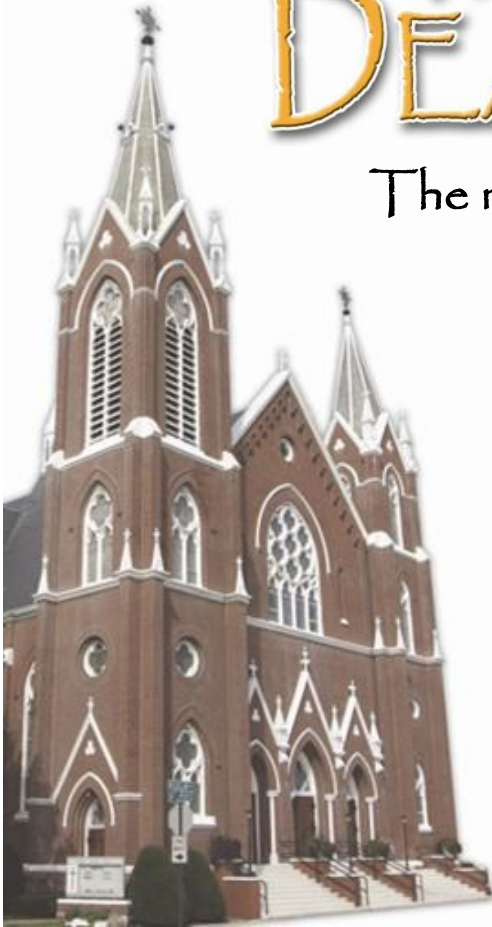


DATE: JUNE 2026  
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# THE DEACON'S SPIRIT

The newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church



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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.



## Father's Day Slide Show

We will be having a slide show honoring fathers on Father's Day which is Sunday, June 21st, during the announcements. Please submit your favorite photo of you and your father and/or a photo of you and your children/grandchildren. Please, no more than one photo from each category. All photos (submitted electronically) must be to Nancy Henke by Wednesday, June 17th. If you would like to submit a photo electronically, email to [nhenke@sslcwausau.com](mailto:nhenke@sslcwausau.com). It would be preferable to have electronic submissions in a jpg. format. Please include the names of the people in the photos with your submissions. **IF YOU SUBMITTED A PHOTO LAST YEAR, THAT PHOTO WILL BE USED.** If you have questions, contact Nancy at 715-845-7858.

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

When I went to seminary, I followed a distance learning track. Members of the congregation I was a part of expressed confusion that I was in classes and still at choir every Wednesday and worship on Sundays. It was sometimes hard to explain accessing classes via zoom, "We're in the classroom from home, tiled on a screen kind of like the Brady Bunch intro, some students are in the classroom, the professor can see us, we can participate in conversations." These descriptions became unnecessary in 2020, when online spaces became necessary for so many more things.



In addition to my online home creating community with my colleagues, there were in person opportunities at the beginning of each semester and at other times. I loved the chances to travel to Wartburg Seminary, connect face to face, and to soak up the time on campus in the chapel, library, and refectory. We often called it "the castle," because the architecture and tower are modeled after Wartburg Castle in Germany. My first experiences as a student was in-person for a 7 week summer Greek intensive. And it was intense. I moved to campus for that short time, just me, my dog Pi, and whatever I could fit in the minivan.

I remember moving out after those short weeks, loading up the minivan with the colors of the sunset fading and darkness settling over the castle. September coolness settling in alongside a profound feeling of "leaving home to go home." Sadness of leaving a place I loved so much and knew that I would not experience in the same way ever again, but also the joy of heading home and getting back to my family. I had moved several times growing up, so it was not an unfamiliar feeling of launching into a big change. I know so many others who can feel this, students moving to dorms, people who travel for work, "snowbirds" who have homes in multiple places. I felt very lucky to be able to say, "my other home is a castle" but it can also be bittersweet wanting to be both places at once.

