



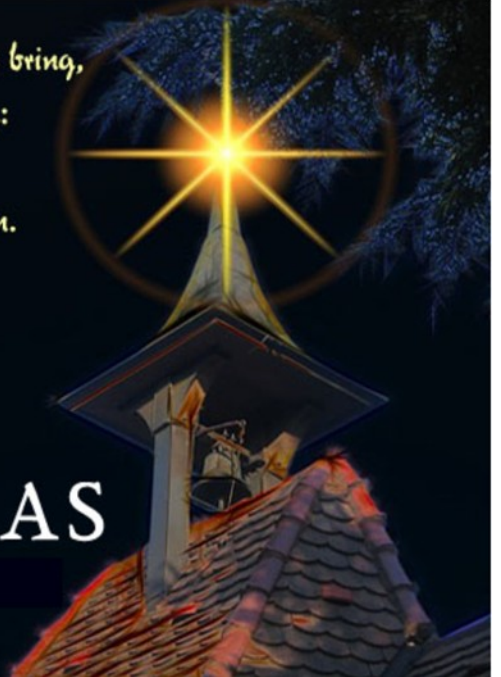
DATE: DECEMBER 2024
Volume 238 • Issue 238

THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Good news from heaven the angels bring,
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:
To us this day a child is given,
To crown us with the joy of heaven.
- Martin Luther

Have a blessed
CHRISTMAS



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

Office Closed:
Tuesday, December 24th and
Wednesday, December 25th for
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

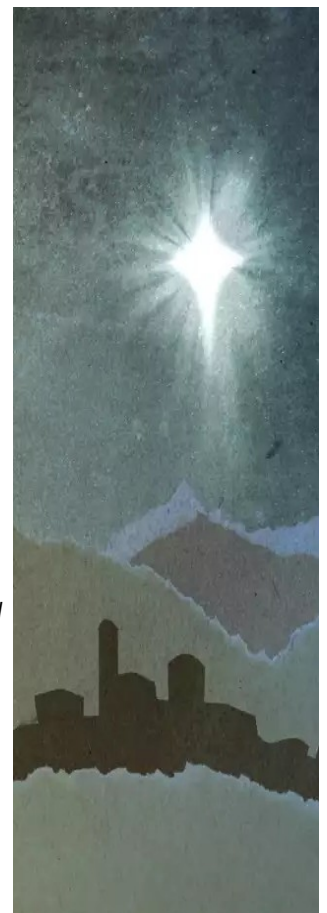
Deadlines:
Bulletin: Wednesday by 8:00 a.m.
Newsletter: 3rd Thursday of the month.

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 14
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

Our Advent theme is "Words for the Beginning."

Beginning again can be scary, but it also a great time for words like hope and joy and peace and love.

Beginning again can be a time to reach for the comforting things, a warm and beloved quilt, a hot beverage, familiar traditional foods, good friends and family.

Beginning again can be a time for old and new songs, for music and laughter and joyous sounds.

Beginning again can be a time for remembering traditions of the past and taking time to grieve.

Beginning again is a time for new stories and old ones too.

Beginning again can be a time to get excited over new possibilities.

Beginning again is a time for anticipation.

Beginning again is a time for next faithful steps.

Beginning again is a time for being rooted in the Creator who made us and loves us.

Advent is a time of beginning as we prepare ourselves for the Incarnation of God in the arrival of baby Jesus.

What story will you tell?

Pastor Karoline



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events					December 2024	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 First Sunday of Advent 9:00 Worship/Blessing of the Fleece 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	2 11:00 Staff Mtg. 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Dartball	3 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:15 SSLC Task Force Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	4 5:30 Midweek Advent Worship at Good Shepherd 6:30 Choir Practice	5 8:30 Quilting 9:00am—6:30pm Day of Prayer at Pilgrim 6:00 AI-Anon	6 2:00 Christmas Decorating in the Sanctuary	7 2:00 Christmas Carol Sing-a-long at Pilgrim
8 Choral Service Shut-in Basket Pick-up 9:00 Worship/Choral Service 10:00 Trust Fund Comm. Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	9 1:00 St. Stephen Grief Group 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Dartball	10 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Council Mtg. 6:30 Little Scholars Christmas Program 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	11 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Midweek Advent Worship at Good Shepherd 6:30 Choir Practice	12 8:30 Quilting 4:00 Worship Comm. Mtg. 6:00 AI-Anon	13	14 9:00 Saturday Crafterday 10:30am—2:00pm Wrapping Party for Adopt-a-Family in the Chapel
15 Choral Service at Pilgrim 9:00 Worship 9:00 Choral Service at Pilgrim 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	16 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 Dartball MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER	17 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:00 Joint Task Force Mtg. at St. Stephen 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	18 5:30 Midweek Advent Worship at Good Shepherd 6:30 Choir Practice	19 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	20 3:00pm—10:00pm Candlelight Concert	21 3:00pm—10:00pm Candlelight Concert
22 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	23 Winter Break Begins 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball	24 Christmas Eve 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 2:00 Worship at Good Shepherd 4:00 Worship at SSLC 5:00 Worship at Good Shepherd 5:00 Worship at Pilgrim 10:00 Combined Worship at SSLC 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum OFFICE CLOSED	25 Christmas Day 9:00 Worship at Pilgrim 10:00 Combined Worship at Good Shepherd OFFICE CLOSED	26 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	27	28
29 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	30 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball	31 New Year's Eve 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum				

