



Steppingstone Newsletter



February & March, 2026

Highlights



The Power of Laughter

Tuesday, Feb. 12 (10am, details on page 4)



Mardi Gras Celebration Dinner

Tuesday, Feb. 17 (5:30pm, details on page 4)



Ash Wednesday Services

Feb. 18 (12noon & 6pm, details on page 5)



Mom's Morning Out

Saturday, Feb. 21 (10am-1pm, details on page 5)



Wednesdays During Lent

Feb. 25 - Mar. 25 (Shared Ministry, details on page 6)



Indoor Garage Sale

Saturday, March 21 (10am-1pm, details on page 5)

CHURCH MATTERS

Church Council Highlights

The church council met on January 12th to address the following:

- ◆ Focused on reviewing the budget and Annual Meeting logistics.
- ◆ Reviewed the proposed budget adjustments due to Redeemer not continuing with shared Wednesday night services because of budget constraints.
- ◆ Approved the request from the Worship and Music Ministry Team for special fundraising to purchase a new projector.
- ◆ Technology Committee reported the improved WIFI is ready for use and they will start meeting on other initiatives that have been in their pipeline:
 - ◇ More use of Icon database
 - ◇ Website refresh
 - ◇ Use of nonprofit technology
 - ◇ Review of nonprofit auction site for church members to use year-round, all money raised goes back to the church
- ◆ Reviewed the list of Reflection items that was created this past year (radar items, ideas, future topics, etc.), the following will remain on the list as additional work is needed:
 - ◇ Thrivent opportunities and education
 - ◇ Bible study - offer to the community (Groups at people's houses)
 - ◇ Advertising community events, church events, etc.- we have a great start.

- Respectfully submitted, Kathy Stickler, Council President



Church Council & Leadership Positions

Some of the Church Council and Leadership positions listed on the last page of this newsletter will not be accurate after the annual meeting and new volunteers are installed. Please look to Weekly Updates and the April Steppingstone for updated information.

Scam Emails, Calls, or Text Messages

Please beware of scam emails, phone calls, or text messages from someone pretending to be Pastor James asking for gift cards and/or favors. The pastors will not approach individuals for favors in this way. A way to spot scam emails is to look closely at the email address. Pastor James email does not end in @gmail.com. It ends with @StStephenWBL.org

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

Winter Weather

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 cancel a worship service, but if we feel we need to cancel a Sunday or Wednesday service we will do everything we can to relay the message to our members, including posting a notice on our website and Facebook.

Getting Events and Meetings Onto the 2026 Online 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 online calendar.

FEATURES & SPOTLIGHTS

Stewardship

Once upon a time there was a seldom-used trail across a Nevada desert where water was scarce. For several miles the only place to get water was from a solitary hand pump. Wired to the pump handle was a tin can and wired to the can was a note.



The note read:

This pump worked as of June, 1932, but the washer seal will dry out and the pump must be primed. Under the white rock yonder is buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. It has enough water to prime the pump, but not if you drink it first. You have to pour a quarter of it in the pump to soak the seal. Then, you have to pour the rest of it medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll get water. Plenty of it. The well won't dry up. Have faith. After you've taken all the water you need, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next fellow.

P.S. Remember to not drink the water in the bottle first. Prime the pump with it and you'll get all the water you need.

We can see this isn't just a story about the West. It's a stewardship story, too. It's about how unselfish giving first results in greater

rewards later. The Bible calls the stewardship gifts of our initial offerings our *first fruits* and Proverbs 3:9 tells us why they are the most important. *"Honor the Lord with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."*

You've probably noticed a couple things about our stewardship messages. One is that they contain stories that are parables about being a good steward. Another is that they seldom say anything about finances or our church budget. That's because stewardship is not about a church's need to receive in support of its budget. Instead, it's about *our* need to give as a fulfillment of our discipleship and stewardship helps us meet that need.

Our stewardship ministry helps God's people grow in their relationship with Christ through the use of their time, talents, and treasure God has entrusted to them. When we stay within this theme, it is natural that our ministry relies on the language of discipleship, as discipleship is about a relationship with Christ, not with a church's budget. What's more, stewardship stories—like the one about the pump in the desert—become parables about how giving unselfishly as a single disciple can benefit so many more people in our Christian family. *Together* we can accomplish so much more in the name of God's work.

