



DATE: JANUARY 2025  
Volume 239 • Issue 239

# THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church

## TAKE TIME

Take time to gaze at a sunset sky  
Where colors blaze to dazzle the eye.  
Take time to watch a moonlit sea  
And look in awe at a towering tree.  
Take time to look in the heart of a flower  
Adorned with diamonds from a gentle shower.  
Take time to view a mountain high  
With snowy peak 'gainst bluest sky  
Take time to listen to the song of birds  
A paean of joy without need of words.

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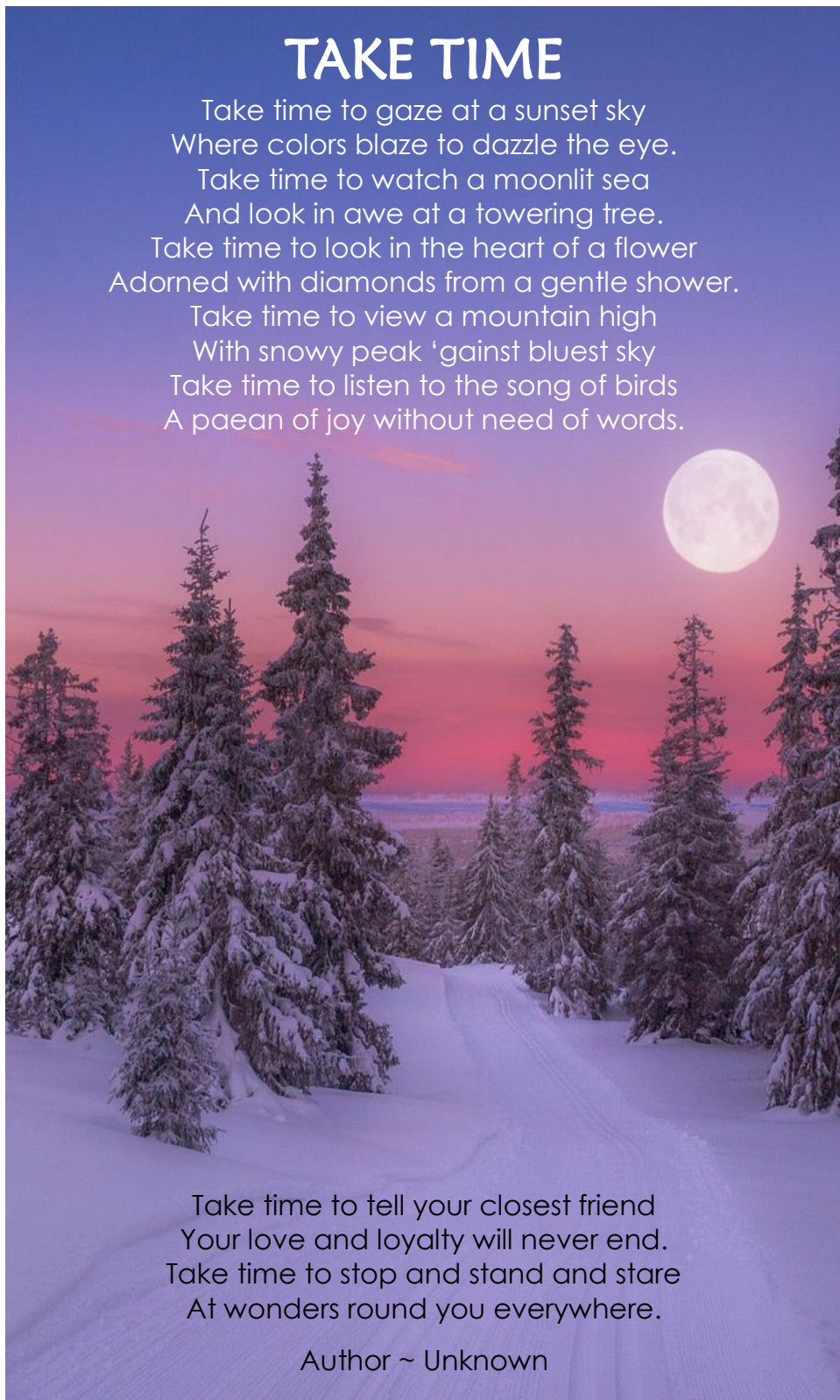
**Office Hours:**  
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays  
from 8am—3pm

**Office Closed:**  
Wednesday, January 1st  
for New Year's 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.



Take time to tell your closest friend  
Your love and loyalty will never end.  
Take time to stop and stand and stare  
At wonders round you everywhere.

