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

Office Closed:
Friday, July 4th

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.

DATE: JULY 2025
Volume 245 • Issue 245

THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Prayer for Independence Day

Dear God,
as we celebrate today
with fireworks and festivals,
help us never to forget
the reason for our joy.
Help us remember
that our rights to life, liberty
and the pursuit of happiness
were signed into our heritage
with the willing blood
of American patriots.
Most of all, help us remember
that the rights of all people
are more

than words on a document,
and that all people have rights
because you have given us
the dignity of human life.

Grant freedom to all,
and give us the strength
to protect the rights of others.

Amen.

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

God is with us!

Truly. No matter where we go, God is with us to the cottage up north for the summer, a long meandering road trip, or summer cookouts in our backyard. God was with us at a boisterous Polka worship, and God will be with us for Christmas in July (July 20th!), and God is with us every time and place we gather for worship. God is with us at birthday and graduation parties. God is with us at the WMC emergency homeless shelter and all of the places we serve and seek help. God is with us at gravesides and hospital beds. God is with us in our joy and in our grief and in our celebration and in our frustrations and in our fear. God is with us even as we listen closely for what we should do next.



God is with the people of St. Stephen, Pilgrim, and Good Shepherd as we worship, share God's Word, and serve our community. God has been with the task forces who have been meeting faithfully to discern the futures and shared ministries of our congregation. In June, leadership from Pilgrim reached out to the Council and Task Force of St. Stephen with a request to merge their congregation into St. Stephen. The people of Pilgrim are facing dwindling attendance numbers, many years without pastoral leadership, and a desire to continue their mission of serving God through their ministries. Also, we both recognize the strong relationships and friendships that have been formed between shared ministries of our congregations, such as the combined choirs and shared worship opportunities.

What would a merger mean?

- The assets and liabilities of Pilgrim will be acquired by St. Stephen.
- The Pilgrim Church facilities and land will become part of St. Stephen. A Building Advisory Committee will be formed with leaders from both congregations to evaluate the future use of the property.
- Pilgrim members will become members of St. Stephen.
- St. Stephen as a congregation will remain with our existing leadership structures, constitution, and assets.

With or without the merger, there will be change.

We are in the process of updating our roster and will be looking at making necessary updates to our constitution. There will be work to do on updating our committee and council structures, and this will be enhanced by adding new leaders. We will be focusing on evangelism and how we welcome newcomers. There will be intentional thought put into how we best merge 2 cultures.

Our next steps are to meet with Synod leaders in August to establish a plan and a timeline for moving forward in ways that strengthen our partnership. Leaders from Good Shepherd are aware of this potential merger, are very supportive, and praying for us. We continue in strong relationship and shared ministry with Good Shepherd as we listen to the Holy Spirit and make next steps.

This is big news, but we remain secure in the best Good News, God is with us! Please, pray, ask questions, and have conversations about what this means for our future. I will do my best to respond when I return from vacation in mid-July and in the meantime, the members of the Task Force will be available to talk.

Peace be with you all! And remember, God is with us!

Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events					July 2025	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	2	3 6:00 Al-Anon	4 Independence Day 5	
6 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	7 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	8 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:00 Good Stewards Comm. Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	9	10 6:00 Al-Anon	11	12
13 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	14 1:00 St. Stephen Grief Group 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	15 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	16	17 6:00 Al-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics	18	19
20 Christmas in July 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	21 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR JULY	22 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	23	24 6:00 Al-Anon NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	25	26
27 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	28 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	29 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	30	31 6:00 Al-Anon		

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their July Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

July 1st

Gene & Darlene Simmerman

July 4th

Chuck & Kim Kershaw

July 10th

Duane & Elizabeth Wolfe

July 12th

Kim & Barbara Brandt

July 14th

Don & Kathy Oakland

July 20th

James & Kaitlyn Ritter

Raymond & Sharon Schirmer

July 22nd

Jim & Bonnie Von Rueden

July 24th

Russell & Julie Post

July 26th

Shane & Amanda Woller

July 31st

John & Elizabeth Beilke



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating July Birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