- Submitted by Ted Field

APPRECIATION

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you to:

- ◆ All who pledged support for all the ministries in the coming year at St. Stephen!
- ◆ All who donated items for the White Bear Area Food Shelf in January.
- ◆ All who cleaned up and organized decorations after Christmas including Kathy Anderson, Bill Kneip, Anita Schreder, Cindy & Tom Scott, and Diane & Paul Swanson.
- ◆ The Hospitality Committee who organize Sunday snacks and event receptions!
- ◆ All who donated mittens, hats, and socks to the Mitten Tree and to Ted Field for delivering them to the Union Gospel Mission in St. Paul.
- ◆ All who submitted their annual reports for the annual meeting!
- ◆ All who worked on revising our Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions document.
- ◆ Diane & Paul Swanson for cleaning up the building after KRM and PCC worship services.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Forum: Deep Listening Survey Results (2/1)

Please join us for an adult forum, immediately following Sunday worship, to share the results of the congregational survey we participated in last year.

Food Shelf in February

Throughout February, donations of 'BAKING ITEMS' are appreciated: cooking oils, flour, sugar, baking mixes, peanut butter, cinnamon, baking extracts, canned coconut milk, frosting, baking chips, and paper bags. Please place your donations in the grocery cart located near the coat rack in the narthex. Items will be delivered to the White Bear Area Food Shelf.

White Bear Area Food Shelf

Most Wanted Items



Register NOW for 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>.

If you have any questions, contact Melissa at:

mwhitman@redeemerwhitebear.org.



Soup'er Bowl Offering (2/8)

Thank you for your cans of soup for the White Bear Area Food Shelf to help our neighbors in need.

Adult Forum: The Power of Laughter (2/12)

Please join us (and invite others) on Thursday, February 12 (10:00am) for an adult forum titled: "The Power of Laughter". Did you know that laughter is good for us? Most of us could benefit from incorporating more laughter into our lives! Laughter affects human physiology by reducing pain, strengthening our immune system, and decreasing stress. Plus, cultivating humor can help us put life's trials and tribulations into perspective, which helps us take ourselves less seriously. Discover easy-to-use tools to incorporate humor into your life each day, and enjoy a chuckle along the way. Presenter: Jenny West from *Family Means* (a nonprofit organization offering educational programs on caregiving and aging). This is a **FREE** community event! Doors open at 9:30am; refreshments begin at 9:45am.



Office Closed (2/16)

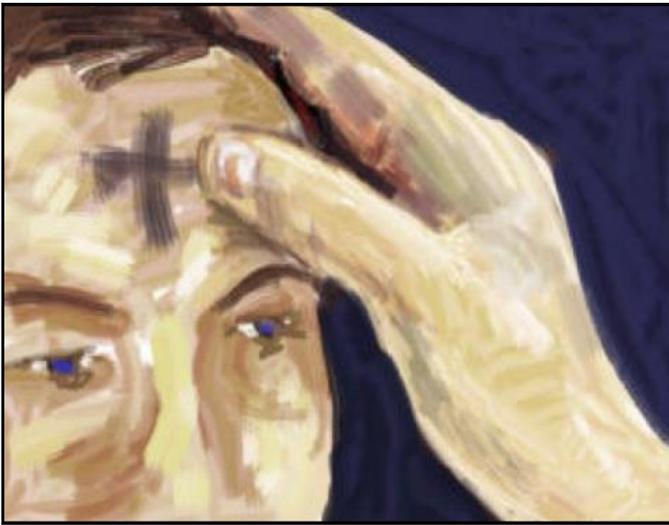
The church office is closed on Monday, February 16 in honor of President's Day.

Mardi Gras Celebration Dinner

This year we will celebrate the passing of Epiphany into Lent one night earlier than usual. The day is called Fat Tuesday and it is typically a Mardi Gras celebration on the eve of Ash Wednesday when we begin our six-week penance of the season of Lent. We will celebrate with an authentic Cajun dinner prepared in our own kitchen and served in the Fellowship Hall on February 17th starting at 5:30pm. There is no charge to attend. Come for the fellowship and to enjoy a delicious meal of red beans and rice, garlic bread, and a desert of King Cake. We hope to see everyone in our Christian family there. Please sign-up at the Welcome Desk so we know who is coming. For more information contact Mike Trenda or Ted Field.