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their December Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

December 3rd

William & Sandra Moss

December 7th

Joe & Heather Matter



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

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



Funerals

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

James Sekaney ~ October 28, 2024

Chuck Deffner ~ November 7, 2024

Jerry Hoppe ~ November 12, 2024

NOVEMBER 2024 MEMORIALS

Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund

In loving memory of our Aunt,
Delores Hilmershausen –
Jamie & Brian Wojtysiak

Capital Campaign

In memory of loved ones –
Charlie & Joyce Fromfeld

In loving memory of my Grandson,
Bradley Fust –
Darleen Fust

In loving memory of Geraldine Schlamp and
Dolores Hilmershausen –
Shirley Kasten

In memory of loved ones –
Ben & Peggy Roble

In memory of Chuck Deffner –
Stephen's Angels

In memory of the love of my life,
Butch Bliese who went to be with our Lord
on October 28, 2023 and my dear friend,
Carrie Nordgren, who went to be with
Our Lord on October 17, 2024 –
Mary Beth Tolley



Adopt-A-Family

We are doing Adopt-A-Family again this year! We have adopted 10 kids. There are gift tags in the back of the church and they will be available through Sunday, December 8th. All gifts need to be back to the church by Friday, December 13th. We will be having a “Wrapping Party” on Saturday, December 14th from 10:30am until 2pm if anyone is interested in helping wrap gifts.

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 16th. Poinsettia memorials will be in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

Office Closed

The office will be closed starting Friday, December 20th until Monday, January 6th 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 “Crafterday”

Join us on Saturday, December 14th from 9am until 4pm. Bring your favorite craft and come upstairs to the choir room. Join us for the morning or the afternoon, or both! We’ll have fun and snacks and coffee will be provided. Pack a lunch or there are many restaurants downtown to pick up lunch from..

Thank You

THANK YOU to all who donated! Coats for Kids was a huge success! A special THANK YOU to Marv Krueger, Nancy Prigge, and Shauna Robinson for bagging and delivering the coats and other winter apparel to the Wausau School District office. The items will be distributed to the schools. The students in need will appreciate all of the generous donations from our church and Immanuel Lutheran Church.

THANK YOU to everyone who donated items/baskets for the Silent Auction and a big THANK YOU to all who bid and won! The proceeds totaled \$636 and will go into the Property Committee’s budget to be used for everyday expenses. We are blessed to have so many of you willing to participate in this endeavor—Stephen’s Angels.

Fellow Ushers, on behalf of St. Stephen Lutheran Church and myself, I would like to say THANK YOU for your continued dedication and willingness to serve as ushers. Ushering is an important part of each service and your desire to help, whether it is your assigned week or not is much appreciated. Merry Christmas and God’s continued blessings—Lloyd Zimmer.

Women’s Bible Study

On Wednesday, December 11th, 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 call Jane Seubert at 715-297-6407, so she can make reservations. Following lunch, a Bible Study will be held 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 2024, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$608

This is the tenth 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 \$13,502 for October.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

For the month of October 2024 and the year to date, the St. Stephen family checkbook looked like this:

October 1—31, 2024

What we received.....\$19,503.
What we spent.....(\$17,936.)
Our balance.....\$ 1,567.

January 1— October 31, 2024

What we received.....\$194,197.
What we spent.....(\$204,721.)
Our balance.....(\$ 10,524.)

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.

CHORAL SERVICE/CHRISTMAS SERVICES



Choral Service

*Sunday,
December 8th
at 9:00 am*



JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS!!!

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24th
2pm & 5pm at Good Shepherd
4pm & 10pm at St. Stephen
5pm at Pilgrim

Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25th
9am at Pilgrim
10am at Good Shepherd

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.