These feelings all come to mind as we begin our united worship services with Pilgrim. We take the next steps, knowing there is joy and excitement in coming into community as the Church together, in new friendships and opportunities. We also hold room for the bittersweet feeling of moving from a beloved church home. We know God's presence is fully in both feelings, fully in both places. We remember the feeling of "leaving home to go home" and ask the Holy Spirit to help us through these times of transition. Each of us has a different story of the homes we've had, physically, online, and spiritually. I hope you find ways to both share and hear, "Welcome Home!"

*Pastor Karoline*

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

St. Stephen Calendar of Events					June 2026	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>2</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:00 Executive Comm. Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>3</b>	<b>4 Synod Assembly</b> 8:00am—3:00pm Rummage Sale at Pilgrim 11:00 Staff Mtg. 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	<b>5 Last Day of School Synod Assembly</b> 8:00am—3:00pm Rummage Sale at Pilgrim	<b>6 Synod Assembly</b> 8:00am—1:00pm Rummage Sale at Pilgrim
<b>7 Graduate Recognition</b> 9:00 Worship 10:15 Trust Fund Comm. Mtg. 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA	<b>8</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:00 Informational Mtg. for Family Support Network	<b>9</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 5:30 Council Mtg. 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>10</b> 9:00 Quilting at Pilgrim	<b>11</b> 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA	<b>15</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>16</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 6:00 Al-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim <b>NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21 Father's Day</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA	<b>22</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg. <b>MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR JUNE</b>	<b>23</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 6:00 Al-Anon 6:30 Worship at Pilgrim	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:30 AA	<b>29</b> 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	<b>30</b> 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum				



## Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their June Wedding Anniversaries.

### CONGRATULATIONS!!!

#### June 2nd

Phil & Ginni Giese

#### June 7th

Dick & Sue Holster

#### June 11th

Nathaniel & Ashley Lenoble

#### June 13th

Edward & Jane Schwede

#### June 14th

Burton & Kay Palmer

#### June 19th

Don & Karen Kromrei

Noel & Rachel Tordsen

#### June 30th

John & Holly Jorgensen

Bill & Pat Lonsdorf



## Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating June Birthdays

### CONGRATULATIONS!!!

#### June 2nd

Darlene Simmerman

#### June 7th

Faye Blarek

#### June 12th

Abigail Noschese

#### June 14th

Dawn Krueger

#### June 15th

Wally Lewitzke

#### June 16th

Cayden Kershaw

Thomas Kole

Maegan Matter

Julie Post

#### June 19th

Karen Kromrei

Kenneth Mylly

#### June 20th

Darcy Jensen

#### June 21st

Scott Romang

Ray Stotmeister

#### June 23rd

Bert Ruechel

Roger Zweck

#### June 24th

Bill Lonsdorf Jr.

#### June 25th

Vicki Romang

#### June 26th

Doris Peterson

*In all thy ways  
acknowledge Him  
and He shall direct  
thy path.*

*Proverbs 3:6*



## 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.

## Board in the Back of Church

You are invited to make an addition to the three-panel board at the back of the church that is going to be at Pilgrim's leave taking service on July 19th. There are also some yellow suns that will be added to the board. Please take one of the suns and write a Bible verse, a prayer, or a hope for our future as our congregations are combined. It would be great if both sides of the panel are packed with suns at the final service.

## Crossways and Camp on Location at Rib Mountain

Crossways Camps have been providing amazing outdoor ministry for our congregation and synod for many years. Outdoor ministry has huge impact on the faith of people of all ages. This is the second year that they are offering "Camp on Location," a one-week day camp taking place at Rib Mountain June 22-25. They also have many options for youth, families, and even seniors! Check it out at [crosswayscamps.org](http://crosswayscamps.org) or e-mail [info@crosswayscamps.org](mailto:info@crosswayscamps.org) or pick up a brochure at church!