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



Ash Wednesday (2/18)

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that "now is the day of salvation." Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world. Please join us and INVITE OTHERS!

Ash Wednesday Worship Services (12noon & 6:00pm w/Choir)

(Note: NO MEAL TODAY before service.)



Quilting for a Cause in Feb & March

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 February: Thurs-2/19, Fri-2/20, Thurs-2/26, Fri-2/27 and in March: Thurs-3/19, Fri-3/20, Thurs-3/26, Fri-3/27.

The 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!

Mom's Morning Out (2/21)

Attention moms! Do you need a morning to yourself? We have the answer for you. On Saturday, February 21, we are offering the wider community FREE childcare (10:00am-1:00pm). The children will receive lunch and enjoy fun activities. Group size is limited. We can accommodate children 2 through 9 years (no infants or children under 2). Pre-registration is necessary. Registration forms are located on the Welcome Desk in the narthex or by contacting the church office.



Donations Accepted (2/22-3/15) Helpers Needed (3/19 and/or 3/20) Church Garage Sale (3/21)

We are looking for volunteers to help set up items for sale in the Fellowship Hall on Thursday and Friday, March 19 and 20th as we prepare for our second Indoor Garage Sale scheduled for Saturday, March 21. This sale is led by Sue Lemon and funds raised from it will support our Children and Families Ministry events: Mom's Morning Out, Parent's Night Out, and the Children's Christmas Celebration. Please contact Sue with any questions at 651-429-5861.

HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



HeartSaver AED/CPR Training (2/24)

On Tuesday, February 24 (10am-1pm), Ricardo Vazquez from the White Bear Lake Fire Department, will be instructing a CPRF class and teaching us how to properly use our AED. If you wish to attend, please sign up in the narthex or contact the church office. The cost is \$60 payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Payment must be received by Sunday, Feb. 8th. Space is limited. See Cindy Scott or Scott Zieman if you have any questions.

Daylight Saving Time (3/8)

Spring forward by setting your clocks one hour ahead at 2:00am on Sunday, March 8.



Easter Garden Orders DUE (3/15)

If you wish to order flowers for our Easter Garden, please fill out an order form and drop it, along with your payment, into the office door mail slot. Order forms must be received in the office by no later than March 15th. You may pick up your flowers from the altar and take them home immediately following the 9:30am Easter service. Donated flowers will be delivered to our home-bound members.



The Season of Lent (2/25-3/25)

On Wednesdays during Lent (February 25 through March 25), St. Stephen will host Lenten worship (12noon) with a soup and salad lunch (12:30pm). Redeemer will host Lenten Dinner Church with meal (5:45pm) and worship (6:00pm). The meal will overlap the service.

Wednesdays During Lent

February 25-March 25, 2026

NOON SERVICES

Worship (12noon)
Lunch (12:30pm)

St. Stephen
Lutheran Church
1965 East County Road E
White Bear Lake



EVENING SERVICES

Dinner (5:45pm)
Worship (6pm)

Redeemer
Lutheran Church
3770 Bellaire Avenue
White Bear Lake



Palm Sunday (3/29)



Join us on Palm Sunday, March 29 (9:30am) as we encounter the paradox that defines our faith: Jesus Christ is glorified king and humiliated servant. We wave palms in celebration 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.

Braided Bread - Tanzania Fundraiser (3/1-3/15)

Please support our Tanzanian mission work by purchasing braided bread through our Tanzania mission team. Orders may be placed in-person in the narthex after Sunday worship or in the Fellowship Hall after Wednesday worship. Pick-up will be on March 28 (10am-12noon).



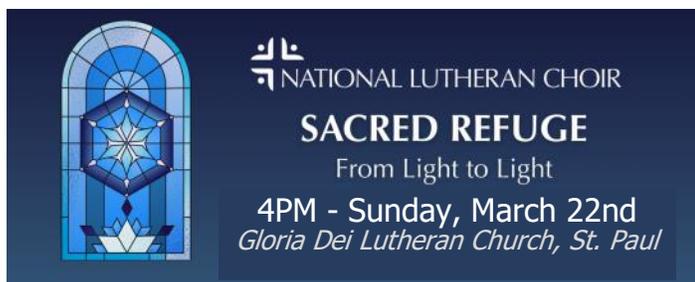
Look for more details in Weekly Update e-blasts.

