



# Steppingstone Newsletter



April, 2026



## Palm Sunday

- ◆ March 29 (9:30am)
- ◆ We celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with palm branches as we enter Holy Week



## Maundy Thursday

- ◆ April 2 (7pm)
- ◆ We remember Christ's last meal with his disciples and the promises embodied in it



## Good Friday

- ◆ April 3
- ◆ Worship (12noon)
- ◆ Worship (7pm) w/combined choirs



## Easter Sunday

- ◆ April 5
- ◆ Sunrise Service (8am)
- ◆ Festival Service (9:30am) w/Senior Choir



## Spring Brunch & Bingo

- ◆ Thursday, April 9
- ◆ 10:00am (door open at 9:30am)
- ◆ Details on page 5

# WORSHIP

## Palm Sunday



Today, we encounter the paradox that defines our faith: Jesus Christ is glorified king and humiliated servant. We too are full of paradox: like Peter, we fervently desire to follow Christ, but find ourselves afraid, denying God. We wave palms in celebration today as Christ comes into our midst, and we follow with trepidation as his path leads to death on the cross. Amid it all we are invited into this paradoxical promise of life through Christ's broken body and outpoured love in a meal of bread and wine. We begin this week that stands at the center of the church year, anticipating the completion of God's astounding work.

## Maundy Thursday

This evening our Lenten observance comes to an end, and we gather with Christians around the world to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection. Tonight we remember Christ's last meal with his disciples, but the central focus is his commandment that we live out the promise embodied in this meal. As Jesus washed his disciples' feet, so we are called to give and receive love in humble service to one another. Formed into a new body in Christ through this holy meal, we are transformed by the mercy we have received and carry it into the world. Departing worship in solemn silence, we anticipate the coming days.



## Good Friday



Life and death stand side by side as we enter into Good Friday. In John's passion account, Jesus reveals the power and glory of God, even as he is put on trial and sentenced to death. Standing with the disciples at the foot of the cross, we pray for the whole world in the ancient bidding prayer, as Christ's death offers life to all. We gather in solemn devotion, but always with the promise that the tree around which we assemble is indeed a tree of life. We depart silently, and we anticipate the culmination of the Three Days in the Easter Vigil.

## Easter Sunday

This is the day the Lord has made! Christ is risen, and through him all creation is made new! Indeed, "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34): Christ's resurrection truly brings life to everyone. We sing hymns of praise, gather around sacred words, and proclaim God's faithfulness, power, and love in the feast of holy communion. With the women at the tomb, we are astonished, elated, and grateful. We depart with joy to proclaim the good news of God's endless love.



## The Power of an INVITE!

*Results from a study conducted by churchtrainer.com:*

**QUESTION:** What brought you to church?

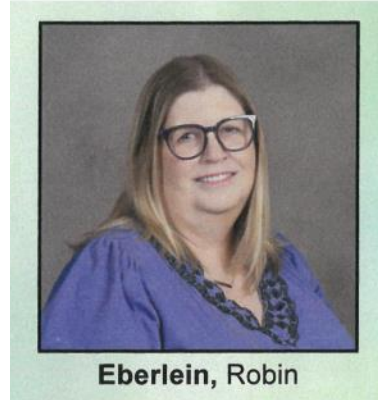
**RESPONSE:** 70-85% Invited by a relative or friend!



# CHURCH MATTERS

## Church Council Reflection

First, I would like to thank Kathy Stickler for her amazing leadership in 2025. Kathy led us in finding great new ways to reach out to the community with things like our Pets & People event and our participation in Manitou Days. Kathy has now transitioned to her new role as Council Secretary.



The council met on Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> and discussed the following:

- ◆ The youth will be doing a targeted giving campaign for the youth mission trip starting Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. For those who always say, "I would rather just give them \$20 than buy the popcorn." Here is your chance!
- ◆ We will be replacing the carpet in the Fellowship Hall with carpet squares. Samples are in the Fellowship Hall. Mike Trenda will be available for questions during the coffee hour after service on March 16<sup>th</sup>. The old, damaged partitions will come down as part of this process.
- ◆ The Fat Tuesday event was quite a success and they are planning to do this every year. Thank you Mike & Ted for organizing this!
- ◆ The church council is planning a retreat in May where we will look for new ways to be a warm and welcoming church.
- ◆ The next indoor garage sale will be March 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10:00 – 1:00.
- ◆ We donated 81 pounds of soup to the White Bear Area Food Shelf in February!

