



THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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

Office Closed:
Thursday, 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.

*Come now,
and let us reason together, saith the Lord:
though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as
white as
snow.*

Isaiah 1:18

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

WALKING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S LOVE

Epiphany, January 6th, celebrates the arrival of the magi, bringing gifts to the holy family. It is thought that it took them years to arrive, not just the 12 days of Christmas that we celebrate in the church year. Which makes sense, because that must have took a whole lot of walking to follow the star. They came from the east, made a stop in Jerusalem before heading to Nazareth, and then walked home. This ancient road trip also led to Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt to protect young Jesus. It doesn't say in the Bible *how* they traveled, but we know it would have been an arduous journey.



And there is a lot more walking in Jesus's story. A visit to John the Baptist, walking into the wilderness, the travels of his itinerant preaching and ministry, his final walk to Jerusalem, and even his post-resurrection walk to Emmaus. Imagine if they'd had a Fitbit to tally all of those steps!

I know that I'm taking walking quite literally here. In the ancient world, there was a lot of walking, but there were also many modes of travel. And then, as now, there were many who could not walk, or found it difficult. The Gospel does not exclude them or their experience. The abundance of travel does show up in the story too. Early Christians known as people of The Way. They were followers, taking their own journeys to spread the news of the resurrection and the promise of grace. It was not about a destination, but about walking together in faith.

This theme runs deeply in the Old Testament too. The prophets speak warning to a people about to be conquered and taken into exile. But they also speak words of promise about God's grace and that there will be a way forward. Isaiah speaks about making a way in the desert, God smoothing the path.

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice cries out:

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*

*Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

These are promises for us too! Not that we won't find difficulty and conflict along our way (goodness knows, Grand Avenue is not a good example of a *smooth* path!) but there will also be lots of joys as well. Some opportunities to live this out will be in our upcoming shared worship services with Pilgrim during Christmas and the season after Epiphany. Watch the calendar! We will worship together, in each other's spaces. We don't move toward a specific destination, but we walk together in faith, trusting that God is with us!

We journey together to celebrate Christ's love.

Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events						January 2016	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
				1 New Year's Day 6:00 Al-Anon	2		3 9:00 Stephen's Angels
4 Hygiene Drive Begins 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	5 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball CLASSES RESUME	6 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 3:00 Transition Team Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	7 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation Class 6:30 Choir Practice	8 8:30 Quilting 3:00 Worship Comm. Mtg. 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	9		10
11 9:00 Worship 10:15 Trust Fund Comm. Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	12 11:00 Staff Mtg. 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR JANUARY	13 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Council Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	14 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation Class 6:30 Choir Practice	15 8:30 Quilting 6:00 Al-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	16		17
18 9:00 Combined Worship at St. Stephen 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	19 MLK Day 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 Dartball NO SCHOOL	20 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 3:00 Transition Team Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	21 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation Class 6:30 Choir Practice	22 8:30 Quilting 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	23 NO ELEMENTARY CLASSES PM		24
25 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	26 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 7:00 Dartball	27 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	28 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation Class 6:30 Choir Practice	29 8:30 Quilting 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	30		31

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating
January Birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

January 1st

Chuck Johnson

January 2nd

Darleen Fust

Penny Windorski

January 3rd

Noel Tordsen

Kyle Utecht

January 4th

Connie Schneider

January 6th

Michael Zahrt

January 7th

Cecil Wold

Duane Wolfe

January 11th

Norma Bandock

Roger Hackbart

January 12th

Nancy Prigge

January 14th

Violet Hackbart

January 17th

Shirley Schwede

January 20th

Dawn Felch

January 22nd

Russell Post

Brad Smith

January 25th

Chad Deffner

Kathy Oakland

January 26th

Nancy Henke



Funeral

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

Lisa Marcott ~ December 12, 2025



CONGREGATION NOTES

Adopt-A-Family

THANK YOU to all who helped with Adopt-A-Family!!! Whether it was a monetary donation, gifts, or help wrapping, it was all greatly appreciated and we had another successful year. Special thanks to Shauna Robinson and Jim Von Rueden who transported all of the presents to the Salvation Army for families to pick up. This year we were able to adopt 8 families which included 20 kids.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of St. Stephen Lutheran Church will be held on Sunday, February 8th, 2026, 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 12, 2026.

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 or call 715-847-2781.