Author ~ Unknown

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

Happy New Year!

Our Advent theme and Christmas theme has been “Words for the Beginning” and we’ve begun our season talking about words like hope, peace, joy, and love. These are great words for new beginnings and are also wonderful for launching us into 2025! I’m wondering what other words will be good for a new year... expectation, wonder, curiosity, faith, grace. What words stand out to you?



Instead of a resolution, many people have begun a tradition of picking a word of intention each new year. When I’ve done this, I’ve found it meaningful to think about what my hopes and dreams are, reflecting on the past year and wondering what I want to focus on in the new year. In past years, I have picked words like gratitude and voice.

I’m not sure yet what my word of intention will be for the new year. My potential list includes: grace, explore, follow, listen, possibility, and new. No matter what word I pick, I know my year will be shaped by following Jesus, Word made flesh. I know our year will be focused on listening for the calling of the Holy Spirit.

We already have some plans for the new year. We will be including a noisy offering in worship on the third Sunday of each month, benefitting a different cause each month. Also new will be the Grief Share ministry beginning in February. We are still planning dates for table talks and town hall meetings. We’ve also begun to make plans for Lent, Easter, and even summer. Anticipation and excitement are definitely words that will be shaping our year together!

*Pastor Karoline*

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events					January 2025	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<b>1 New Year's Day</b> NO SCHOOL OFFICE CLOSED	<b>2</b> 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 9:00 Stephen's Angels
<b>5 Hygiene Drive for Bridge Street Mission begins</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/IDS 7:00 AA	<b>6</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Dartball	<b>7</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:15 SSLC Task Force Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>8</b> 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice	<b>9</b> 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> 9:00 Worship 10:00 Mtg. in Chapel 10:15 Trust Fund Comm. Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/IDS 7:00 AA	<b>13</b> 1:00 St. Stephen Grief Group 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball <b>MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR JANUARY</b>	<b>14</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Council Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>15</b> 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice	<b>16</b> 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics <b>NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</b>	<b>17</b> 3:00pm-10:00pm Candlelight Concert <b>NO ELEMENTARY CLASSES PM</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/IDS 7:00 AA	<b>20 MLK Day</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 Dartball <b>NO SCHOOL</b>	<b>21</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:00 Joint Task Force Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>22</b> 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice	<b>23</b> 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/IDS 7:00 AA	<b>27</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball	<b>28</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>29</b> 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice	<b>30</b> 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon	<b>31</b>	

# ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



## Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating January Birthdays.

**CONGRATULATIONS!!!**

### January 1st

Chuck Johnson

### January 2nd

Darleen Fust

Penny Windorski

### January 3rd

Travis Teske

Noel Tordsen

Kyle Utech

### January 4th

Connie Schneider

### January 6th

Michael Zahrt

### January 7th

Anna Dodds

Cecil Wold

Duane Wolfe

### January 9th

Isaac Stuhr

### January 11th

Norma Bandoek

Roger Hackbart

Bennett Korpela

### January 12th

Nancy Prigge

### January 14th

Violet Hackbart

### January 15th

Ashley Kumm

Rebecca Hebda

### January 17th

Amy Korpela

Shirley Schwede

Andrew Wiskow

### January 18th

Ruth Grell

### January 20th

Dawn Felch

### January 22nd

Russell Post

Brad Smith

### January 24th

Jeff Busha

### January 25th

Chad Deffner

Kathy Oakland

### January 26th

Nancy Henke



Let us walk  
in the *light*  
of the *Lord*

Isaiah 2:5

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of St. Stephen Lutheran Church will be held on Sunday, February 9th, 2025, immediately following worship. Each committee/group will need to turn in an individual report to be included in the Annual Report. The deadline is Monday, January 13, 2025.

