



THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

DATE: DECEMBER 2023

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The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church



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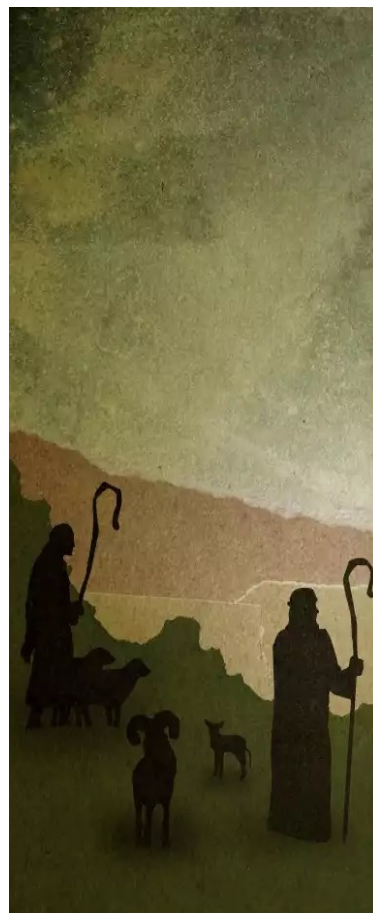
Office Hours:
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays
from 8am—3pm

Office Closed:
Monday, December 25th and
Tuesday, December 26th for
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

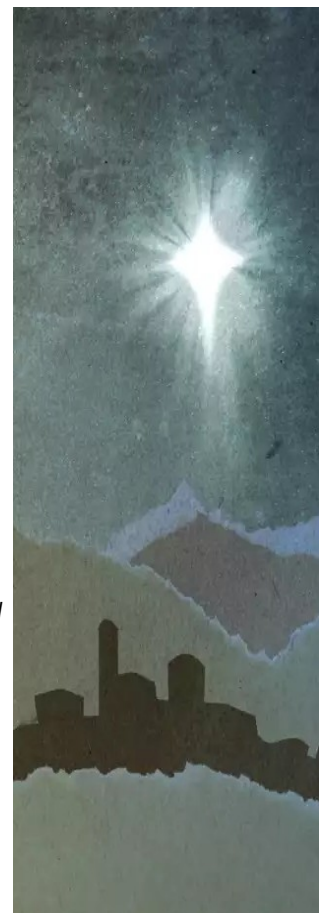
Deadlines:
Bulletin: Wednesday by 8:00 a.m.
Newsletter: 2nd Thursday of the month.

Facebook:
Join us to watch a livestream service
every Sunday at 9am at
<https://www.facebook.com/wausausslc>

Worship Telecast:
Our Worship Services are telecast on
Spectrum channel 980/TDS channel 17
on Sundays at 12pm (this is the previous
Sundays' service), Mondays at 3pm, and
Tuesdays at 10am and 10:30pm.



Now there were
in the same country
shepherds living
out in the fields,
keeping watch over
their flock by night.
And behold,
an angel of the Lord
stood before them,
and the glory of the Lord
shone around them, and
they were greatly afraid.
Then the angel
said to them,
"Do not be afraid,
for behold, I bring you
good tidings of great joy
which will be to all people.
For there is born to you
this day in the city of David
a Savior, who
is Christ the Lord.
And this will be
the sign to you:
You will find a Babe
wrapped in
swaddling cloths,
lying in a manger."
Luke 2:8-12



Pastor Karoline Schwantes/Phone: 715-370-5514/Email: prkaroline@sslwausau.com

How does a weary world rejoice? This question will shape our worship through Advent and the Christmas season.

To-do lists, shopping lists, loneliness, seasonal parties, the end of traditions long held, concerts, world news, local news, "where are the tape and scissors? I just had them!", days without seeing the sun, health concerns, parades, weather interfering with plans, the list goes on and on. Sometimes it all just feels like too much. Or maybe it feels like something is missing. Where is the room for rejoicing?

This theme is accompanied by worship materials from A Sanctified Art to help us practice joy in a weary world. "It's about learning how to rejoice in the midst of difficult, ordinary, and extraordinary days" because our joy is rooted in the love of God and in the gift of grace through Jesus Christ. Each week has a message related to the main theme. During advent, *we acknowledge our weariness, we find joy in connection, and we allow ourselves to be amazed.* Our annual Choral Service during worship on December 10th will dive deeply into these themes as well, as word and music are shared in beautiful ministry.

