

DATE: AUGUST 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.

*In
God's Grace
each dawn is a gift
and every day a miracle...*

*To every thing
there is a season,
and a time to every purpose
under the heaven.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:1



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

Last week, I was fortunate to spend a few days at the Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts at St. Olaf. Pastors, deacons, and lay people gathered around the theme, "Nourishing Vocation: Every Time, Every Age, Every Place". We were nourished through worship, music, learning, creativity, conversation, and connection. I found the time renewing and energizing.



One thing I noticed at opening worship on Monday, was that many of the hymns we sang were ones that we had sung during the Pilgrim leave-taking service the day before. I found myself carrying Pilgrim and St. Stephen in my heart and in my conversations throughout the conference (and not just because I ran into our seminarian Kathy there!). It was because I am grateful and proud of the hard work that our congregation(s) have done together and the ways in which we are listening and trusting God for guidance. So many congregations are facing the same struggles we have been through and are also learning to trust, listen, and worship in the midst of the grief and joy of change.

In addition to classic favorites, our worship was filled with new music, including a new liturgy setting, "Living Voice of Creation". The themes of this liturgy are invitations to "remember and to know our belovedness, reflect on our relationship with God and creation, hear our call to stewardship, and to live in hope of God's restorative work in this world". One quote from the workshop spoke to me deeply, "Every part of creation holds its own beauty AND its own brokenness --so do you".

Even in the midst of the new music, I was reminded of us. One song in particular became rooted in my mind, "God Is Doing a New Thing". As I sang this over and over on the drive home, I kept thinking of the Celebration Service on September 20th where we will celebrate our merger. I also thought about this moment we are in, where we are living between the leave-taking and the time of celebration, complete with grief and growing pains and joy and tiredness and excitement, knowing deeply that God is near. Knowing deeply that God is constantly creating and guiding, holding us and joining us in both our brokenness and our beauty.

Pastor Karoline

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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St. Stephen Calendar of Events						August 2026	
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
2 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 AA	3 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	4 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	5	6 6:00 AL-Anon 6:30 Worship at SSLC	7	8	
9 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 AA	10 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	11 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	12 9:00 Quilting at Pilgrim 1:00 Women's Bible Study Planning Session	13 6:00 AL-Anon 6:30 Worship at SSLC	14	15	
16 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 AA	17 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 6:30 Property Comm. Mtg.	18 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	19	20 6:00 AL-Anon 6:00 Special Olympics 6:30 Worship at SSLC	21	22	
23 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 AA	24 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum MEMORIAL DEADLINE FOR AUGUST	25 10:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 10:30 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum	26	27 6:00 AL-Anon 6:30 Worship at SSLC NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	28	29	
30 9:00 Worship 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum 12:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 14/TDS 6:00 AA	31 3:00 Worship Telecast Ch. 980/Spectrum						

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



Anniversaries

The following couples are celebrating their August Wedding Anniversaries.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

August 2nd

Verlyn & Kathleen Oelke
Douglas & Kim Pittsley

August 3rd

Dennis & Sharon Lohrey

August 6th

Thomas & Kathy Brown
Randy & Crystal Nielson

August 8th

Alex & Jacque Schremp

August 9th

Jeff & Delores Kessel
Aaron & Sarah Werth

August 11th

Mark & Tammy Kromrei
Seth & Jeanette Wiskow

August 12th

Thomas & Charlene Buttner

August 14th

Frank & Suzanne Koerten
Steven & Rachel Poppe
Scott & Vicki Romang

August 15th

Kyle & Betsy Utecht

August 19th

Stan & Jill Myers

August 20th

Michael & Debra Zahrt

August 27th

John & Nancy Schneider

August 31st

Chuck & Susie Johnson



Birthday Blessings

The following people are celebrating August Birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

August 1st

McKenna Ecker

August 2nd

Michael Holster

August 5th

Nancy Schneider

August 6th

Rachel Fehlhaber-Poppe

Kolton Kershaw

Bonnie Von Rueden

August 7th

John Jorgensen

August 8th

Rhonda Will

August 9th

Gene Simmerman

Gail Wolfe

August 10th

Glenda Modrzejewski

Ashton Sekaney

August 11th

Ronald Dins

August 13th

Edward Schwede

August 14th

Shirley Ecker

Greg Koch

Patti Mortenson

August 15th

Delia Kole

Randy Nielson

August 16th

Joanne Lewitzke

August 18th

Deanna Kelly

Evelyn Lenoble

Karen Prigge

Carol Seymour

Alissa Strick

August 19th

Elsie Zastrow

Wendy Zimmer

August 20th

Joseph Mohr

August 22nd

Kari Van Natta

August 26th

Willis Gresen

August 27th

Jenni Zaitz

August 28th

Carla Eberhardy

Betty Lou Peterson

Eugene Viegut

August 29th

Naomi Kieper

August 30th

Larry Frick



Funeral

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

Ron Felch ~ July 25, 2026

Altar Committee

The Altar Committee is looking for several people for communion set up and clean up on average not more than once a month. Please contact Bonnie Von Rueden if you are interested in volunteering at vonbonniek@gmail.com or 715-409-6828.

