

DATE: MARCH 2026
Volume 253 • Issue 253

THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church



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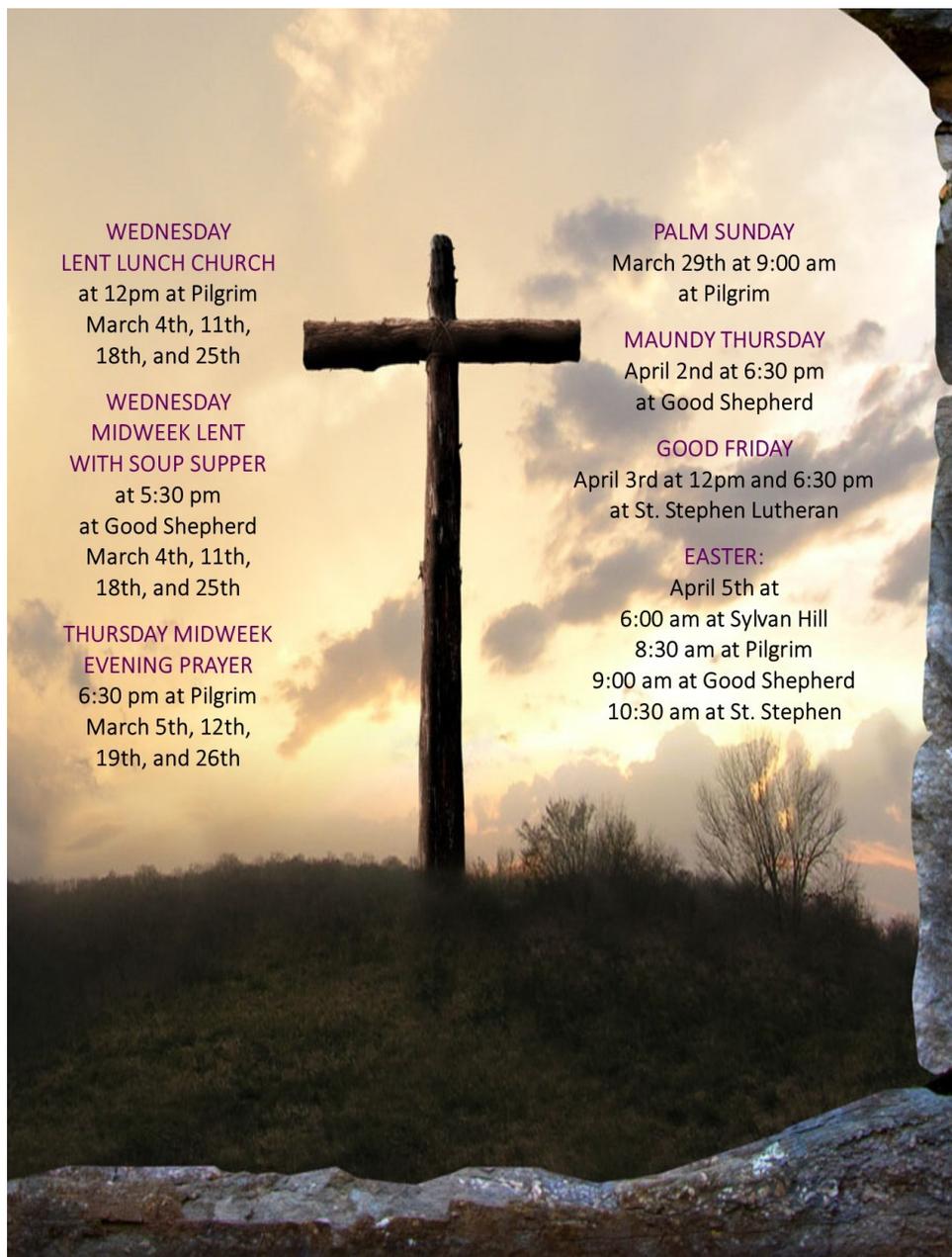
Email address:
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Office Hours:
Mondays and Thursdays
from 8am—3pm
Wednesdays working from home

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.