This year, the 4th Sunday of Advent falls on December 24th. *We sing stories of hope* for our morning Advent Worship Service at 9am and *we make room* at our 6pm Christmas Eve Worship Service. Christmas morning we celebrate Christ's birth with a simple worship in the chapel with cocoa, coffee, and guitar at 9am on December 25th. In the season of Christmas, *we root ourselves in ritual and we trust our belovedness.*

December can be a time of year that stirs many emotions. Sometimes a lot of transition and anxiety make us long for familiar traditions and sometimes grief and other emotions can make those same traditions feel impossible. God is with us throughout all of these feelings. This year, we practice rejoicing together as we deeply explore our belovedness as God's people through worship, art, word, music, and making space. This year are also a lot of new worship opportunities as we have been invited to participate in other local ELCA congregations Advent and Christmas traditions, like mid-week worship at Good Shepherd, a hymn sing at Pilgrim, and a Blue Christmas service. How does a weary world rejoice? Together we will learn and grow as we celebrate Christ's coming!

Sunday Advent Worship at St. Stephen at 9:00 am on December 3, 10, 17, 24
Choral Service with the Combined Choir and Bell Choir, December 10.

Mid-week Advent Services at Good Shepherd at 5:30 pm on November 29, December 6, 13, 20
Join our confirmation classes as we worship at Good Shepherd in Advent.

Christmas Sing-a-long at Pilgrim at 2:00 pm on December 16
Traditional Christmas carols. Light refreshments to follow.

Blue Christmas at Mount Calvary at 6:00 pm on December 21
*A longest night service, recognizing that this season brings up many feelings.
Sponsored by Mount Calvary, Pilgrim, Saint Andrew, and St. John's Mosinee.*

Christmas Eve Worship at St. Stephen at 6:00 pm December 24
Traditional worship with many favorite hymns and candle lighting

Christmas Morning in St. Stephen's Chapel at 9:00 am December 25
*A simple, musical service with classical guitar.
We will gather around the tables in the chapel for Word and Communion.
Coffee and hot chocolate will be available.*



Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

3

St. Stephen Calendar of Events						December 2023	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
					1	2 9:00 Stephen's Angels FLEECE BLANKET DEADLINE	
3 Blessing of the Fleece First Sunday of Advent 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	4 11:00 Staff Mtg. 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Dartball	5 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	6 6:30 Combined Choir	7 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Council Presidents' Mtg. at SSLC in the Chapel	8	9	
10 Advent Choral Service 9:00 Worship/Choral Service 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	11 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Dartball MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER	12 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 4:30 Executive Comm. Mtg. 5:30 Council Mtg. 6:30 Little Scholars Christmas Program 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	13 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Combined Choir	14 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	15	16 1:00 Saturday Craftersnoon 2:00 Christmas Singalong at Pilgrim Lutheran	
17 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	18 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 Dartball	19 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	20 6:30 Combined Choir	21 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics	22	23	
24 Christmas Eve 9:00 Worship/Advent Service 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 Worship/Christmas Eve Service 7:00 AA	25 Christmas Day 9:00 Worship 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum WINTER BREAK BEGINS OFFICE CLOSED	26 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum OFFICE CLOSED	27 6:30 Combined Choir	28 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	29	30	
31 New Year's Eve 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA							

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating December Birthdays.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

December 2nd

Sharon Lohrey

December 6th

Grace Luetschwager

December 9th

Briana Gutowski

Paul Oestreich

December 10th

Thomas Harry

John Teske

Herb Yolitz

December 11th

Dimitri den Otter

December 13th

Josslyn Phillips

Josslyn Phillips

December 17th

Michael Meuret

December 18th

Troy Sekaney

December 20th

Allen Brouchous

Dan Peters

December 24th

Shirley Kasten

Rachel Zastrow

December 26th

Heather Matter

December 30th

Cheryl Lonsdorf

December 31st

Mike Korpela



Advent Choral Service
Sunday, December 10th at 9am



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their December Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

December 3rd

William & Sandra Moss

December 7th

Joe & Heather Matter



Christmas Eve Service
Sunday, December 24th
at 6pm



Baptisms

"...child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

Leila Mae Whitmore ~ October 8, 2023

Lucy Lynn Schremp ~ November 26, 2023



Funerals

"...in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to almighty God..."