## Aspirus Lifeline Services

Aspirus Lifeline services are back to being installed in area households. Lifeline is an easy-to-use, 24-hour service that provides quick assistance whenever it's needed. Subscribers are able to live more independent, active lives at home because Lifeline's professional staff is ready to provide assistance if needed. Subscribers are free to go about their daily activities with more confidence and less worry, even if they live alone. Aspirus Lifeline also offers Auto Alert, which is advanced technology and provides an added layer of protection: 1) Offers access to help with or without the push of a button if a fall is detected 2) Is an easy-to-wear pendant-style button that is comfortable and waterproof 3) Is the ONLY medical alert pendant with breakthrough technology that, if it detects a fall, will automatically call for help even if you can't push the help button or are unable to ask for help. Learn more by going to: [www.aspirus.org/lifeline](http://www.aspirus.org/lifeline) or call 715-847-2781.

## Baby Shower Update

An update from the Baby Shower that we held this past summer: Due to your generous donations, we have been helping families in need and I had the pleasure of seeing a woman be blessed with the car seat that was donated. The woman came in to The Neighbors' Place for help because she was granted emergency placement of her two young grandchildren. The grandchildren's parents were killed in a car accident. It was an honor to witness how the generosity of our congregation helps people day in and day out through The Neighbors' Place. This particular incident touched me and warmed my heart, so I wanted to share one story of many on how we are making a difference in the community. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Everyone! - Shauna Robinson, Good Stewards Elder

## Can Pop Up Tabs

The Angels are collecting Can Pop Up Tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. The Ronald McDonald House provides a place for families with sick children to rest, prepare meals, and share their concerns and experiences with other families. It keeps families close to their child and the care that child needs, and provides the comfort and support needed during that difficult time. Place your tabs in the container in the hallway across from the office.

## Community Dinners

Starting in January, the Community Dinners will no longer be held at First Presbyterian Church. They will be moved to First United Methodist Church at 903 North 3rd Street, Wausau, which is near the YMCA downtown.

## Faith In Action

Faith in Action is a Non-Profit Organization which offers quality services at NO COST, for seniors to live in their homes, as long as feasibly possible. All services are provided regardless of income, religious belief, or ethnic background. If you or a neighbor needs help getting transportation for medical appointments, grocery shopping, or running any other errands please call Faith in Action at 715-848-8783 Monday thru Thursday from 9 am to 2 pm. Their office is located here in Wausau at 630 Adams Street.

## Benevolence

Through your support of St. Stephen in the month of November 2024, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$399

This is the eleventh 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 \$8,877 for November.

## St. Stephen Family Checkbook

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

### November 1—30, 2024

What we received.....\$19,821.  
What we spent.....(\$15,490.)  
Our balance.....\$ 4,331.

### January 1— November 30, 2024

What we received.....\$214,018.  
What we spent.....(\$220,211.)  
Our balance.....(\$ 6,193.)

## 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.

## Fleece Blankets

We created 41 fleece blankets this year for the Children's Advocacy Center. Thank you to all who donated to help us meet that number. A special shout out to the Angels who did the cutting and tying.

## Grief Share

A new Grief Share Group will be starting at St. Stephen on February 3rd from 6:30 to 8:30 pm facilitated by Shirley Ostrem and Jane Seubert. Grief Share is a 13 week DVD-based course designed to support and help move people through the grief process. For more information, please contact Shirley Ostrem at 715-359-5531 or email [sjostrem2113@outlook.com](mailto:sjostrem2113@outlook.com).

## Hygiene Drive

There are many in our community that need our help. The Angels are hosting a Hygiene Drive in January for the Bridge Street Mission. This is a residential Christian discipleship program providing the support and skills needed to live addiction free and also to live a productive life. They provide recovery support groups to help maintain the sobriety of the men enrolled. They encourage healthy relationships, they help find jobs with job training and support, and they provide financial literacy for those needing help. Items needed: pillows and zip covers, men's deodorant, men's lotion, nail clippers, chap stick, and plastic soap boxes. A table will be placed in the back of the church for donated items. Please find it in your heart to donate to this cause. Thank you!