**WEDNESDAY
LENT LUNCH CHURCH**
at 12pm at Pilgrim
March 4th, 11th,
18th, and 25th

**WEDNESDAY
MIDWEEK LENT
WITH SOUP SUPPER**
at 5:30 pm
at Good Shepherd
March 4th, 11th,
18th, and 25th

**THURSDAY MIDWEEK
EVENING PRAYER**
6:30 pm at Pilgrim
March 5th, 12th,
19th, and 26th

PALM SUNDAY
March 29th at 9:00 am
at Pilgrim

MAUNDY THURSDAY
April 2nd at 6:30 pm
at Good Shepherd

GOOD FRIDAY
April 3rd at 12pm and 6:30 pm
at St. Stephen Lutheran

EASTER:
April 5th at
6:00 am at Sylvan Hill
8:30 am at Pilgrim
9:00 am at Good Shepherd
10:30 am at St. Stephen

**GOOD SHEPHERD, PILGRIM, AND ST. STEPHEN
LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE ELCA
INVITE YOU TO JOIN IN OUR
SHARED MINISTRY LENTEN JOURNEY.**

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

WALKING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S LOVE

This last weekend I attended an event called Journey with Jesus. Over 100 youth from middle school through high school from 11 churches throughout the East Central Synod gathered at Green Lake Conference center. We played games, danced and sang, gathered for Bible study, ate really yummy food, and laughed a lot over 3 days.



On Saturday the youth attended 3 workshops, having numerous options to choose from. I sat in on one created and led by 2 high school members of the synod youth team. Participants had been invited to bring a pair of white canvas shoes to decorate. There were fabric paint pens and brightly colored shoelaces to add.

I doodled on mine as we shared stories, talked about our walk in faith, and sang (with exuberance! Apologies to the quiet workshop next door!). Our conversations led me to add the theme verse for the weekend to my boots, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances."

There is so much to be thankful for from the retreat. I am thankful for the witness of young people in their faith in Christ, for our walk together as the Church, and for the love of God that meets us exactly where we are.

Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events					March 2026	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	2 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 GriefShare 7:00 Darball	3 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 3:00 Transition Team Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	4 12:00 Midweek Lent Lunch Church at Pilgrim 5:30 Midweek Lenten Service at Good Shepherd w/ supper & Confirmation to follow	5 8:30 Quilting 11:00 Staff Mtg. 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Midweek Holden Evening Prayer at Pilgrim 7:00 Choir Practice	6	7 9:00 Stephen's Angels 3:00pm—10pm Candlelight Concert
8 Daylight Saving Begins 9:00 Worship 10:15 Trust Fund Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	9 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 GriefShare 7:00 Darball	10 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Council Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	11 12:00 Midweek Lent Lunch Church at Pilgrim 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Midweek Lenten Service at Good Shepherd w/ supper & Confirmation to follow	12 8:30 Quilting 1:00 Worship Comm. Mtg. 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Midweek Holden Evening Prayer at Pilgrim 7:00 Choir Practice	13	14 8:00am—10:00pm AA Conference in the Downstairs Auditorium
15 9:00 Worship 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 GriefShare 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 Darball MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR MARCH	17 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 3:00 Transition Team Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	18 12:00 Midweek Lent Lunch Church at Pilgrim 5:30 Midweek Lenten Service at Good Shepherd w/ supper & Confirmation to follow	19 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics 6:30 Midweek Holden Evening Prayer at Pilgrim 7:00 Choir Practice NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	20 No Elementary Classes PM	21
22 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	23 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 GriefShare 7:00 Darball	24 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	25 12:00 Midweek Lent Lunch Church at Pilgrim 5:30 Midweek Lenten Service at Good Shepherd w/ supper & Confirmation to follow	26 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Midweek Holden Evening Prayer at Pilgrim 7:00 Choir Practice	27	28 9:00am—4pm Saturday Craterday
29 Palm Sunday 9:00 Combined Worship at Pilgrim 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 7:00 AA	30 Spring Break Begins 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Bell Choir 6:30 GriefShare 7:00 Darball	31 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum				



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their March Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

