

DATE: APRIL 2026
Volume 254 • Issue 254

THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church



512 McClellan Street
Wausau, WI 54403-4882

Phone: 715-845-7858

Website: www.sslcwausau.com

Email address:
information@sslcwausau.com

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

Office Closed:
Good Friday, April 3rd
Easter Monday, April 6th

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.

Good Friday, April 3rd
Worship at St. Stephen at 12 & 6:30 pm



Easter Sunday, April 5th
Worship at Pilgrim at 8:30 am
Worship at St. Stephen at 10:30 am

Pastor Karoline Schwantes/Phone: 715-370-5514/Email: prka-

WALKING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S LOVE

Easter is coming!

We may still be digging out from 30 inches of snow. It may seem like our to do lists are too long. It may feel like there's only bad news and sad news.



Good News! Easter is coming!

Hope!

Palm Sunday comes with waving palm branches, baptismal waters, and first communion celebrations.

Holy Week tells the story of God come near.

Maundy Thursday remembers an intimate meal with Jesus and his disciples which shares an invitation for today.

Good Friday doesn't gloss over the pain and grief of the crucifixion, but points to God's willingness to sacrifice all for grace.

And Easter proclaims the Good News! Jesus is risen for the sake of the world, for our sake, and for you!

This has been a busy season in the Church year, especially for St. Stephen and Pilgrim as we make plans to unite in the future. A lot of hard work has been going into the work groups and a lot of new friendships are being made and strengthened as we worship together. Listening to the ways in which the Holy Spirit is calling us has been a sometimes difficult and sometimes rewarding journey together. This stirs up a lot of feelings too. Excitement, grief, joy, and even fear! But we walk together, celebrating Christ's love, knowing God is with us and guiding us.

Easter is coming!

Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events						April 2026	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
<p>5 Easter 6:00 Worship at Sylvan Hill hosted by Good Shepherd 8:30 Worship at Pilgrim 9:00 Worship at Good Shepherd 10:30 Worship at St. Stephen 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA</p>	<p>6 Classes Resume 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Grief/Share OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>7 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:00 Executive Comm. Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum</p>	<p>8 9:00 Quilting at Pilgrim 1:00 Women's Bible Study 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice</p>	<p>9 8:30 Quilting 11:00 Staff Mtg. 1:00 Worship Comm. Mtg. 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim</p>	<p>3 Good Friday 12:00 Good Friday Service at St. Stephen 6:30 Good Friday Service at Stephen OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>4 9:00 Stephen's Angels</p>	
<p>12 9:00 Worship 10:15 Trust Fund Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA</p>	<p>13 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Grief/Share</p>	<p>14 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum</p>	<p>15 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice</p>	<p>16 8:30 Quilting 5:30 Council Mtg. 6:00 AI-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	
<p>19 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA</p>	<p>20 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Grief/Share 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR APRIL</p>	<p>21 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum</p>	<p>22 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice</p>	<p>23 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 9:00am-4pm Saturday Craterday</p>	
<p>26 SSLC serving Community Dinner 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA</p>	<p>27 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Grief/Share</p>	<p>28 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum</p>	<p>29 5:30 Bell Choir 5:30 Confirmation 6:30 Choir Practice</p>	<p>30 8:30 Quilting 6:00 AI-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim</p>			



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their April Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

April 6th

Jeff & Mary Blomquist

April 7th

Ron & Dawn Felch

April 12th

Don & Jane Seubert

April 16th

John & Cathy Teske



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating April Birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

April 5th

Bonnie Pils

April 8th

Florence Beese

Cathy Teske

April 9th

Dick Holster

April 10th

Roxanne Christian

April 12th

John Baddock

Hailey Koehler

April 13th

Molly Kieper

Sandy Hintz Oestreich

April 17th

Mackenzie Kieper

April 18th

JJ Deffner

April 19th

Diane Waldinger

April 22nd

Lydia Lenoble

April 24th

Susan Brouchous



Funerals

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

Kathleen Jaecks ~ March 6, 2026

Marjorie Nimz ~ March 14, 2026



Let all that you do be done in love.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:14

Church Rummage Sale

This year's Annual Church Rummage Sale will be a bit different. First, the sale will be held at Pilgrim in their fellowship hall. Second, it will run for 2 weekends. The first weekend will be Thursday, May 14th thru Saturday, May 16th. The second weekend will be Thursday, June 4th thru Saturday, June 6th which is when the neighborhood-wide sales are occurring. Donations will be accepted at St. Stephen as usual. You can drop donations off in the basement (by elevator) by the steps going up to the youth room. Other drop off dates/times will be available (watch for those in Sunday bulletins). Again this year, no electronic equipment or large furniture like sofas or mattresses. Contact either Nancy in the office or Sarah Lonsdorf if you have questions.