Bulletin Printer/Collator 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 or call her at 715-845-7858. THANK YOU, SHIRLEY for your years of dedicated volunteerism! I will miss seeing you every week!

Coats for Kids

Please mark your calendars for our 2026 Coats for Kids event. On Wednesday, September 2nd, there will be a table set up with a display in the coffee hour area to place your new, slightly used, clean donations. The timeline to donate is Wednesday, September 2nd thru Monday, October 26th. The donated items will then be delivered to the Wausau School District and DC Everest School District offices to be distributed to those in need. All sizes are needed from little kids to senior high students. Clothing, new in package underwear, and socks, etc. see the list on the display. Email nancyprigge499@gmail.com with questions. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

GriefShare

GriefShare is a 13-week video session and is a national program to help individuals to journey with the death of a loved one or someone very close to you. The sessions begin with discussion, viewing a 30-minute video, following with more discussion. We will be offering a fall session at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Wausau beginning on Monday, September 14th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm and ending Monday, December 7th. The sessions will be held in the conference room. You can register by contacting Shirley Ostrem by email sjostrem2113@outlook.com OR go to the GriefShare.org website.

Office Closed

The week of August 16th, Nancy Henke will be on vacation and will return to the office on Monday, August 24th. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please call Pastor Karoline at 715-370-5514. Thank you!

Women's Bible Study Planning

On Wednesday, August 12th, the Women of the Church will meet at 1pm in the conference room to discuss planning for the Bible study for the fall and into 2027.

Benevolence

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

ELCA National & Synod Support \$552

This is the sixth 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 \$12,267 for June.

St. Stephen Family Checkbook

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

June 1—30, 2026

What we received.....	\$25,881.
What we spent.....	(\$20,620.)
Our balance.....	\$ 5,261.

January 1—June 30, 2026

What we received.....	\$130,749.
What we spent.....	(\$134,858.)
Our balance.....	(\$ 4,109.)

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.

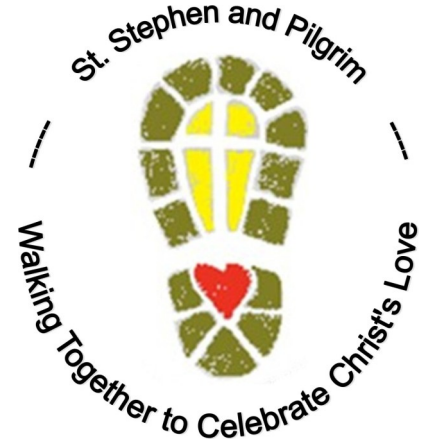
Other Funds: Confirmation/National Youth Gathering, Faith Enrichment Fund, Major Church Improvement, Missionary Sponsorship, Rooted in Faith (Crossways Capital Improvement) Fund, Seidel/Meyer Scholarship, Seminary Scholarship, and World Hunger.

BLESSINGS THAT GIVE HOPE UPDATE

Blessings That Give Hope (BTGH), our ministry that helps stock the pantries at Horace Mann Middle School, Wausau East High School, John Marshall Elementary, and Franklin Elementary is gearing up for the start of school on September 1st. All of these schools have pantries that supply food, snacks, and other items like school supplies to needy students. In addition, the schools have other needs that arise from time to time. An example is providing calculators for needy math class students.

Please consider donating money or needed items to any or all of these east-side schools.

- As of mid-July, only two of the four schools have listed needs for the fall.
- There are two large black bins across the hall from the office where you can drop off donations.
- Checks can be made out to Blessings That Give Hope.
- **If you so wish, you can designate donations to a specific school or a specific program, and we will be sure to get the donations to them.**
- Also, I am available to pick up your donation if you can't drop it off at church.



Here's a list of the schools and their needs:

Franklin Elementary

- BTGH provided them with leggings, pants and underwear in May. Their social workers have not provided a list for the fall.

Horace Mann where there are more than 80 needy students.