William Lewitzke ~ October 28, 2023

Rodney Bliese ~ October 28, 2023



Christmas Day Service
Monday, December 25th at 9am

Adopt-A-Family

We will be doing Adopt a Family through the Salvation Army and will sponsor ten kids. The Trust Fund is matching all monetary donations. We will be doing a wrapping party in December. Once the gifts are wrapped, we will take them to Salvation Army for those families to pick up. Watch the Sunday bulletins for more detailed information. For questions, reach out to Shauna Robinson or any member of the Good Stewards Committee.

December Memorials

If you would like a memorial placed in the December bulletins and January newsletter, it needs to be to the office by Monday, December 11th. Poinsettia memorials will be in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

Office Closed

The office will be closed starting Friday, December 15th until Wednesday, January 3rd as Nancy Henke will be on vacation. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please call Pastor Karoline Schwantes at 715-370-5514.

Saturday "Crafternoon"

Join Pastor Karoline for an afternoon of crafting on Saturday, December 16th from 1pm to 4pm. Bring whatever craft you're working on, whether it's card making, scrapbooking, crocheting, knitting, or even addressing your Christmas cards! We'll meet in the Conference Room.

Sponsorships Needed

Sponsorships are needed for the following: Christmas Eve bulletin covers (\$23), and Christmas Day bulletin covers (\$9). If you are interested in sponsoring either of these items, please contact Nancy Henke in the church office at 715-845-7858.

Thank You

THANK YOU to all who donated! Coats for Kids was a huge success! We distributed the items to Wausau and DCE School districts. Thank you Nancy Prigge for all your help and hard work to get these sorted, counted, and to the schools. We received 29 coats, 111 hats, 27 pairs of gloves/mittens, 30 scarves, 92 sweatshirts, 5 vests, 105 pairs of socks, 1 poncho, 9 pairs of boots, 8 pairs of snow pants, 16 pairs of underwear, 1 bra, and 20 pairs of sweatpants.

THANK YOU to all who donated to the Feminine Hygiene Drive! We were able to collect a total of 536 tampons, 496 pads, 10 deodorant, 80 liners, 4 personal care kits, and 2 packs of Q-Tips, and we raised \$60 to purchase more items.

Our 2023 Silent Auction was successful with \$681 being raised. All the monies went into the Property Fund for building maintenance. Thank you to everyone who participated. If anyone has any ideas for a basket in 2024, let one of the Angels know.

Women's Bible Study

On Wednesday, December 13th, the Women's Bible Study group will meet at 2510 Restaurant at 11:30 am for a Christmas celebration. Each person will order off of the menu, and pay their own way. If you wish to attend, please let Jane Seubert know so she can make reservations. Following lunch, they will have at Bible Study at church in the Conference Room. Any women in the congregation who would like to attend are WELCOME!

Benevolence

Through your support of St. Stephen in the month of October 2023, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$579

This is the ninth month of our unified budget in which we now give four and one half percent (4.5%) of our current expense receipts and loose plate offerings for benevolence. The above amount is based on the income of \$12,537 for October.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

For the month of October 2023 and the year to date, the St. Stephen family checkbook looked like this:

October 1—31, 2023

What we received.....	\$17,464.
What we spent.....	(\$19,277.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 1,813.)

January 1— October 31, 2023

What we received.....	\$187,457.
What we spent.....	(\$207,726.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 20,269.)

Order of Importance of Memorials and Other Special Offerings

Primary Funds: Current Expense Receipts, Building Improvement/Maintenance Fund, and Sustainability Trust Fund.

Secondary Funds: Bell Choir Fund, Brick Maintenance (tuck pointing), Choral Fund, ELCA Scholarship Fund, Good Neighbor Fund, Library Fund, Organ Fund, Quilters Memorial Fund, Parish House Alarm, Technology Fund, and WELCA Clean Water Fund.

Other Funds: Confirmation/National Youth Gathering, Faith Enrichment Fund, Major Church Improvement, Missionary Sponsorship, Rooted in Faith (Crossways Capital Improvement) Fund, Seidel/Meyer Scholarship, Seminary Scholarship, and World Hunger.