## Little Free Pantry

The Good Stewards Committee is asking for food donations for the little free pantry outside of the church. We can use things like canned meat, peanut butter, pasta, hamburger helper, cereal, etc. We just ask that it not be in a glass container or contain carbonation. There are two plastic containers in the chapel area labeled for food donations. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to Shauna Robinson or anyone else on the Good Stewards Committee. Thank you!

## Office Closed

The office will be closed 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.

## Thank You!

**Eucharistic Ministers**—Thank you to everyone who brings communion to our homebound congregation members and to those that are in assisted living facilities and nursing homes. This is such an important part of church ministry. I am sure that our members who are unable to attend church cherish your visits—Nancy Henke.

**Ushers**—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 Zimmel.

**Worship Assistants**—I want to thank everyone who served as Assisting Ministers, Communion Assistants, Lectors, and Projection/Video Assistants. You are an integral part of Sunday morning worship—Nancy Henke.

And a special thank you to Shirley Kasten, who faithfully comes in every week to print and collate the bulletins.

## Synod Youth Retreat

The Synod Youth Retreat, Inescapable Love, will be held Friday, February 21st thru Sunday, February 23rd at Imago Dei Village in Clintonville, WI. This retreat is open for youth from 6th thru 12th grade and is designed for youth to come together, grow in their faith, and build deeper connections with their peers and God. Early Bird Registration ends January 13th. Registration closes January 27th. Email or call Nancy Henke at [nhenke@sslwausau.com](mailto:nhenke@sslwausau.com) or 715-845-7858. Cost will be offset by congregation youth funds, so cost per participant is \$99, with additional funding available upon request.

## Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study Group will meet on Wednesday, January 15th at 1pm in the Conference Room. Any women in the congregation who would like to attend are WELCOME!

**We adopted 10 kids for Adopt-A-Family this year and held a “Wrapping Party” on December 14th. Because of the generosity of our congregation, these kids will have a Merry Christmas!!!**



## Capital Improvement Update

As of December 1, we have made payment to Krause Konstruktion for the building work completed this summer.

As a refresher, here is what was completed, all items under budget:

- Alley repair – \$3,533
- Video streaming equipment upgrade – \$3,936.51
- Roof/tuckpointing/louvers/fascia repair - \$201,633
- **Total expenditures = \$209,132.51**

With giving from the congregation and monies from both the Trust Fund and the Building Improvement fund, we ended up financing **\$121,000** from the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA.

Our monthly payments to pay off the loan in 5 years' time will be approximately **\$2,415/month**.

Thank you to those who have contributed financially in 2024 and made a commitment to ensure we are able to pay off the loan quickly. If you have yet to meet your 2024 commitment, please do so as soon as possible. If you have yet to complete a pledge form, they are available in the office and can be turned in at any time.

Don't forget 2025 is right around the corner and we will need your pledged funds starting in January to help us meet our monthly obligations.

If you need a reminder on your pledge amount, please contact the office and Mary Beth will provide you with the pledge amount.

Capital Committee

Jeff Blomquist, Dick Holster, Sue Holster, Randy Van Natta, and Pastor Karoline



# 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](mailto: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.

## DECEMBER 2024 MEMORIALS

### **In loving memory of Jerry Hoppe**

Capital Campaign -- \$500

Family and Friends

### **Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund**

In loving memory of my Sister, Grace Berg –

Kathleen Jaecks

### **Capital Campaign**

In loving memory of my Parents, Pat & Iris Brown; my Aunt & Uncle, Dawn & Jim Henke; my Grandparents, Alfred & Sue Zillman; and my Great Grandparents, Albert & Emilie Zillman, all of whom were members of St. Stephen –

Kelly Brown

In loving memory of Charles Deffner and Jerry Hoppe –

The Kasten Family

In memory of loved ones –

Pam Kohnhorst

In loving memory of Jerry Hoppe –

Sarah Lonsdorf

In loving memory of Chuck Deffner, Jerry Hoppe, and Ralph Kohnhorst –

Mary Beth Tolley

### **Current Expense Fund**

In loving memory of Jerry Preller, Butch Skinner, and Perry Barr –

Kay Preller

### **Library Fund**

In loving memory of Merlin Ninnemann –

Tim Gritzmacher

### **Seidel Meyer Pastoral Ministry Fund**

In loving memory of Harold & Sue Kratwell, Kenneth & Sadie Borth, and Norman & Bertha Zietlow –

Sandy & Ron Borth and Family

If you would like a memorial placed in the January bulletins and February newsletter, it needs to be to the office by Monday, January 13th. Thank you!