July 4th

Lloyd Zimmer

July 8th

Kathleen Jaecks

Clara Lind

David Skola

Jim Von Rueden

July 9th

Nancy Zelich

July 11th

Ben Roble

July 12th

Barbara Brandt

July 16th

Joyce Fromfeld

Walter Grau

Sue Holster

Lisa Koch

July 17th

Verlyn Oelke

July 18th

Linda Salzman

Lucy Schremp

July 19th

Vanessa Koehler

July 20th

Dianna Busha

July 21st

Richard Shipway

July 23rd

Annika Tordsen

July 24th

Susan Johnson

Jeffrey Will

July 25th

Sharon Hopp

July 26th

Christine Baumann

Zadra Luedtke

July 29th

Sandra Moss

Jakob Tordsen

July 31st

Cole Hannes

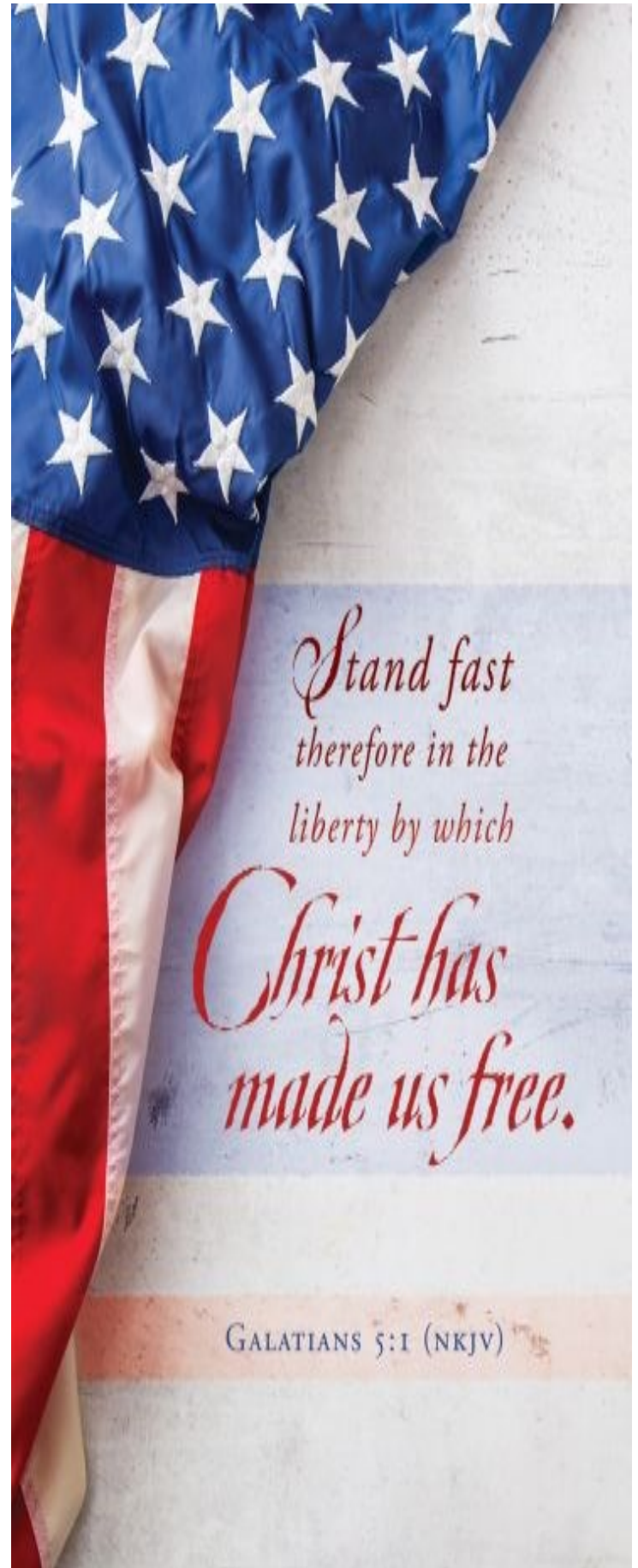
Beth Lind



Funeral

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

Charles Fromfeld ~ June 22, 2025



Capital Improvement/Mission Investment Loan

In 2024, St. Stephen borrowed **\$121,000** from the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA to finance building improvements. Beginning in early 2025, we began making monthly payments, with the goal of paying the loan off in 5 years' time. As of June 1, 2025, our current balance is **\$117,754**. Our goal, with your support, is to pay the loan off in 5 years' time. Thank you to those who have already met your 2025 commitment amount and those who are paying on a regular basis. If you have not yet paid your commitment amount, please consider payment sooner than later as earlier payments reduce the principal more quickly. If you need a reminder on your pledge amount, please contact the office and Mary Beth will provide you with your pledge amount. Capital Committee – Jeff Blomquist, Dick Holster, Sue Holster, Randy Van Natta, and Pastor Karoline

Lutheran World Relief

It's time to watch for sales on Lutheran World Relief items. This year we will assemble School Kits and Personal Care Kits. Primary needs are: lightweight bath towels (20"x40" to 52"x27"), bath size bars of soap, sturdy combs (no picks or fine-toothed), nail clippers, spiral notebooks (70-80 sheet), rulers (cm on one side), and crayons (16-24 count)

Office Schedule for July

The office will be open on Mondays and Thursdays during the month of July. Nancy Henke will be working from home on Wednesdays and checking the church voicemail and her email. The week on June 29th, Nancy will be on vacation and will return to the office on Monday, July 7th. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please call Pastor Will Ostrem at 715-571-2750 as Pastor Karoline is on vacation from Thursday, June 26th thru Sunday, July 13th.

Polka Service

We had a wonderful turn out for the Polka Service that was held at Pilgrim on Sunday, June 22nd. 136 people attended the service and there were around 80 people (including helpers) who stayed and ate lunch after the service. There was more food than needed, so the extra drinks, cookies, chips, and potato salad were donated to the homeless shelter. \$380 was collected for the Alzheimer's Association. Thank you to everyone who made this service possible and to those that attended!