- **Re-stocking the pantry.** Here are the needs for August and Fall 2026:

Kleenex	Male/Female Deodorant
Jelly (plastic container)	Rice (instant/white)
Peanut Butter	Lipton Rice and Noodle sides
Granola/Nutri grain bars	Canned Fruit
Instant Oatmeal	Boxed Potato - Scalloped, Cheese, etc.
Boxed Milk (powdered milk)	Stuffing Mix
Brownie Mix	Gravy (packets)
Cake Mix/Frosting	Ravioli/SpaghettiOs
Spaghetti Sauce (canned or plastic jars)	Canned Vegetables
Soup, Stew, Chili	Canned Spam or Ham
Soft Taco Shells	Black/Refried Beans for tacos
Snacks (individual size)	Taco Seasoning
Jello/Pudding	Muffin Mix
Pancake mix	Syrup (plastic bottles)
Mac N Cheese	Pop Tarts
Microwavable Popcorn	Jerky
Can or packs Chicken/Tuna	Single serve cereal
Meal in a box (pizza, pasta, rice, soup kits)	
- **Horace Mann has started an Eagle Fuel Station to provide students with snacks during the day.** If you are interested in donating snacks, please contact me and I will forward a list to you.
- **Ten strips of bus tickets for needy students.** The cost is \$9.50 for 10 tickets. Make checks payable to Metro Ride, drop them off at church, and we will deliver them.

BLESSINGS THAT GIVE HOPE UPDATE (CONT.)⁷

- **Gift cards to Kohl's, Target, Walmart, and TJ Maxx.** The suggested amount is \$30 per card. They use them all year. FYI, a staff member takes the student shopping to control card use.
- **Projects for the Fall:**
 1. Sewing class needs. A St. Stephen member has obtained a Thrivent grant that may be designated for the sewing class. Call me if you would like to know more about this.
 2. Cooking class needs. A St. Stephen member has obtained a Thrivent grant that may be designated for the cooking class. Call me if you would like to know more about this.
 3. Work Center needs. They are creating 10 work centers for students to work individually (since they can't get work done at home).
 - 10 bins for supplies
 - 10 boxes color pencils
 - 10 boxes of crayons
 - 10 dry erase markers
 - 10 permanent markers
 - 10 packs of sharpened pencils
 - 10 erasers
 - 10 wall command hooks to hang headphones on
 - 10 boxes of Kleenex
 - 10 Clorox wipes

John Marshall Elementary

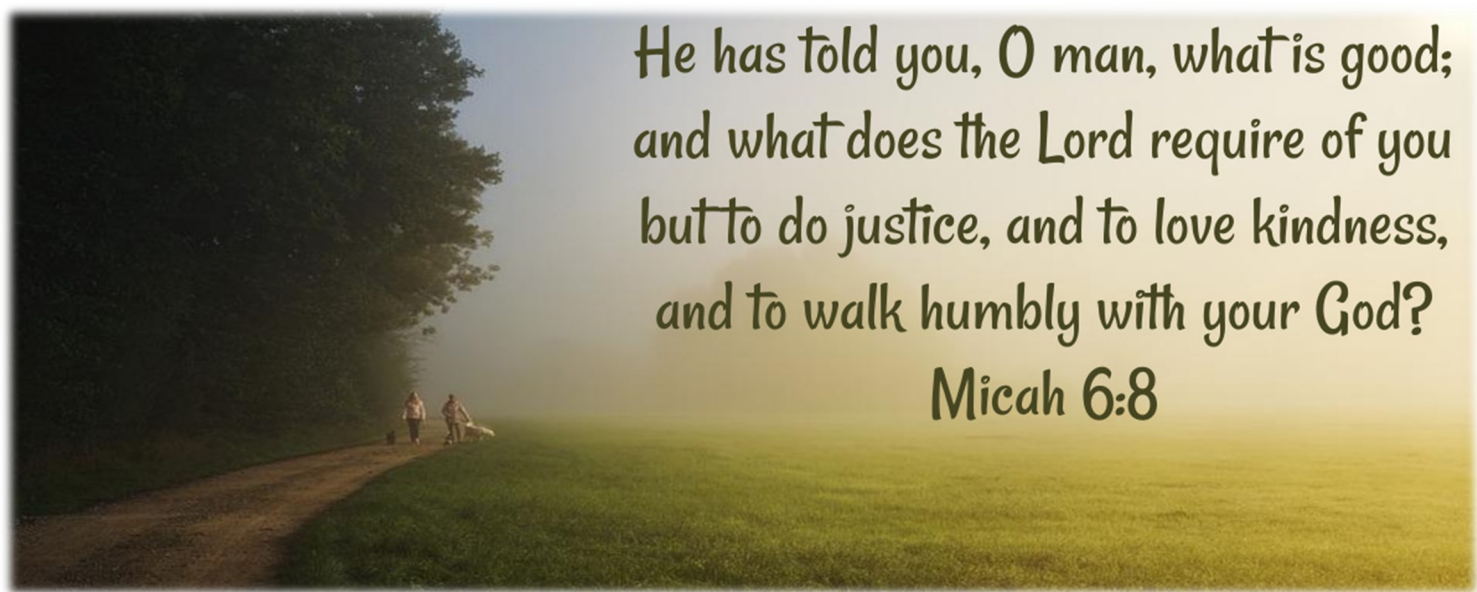
- Their new social worker has yet to provide a list. In the past, snacks and individual meals, especially macaroni and cheese, have been popular with the students they serve.