NOVEMBER 2023 MEMORIALS

In loving memory of William “Bill” Lewitzke
Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund -- \$1035
Family & Friends

Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund

In loving memory of Butch Bliese –
Deb Gleason and Gleason/Walter Families

In loving memory of Bill Lewitzke –
Shirley Kasten

In loving memory of William Lewitzke –
Geraldine Kowalski

In loving memory of Bill Lewitzke –
Sarah Lonsdorf

In loving memory of Bill Lewitzke –
Don & Kathy Oakland

In loving memory of my Niece, Melissa Fleming and Friend, Bill Lewitzke –
Mary Beth Tolley

In loving memory of my Wife, Sally who passed away November 18, 1995 –
Herb Yolitz

Current Expense Fund

In memory of loved ones –
Joyce & Charlie Fromfeld

In loving memory of my Grandson, Bradley Fust who would have been 40 years old on
November 12th –
Darleen Fust

In loving memory of Bill Lewitzke –
Elaine Hoppe

In memory of loved ones –
Pam Kohnhorst

In loving memory of William Lewitzke –
Jane Seubert

Christmas Symbols



The Star Of Bethlehem

The Star of Bethlehem is a symbol of hope and miracles. When Jesus Christ was born, the Star of Bethlehem guided the Three Wise Men to Jesus. For Christians, it is a reminder of the hope that Jesus brings to the world.

Bells

Bells are often used as Christmas symbols because they represent joy and happiness. They can also symbolize the ringing in of the New Year. Bells are often used in holiday decorations, such as wreaths and garlands. They are also a common motif in Christmas music.



The Nativity Scene



The Nativity scene is a popular Christmas symbol that represents the birth of Jesus Christ. It typically features a baby Jesus in a manger, surrounded by Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and animals. The scene is meant to remind us of the humble beginnings of Christ and the true meaning of Christmas.

The Christmas Tree

When we look at the Christmas tree, we are reminded of the hope and joy that the holiday brings. The evergreen tree is a symbol of life and growth, which reminds us that Christmas is a time to celebrate new beginnings. The lights on the tree represent Jesus Christ, who is the "light of the world"



The Christmas Wreath

The Christmas wreath is a symbol of hope, love, and joy. It is traditionally made from evergreen branches, which represent eternal life. The wreath is often decorated with items such as berries, ribbons, and holly. It is typically hung on doors or walls as a decoration.

Candy Canes

Candy canes are a popular Christmas treat that also has symbolic meaning. The shape of the candy cane is said to represent the shepherd's staff, and the red and white stripes are meant to represent the blood and purity of Jesus Christ. Candy canes are also often used as decoration, hung on Christmas trees or in wreaths.



KEEPING CHRISTMAS

by Dr. Henry Van Dyke

It is a good thing to observe Christmas Day.
 The mere marking of times and seasons,
 when men agree to stop work and make merry together,
 is a wise and wholesome custom.
 It reminds a man to set his own little watch, now and then,
 by the great clock of humanity, which runs on sun time.
 But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas Day,
 and that is, keeping Christmas.
 Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people,
 and to remember what other people have done for you;
 to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world;
 to see that your fellow-men are just as real as you are,
 and to try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy;
 to own that probably the only good reason for your existence
 is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life;
 to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe,
 and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness—
 are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.
 Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children;
 to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old;
 to stop asking how much your friends love you,
 and ask yourself whether you love them enough;
 to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts;
 to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want,
 without waiting for them to tell you;
 to make a grave for you ugly thoughts,
 and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—
 are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.
 Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—
 stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—
 and that the blessed Life which began in Bethlehem long ago
 is the image and brightness of Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.
 And if you keep it for a day, why not always? But you can never keep it alone.

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

Checks and money must be delivered by hand or mail, and postmarked on or before December 31, 2023 in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2023. Checks that are placed in the church offering at the first service of January 2024, **WILL NOT QUALIFY FOR A CHARITABLE DEDUCTION IN 2023**, even if the check was dated for 2023, or was actually written in 2023.

To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, please do not file your 2023 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. You may lose a deduction for some contributions if you file your tax return before receiving a written acknowledgment.

Below is a form requesting your year end tax statement. Forms will also be available in the back of the church and on the counter by the church office. If you prefer, you can email Bill Dunker at bdunker@sslclwausau.com and give him the following information:

Envelope Number (Optional) _____

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

____ I will pick up at the back of the church in January

____ Mail it to me

____ Email it to me – Email Address _____

If you do not have email, you can call the church office at 715-845-7858 leave your name, and indicate that you want a tax statement, and a form will be filled out for you and given to Bill Dunker.

Otherwise, completed forms can be placed in the brown box in the back of the church, mailed in, dropped off at the office, or put in with the offering. Statements will be ready by January 21, 2024.

If you have questions, you may call the church office at 715-845-7858.

COUNCIL MINUTES ~ NOVEMBER 14, 2023

Present: Pastor Karoline, Kathy Robinson, Lynn Deffner, Pam Hackbart, Sarah Lonsdorf, Verlyn Oelke, Jim Von Rueden, Shauna Robinson, Jackie Schremp, and Vicki Romang. **Absent:** Sue Holster, Lloyd Zimmel, and Jeff Blomquist.