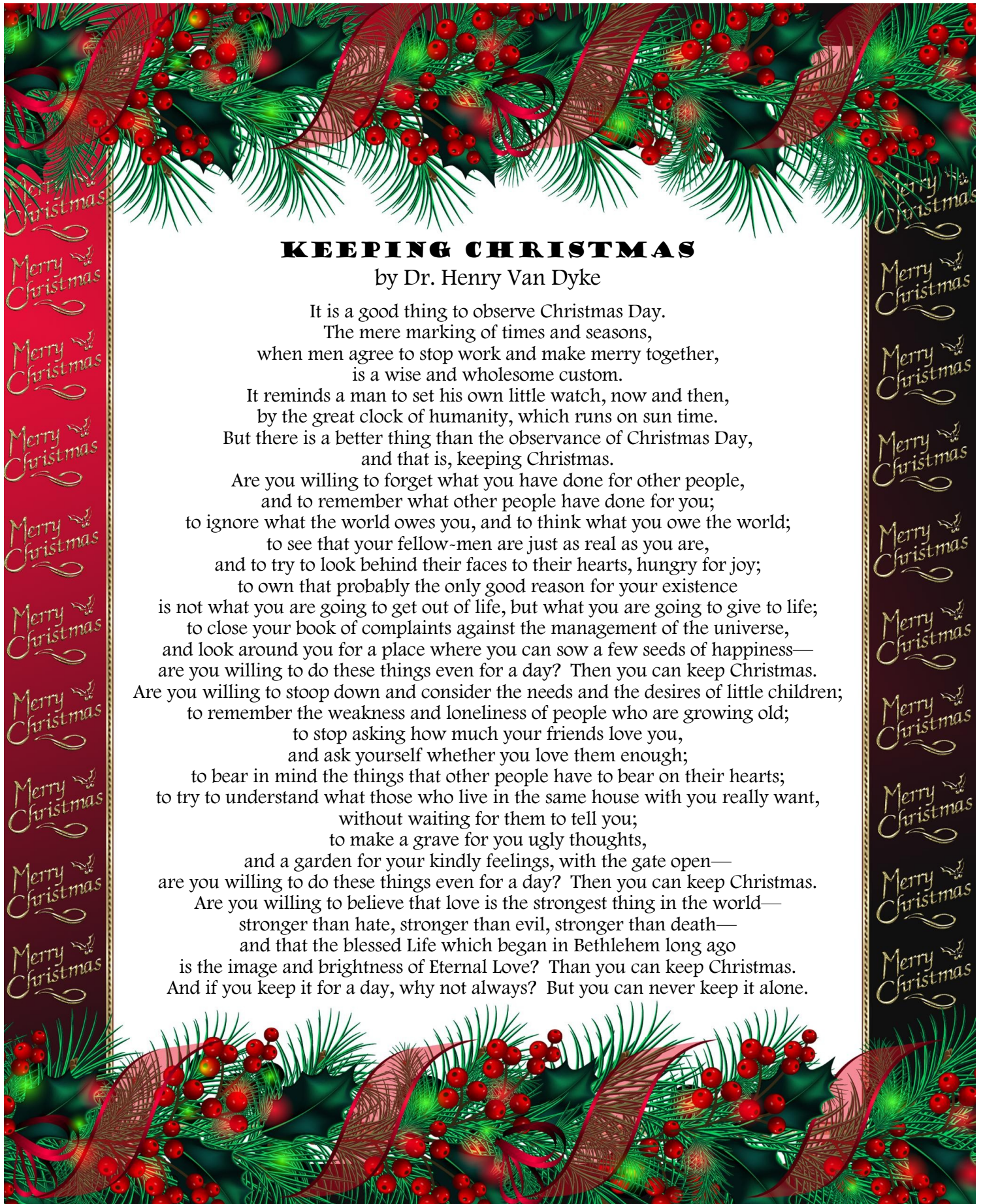
Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children;
to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old;
to stop asking how much your friends love you,
and ask yourself whether you love them enough;

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.



PICTURES FROM TRUNK OR TREAT



PICTURES FROM COATS FOR KIDS



IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

Checks and money must be delivered by hand or mail, and postmarked on or before December 31, 2024 in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2024. Checks that are placed in the church offering at the first service of January 2025, **WILL NOT QUALIFY FOR A CHARITABLE DEDUCTION IN 2024**, even if the check was dated for 2024, or was actually written in 2024.

To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, please do not file your 2024 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 Mary Beth Tolley at mbtolley@sslcwausau.com and give her 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 Mary Beth Tolley.