March 11th

Daryl & Roxanne Christian

March 26th

Darrin & Vanessa Koehler

March 31st

Michael & Leah Holster



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating March Birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

March 1st

Theresa Kole

March 2nd

Jay Pippenger

March 5th

Ron Felch

March 7th

Nathaniel Lenoble

March 8th

Derek Koehler

March 9th

Vallory Haiker

March 10th

Phil Giese

March 13th

Dennis Lohrey

Brenda Prieve

Shirlee Shaw

March 14th

Darlene Zietlow

March 20th

Darlene Johnson

March 25th

Nelda Hettinga

March 26th

Darrin Koehler

March 27th

Dale Seymour

Jeanette Wiskow

March 31st

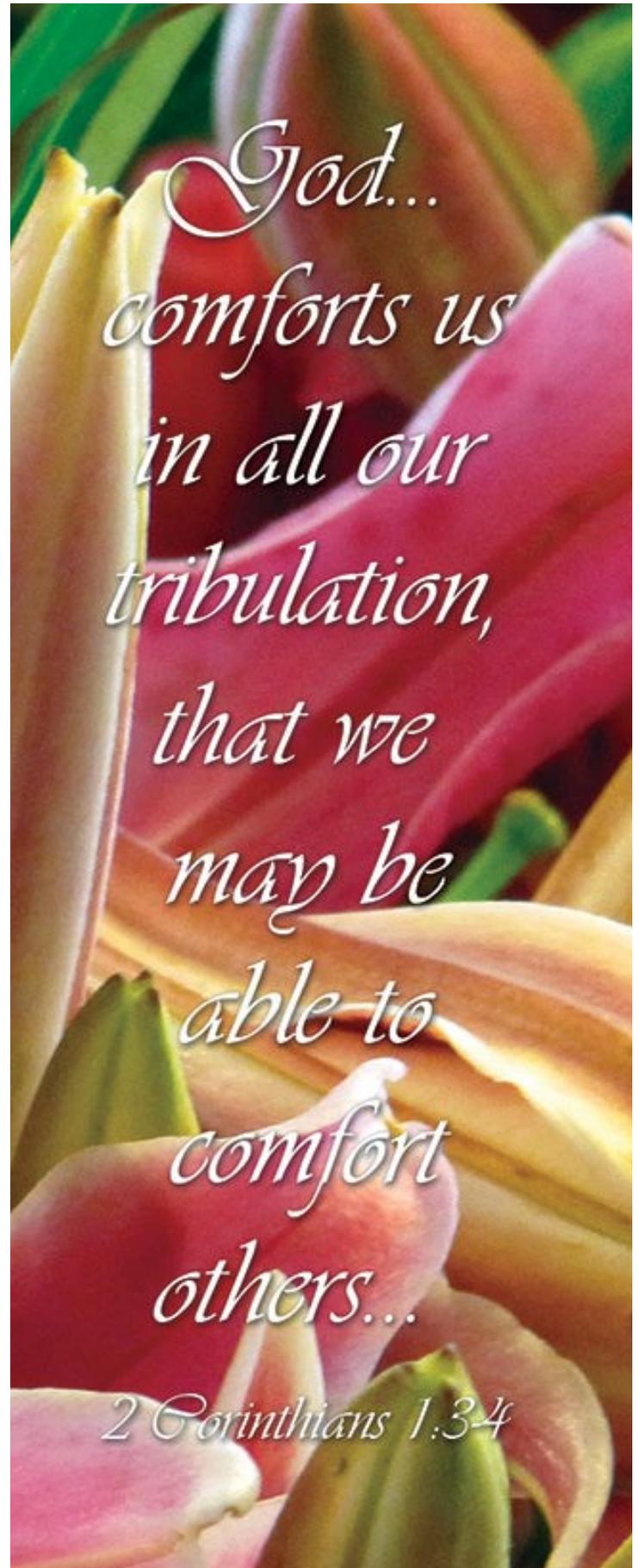
Susan Brouchous



Funeral

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

Violet Hackbart ~ February 13, 2026



Christ In Our Home Devotionals

Beginning in April, we will be shifting our devotional subscription to Christ in Our Home. This quarterly devotional is similar to Portals of Prayer and is available in standard print and large print. There is also an audio format available. Please let us know in the office if you would be interested in the audio version to listen to the devotional.