Dine to Donate Sundays

Want an easy way to donate money to St. Stephen Lutheran Church? Just eat at Texas Roadhouse in Wausau on Sundays!!! This is how it works: dine at Texas Roadhouse on Sunday and present our church bulletin for 10% of your food bill (not including alcohol, taxes, or gratuity) to be donated back to our church. Not valid with any other offers or on holidays. Dine in ONLY. One per table, per visit. This is a weekly, on-going program that takes place EVERY Sunday. A check will be sent to the church once a month.

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 9am-2pm.

HELP Closet

HELP Closet is a local Health Equipment Lending Program. Items usually available are: hospital beds, wheelchairs, commodes, shower seats, standard walkers, canes, and crutches. There is a minimal charge to use an item from this closet. The closet is located at 1106 Fifth Street in Wausau, 715-843-5985.

Benevolence

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

ELCA National & Synod Support \$554

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 \$12,307 for November.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

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

November 1—30, 2025

What we received.....	\$20,955.
What we spent.....	(\$18,938.)
Our balance.....	\$ 2,017.

January 1—November 30, 2025

What we received.....	\$227,410.
What we spent.....	(\$226,830.)
Our balance.....	\$ 580.

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.

MORE CONGREGATION NOTES

Hygiene Drive

The Angels are hosting a Hygiene Drive in January for 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, razors, men's deodorant, nail clippers, chap stick, and twin sheets. 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!

Office Closed

The office will be closed until Monday, January 5th 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.

St. Stephen Trust Fund

St. Stephen Lutheran Church established a Trust Fund in 1988 as an investment in our future. There are two funds invested through Financial First Advisors in Wausau. The Trust Fund Committee is responsible for these funds and uses only a percentage of the earnings for the designated projects. The Wider Mission Fund is to support the wider mission of the Church in our community and globally. Examples would include: The Neighbors' Place, Open Door, the Wausau Warming Center, Lutheran World Relief, and others. The Building Preservation Fund is for the preservation of our church buildings. In the past this has included fixing the elevator, parsonage updates, and organ repair as well as other repair projects. St. Stephen is known for its generosity. Because only the interest earned on each fund is used in our outreach missions, it is important to maintain a solid investment balance. Please keep the St. Stephen Trust Fund in mind when doing your estate planning. You can designate a specific fund or project, or make a general reference to the Trust Fund.

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. Happy New Year 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.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study Group will meet on Wednesday, January 14th at 1pm in the Conference Room. Any women in the congregation who would like to attend are WELCOME!

DECEMBER MEMORIALS

DECEMBER 2025 MEMORIALS

Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund

In loving memory of my Husband, Roger Fust and my Grandson, Brad Fust –
Darleen Fust

In memory of loved ones –
Ben & Peggy Roble

Capital Campaign

In loving memory of Chuck Deffner, Alvin & Betty Deffner, James Schumacher, and Garnett Schenzel –
Lynn Deffner

In loving memory of Kathy Boehm –
Shirley Kasten

Current Expense Fund

In loving memory of our Son, Brandon Pippenger and our Parents, James & Betty Boerner –
Jay & Patty Pippenger

In memory of loved family –
Kay Preller

Seidel Meyer Pastoral Ministry Fund

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

NEW YEAR PRAYER:

Thank You Lord for giving me
The brand new year ahead.
Help me live the way I should
As each new day I tread.
Give me gentle wisdom
That I might help a friend,
Give me strength and courage
So a shoulder I might lend.
The year ahead is empty,
Help me fill it with good things
Each new day filled with joy
And happiness it brings.
Amen.



TRANSITION TEAM MINUTES ~ 11/18/2025

"Walking Together to Celebrate Christ's Love."

Present at meeting: Jean Trempe, Pr. Cath Mode, Pr. Karoline Schwantes, Charlie Freiberg, Pam Hackbart, Jeff Kessel, Sue Koerten, Sarah Lonsdorf, and Verlyn Oelke.

Our synod coach, Pr. Cath Mode, started the meeting with a devotion and a prayer. She reviewed our new Mission Statement that came out of the retreat on October 26th: "**Walking Together to Celebrate Christ's Love.**" From now on we should include this on all written communications.

Update for Pr. Cath on how the process has been going since we met last. Comments we've received convey support for and excitement about the transition. Both congregations have more volunteers for the work groups.

Values: Jean Trempe shared the list she compiled for Pilgrim. There is no formal list of values for St. Stephen. Pr. Karoline shared a document listing the mission statement and list of values that came out of the combined retreat on October 26th. Pr. Cath suggested that we get about 4 people together in the next month to come up with a values document that can be posted.

