ♦ **Youth Group...** (7:00-8:00pm) on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays for grades 7 thru 12.



### 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) if you have questions.

### Getting Events Onto the 2026 Church 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 2026 calendar.

### Please Pick Up Your 2026 Contribution Envelopes in the Narthex

Boxed contribution envelopes are available for pick-up in the narthex (arranged alphabetically) for congregants who donate using envelopes. Thank you for picking up your box today and saving the church postage.

### Sing, Sing, Sing! Come Join the Choir

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. If you wish to participate or have any questions, contact Kari at [ballatahosmer@gmail.com](mailto:ballatahosmer@gmail.com)



## HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Do You Have Computer Skills?

If you have computer skills, we especially could use your help in the church office for three hours per week (12-3pm) on either Mondays or Wednesdays. Duties include answering phones, helping with mailings, and various projects. Please contact Tami at 651-777-1107 or [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) if you have any interest or questions.



### Sponsor Altar FLOWERS



If you wish to sponsor flowers in 2026, 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 2026)

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 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 Sunday GREETER

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.



Prayer is the habit of the heart. -Leighton Ford

### SNACK Sponsor Sign-Up

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.



### Volunteer Helpers for Funeral Luncheons

Please consider volunteering to help with funerals at St. Stephen Church. Positions to choose from include food prep and set-up from 9:00-11:30am. Serving food and clean up 11:30am-2:00pm. Making a pan of bars/cookies to serve at funeral lunch. Please contact Judy Ruth at 651-426-0869 to volunteer or for additional information.

### Lost & Found

If you have lost any items (jewelry, clothing, keys, umbrella, etc.) in the last two years, please contact the church office and describe what you are missing. 651-777-1107 or [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org)

### Neighbors Helping Neighbors Clothing Thrift Store

Consider shopping for clothing at Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN), the thrift store behind the church! **Proceeds from all sales benefit local charities.** Hours: Tues/Wed/Thurs 10-4 and Sat 10-1. Consider volunteering (one 3-hour shift per month or more if you wish), along with many others from our community. Clothing donations are appreciated. If you are interested in being a part of this meaningful neighborhood outreach, please contact the church office.



# APPRECIATION

## Thank you to:

- ◆ Thank you to those who cleared off leaves from the parking lot!
- ◆ All who lit the candles during advent.
- ◆ Thank you to all who helped announce the coming of Christmas through the hanging of the greens church decorating.
- ◆ Thank you to White Bear Floral for providing our Christmas trees and the potted greens at our main entrance!
- ◆ To all who put up the nativity scene and hung the star light.
- ◆ All who ordered Christmas Garden Poinsettias this year; making our sanctuary a joyful and beautiful place to worship!
- ◆ To everyone who participated in making ornaments for our Festival of Trees Christmas tree.
- ◆ Those who decorated the altar with our Christmas Garden Poinsettias and labeled them for pick-up, and to all who donated their plants to our home-bound members.
- ◆ The Senior Choir, accompanists, musicians, and others, for their musical performances during Advent.
- ◆ All who contributed to a Christmas gift for Pastor James and Pastor Juli.
- ◆ All who baked or purchased cookies & bars, assembled trays, and/or delivered decorated trays to our home-bound members! Your outreach efforts mean so much to those who feel comforted knowing that we are thinking about them during Christmastime.
- ◆ To the members who gifted cards and donations to help other families during this season of giving.
- ◆ To our Communion servers.
- ◆ To all who attended our “Preventing Fraud & Scams” event and those who made the event happen!
- ◆ To those who researched getting WIFI, organized equipment, and ran lots of wiring throughout the building.
- ◆ To the entire congregation for the many ways they continue being “A Christian community bringing God’s love to the world.”
- ◆ *From Carole Jensen - Thank you so much for the delicious Christmas cookies. I enjoyed them very much!*

*(Editor’s note: Please forgive me if I missed mentioning our appreciation of someone or group. It’s hard to keep track of all that folks are doing around the church, which is a great problem to have when you think about it. Please know that all you do is appreciated!)*



## APPRECIATION

- ♦ **Living Nativity...** Unfortunately we had to cancel this year's Living Nativity event due to the extreme cold temperatures, but we wish to thank everyone who helped in the planning for and then the cancellation efforts. We are looking forward to next year's event, which is planned for Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026.



# 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)



## 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.

Prayer Request (add or remove from the Prayer List)	
ADD	This person is... <input type="checkbox"/> Member <input type="checkbox"/> Family <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <input type="checkbox"/> Self
Your name _____	
Reason for prayer _____	
May we share this with the congregation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
REMOVE	Update _____
A Christian community bringing God's love to the world.	

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

# January Birthdays



### We're Moving... Fellowship Time After Worship

Each Sunday immediately following the worship service, gather together for coffee and treats. We have special snacks that have been provided by folks who sign up to be SNACK SPONSORS.

Normally we meet in the narthex, but going forward, we will be in the **FELLOWSHIP HALL**.



### New Church Photo Directories

Our new church photo directories are here for those who had their portrait taken by Universal or paid \$15. Some folks still haven't picked theirs up yet. They are located in the narthex just as you enter the church. Be sure to only take the photo directory with your name on it.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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### The Steppingstone Newsletter...

Is distributed monthly. If you have any items for the **February** issue, please send them to [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) by Sat., Jan. 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, 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

- 1/1 New Year's Day - **OFFICE CLOSED** (Thurs)
- 1/1 God's Word Bible Discussion – **ON BREAK**
- 1/4 Annual Reports **DUE** (Sun)
- 1/4 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 1/5 Christmas Clean-up Day (Mon/9:00am-12noon)
- 1/7 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 1/8 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 1/10 Content **DUE** for February Steppingstone (Sat)
- 1/11 Senior Choir Performing (Sun/9:30am)
- 1/11 Zach VanDyke Godspeed Reception (Sun/10:45am)
- 1/12 Church Council Meeting (Mon/6:00-7:30pm)
- 1/18 Communion Assistant Training (Sun/10:30-11:00am)
- 1/19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day - **OFFICE CLOSED** (Mon)
- 1/15 Quilters (9:00am-3:00pm, also on Fri/16, Thurs/22, Fri/23)
- 1/22 Steppingstone Distribution Day (Thurs)
- 1/25 Annual Meeting of the Congregation (Sun/10:45am-12noon)
- 1/27 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 1/28 Faith Education - **ON BREAK** (Wed)