State Capital Gathering (3/29)

Please organize your own carpools if you wish to join others at the State Capital gathering on Sunday, March 29 (2:00pm). Talk to Pastor James or Pastor Juli for more information.



HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES



National Lutheran Choir

As we transition from the stillness of winter into the promise of spring, we are invited to seek refuge in song—a sacred space where the soul finds its voice and a place to belong. Purchase tickets here: [Sacred Refuge — National Lutheran Choir](#)

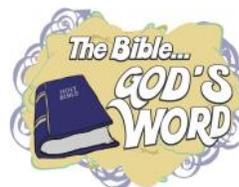
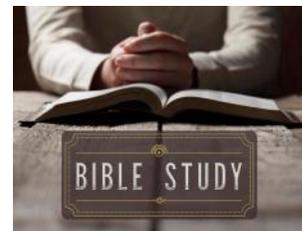
Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (3/31)

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 6551-269-6122. We are on BREAK in February. On Tuesday, March 31, we will be gathering at Olive Garden (1749 Beam Ave) in Maplewood. RSVP by 3/29.



Pastor-led Bible Study

Led by Pastor James on Mondays (10:00-11:00am) in the library.



God's Word

God's Word Bible discussion group, led by Phyllis Ballata, meets in the Library on Thursdays (1:00-2:00pm).

LOOKING AHEAD

Progressive Dinner

Saturday, April 25 (5:00pm)

Maunder Thursday—April 2
7:00pm

Good Friday—April 3

12noon & 7:00pm (with combined choirs)

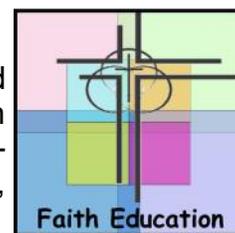
Easter Sunday—April 6

Sunrise Service (8:00am)

Festival Service w/Choir (9:30am)

Faith Ed Schedule

On Ash Wednesday (2/18), Children's Wednesday School, Pre-confirmation, and Youth Group are on break, however, Confirmation is still meeting. Faith Ed is on Spring break (3/11). Wednesday Faith Ed continues at Redeemer during Lent (2/25-3/25). On April 8, all Faith Ed returns to St. Stephen except for the Youth Group, which will continue meeting at Redeemer.



Sunday School

(9:45-10:30am) at St. Stephen in Classroom "I" September through May for Preschoolers (age 3 by 9/1) thru grade 5.

Wednesday School

Faith Education meets at Redeemer through Easter and then at St. Stephen (classroom "I").

- ◆ **Frolic Nursery...** (6:00-7:00pm) on Wednesdays. For Preschoolers (age 3 by 9/1) thru K.
- ◆ **KICK'n It!...** (5:30-6:15pm) on Wednesdays (not on 5th Weds) for grades 1 thru 2.
- ◆ **Pre-Confirmation...** (5:30-6:15pm) on Wednesdays (not on 5th Weds) for grades 3 thru 5.
- ◆ **Confirmation...** (7:00-8:30pm) on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Wednesdays for grades 6 thru 8.
- ◆ **Youth Group...** (7:00-8:00pm) on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays for grades 7 thru 12.

EASTER FLOWER GARDEN ORDER FORM

Easter Flower Garden 2026

Please indicate your choice of flower/plant:

- _____ Azaleas \$30.00
- _____ Cyclaman \$20.00
- _____ Hydrangea \$30.00
- _____ Kalanchoes \$20.00
- _____ Lilies \$15.00
- _____ Mums \$15.00
- _____ Rieger Begonia \$20.00
- _____ Tulips \$15.00



_____ I would like to donate \$20.00 to the general fund for flowers rather than order a specific flower/plant.



I wish to **KEEP** my plant

I wish to **DONATE** my plant

(If you wish to keep your plant, please feel free to pick it up AFTER the 9:30am Easter Sunday Worship Service.)