Community Baby Shower

A Community Baby Shower will be hosted at St. Stephen on Sunday March 22nd. We will be collecting NEW items to be delivered to The Babies Place. We will be collecting items such as: body wash, diaper cream, baby lotion, Dove sensitive bar soap, baby food, Similac formula, wipes, diapers size 5 and up, and Pull Ups 3T/4T and up. They have a budget to purchase diapers and wipes from the national diaper bank at a cheaper cost however, baby hygiene/food is something that is completely run on donations. Please bring your donations to church and place them in the black laundry cart near the office labeled Community Baby Shower before Monday March 30th. If you would prefer to make a monetary donation place it in Shauna's mailbox or hand it to her with a memo indicating it is for the Baby Shower and she will go purchase items on March 29th. If you have any questions please contact Shauna.

Hygiene Drive

Hope for the Homeless Hygiene Drive has begun! We will collect items through Sunday, March 15th. They are asking for: laundry soap, dish soap, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, razors (men/women), toilet paper, paper towel and trash bags. These items will be collected in the brown cardboard box located in the lobby near the office. They will go to The Neighbors' Place, Open Door, Community Center for Hope, and Granite House. Monetary donations can be given to or put in Shauna Robinson's mailbox in the church office (please indicate Hygiene Drive in memo line on your check) and what is collected will go towards purchasing items on the afternoon of March 15th. The items will be picked up the week of the 16th by The Neighbors' Place. Let's help our neighbors in need. If you have any questions please call Shauna at 608-514-4504.

Lent Lunch Church Soup Sign-Up

If you would like to make a crockpot of soup for our Soup Lunch Services during Lent, there is a sign-up sheet on the counter in the reception area.

Lenten Service Free Will Offerings

The free will offerings from the Midweek Lenten Services will be collected and given to the Wausau Free Clinic. This clinic provides free primary care to low income and the uninsured in Central Wisconsin. The medical professionals are volunteering their services which can include treatment for common illnesses, diagnostic testing, and free or low cost medications. They focus on households with incomes 300% below the federal poverty line level. With federal monies drying up, our community has the opportunity to step up and help this clinic help our neighbors.

Library Update

The St. Stephen library has added a new section on grief. About 20 new titles are available, which include books on death and dying, finding hope, co-dependency, and prayer. The library also provides resources for Bible study and children's activities.

Benevolence

Through your support of St. Stephen in the month of January 2026, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$556

This is the first 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 \$12,365 for January.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

For the month of January 2026 and the year to date, the St. Stephen family checkbook looked like this:

January 1—31, 2026

What we received.....\$19,234.
What we spent.....(\$23,300.)
Our balance.....(4,006.)

January 1—31, 2026

What we received.....\$19,234.
What we spent.....(\$23,300.)
Our balance.....(\$ 4,066.)

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

Office Closed

The office will be closed the week of March 23rd as Nancy Henke will be on vacation due to the service being held at Pilgrim Lutheran on Palm Sunday, March 29th with no service at St. Stephen. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please call Pastor Karoline Schwantes at 715-370-5514.

Saturday Crafterday

Saturday Crafterdays Return! March 28th, and May 16th. Bring your favorite craft and play! Join us for a fun and relaxing day of crafting and conversation. We will be meeting upstairs in the choir/arts room. We've had people work on a variety of projects like, scrapbooking, card making, diamond art, embroidery, and many others. There are lots of stamps and other craft supplies here as well. This activity is FREE! Lots of space, natural light, and long tables. Elevator access. Bring a snack to share. Coffee provided. Bring your own lunch or there are lots of food options downtown. Card making supplies available. The church address is 512 McClellan St., downtown Wausau. Parking available on the street or in the St. Stephen lot on McClellan (on the other side of the brick house).