The meeting opened at 5:30 pm following the Executive Council meeting.

A motion was made and passed to accept the October 17, 2023 Council minutes.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Karoline gave a verbal report. No written report was provided. There is a youth conference scheduled for February. Any youth interested should contact Pastor Karoline.

President's Report: Kathy Robinson gave a verbal report. No written report was provided. There is stress in the community concerning the future of churches in our area. The meeting on November 18th will be a good forum to forge a path to aid these congregations. This will be a good time for other congregations to hear what may have worked for congregations that have been in same situation in the past and what helped them.

Treasurer's Report: Our general fund currently has a balance of \$1,896. Our net income is \$20,000 less than we have spent YTD. Bill Dunker has announced he will be retiring from the role of Assistant Treasurer at the end of 2023. He will work with whoever we hire, but will be paid hourly for that time. Personnel Committee has been asked to advertise for this position.

A motion was made and passed to accept these reports.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: A written report was provided. Update given by Shauna Robinson to include extreme weather "Community on Call" with Pilgrim and the Adopt-A-Family. We will be asking congregation members to provide meals, supervision, etc.

Property: No written report was provided. Improvements to the elevator are scheduled to be completed on November 28th. The ice maker at the parsonage was removed because it was leaking and the renters don't need it. The large bells in the bell tower were not working. The bells were oiled and now running properly. An update to the maintenance checklist was added to be proactive on the care of the bells. Shelly has resigned as our cleaning custodian. Cecil will take over duties until spring; we will re-evaluate the duties at that time. The CD/DVD player has been repaired. The sanctuary roof will be looked at by the original installers to see what can be done to mitigate the problems we are having (fasteners are rusting out due to humidity and slate plates are falling). They will give us a quote for repair and/or replacement.

Worship: A written report was provided.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided.

A motion was made and passed to accept these reports.

Old Business:

- Memorial Fund – No change to the order this month.

New Business:

- Invoice Approval – A motion was made and passed to approve the bills paid. We approved up to \$5000 for repairs/updates to the parsonage. Submitted receipts totaled \$5002.63. Normally we budget \$1000 for maintenance. Door handles, paint, doorbell, and woodwork are all routine maintenance. Those items will be removed from the cost of the updates, so this will be less than \$5000. Jim suggested we ask the Trust Fund for the money. This was voted on and approved.
- Bill Dunker, Nancy Henke, and Cecil Wold will receive a wage increase of 3.5% per recommendation of the Personnel Committee. Pastor Karoline will receive a 4.1% increase per recommendation of the Synod. Pastor Karoline has been asked to co-lead a women's retreat next summer (1 week) and a family retreat (1 week) at a Crossways camp. The question was asked if she must take vacation time for those two weeks because she is technically not going to be on vacation. The recommendation by the Personnel Committee was that this would be paid time, no vacation time would be used.
- Discussion about Little Scholars expanding into the nursery took place. Because of input from the congregation, the decision was made to not give up that space. Once we meet with the Synod and determine who we are and what we want to be as a church, further discussion can take place about Little Scholars expansion, if that is the route we choose to go.
- No Nominating Committee was named, but we will be requesting volunteers for the following Council positions: Vice President, Property Elder, Trust Fund, and Members at Large.
- A budget meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 5th at 5:30pm. Budget approval will be on Tuesday, December 12th at our regular meeting.
- Newsletter deadline for December is Thursday, December 14th at 8am.
- Submissions for the Annual Report are due on Monday, January 8, 2024.
- The Council Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, February 25th from 11am to 5pm. We will discuss the Stewardship Campaign and the Capital Budget Campaign.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for December 12th at 5:30pm following the Executive Council meeting which is at 4:30pm.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 7:05pm.

Respectfully submitted—Vicki Romang, Council Secretary



ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS

If you would like to place a poinsettia in church for Christmas, please complete this form and either mail it in or bring it to the church office.

DEADLINE FOR ORDERS IS MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH, 2023

Given in memory of

Given in honor of

Given by

How many?

We are only offering Traditional Red this year.

Each plant is in a 6 ½" pot.

Cost of each plant is \$ 12

Call Nancy Henke @ 715-845-7858 with any questions.

Please include your payment with this form.

Make check payable to: *St. Stephen Lutheran Church.*

Thanks!