## Church Rummage Sale

The second rummage sale at Pilgrim will be June 4th through the 6th. Please feel free to donate your treasures, but please drop them off at PILGRIM. Call the office at 715-842-4544 to be sure the doors are unlocked. Also, another opportunity to bake something for this bake sale. You can drop your baked goods off at PILGRIM on Wednesday, June 3rd by 3pm. Thank you!

## 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.

## Immigrant Family Support Network

Good Neighbors Needed! If you are interested in helping to support immigrant and refugee families in need in the Wausau and Marathon County area, particularly those impacted by current changes in immigration policy in the last few years, we need you! Current needs include: support with food and essentials and transportation including to immigration hearings in Milwaukee or Minneapolis. For all those interested in volunteering, an informational session will be held on Monday, June 8th at 6pm at St. Stephen Lutheran Church.

## Benevolence

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

ELCA National & Synod Support \$569

This is the fourth 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 \$12,643 for April.

## St. Stephen Family Checkbook

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



<b>April 1—30, 2026</b>	
What we received.....	\$26,398.
What we spent.....	(\$22,708.)
Our balance.....	\$ 3,690.
<b>January 1—April 30, 2026</b>	
What we received.....	\$86,114.
What we spent.....	(\$95,155.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 9,041.)

## 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.

## Office Closed

The office will be closed the week of May 24th 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.

## Penguin Project

All year long, theaters across the country burst to life with something nothing short of magical. On these stages artists step into beloved Broadway roles—each performance transformed by a powerful twist. Every character is brought to life by artists with disabilities, paired with dedicated peer mentors who support, encourage, and celebrate them at every turn. After months of rehearsals, they step into the spotlight together, delivering performances that radiate talent, friendship, and the unstoppable force of the human spirit. These shows don't just entertain—they redefine what's possible. The Penguin Project of Central Wisconsin presents Aladdin Jr., June 25th thru the 27th at Wausau East High School. You may purchase tickets at [penguinprojectcw.org](http://penguinprojectcw.org) or at the door.

## Singers Invited

The choir will be singing two anthems, "Day by Day" and "How Can I Keep from Singing" at the July 19th leave taking service at Pilgrim. Your voice would be a welcome addition to the group. You do not need to be a member of the choir to sing at this special service. There are six rehearsals scheduled for the summer. All of them are held at Pilgrim at 6:30 pm: Thursday, June 25th, Tuesday, June 30th, Thursday, July 9th, Tuesday, July 14th, and Thursday, July 16th. There is one additional practice held at Pilgrim at 10 am on Saturday, July 18th.

## Special Congregational Meeting

A special congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, June 14, 2026 to approve spending \$6300 on renovations for the Parsonage supporting our tenants, New Insights Counseling.

## 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.

## Volunteer Needed

Shirley Kasten has decided to retire from her volunteer job printing and collating bulletins. This job takes around an hour and is usually done on Thursday afternoons. If you would be interested in taking over as bulletin printer/collator, please contact Nancy Henke in the church office at [nhenke@sslcwausau.com](mailto:nhenke@sslcwausau.com) or call her at 715-845-7858. THANK YOU, SHIRLEY for your years of dedicated volunteerism! I will miss seeing you every week!

## MAY 2026 MEMORIALS

### Current Expenses

In memory of loved ones –  
Joyce Fromfeld

In loving memory of Florence Beese, John Baddock, and Kathleen Jaecks –  
Shirley Kasten

In loving memory of Jerry Preller –  
Kay Preller

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for the generous financial gift you made to my seminary account. I'm truly grateful for your support and for the way you continue to invest in my preparation for ministry.

Your gift will help cover books for the next year, and it lightens a significant burden so I can focus more fully on my coursework, spiritual formation, and serving where God has placed me.

Please know how much I appreciate not only your financial help, but also your prayers, encouragement, and friendship. I'm thankful to be part of a church family that supports the call God places on God's people. I will continue praying for St. Stephen and for God's work among our church family in the year ahead.