I would also like to give a big thank you to outgoing council members Kathy Stickler, Scott Zieman, and Ted Field.

Welcome to our new members, Bob Whelehan, Matthew Tilahun, and Angel Stafsholt!

Submitted by Robin Eberlein  
Church Council President

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### **Sponsor Altar Flowers**

If you wish to sponsor flowers, 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) 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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



## Pick Up Your Braided Bread (3/28)

For those who purchased braided bread during our Tanzania Fundraiser, please pick up your bread on Saturday, March 28 (10am-12noon) at Ken and Karen Smith's temporary home (3580 Rooney Place, WBL). Thank you for supporting this important mission!

## Palm Sunday Faith Action: Reclaiming Christianity In the Public Square (3/29)

On March 29, join thousands of Christians on Palm Sunday to celebrate the call of our faith to love our neighbors: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and welcoming the stranger. At 2pm, a procession leaves from several churches at University & Dale in St. Paul and marches towards the capitol. At 2:30pm, there will be a worship and program at the MN State Capitol Mall. Visit [palmssunday2026.com](http://palmssunday2026.com) for more information!

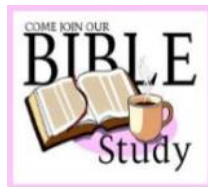
## Church Office Closed (4/6)

The church office is closed on Easter Monday. Regular office hours are Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm and Friday 9:00am-12:00pm.

## Monday Bible Study

Join us (*and invite others*) Mondays in the library (10:00-11:00am) for Bible Study (led by Pastor James Muske). Walk-ins are welcome.

We are on break April 6<sup>th</sup>.



## Food Shelf – Most Wanted Items in April

For 2026 we are doing a different theme each month for food shelf donations. During the month of April we will be collecting items needed for Spring cleaning. Please bring in things like dish soap, laundry soap, Windex, sponges, and any other cleaning products you think might be useful. Paper towels, toilet paper and Kleenex are also great to bring in. These

are items that can't be purchased with SNAP benefits (food stamps), so they are very appreciated at the food shelf. Please put donations in the shopping cart by the coat rack in the narthex.



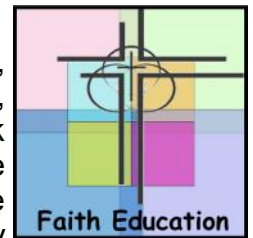
## Ramadan Iftar (4/3)

From Pastor Juli... The Minneapolis Council of Churches has been coordinating iftar dinners for many years. During Ramadan, Muslims fast all day, and iftar is the evening meal breaking the fast. Different mosques have volunteered to host visitors. There is a short informational presentation, the Muslims have a prayer together, and then a meal is served. I have been attending these for several years at different mosques, and the food has always been plentiful and delicious and the hospitality warm and genuine. This year in particular, the Islamic community appreciates the opportunity to welcome everyone and make connections. If you are interested, this link leads to the registration page. There is no charge. Each individual needs to register separately (no group registrations). <https://mnchurches.org/what-we-do/taking-heart>

## Faith Ed Schedule

Children's Wednesday School, Pre-confirmation, Confirmation, and Youth Group are on break April 1 during Holy Week. The Youth Group will continue meeting at Redeemer. Sunday school is on break April 5<sup>th</sup> for Easter. Wednesday Faith Ed returns to St. Stephen, including:

- ◆ Frolic Nursery (age 3 by 9/1 thru K) resumes 4/8 in the nursery (6-7pm) each week.
- ◆ Kick'in It! (grades 1 thru 2) resumes 4/8 in Classroom "I" (5:30-6:15pm) each week (except 5th Wednesdays).
- ◆ Pre-Confirmation (grades 3 thru 5) resumes 4/8 in Classroom "I" (5:30-6:15pm) each week (except 5th Wednesdays).
- ◆ Confirmation (grades 6 thru 8) resumes 4/15 in Classroom "I" (7-8:30pm) on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Wednesdays.



# HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



## GAP Worship & Community Meal Resumes (4/8)

On Wed., April 1, GAP Worship Service and the Community Meal are on break, **resuming on April**

**8th.** Wednesday is a perfect time to invite family members or friends to join you at our community meal (5:15pm) and GAP (Grace & Praise) casual worship service (6:00pm) in the sanctuary. There are many people who say they would go to church if they were invited!

## Cook/s Needed (April & May) for Wednesday Meals



We are in need of volunteers to prepare, cook, and serve Wednesday evening community meals April 8 through May 27. Mealtime is 5:15-6:00pm before our Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship Service. Choose one or as many Wednesdays as you like. You may choose the meals. The church can buy the food (with a one-week notice) or you can buy the food, submit receipts, and get reimbursed up to \$75 (our max budget). Sign up in the kitchen or contact the church office at [office@ststephenwbl.org](mailto:office@ststephenwbl.org) or 651-777-1107 to get onto the schedule.

## Spring Brunch & Bingo (4/9)



We're kicking off spring with fun, food, and fellowship! Join us for our first Spring Brunch & Bingo on Thursday, April 9 (10am) for brunch-themed bingo and trivia games. Non-cash prizes will be awarded to winners. The brunch includes egg bakes, fruit salad, sweet breads, coffee, and juice (suggested donation: \$5 per person). This is a great opportunity to invite family and friends to church! You must RSVP by April 6th (651-777-1107). Doors open at 9:30am.

## Quilting for a Cause (4/23, 4/24, 4/30, 5/1)

Our group makes 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 if you wish to join us: Thurs-4/23, Fri-4/24,



Thurs-4/30, Fri-5/1. We are always in need of new and like-new top sheets. If you have any to donate, please drop them off at the church office. Thank you for your donations@

## Progressive Dinner (4/25)

Come and join us in the Narthex on Saturday, April 25 (5:00pm), for tasty appetizers, before we continue our evening of great food and wonderful company as we "progress" to dinner and dessert. It's a fun way to get to know people from St. Stephen. Although mostly couples attend, singles are welcome. Sign-up Sundays in April in the Narthex. Any questions, call Pam Prokosch at (651) 253-0537.



## Vacation Bible School (VBS)



Register children now for this year's Vacation Bible School (VBS) titled: "Faith Detectives: God's Clues All Around Us". VBS will be only four days this year and held at Redeemer on June 22-25 (9:00am-12noon). On Wed., June 24, gather for our VBS BBQ (5:15pm) and GAP Worship (6:00pm) at St. Stephen. Register online at:

<https://form.jotform.com/260054432525146>.

## VBS Volunteers Needed!

We cannot run this program without you! If you would like to volunteer, or if you have any questions, please contact Melissa at:

[mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org](mailto:mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org)

# HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



## Blessing of the Quilts Quilts On Display & for Sale (4/26 & 4/29)

Quilts will be on display in the sanctuary on Sunday, April 26 and on Wednesday, April 29. They will be offered for sale before and after worship services. This sale is a fundraiser which keeps this ministry going. Unsold quilts will be donated to local shelters.

## 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 discussing "God the Father". Feel free to join us anytime!

## Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (4/28)

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 28, we are meeting at Jimmy's (1132 Co Rd E East, Vadnais Heights). RSVP by 4/26.



## 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; walk-ins are welcome.



## Upcoming Events:

### 2026 SPRING MINISTERIUM

📅 March 26, 2026  
🕒 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

### MEET THE PRE-IDENTIFIED CANDIDATES FOR BISHOP

📅 April 12, 2026  
🕒 2:00 pm

### THE WORD & SACRAMENTS IN AN INVITING CHURCH

📅 April 18, 2026  
🕒 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

### 2026 ECOFAITH SUMMIT

📅 April 18, 2026  
🕒 9:30 am - 5:00 pm



## BISHOP ELECTION

Keep up to date on the news around electing the next synod bishop! There are now five pre-identified candidates who are continuing with the nominating process. Bios and videos are available for the Revs. Brad Froslee, Justin Grimm, Jill Rode, Bradley Schmeling, and Patrick Shebeck. A "meet the candidates" event will be held April 12 in Roseville. Learn more: <https://spas-elca.org/>

# HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Sign Up Now! - Nordic Walking Club (4/28-8/25)

Sometimes on our journeys with Christ we put on hiking shoes and grab a pair of walking poles. That's St. Stephen Nordic Walking and it returns in 2026.