WMC Shelter

THANK YOU to those who have helped with donations to the WMC Shelter thus far as well as volunteering there on the 1st and 3rd Monday (sign-up sheet outside church office on the board). This would not be possible without your assistance. The current needs of the shelter are cases of bottled water, lotion, men's boxer underwear, women's underwear, and disposable coffee cups as well as sugar and creamer for coffee. If you have any items that you would like to donate, please bring them to church. If you'd prefer to do a monetary donation please make a memo on your check or a note that states it's for WMC supplies. If you have any questions please contact Shauna Robinson at 608-514-4504.

Benevolence

Through your support of St. Stephen in the month of May 2025, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$637

This is the fifth 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 \$14,146 for May.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

For the month of May 2025 and the year to date, the St. Stephen family checkbook looked like this:

May 1—31, 2025

What we received.....	\$20,473.
What we spent.....	(\$21,401.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 928.)

January 1—May 31, 2025

What we received.....	\$100,566.
What we spent.....	(\$111,407.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 10,841.)

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.

JUNE 2025 MEMORIALS

In loving memory of Ruth Grell

Capital Campaign -- \$70

Capital Campaign

In loving memory of Ruth Grell –
Kelly Brown

In loving memory of Gerry, who sang so beautifully for our congregation –
Kelly Brown

In loving memory of my Father, Merritt Gleason, whose Birthday Anniversary is June 6th –
Deb Gleason

In loving memory of my Grandparents, Vern & Bernice Anderson, who were lifelong members of St. Stephen Lutheran Church –
John Kronenwetter

In loving memory of Ruth Grell –
Sarah Lonsdorf

In loving memory of Ruth Grell –
Jane Seubert

In loving memory of my Brother-in-law, Merritt Gleason; Stepfather, Orville Lodholz; and Nephews, Brian Gleason and Andy Prieve –
Mary Beth Tolley

In loving memory of Ruth Grell –
Mary Beth Tolley

In loving memory of Ali Will –
Jeff & Rhonda Will

Seidel Meyer Pastoral Ministry Fund

In loving memory of our Mothers, Sue Kratwell and Sadie Borth –
Sandy & Ron Borth and Family



COUNCIL MINUTES ~ JUNE 10, 2025

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Present: Dick Holster, Vicki Romang, Jim Von Rueden, Betsy Utecht, Pastor Karoline, Shauna Robinson, Jeff Blomquist, Sarah Lonsdorf, Darrin Koehler, Nancy Prigge, Nelda Hettinga, and Jacque Schremp

Absent: Sue Holster

Council Minutes for April 8, 2025: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Karoline provided a written report. In addition, Pastor Karoline will be leading Bible study at family camp at Imago Dei from July 27th to August 1st.

Treasurer's Report: The General Fund total is \$18,454.73 and the total capital is \$7,613.26.

A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: No written report was provided. Tracy Rieger requested \$60 for rent assistance to avoid an eviction, which was provided from the Community Outreach Fund. Shauna Robinson applied for and received a \$4,500 "Doing a New Thing" grant for operations at the WMC Shelter. The shelter has been at capacity some nights and is averaging 40 to 60 individuals per night. Three individuals were housed during the month of May. Donations of men's underwear, bottled water, coffee creamer, and sugar are needed. Options are being explored to provide individuals with help doing personal laundry.

Property: Written reports were provided from the April and May committee meetings.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided from the May 5, 2025 committee meeting.

Worship: Written reports were provided from the April 10, 2025 committee meeting and the May 1, 2025 tri-church committee meeting. The Polka service will take place on June 22nd at Pilgrim. Proceeds will go to the local Alzheimer's Association chapter, as June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness month.

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:

- Invoice Approval—The total amount of invoices paid was \$22,842.98 in April and \$13,660.02 in May.
- **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Nancy Henke is in need of a new computer. Funds from the Technology Fund will be used for this purpose.
- Noisy Offering—June 15, 2025.
- Donations from the noisy offerings will continue to be added to the Community Outreach Fund.
- Capital Campaign—Additional monthly payments of \$1,500 are being made toward principal, beyond the regular monthly payments.
- Task Force—The Task Force is currently on a hiatus for the summer and will regroup in September.
- Wausau Area ELCA Church Presidents' Meeting—A task force has been set up to organize half-day leadership workshops for council and committee members. Karen from St. Andrew is starting a "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" program to provide and set up mattresses and beds for individuals in need.
- Candlelight Concerts—St. Stephen will now receive \$600 per concert rather than \$500, plus \$500 per year for storage. Three concerts are scheduled for fall 2025.
- Community Outreach Fund—Funds are sufficient for the time being. Going forward, guidelines should be established regarding what the fund will pay for and the procedure for doing so.
- Lockers for the Homeless—Lockers have been installed behind St. Stephen but have not yet been assigned to individuals.
- Goals for 2025—Review Constitution & Bylaws; review memorial funds; update membership list—a meeting will be scheduled to outline a plan for this task.
- A motion was made and carried to accept Judy Kort as a new member.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, September 9, at 5:30 pm.

A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Utecht, Council Secretary