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 19, 2025.

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

COUNCIL MINUTES ~ NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Present: Pastor Karoline, Dick Holster, Verlyn Oelke, Vicki Romang, Jeff Blomquist, Sarah Lonsdorf, Shauna Robinson, Darrin Koehler, and Jacque Schremp.

Absent: Kathy Robinson, Sue Holster, Lynn Deffner, and Nancy Prigge.

Dick Holster led the meeting in the absence of President, Sue Holster.

Council Minutes from October 8, 2024: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without any changes.

Pastor's Report: A recommendation was made to involve the younger members of the congregation by adding a noisy offering during Sunday services. The Annual Meeting is being planned for Sunday, February 9, 2025. It was recommended that St. Stephen be a sponsor for Crossways Camping Ministries. A day camp is tentatively being planned for June. The recommended locations are Rib Mountain State Park or Marathon Park. The Council approved sponsoring this event. Several updates have occurred or are in the process at St. Stephen: We mourned the deaths of Geraldine Schlamp, Jim Sekaney, and Delores Hilmerhausen. Currently, there are three young people from St. Stephen who are attending confirmation classes. A baptism is in the planning stage. A family has requested to join our worship family. Table talks have begun. The purpose is to have one-on-one talks with fellow members on subjects of interest. If you would like to attend a Table Talk session, a sign-up sheet is located in the reception area.

President's Report: A president's report was not provided for October.

Treasurer's Report: Our total capital is \$3,748. A line item on the balance sheet, Accts Rec-Little Sch Rent Receivable, to be reviewed. The Christmas Tree Fund to be combined with the Banner Fund.

A motion was made and carried to accept the reports.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: The Little Free Pantry has been utilized heavily. We are working together this Christmas season with Good Shepherd, Immanuel, and Pilgrim to sponsor 30 kids through the Adopt-A-Family program. Donations of wrapping paper and tape are welcome. Shauna Robinson will be available after services to coordinate this event.

Property: Two church window frames (large window with Jesus and children and a south window) are in need of repair. These frames will need to be rebuilt. The repairs may take up to a year to complete. An organ tuner was available to give an estimate of repairs/life of the organ. In the current condition, the life of the organ is expected to be 10 years. Future need of upgrade from pneumatic to electric control with an estimated cost of \$60,000. The last time the organ was updated was in the 1970's. Discussion was held on implementing solar energy that will decrease the electric bill considerably. There is a 30% tax credit for implementing solar. Checking into the possibility of grants available for non-profit organization to assist with the cost.

Trust Fund: Distribution of \$3,250 was approved for October and \$4,200 for November. Some programs that are utilizing the funds are Adopt-A-Family, Lutheran World Relief, Toys for Tots, Homme Home Building Improvement, Catholic Charities Warming Center, Little Free Pantry, and Wheels to Work program.

Worship: Advertisement of the service times is a combined effort with Good Shepherd and Pilgrim Church. The Council approved a budget of \$200.

Important events in December: The Christmas tree will be decorated on Friday, December 6th, time is pending. **Services at St. Stephen:** The Choral Service will be held on December 8th, Candlelight Concert on December 20th at 6:30pm and 8:30pm, Christmas Eve Service at 4pm, and a combined Christmas Eve Service with Good Shepherd at 10:00pm. **Services at Good Shepherd:** Christmas Eve at 2pm and 5pm and a combined service with St. Stephen on Christmas Day at 10am. **Services at Pilgrim:** Christmas Eve at 5pm and Christmas Day at 9am.

A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.

Old Business:

- Memorial Fund Order – The Current Expense Fund is number one, Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund is number two, and Sustainability Trust Fund is number three.

New Business:

- The total amount of invoices paid in October was \$17,931.
- Capital Campaign – The loan for the roof was budgeted at \$180,000. The amount needed to borrow is \$125,000. Approval was granted for a construction loan of \$125,000 with a monthly payment of \$1,459 for 10 years. Due to the contributions received the monthly payment may be lower than anticipated. Reminder to congregation contributors will be made by the committee.
- Taskforce Update – Pastor Mode will talk with all involved Task Forces concerning the process of the consolidation/merger. She will discuss the major concerns previously indicated by the congregation. A Town Hall at St. Stephen will be held on Sunday, November 24th after the service.
- 2025 Budget – The budget will be discussed with Council members on Sunday, December 1st after the service.
- Nominating Committee – Dick Holster continues to find volunteers to fill the open Council positions. The Council Secretary position and two Member-At-Large positions are available. If interested, please contact Dick or another Council member.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 5:30pm.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Romang, Council Secretary