What is it? It's an hour of walking together during the summer on graded or paved paths in a local community or regional park. Walking poles—which are optional—are similar to the ones used for Nordic skiing and can make walking easier on unpaved paths, particularly when going uphill or downhill.

Nordic Walking will start April 28<sup>th</sup> and continue every Tuesday between 7 to 8 pm until August 25<sup>th</sup>.

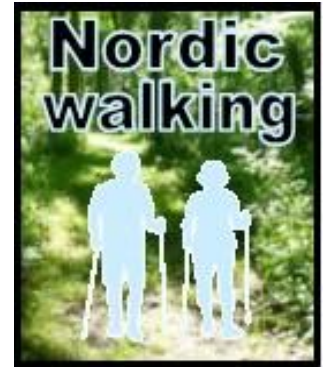
Distances will vary, but never farther than 2 ½ miles, sometimes on paths that are out-and-back and sometimes on looped trails. One of our popular routes is the paved path on Lake Avenue in White Bear Lake, out-and-back starting at Kowalski's. When we prefer to get into the woods and *let the forest be with us*, we will choose places like Tamarack Nature Center in WBL, Katherine Abbott Park in Mahtomedi, or one of three Vadnais Heights regional parks, with opportunities to see wildlife, flowers, and other natural features.

We observe “group compaction” while we walk, which means if we get spread out we adjust pace to keep everyone together.

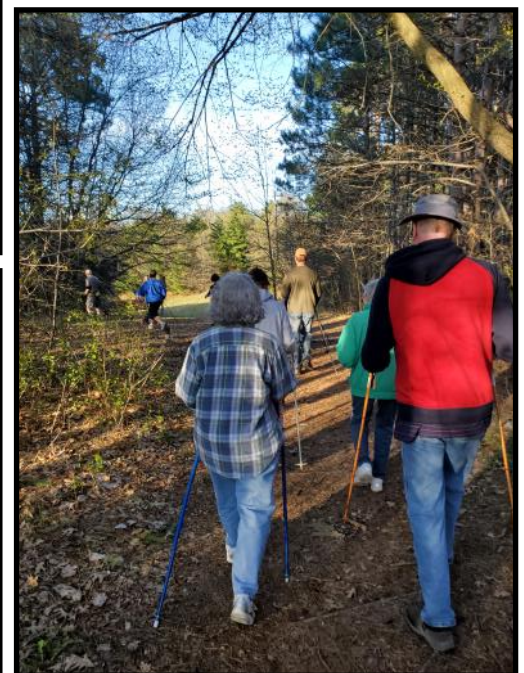
All ages and conditions are welcome. Some parks allow dogs. Each week walkers will get advice regarding the need for bug repellent, sunscreen, poles, etc., as well as a description of the upcoming walk. All our routes have restroom facilities at either the start of the walk or along the way.

A sign-up sheet is located on the Welcome Desk so that all interested walkers get their name on a mailing list for weekly updates, information about the upcoming walk, and last-minute cancellations due to weather. In the coming weeks a handout describing walking routes and driving directions to the parks will be available at the Desk.

Come for the exercise, fellowship, and pleasure of a summer evening spent outdoors. Contact Ted Field with questions and please sign up.



Ted Field,  
Head Walker



### JOIN A COUPLES GOLF LEAGUE

If you are interested in joining a Couples Golf League that will begin in May, please contact Mike Trenda at [mike.trenda@gmail.com](mailto:mike.trenda@gmail.com) or 651-324-9568. Time and days to be determined. High to low handicap welcome. 9 holes/week.



### WOMEN'S GOLF GET-TOGETHER

Contact Judy Ruth at 612-802-0369 if you are interested in playing informal games of golf.

# APPRECIATION

**Come & Be Curious...** Thank you to everyone who planned, set up, attended, and cleaned up our *Come & Be Curious* events in January (Maintain Your Memory) and February (The Power of Laughter)! *Pictured right.*

**Hospitality Committee...** Thank you for all the times you make sure we have great treats and refreshments. We appreciate you all!