**Present:** Pastor Karoline, Sue Holster, Dick Holster, Verlyn Oelke, Vicki Romang, Jeff Blomquist, Sarah Lonsdorf, Shauna Robinson, Darrin Koehler, and Lynn Deffner. **Absent:** Kathy Robinson, Nancy Prigge, and Jacque Schremp.

Jim Von Rueden has graciously volunteered to temporarily fill the role of Assistant Treasurer while Mary Beth Tolley is recovering from an illness. A motion was made and the Council unanimously approved this temporary transition.

**Pastor's Report:** A written report was provided. Pastor Karoline will be away January 7th thru the 19th for a continuing education opportunity. She will be traveling to Greece and Turkey and will be visiting many of the sites of Pauline New Testament epistles. During the month of November, we mourned the deaths of Jim Sekaney, Chuck Deffner, and Jerry Hoppe. Three Table Talks have been conducted. A couple of the topics that were covered were concerns over the future of our building and inclusion; how we can be more welcoming to others. Table Talks will continue with topics of concern. The noisy offerings will be included in the services the third Sunday of the month. Vicki Romang will provide several buckets to involve as many of the youngest members of our congregation during the service as possible.

**President's Report:** No written report provided. The Candlelight Concerts are filling up. There has been a great response for the concerts that will be held on December 20th and 21st.

**Treasurer's Report:** Our total capital is \$8,078. The rental income from the parsonage and Little Scholars is up to date.

**A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.**

### **Committee Reports:**

**Good Stewards:** No written report provided. We are sponsoring 30 families through the Adopt-A-Family Program. All the tags have been picked up by congregation members. We have been asked to adopt three mothers in the area that are in great need. It is wonderful to see how we are able to help so many in our community. Over 100 meals were served during the Community Dinner held in November. This event will be held at First United in the future. Good Shepherd church is now joining the Good Stewards Committee in efforts to help the community.

**Property:** A written report was provided. The Property Committee, along with the support of the Trust Fund Committee, is looking to replace the double oven in 2025. Due to safety concerns, it is suggested starting in 2025 to replace the wax candles during the Christmas Eve services with LED candles. Window repair on the west side of the church has begun.

**Trust Fund:** A written report was provided. Distributions in the month of November totaled \$1,300. Recipients of the distributions were Crossways Camping Ministries, The Neighbors' Place, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and The Women's Community.

**Worship:** A written report was provided. Advertisement of the times of our Christmas services is a combined effort with Good Shepherd and Pilgrim Churches. The total amount paid for the advertisement in the City Pages and Wausau Pilot and Review was \$752. This expense will be divided among the three churches.

**A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.**

### **Old Business:**

- Memorial Fund Order – No change to the order this month. 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 \$101,484. This amount includes \$80,662 to Krause Konstruktion for roof repairs.
- Capital Campaign – Reminder to congregation contributors will be made by the committee.
- Task Force Update – Many topics were discussed during the Task Force meetings. The two major concerns were what can we do together, a discussion with Pastor Mode, and what do we want to create through our ministry. Discussions in 2025 will include but are not limited to, the life cycle of the church.
- Nominating Committee – Dick Holster has found volunteers for most of the open Council positions. The Council Secretary position is still available. If interested, please contact Dick Holster or another Council member.
- Annual Budget – The submitted annual budget for 2025 was accepted by the Council with a few updates. A large expense in the budget is the weekly offering envelopes and the postage to send them. The approximate cost for the envelopes is \$3,682. This will be a topic to further discuss with the congregation.
- Pine Tree Quilters (PTQ) – The PTQ group is interested in renting some space in our building. The group has been holding their meetings at Mount Olive for over 10 years. However, Mount Olive is not able to provide space any longer due to growth within their congregation and events.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 5:30pm.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted, Vicki Romang, Council Secretary