Spring Ahead

Don't forget to "Spring Ahead"! On Saturday, March 7th before bed, set your clocks ahead 1 hour.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study Group will meet on Wednesday, March 11th at 1pm in the Conference Room. Any women in the congregation who would like to attend are WELCOME!

FEBRUARY 2026 MEMORIALS

Building Improvement and Maintenance Fund

In loving memory of Leona Teske –
John & Cathy Teske

Capital Campaign

In loving memory of my Sisters, Laurie, Jane, & Virginia –
Pat Erdman





Come walk with us as we remember Christ's Love during this Lenten Season. All are welcome!

- *March 4th thru March 25th - Wednesday Lunch Church Service. This casual service will be held in Pilgrim's Fellowship Hall and will include a lunch. Lunch will served at noon with the service beginning around 12:15 p.m.*
- *March 4th thru March 25th - Weekly Wednesday Worship Services and Soup Suppers begin at Good Shepherd. Services at 5:30 p.m. with soup supper and Confirmation to follow.*
- *March 5th thru March 26th - Weekly Holden Evening Prayer services begin on Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. at Pilgrim.*
- *March 1st thru March 22nd - Sunday Worship Services during Lent will be held at 9:00 a.m. at St. Stephen.*
- *March 29th - Palm Sunday Service at 9:00 a.m. at Pilgrim, including a baptism.*
- *April 2nd - Maundy Thursday Worship Service at 6:30 p.m. at Good Shepherd.*
- *April 3rd - Good Friday Worship Service at 12:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. at St. Stephen.*
- *April 5th - Easter Sunday*
 - *6:00 a.m. Good Shepherd Sunrise Service held at Sylvan Hill*
 - *8:30 a.m. Pilgrim*
 - *9:00 a.m. Good Shepherd*
 - *10:30 a.m. St. Stephen*

Pilgrim services held in the Sanctuary will be recorded and available at Pilgrim's website. St. Stephen's services are available livestream via their website and on Facebook.

*For more information, check out the Pilgrim website at <https://www.pilgrimofwausau.org> or St. Stephen's website at <https://sslcwausau.com>
Good Shepherd's information is available at <https://gswausau.org>*

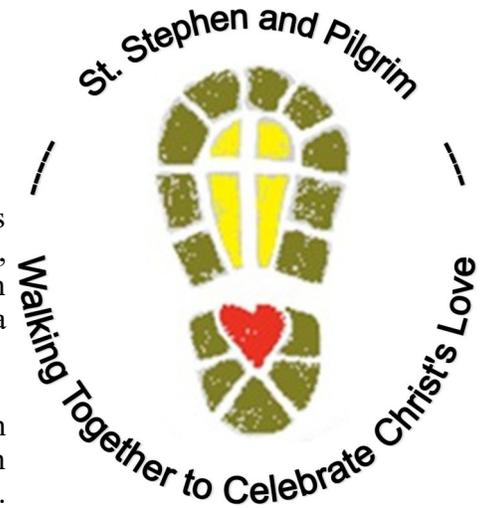
TRANSITION WORKGROUPS UPDATE

Walking Together to Celebrate Christ's Love:

An Update from Transition Workgroups

February 19, 2026

It is an exciting time! On February 1st, a combined worship service was attended by 83 people. We truly are “walking together” as one congregation, one church family. Transition workgroups have been involved with different areas as we move toward completing a merger. They’re moving at a brisk pace!



Watch for this logo for future updates about our merger.