With sincere gratitude,  
Kathleen Robinson  
Wartburg Theological Seminary | Master of Divinity

*"And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*  
Micah 6:8 (NIV)

## **NEW NOVELS IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY**

### **The Women**

by Kristin Hannah  
Historical fiction, Vietnam War

### **Nora, Nora**

by Anne River Siddons  
1960's teenagers in Georgia  
(large print)

### **Aunt Dimity and the Summer King**

by Nancy Atherton  
Light-hearted, small town life  
(large print)

### **Knit the Season**

by Kate Jacobs  
Family, friends, holidays  
(large print)

### **Wormwood**

by Susan Wittig Albert  
Murder mystery

### **The Darling Dahlias and the Texas Star**

by Susan Wittig Albert  
Murder mystery

### **Nail Biter**

by Sarah Graves  
Murder mystery

### **The Tattooist of Auschwitz**

by Heather Morris  
Historical fiction

### **The Sound of Broken Glass**

by Deborah Crombie  
Murder mystery, South London

# BLESSINGS THAT GIVE HOPE

## Blessings That Give Hope (BTGH)

### “Walking Together to Celebrate Christ’s Love”

Pilgrim started the Blessings That Give Hope ministry in the fall of 2018, in part as a response to a revitalization program where a Pilgrim task force gathered input from community leaders. We learned that food insecurity is a big problem in Wausau and that a large proportion of students at John Marshall Elementary qualified for food assistance. Originally, we provided two meals and two snacks for Saturday and Sunday to needy John Marshall students.



Over the years BTGH has evolved and changed with more projects and programs. At times, we’ve partnered with Peyton’s Promise on Food Drives. BTGH has started to provide other items, not just food, including snacks, personal hygiene items, school supplies, and clothes. We’ve also started to help Eagle Pride Market, the pantry at Horace Mann Middle School. In the last few years we’ve provided items for Zoro’s Locker, the pantry at Wausau East High School. This month we provided boys pants, girls leggings, and underwear for needy students at Franklin Elementary.

BTGH is administered by Jeff and Delores Kessel. We are pleased to announce that BTGH will continue at our new merged congregation, St. Stephen Lutheran Church. We are excited to continue this program that shows Jesus’ love for those in need. The name will be the same. Our goal remains the same: help the children of hard-working parents who lack, not just food, but other necessities.

We will continue donating a wide variety of items to needy students at John Marshall Elementary, Horace Mann Middle School, and Wausau East High School. This spring we’ve expanded BTGH to serve needy students at Franklin Elementary School, the Wausau school closest to St. Stephen.

All four schools will be restocking their pantries in the summer and early fall. We will distribute lists of pantry needs in *The Deacon’s Spirit*. One or two bins for donations will be placed across the hall from the St. Stephen office.

Over the years we’ve been amazed at the generosity of Pilgrim members, friends of Pilgrim members, southeast siders, and other community members! If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 715-573-4491.

Jeff Kessel for the Blessings That Give Hope team

Each week, there will be opportunities to vote for your hymns. The 2 hymns with the top number of votes will move on to Round 2, beginning in August. Round 3 will take place on August 30th and September 6th, with the ultimate vote for our 2026 Song of the Summer on September 13th!

For each voting opportunity you may vote for two hymns. You may vote by:

- In person at worship on Sunday at 9:00 am
- In person at worship on Thursday at 6:30 pm (at Pilgrim)
- Comment on the Facebook post by midnight on Sunday
- Comment on the Facebook live recording of the worship service by Sunday at midnight

Winning hymns will be shared on Mondays and will move on to the next round!