**Bookkeeper & Treasurer...** Thank you for being good stewards of the church's finances! We appreciate your time and talent.

**From Jacobson and Vermeersch families...** *Thank you for our thoughts, prayers, and support during our time of loss. Your card was so appreciated for the loss of Carol Jacobson. Thank you so much for all the support you have provided to Carol over the years.*

**Jars for Blessing Project...** Thank you to Angel Stafsholt for the perfect jars she purchased and donated. How kind and thoughtful of her. Every week we write something we are thankful for. We date it and put in each child's jar. At the end of 2026, we will read the notes. It will help us remember how good God is to each of us.

**From White Bear Area Food Shelf...** *Thank you for your recent donation of \$79. Total visits to our food shelf have surged by 60% compared to last year at this time. Each month, we welcome an average of 6,233 visitors. Our new Community Market has effectively doubled the number of people we can serve. Your steadfast support enables us to make a tangible difference.*

**Soup'er Bowl Sunday...** Thank you to all who contributed on Feb. 8th!

**CPR/AED Training...** On February 24, staff and others received CPR and AED training. Thank you to Cindy Scott for arranging this class. *Pictured right.*

**Prayer Vigil...** Thank you to all who attended the prayer vigil in January. *Pictured right.*

**Mardi Gras Celebration Dinner...** Thank you to all who cooked, planned, attended, and cleaned up on Feb. 17th. *Pictures on page 10.*



# PRAYERS

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](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 <small>(add or remove from the Prayer List)</small>	
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.	

## 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.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



# APRIL Birthdays



## APPRECIATION

**Mardi Gras Dinner...** Thank you to everybody who came and celebrated the 1st annual Mardi Gras “Fat Tuesday” dinner! It was a fun filled evening with traditional Cajun music, food (chefs: Mike Trenda, Tom Scott, Ted Field), 3 beautiful King Cakes (baker: Marla Amborn), amazing decorations (Gretchen Trenda & Cindy Scott)! It was such a success that we will continue this wonderful fellowship event! “Laissez les bons temps rouler”.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### In This Issue

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Happenings & Opportunities (4-7)  
Appreciation (8, 10)  
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### The Steppingstone Newsletter...

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

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### 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

Grace & Praise (GAP) 6:00pm  
(Community Meal at 5:15pm, \$5/pp)  
Faith Ed: 5:30pm, 6:00pm, 7:00pm

## Calendar Highlights

- 4/1 Food Shelf Collection (Wed)
- 4/1 Faith Ed (ON BREAK)
- 4/2 Maundy Thursday Service (7:00pm)
- 4/3 Good Friday Day Service (12noon)
- 4/3 Good Friday Evening Service w/Combined Choirs (7:00pm)
- 4/5 Easter Sunday Sunrise Service (8am)
- 4/5 Easter Sunday Festival Service w/Choir Singing (9:30am)
- 4/5 Food Shelf Collection (Sun)
- 4/6 Easter Monday / Church Office CLOSED (Mon)
- 4/8 Faith Ed at St. Stephen **RESUMES** (Wed) - except Youth Group
- 4/8 Community Meal at St. Stephen **RESUMES** (Wed/5:15pm)
- 4/8 Grace & Praise (GAP) Worship at St. Stephen **RESUMES** (Wed/6:00pm)
- 4/9 Spring Brunch & Bingo (Thurs/10:00am)
- 4/9 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 4/10 Content Deadline for May Steppingstone (Fri)
- 4/13 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-8:30pm)
- 4/23 May Steppingstone Distribution Day (Thurs/9:15am)
- 4/23 Quilting Group (Thurs/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 4/30*
- 4/24 Quilting Group (Fri/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 5/1*
- 4/25 Progressive Dinner (Sat/5:00pm)
- 4/26 Blessing of the Quilts (Sun/9:30am)
- 4/26 Quilts on Display and For Sale (Sun/10:30-11:30am)
- 4/28 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)
- 4/28 Nordic Walking **BEGINS** (Tues/7:00-8:00pm)
- 4/29 Quilts on Display and For Sale (Wed/5:00-6:00pm)