- **Worship** – Traditional Sunday worship services continue at both churches, with joint worship on designated Sundays. Pilgrim offers evening worship services on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. We are reviewing worship traditions and practices. The plan is to blend elements of both churches. As part of that goal, altar sacraments and other sanctuary fixtures are being inventoried.
- **Facilities & Property** –The St. Stephen Trust Fund has approved funds for an architectural survey of both buildings to learn about any concerns. The study may provide suggestions for suitable uses. We’re also looking at routine maintenance required at Pilgrim’s property until disposition is determined.
- **Prayer** – You may have noticed that prayer requests at Sunday worship are now combined at both St. Stephen and Pilgrim, so that members can come together to pray for those in need. We’re looking at how Pilgrim’s prayer group, as well as other opportunities for prayer, can be expanded to include members of St. Stephen. Our goal is to normalize prayer in daily activities and reinforce organized prayer traditions at both churches.
- **Constitution & Bylaws** – We’ve updated St. Stephen’s constitution to conform with the required template from the ELCA which incorporates bylaws. Changes are being recommended. There are a few pieces yet to be completed prior to submission for congregation and synod review and approval.
- **Policies & Procedures** – Both churches have a plethora of written policies. We are looking at everything from joyous weddings to the details of safety. The group aims to make recommendations for policies that will be used for the renewed Church.
- **Legal** – Copies of deeds for Pilgrim’s property have been gathered. A certified survey may be required. Once all details are gathered, legal resources will be engaged.
- **Financial** – Our Treasurers say they’re ready to go when we are. Here is a piece of trivia for you: Do you know who previously audited St. Stephen’s Trust Fund? If you guessed it was Pilgrim’s own Charlie Freiberg, CPA, you would be right.
- **In-reach and out-reach** – We are gathering data from each congregation about our various outreach programs. Examples include support for the homeless and hunger, and the quilters at both churches.

Do you have ideas, questions, or just want more information? Please contact Nancy at St. Stephen or Fred at Pilgrim. They will direct you to the workgroup leaders.

COUNCIL MINUTES ~ FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Present: Dick Holster, Betsy Utecht, Sarah Lonsdorf, Darrin Koehler, Jeff Blomquist, Shauna Robinson, John Kronenwetter, Pastor Karoline

Absent: Sue Holster, Jacque Schremp, Jim Von Rueden, Vicki Romang

Council Minutes for January 13, 2026: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

Annual Meeting Minutes for February 8, 2026: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Karoline recently participated in the Wausau Area Prayer Vigil at St. Andrew with faith leaders from throughout the community. The issues with her email are partially resolved, and she is now able to send and receive emails. Pastoral care continues, as does preparation for Lent.

Treasurer's Report: The total capital is \$23,165.82.

A motion was made and carried to accept these reports.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: The Good Stewards Committee will meet on Monday, February 16. Upcoming initiatives include the Help for the Homeless Hygiene Drive during February and March and the Community Baby Shower during March.

Property: A written report was provided for January 2026. Additionally, the Property Committee will look into the possibility of moving the altar in the chapel to provide additional space for fellowship.

Worship: The Worship Committee will meet on Thursday, February 12.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided from the February 4, 2026 meeting.

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:

- **A motion was made and carried to approve distributions of up to \$5,000 from the Building Preservation Fund for architect fees and up to \$5,000 from the Memorial Reserve Fund for initial legal fees for the merger with Pilgrim.**
- Invoice Approval—The total amount of invoices paid was \$21,596.85.
 - **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Noisy Offering—February 15, 2026
 - Donations from the February Noisy Offering will be added to the Community Outreach Fund.
- Capital Campaign Update— The loan balance was \$99,961.03 as of January 31, 2026.
- Transition Team Update—The next meeting will take place on February 17, at 3 p.m.
- Wausau Area ELCA Church Presidents' Meeting—Pastor Jack from St. Andrew has prepared a proposal for a Community Assistance Fund, which would be a collaboration between area ELCA churches. More information is needed before St. Stephen makes a final decision as to whether to participate.
- Barb Schewe Estate Disbursement—At the Annual Meeting, the congregation voted to place the disbursement in a Sustainability Fund managed by the Trust Fund Committee. The Constitution and Bylaws Work Group will address the creation and administration of the Sustainability Fund.
- Synod Assembly—June 4th thru June 6th, 2026, in Oshkosh
 - At the Annual Meeting, Shirley Ostrem was nominated as one of St. Stephen's two delegates.
 - Another delegate is needed. Registration will open in March.
- ICE Update—Signage was provided to Little Scholars. In the future, the Safety Committee may reconvene to assess options for making the Little Scholars space more secure.
- Going forward, St. Stephen and Pilgrim will hold combined Council meetings until the merger is completed.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Utecht, Council Secretary