## Round

May 21st-May 24th	#597 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less #789 Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us (Blessed Jesus) #767 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me #396 Spirit of Gentleness
May 28th-May 31st	#413 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! #525 You Are Holy #759 My Faith Looks Up to Thee #836 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
June 4th-June 7th	#774 What a Fellowship. What a Joy Divine (Leaning on the Everlasting Arms) #638 Blessed Assurance # 773 Precious Lord, Take My Hand #742 What a Friend We Have in Jesus #731 Earth and All Stars!
June 11th-June 14th	#779 Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound # 502 The King of Love My Shepherd Is #787 On Eagle's Wings #838 Beautiful Savior # 824 This Is My Father's World
June 18th-June 21st	#631 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling # 801 Change my Heart, O God #785 When Peace Like a River (It Is Well with My Soul) #856 How Great Thou Art #840 Now Thank We All Our God
June 25th-June 28th	#880 O God beyond All Praising #661 I Love to Tell the Story #592 Just As I Am #781 Children of the Heavenly Father #618 Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer
July 2nd-July 5th	#887 This is My Song #423 Shall We Gather at the River #656 Blest Be the Tie That Binds #623 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me #890 Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory
July 9th-July 12th	#669 Rise Up, O Saints of God! #817 You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore #379 Now the Green Blade Rises #733 Great is Thy Faithfulness #826 Thine the Amen

# COUNCIL MINUTES ~ MAY 12, 2026

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

**Absent:** Sue Holster, Shauna Robinson, and Jacque Schremp

**Council Minutes for April 16, 2026:** A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes. **Special Congregational Meeting Minutes for April 26, 2026:** A motion was made and carried to accept the minutes without changes.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Karoline provided a written report. The Alliance for Safe and Prosperous Communities is in the process of creating a family support network in response to recent ICE enforcement actions. An informational meeting will be held at St. Stephen on June 8 at 6:00 p.m. The Prayer Work Group is working with Pastor Cath Mode to organize a congregational retreat sometime in October that will focus on prayer and dealing with change. In conjunction with the retreat, a "timeline" for St. Stephen will be created.

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

**Treasurer's Report:** The total capital is \$18,190.81.

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

## **Committee Reports:**

**Good Stewards:** No report was provided.

**Property:** A written report was provided, which included an update regarding plans for proposed remodeling at New Insights. A special congregational meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 14th to approve funding for the remodeling project. **A motion was made and carried to approve the extension of New Insights' lease for five years (until 2033) with an increase of \$75/month each year.**

**Worship:** A written report was provided from the April 16, 2026 meeting.

**Trust Fund:** A written report was provided from the May 5, 2026 meeting. Clarification was provided that the investment profile will be the same across all funds.

**A motion was made and carried to accept the committee 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 \$23,895.56.
  - **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Capital Campaign Update—The current loan balance is \$93,587.
- Communications Work Group Proposal
  - **A motion was made and carried to accept the Communications Work Group's "Resolution Regarding Communications," creating a permanent Communications Committee and appointing Jeff Kessel, Pat Erdman, and John Kronenwetter as co-chairs.**
- Combined Pilgrim and St. Stephen Rummage Sales will take place at Pilgrim on May 14-16 and June 4-6.
- Synod Assembly—June 4-6 in Oshkosh. St. Stephen's delegates are Shirley Ostrem and John Kronenwetter.
- Thursday evening services at Pilgrim—Delores Kessel provided information regarding the current Thursday evening services at Pilgrim. The Thursday evening services will continue at Pilgrim through July 19th, led by Pastor Karoline. The Worship Work Group will explore options for the continuation of the Thursday evening service, or other midweek services, beyond that date.
- Three congregations have expressed interest in leasing or purchasing the Pilgrim property.
- **A motion was made and carried to authorize the approval of Item 1 on architect Rod Cox's proposal—i.e., the creation of a background floor plan for Pilgrim from existing drawings.**
- **A motion was made and carried to accept Kay Palmer as a member by affirmation of baptism.**

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, June 9, at 5:30 p.m.

**A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Betsy Utecht, Council Secretary