Combined Worship

Worshiping together during Lent has been great and meaningful! It has been an experiment in shared worship. As details of the merger come together and we are starting to put together a timeline for planning, we will be making long term decisions for worship together. After Easter, we will be holding services at both congregations again (April 12th thru May 17th) and will be coming to you with a plan for the summer soon.

Graduates

Are you or a member of your family graduating from high school, a tech college, or a 4 year college? Please let us know so St. Stephen can help you celebrate this milestone during our worship service on Sunday, June 7th! Please submit a photo to Nancy Henke at nhenke@sslwausau.com and let her know if you will be present for the service on June 7th. Photos of graduates will be in the announcements before the service.

Parking for Good Friday Services

On Good Friday, parking will be allowed on McClellan Street across from the church in city lots 10 and 11 for both the 12pm and 6:30pm services.

Saturday Crafterday

Saturday Crafterday on April 25th 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).

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study Group will meet on Wednesday, April 8th 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 February 2026, we were able to contribute to the following ministry:

ELCA National & Synod Support \$650

This is the second 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 \$14,441 for February.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

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

February 1—28, 2026

What we received.....	\$21,490.
What we spent.....	(\$25,391.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 3,901.)

January 1—February 28, 2026

What we received.....	\$40,323.
What we spent.....	(\$48,691.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 8,368.)

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.

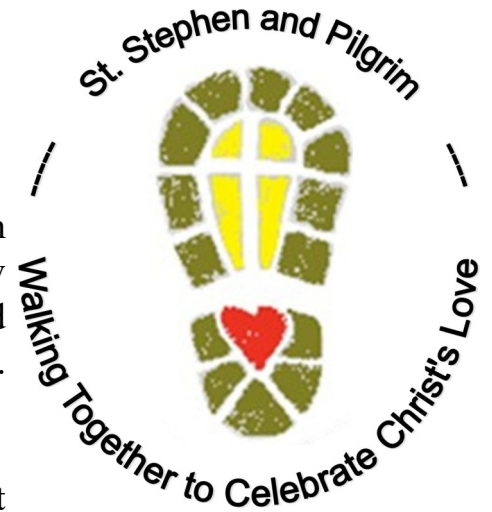
TRANSITION WORKGROUPS UPDATE

Walking Together to Celebrate Christ's Love:

An Update from Transition Workgroups

March 18, 2026

A vote to affirm the intent of St. Stephen and Pilgrim congregations to merge is expected in April. While a legal review must take place before voting, the Transition Team and workgroups have not identified any major roadblocks. More details regarding the vote and next steps will be shared soon.



The first joint meeting of the Congregation Councils was held at St. Stephen on March 10th, with additional meetings planned for April. These joint meetings aim to bring Pilgrim and St. Stephen leadership together and begin integrating council functions.

The Prayer Transition Workgroup is also planning a one-day workshop titled, “*Adapting to Change*”, led by Pastor Karoline and Pastor Cath Mode. The date is still to be determined. “Because life is busy for all of us, it will be a one-day event—one and done!”, said Pam Hackbart. “We hope to give voice to everyone’s concerns, grief, excitement, or whatever we’re feeling as we merge together, while also offering support and insight for the road ahead”.

A group led by Verlyn Oelke has reviewed and proposed updates to St. Stephen’s governing documents, incorporating guidance from the ELCA along with recommendations from the Transition Team.

One proposed change involves the structure of the Congregation Council, including updated terms of office and committee organization. “The Council will have five standing committees”, Oelke explained, “along with a provision that allows the congregation to elect a member-at-large if committee members are unavailable to serve on the Council.”