WORK GROUPS

- Pr. Cath stated that we need to pare down our work groups. One option is to appoint task forces within a work group; each task force will be given specific charges. Another option is to ask some group members to move to another group based on their interests.
- We need to finalize our list of work groups. To that end we discussed Jean Trempe's revision of the spreadsheet.
- **Start-up of work groups** was discussed. The consensus was to start the groups this month and into next. The logistics of this process was discussed and potential complications with all that's going on during Advent and Christmas. It was decided to have a big get together in January where all the group members will be installed.
- Pr. Cath advised that we diligently proceed with the merger process without pause even in this busy season.
- **How to get the work groups started.** We agreed that a Transition Team member will facilitate the process of getting a work group off and running before January. One person referred to this role as the connector. We assigned this role for each of the work groups. Here's a list of the assignments:
 - Constitution/Bylaws: Verlyn Oelke
 - Legal: Dick Holster
 - Financial: Jim Von Rueden
 - Pilgrim's Real Estate (physical plant, Grounds, & Maintenance): Jim Lenselink
 - Pilgrim's Real Estate (long term use): Jean Trempe
 - Communications: Jeff Kessel
 - Policies & Procedures/Practices: Jeff Kessel
 - Worship: Sarah Lonsdorf
 - Ministries: The organization of this work group was discussed in detail. It was suggested to divide the group into two: Outreach and Inreach. Pam Hackbart will shepherd the Outreach group. Jean Trempe will recruit a person to shepherd the Inreach work group.
 - Prayer: Pam Hackbart
 - Celebration: Karen Larson
- Jean Trempe will update the spreadsheet to reflect the things we talked about in this meeting.
- Pr. Cath recommends that the Transition Team member facilitating work group start-up provide the work group members our new mission statement, a list of our values, an updated spread sheet, and the theme prayer for the transition.

Discussion points during the meeting:

- In our work towards merger an aim should be to attract the churched and dechurched.
- The work group kick-off should include a liturgical beginning.
- Pr. Cath suggested that we incorporate a symbol/logo/design into our mailings and postings. A good place to start a search for a symbol/logo/design is to check out clip art available on the internet. This symbol/logo/design could be put on a card in the pews to remind people of the merger.
- We should craft a theme prayer for the transition. Sarah Lonsdorf will draft that.
- Another way to keep merger in people's thoughts is to post photos. Some photos of the retreat have been posted at St. Stephen,
- Congregational members are getting to know each other better. The whole process that we are in is 'Joyful Chaos'.
- We need to better define evangelism.
- A person from the synod may be part of the Constitution/Bylaws group work.

Pr. Karoline led us in prayer for a recently hospitalized Pilgrim member and a recently injured St. Stephen member.

Next Two Meetings:

- December 2nd, 3:00 PM, at St. Stephen. Transition Team members shepherding each work group are to give an update on the work group.
- December 16th. Agenda items to be determined.

Pr. Cath concluded the meeting with a blessing.

Submitted by Jeff Kessel

TRANSITION TEAM MINUTES ~ 12/02/2025

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“Walking Together to Celebrate Christ’s Love.”

Present at meeting: Dick Holster, Jean Trempe, Pr. Karoline Schwantes, Verlyn Oelke, Charlie Freiberg, Pam Hackbart, Sue Koerten, Frank Koerten, Sarah Lonsdorf, Jim Von Rueden, and Jeff Kessel.

Verlyn Oelke, started the meeting with our new Transition Prayer. He and Sarah Lonsdorf met recently to compose this prayer. The team likes this prayer.

Transition logo/design: At our last meeting Pr. Cath suggested that we incorporate a symbol/logo/design into our mailings and postings. Jeff Kessel found a design online that he presented to the team in an email. Since then, Pr. Karoline suggested some modifications that incorporates our Mission Statement. This was discussed and there was general agreement that we like the design. This new logo will be tweaked. Nancy Henke will add this to St. Stephen’s bulletin and it will be added to Pilgrim’s bulletin. It should be added in the signature line of written communications.

(Core) Values:

- Jean Trempe shared the list she compiled for Pilgrim. There is no formal list of values for St. Stephen. Verlyn Oelke found an old list of St. Stephen’s values. Pr. Karoline shared a document listing the mission statement and list of values that came out of the combined retreat on October 26th. These lists are briefly reviewed.
- These lists of core values will be revamped by Pr. Karoline and attached to these minutes for release to the congregations.
- Transition team members assigned to work with the work groups is to present a list of values to each work group and report that the Transition Team is working on refining the list.

Evangelism: The definition of evangelism that was submitted to the team was briefly discussed.