This plant is in (circle one): **memory / honor /celebration** of:

Your name/s as you would like to appear in bulletin:

Phone Number (in case we need to contact you): _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ **Envelope #** _____

(Indicate "Easter Garden" on check)

**Return this form and payment
BEFORE Sunday, March 15**

*Place into an offering plate, inside or outside mail drop, send via US mail,
or contact the church office to make other arrangements.*

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 1965 East County Rd E, White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651-777-1107 or office@StStephenWBL.org

COUNTERS: Please note payment above and put this form into Tami's mail slot.

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 office@StStephenWBL.org

Prayer Request Cards

Prayer Request Cards are located in the sanctuary pews. Feel free 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... 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Do You Wish to Be Baptized?
If you wish to be (or have your child) baptized,
please contact the church office at 651-777-1107
or office@StStephenWBL.org



GENERAL INFORMATION

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The Steppingstone Newsletter...

Is distributed monthly. If you have any items for the **April** issue, please send them to office@ststephenwbl.org by Tuesday, Mar. 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 & meal)
At Redeemer - 3770 Bellaire Ave.
(Meal 5:45pm, Service 6pm)

- 2/1 Adult Forum: Survey Results (10:45am)
- 2/2 Finance Committee (Mon/11:15am-1:15pm)
- 2/5 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 2/8 Soup'er Bowl Sunday (bring cans of soup)
- 2/8 **DEADLINE** to sign up for CPR/AED Training (Sun)
- 2/9 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-8:30pm)
- 2/12 Adult Forum: The Power of Laughter (Thurs/10:00am)
- 2/15 VBS Registration **BEGINS** (Sun)
- 2/16 President's Day / Church Office **CLOSED** (Mon)
- 2/17 Outreach Ministry Team Meeting (Tues/3:30-5:00pm)
- 2/17 Mardi Gras Celebration Dinner (Tues/5:30pm)
- 2/18 Ash Wednesday Services (12noon & 6:00pm w/Choir)
- 2/18 Confirmation Class at Redeemer (Wed/7:00-8:30pm)
- 2/18 **ASH WEDNESDAY** / Most Faith Ed **ON BREAK**
- 2/19 Quilting Group (Thurs/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 26*
- 2/20 Quilting Group (Fri/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 27*
- 2/21 Mom's Morning Out (Sat/10:00am-1:00pm)
- 2/22 Garage Sale Donations **BEGIN** (Sun)
- 2/24 CPR/AED Training (Tues/10:00am-1:00pm)
- 2/24 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch **ON BREAK**
- 2/25 Lenten Service (Wed/12noon)
- 2/25 Lenten Lunch (Wed/12:30pm)
- 2/25 Lenten Dinner Church **at Redeemer** (Wed/5:45pm)
- 3/1 Braided Bread Sales (Tanzania Fundraiser) **BEGIN**
- 3/2 Finance Committee Meeting (Mon/11:15am-1:15pm)
- 3/4 Lenten Service (Wed/12noon) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 3/4 Lenten Lunch (Wed/12:30pm) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 3/4 Lenten Dinner Church at Redeemer
(Wed/5:45pm) *also on 11, 18, 25*
- 3/5 Worship & Music Meeting (Thurs/6:00-7:00pm)
- 3/8 Daylight Saving Time **BEGINS** (Sun/2:00am)
- 3/9 Church Council Meeting (Mon/7:00-8:30pm)
- 3/10 Content **DEADLINE** for April Steppingstone (Tues)
- 3/11 Faith Ed **ON SPRING BREAK**
- 3/15 Easter Flower Garden Orders **DUE** (Sun)
- 3/15 Braided Bread Sales (Tanzania Fundraiser) **END**
- 3/15 Garage Sale Donations (Sun/9:00-11:00am) **END**
- 3/19 Quilting Group (Thurs/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 26*
- 3/19 Garage Sale SET-UP (Thurs/9:00am-9:00pm)
- 3/20 Garage Sale SET-UP (Fri/9:00am-9:00pm)
- 3/20 Quilting Group (Fri/9:00am-3:00pm) *also on 27*
- 3/21 Garage Sale INDOORS (Sat/10:00am-1:00pm)
- 3/25 Dinner Church & Faith Ed at Redeemer **FINAL**
- 3/28 Braided Bread PICK-UP (Sat/10am-12noon)
- 3/29 **PALM SUNDAY**
- 3/29 State Capital Gathering (Sun/2:00pm)
- 3/31 Christian Singles Lunch Bunch (Tues/11:30am)