Another area under review is the governance of the St. Stephen Trust Fund. Established in 1986 as a separate entity, it is now recommended, based on ELCA guidance, that the Trust Fund be incorporated into the church’s bylaws and included within the St. Stephen constitution. The Trust Fund Committee is also looking to add a member of the Pilgrim congregation.

“We hope to complete the updates to the constitution and bylaws and submit them to the Synod Constitution Committee for preliminary approval”, Oelke said.

MARCH 2026 MEMORIALS

In loving memory of Lisa Marcott

Capital Campaign Fund -- \$215

Family & Friends

In loving memory of Violet Hackbart

Sustainability Trust Fund -- \$1410

Family & Friends

Capital Campaign Fund

In loving memory of Violet Hackbart –
Claudette Borre

In memory of loved ones –
Joyce Fromfeld

In loving memory of Violet Hackbart –
Shirley Kasten

In loving memory of Violet Hackbart –
Sarah Lonsdorf

In loving memory of Violet Hackbart –
Gail & Tommy Schmidt

Library Fund

In loving memory of Ron Peters –
Paul & Sandy Oestreich



COUNCIL MINUTES ~ MARCH 10, 2026

Present: Dick Holster, Jim Von Rueden, Betsy Utecht, Sarah Lonsdorf, Darrin Koehler, Jeff Blomquist, John Kronenwetter, Pastor Karoline, and Jacque Schremp.

Absent: Sue Holster, Vicki Romang, and Shauna Robinson.

Council Minutes for February 10, 2026: A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Karoline provided a written report. Three students will soon be participating in instruction for First Communion. On April 18th, the Synod will be holding church council training in Marion, Wisconsin. The Synod will present a Church Property Resource Hub webinar on March 17th, 19th, and 24th.

A motion was made and carried to accept Pastor Karoline's report.

Treasurer's Report: The total capital is \$18,864.32.

A motion was made and carried to accept the treasurer's report.

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: No written or verbal report was provided.

Property: No written report was provided. A printer issue was fixed in the office by replacing a drum and cartridge. A new printer has been ordered for Nancy. Information about a new sign has been requested from Graphic House and Finishing Touch. A quote is being obtained to replace the gas ovens downstairs with electric ovens. The Property Committee met with New Insights regarding a proposed renovation of the first floor of the parsonage to create an additional office. **A motion was made and carried to accept the Property Committee's report.**

Worship: A written report was provided from the February 12, 2026 meeting. **A motion was made and carried to accept the Worship Committee's report.**

- **A motion was made and carried for separate Sunday services to continue at Pilgrim through Sunday, May 17th.**
- The issue of payment for cantors at services will be referred to the Personnel Committee.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided from the March 8, 2026 meeting. **A motion was made and carried to accept the Trust Fund Committee's report.**

- The Trust Fund Committee and Executive Committee will discuss options for the Sustainability Fund at an upcoming Trust Fund Committee meeting.
- The Trust Fund Committee is seeking a Pilgrim member to join the committee.

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:

- Merge Resolution & Vote—Tentative dates for the vote are April 19 or April 26.
- Invoice Approval—The total amount of invoices paid was \$17,989.13.
 - **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Noisy Offering—Donations from the March Noisy Offering will be added to the Community Outreach Fund.
- Capital Campaign Update—The loan balance was \$99,698.88 as of February 28, 2026.
- Transition Team Update—The most recent meeting took place on March 3rd.
- Combined Pilgrim and St. Stephen Rummage Sales will take place at Pilgrim on May 14-16 and June 4-5. Donations can be dropped off at St. Stephen and will be transported to Pilgrim.
- Synod Assembly—June 4-6, 2026 in Oshkosh.
 - Shirley Ostrem has already been selected as St. Stephen's first delegate for the Synod Assembly.
 - **A motion was made and carried to select Shauna Robinson as St. Stephen's second delegate for the Synod Assembly.**
- Donations of \$33 were recently collected for Darren Letner, who maintains the fish tank. **A motion was made and carried to increase the amount given to Darren from \$33 to \$100.**

The next Council meeting will be on Thursday, April 16, at 5:30 p.m.

A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Utecht, Council Secretary