WORK GROUPS

- Before the team meeting Jean Trempe updated the Merger Exploration work Groups spreadsheet and the Merger Exploration- Work Group Contacts list.
- Copies to the Contacts list were passed out and discussed.
- Verlyn Oelke reports that a pastor recommended the Synod office will serve as a resource for the Constitution & Bylaws work group.
- None of the work groups have met yet.
- Each Transition Team point person should contact the prospective work group members and schedule a meeting before the end of the month.

Constitution, Bylaws and Governance were discussed in detail.

- Verlyn Oelke reports that the ELCA has legal requirements about governance in addition to a new model constitution.
- Now that a Synod person will serve as a resource or consultant to the Constitution & Bylaws work group, we can address some issues. Some of these issues were discussed in detail. These include:
 - A timeline for the merger process that conforms to ELCA requirements.
 - 2026 budgets.
 - Merged council structure and composition.
 - A process for membership transfer during the merger process.
- Verlyn will be in contact with the person who will be our resource.
- Related to a timeline for the merger process the issue of our upcoming annual congregational meetings came up. Should we ask our congregations for further approval of the process? It was agreed that we consider presenting a resolution at the annual meetings. The team will be working on a resolution. Also, Pr. Karoline will consult a few people with experience in the process of merging. We set ourselves a deadline of 12/9 for coming up with a resolution.

Discussion points during the meeting:

- **We are thankful for all the people who want to be part of the process of merging.**

Our next meeting will be on January 5th at St. Stephen starting at 3:00 PM.

We concluded the meeting with the Lord’s Prayer.

Submitted by Jeff Kessel

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

Checks and money must be delivered by hand or mail, and postmarked on or before December 31, 2025 in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2025. Checks that are placed in the church offering at the first service of January 2026, **WILL NOT QUALIFY FOR A CHARITABLE DEDUCTION IN 2025**, even if the check was dated for 2025, or was actually written in 2025.

To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, please do not file your 2025 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 Jim Von Rueden at mbtolley@sslcwausau.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 Jim Von Rueden.

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 18, 2025.

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

COUNCIL MINUTES ~ DECEMBER 9, 2025

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Present: Dick Holster, Vicki Romang, Jim Von Rueden, Betsy Utecht, Sarah Lonsdorf, Darrin Koehler, Jeff Blomquist, Shauna Robinson, and Pastor Karoline

Absent: Sue Holster, Nancy Prigge, and Jacque Schremp

Council Minutes for November 6, 2025: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Karoline provided a written report.

Treasurer's Report: The total capital is \$26,441.69.

A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: Adopt-a-Family is ending this week. Gifts were purchased for 20 kids and 8 families. A wrapping party will take place on Saturday, December 13th.

Property: Re-covering of the stairs has been completed and a new entrance mat installed. A heat pump for the education unit was replaced. The Property Committee has made a recommendation to Little Scholars to discontinue using a shared passcode for the entrance beginning on January 3rd.

Worship: A written report was provided from the November 13, 2025 committee meeting.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided from the December 7, 2025 committee meeting. **A motion was made and carried to approve the four distributions noted in the report.**

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 \$18,823.69.
- **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Noisy Offering—December 21, 2025
- Donations from the noisy offerings will continue to be added to the Community Outreach Fund.
- Capital Campaign Update—Double payments continue to be made. Capital Campaign 2024 fund balance is \$13,885.92.
- Transition Team Update and Work Groups—**A motion was made and carried to delegate authority to the Transition Team to determine whether to include a resolution to merge with Pilgrim on the Agenda for the Annual Meeting on February 8, 2026.**
- Wausau Area ELCA Church Presidents' Meeting—The next meeting will take place on January 20th. St. Andrew is interested in establishing a multi-congregational group to pool funds in order to address requests for housing assistance. The Council would like more information before any decisions are made as to St. Stephen's participation in such a group.
- New Member Acceptance—**A motion was made and carried to accept John Kronenwetter and Shirley Ostrem as members.**
- Budget—**A motion was made and carried to approve the revised budget for 2026.**
- Little Scholars Flooring—The Trust Fund Committee approved a distribution of \$4,913 to the Property Committee for flooring in the southeast classroom taken from the Building Preservation Fund.
- Annual Meeting—February 8, 2026
- **A motion was made by the Nominating Committee that the current slate of church council members remain in place until a congregational meeting takes place following the merger with Pilgrim. The motion carried.**
- Audit Committee—The members of the Audit Committee are Cathy Teske, Pam Kohnhorst, and Sue Holster.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, January 13, at 5:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Utecht, Council Secretary