Wausau East

- Their pantry is being expanded this summer but come fall the pantry coordinator informed me that their most needed items are canned fruits (peaches, pears, mandarin oranges, etc.), vegetables (corn, green beans, peas), soups (tomato, chicken noodle, Hearty meals soups) and any type of snacks.

Wausau School District lunch debt. Approximately \$20,000 in school lunch debt remains for the 2025-2026 school year. If you want to know more about this issue, please call me.

Jeff Kessel
715-675-4271



He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
Micah 6:8

AMERICA AT 250: HOLDING GRATITUDE & HUMILITY

Dear Church,

As we look toward the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, many of us will celebrate with fireworks, parades and barbecues. Independence Day often brings us together with family and friends. Yet there is more that connects us than our communal celebrations. We are also connected through a common vision.

Signed in 1776, the Declaration of Independence proclaims a vision of equality for all people. While there were other nations pushing for equality at the time, the declaration was and is a monumental document in the way it names the aspiration so boldly. As we observe and celebrate the 250th Anniversary of that signing, we also affirm the vision of freedom and equality it casts. We can be grateful.



And with contrition and humility, we acknowledge all the ways we have failed to embody that vision. As members of this church, we are called to “pray, participate in, and advocate for civic life in the United States that reflects God’s activity and call, which seek both the well-being of all people and a creation marked by justice and peace” (ELCA social statement *Faith and Civic Life*, p. 89).

As Lutherans, we know the importance of naming realities for what they are. As citizens, we confess the ways we have not yet realized the vision of the Declaration of Independence and, more importantly, as Christians we confess the ways we have participated in or been complicit in failures to live into the vision God provides. This vision is rooted in creation and redemption. God crafts each person in God’s own image and sends Jesus Christ to redeem us, setting us free to follow Christ’s new commandment to love one another.

As we celebrate 250 years of the Declaration of Independence, we can hold gratitude and humility, possibilities and shortcomings. We continue to live in the already and the not-yet.

And we hold fast to the most important promise of all: the presence of God with us, the power of the resurrection of Christ, the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit, and the ever-unfolding grace of God.

We celebrate this occasion neither as a perfect nation nor as a perfect church but as a people held in God’s grace and called into community in service to all neighbors and for the sake of the world God so loves.

In Christ,

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
 Presiding Bishop
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Leave-Taking Service on Sunday, July 19th, marked the final worship service held within the walls of Pilgrim Lutheran Church. In her opening remarks, Bishop Anne Edison-Albright reflected that the day felt like “attending a wedding and a funeral at the same time.” Her observation that “a building doesn’t make a church” was echoed in many ways throughout the service.

The leave-taking acknowledged the sadness of departing a spiritual home that has held so much joy and so many memories for the Pilgrim family. It also pointed toward a new beginning as the people of Pilgrim and St. Stephen continue their life and ministry together.

Delores Kessel described the occasion as a time of both sorrow and hope, a sentiment reflected in her selections for the choir anthems. The words, “Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing”, captured the spirit of the day especially well.

Frank Koerten, Pilgrim’s Council President, reminded the congregation that change is part of every journey. The congregation then shared tears and laughter with Jean Trempe as she recalled the many celebrations, milestones, and memories held within Pilgrim’s walls.

The sermon by the Rev. Paulette Creswell offered comfort to all in attendance. It was a message of history, memory, lives touched, and the promise that God’s mission will continue. Her reference to the congregation council issuing a directive to use “plenty of sugar” in bake sale recipes also brought a moment of warmth. Earlier in the week, a neighbor passing the church had told choir members how much the neighborhood appreciated the baked goods offered at Pilgrim on election days.

The Rite of Leave-Taking, led by the Rev. Dara Clifford, offered prayers of closure at the places of the Word, Baptism, and the Meal. Last, Bishop Edison-Albright spoke the Declaration of Leave-Taking:

With thanks to God for the work accomplished in this place, I declare this building to be vacated for the purposes of Pilgrim Lutheran Church, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May the witness of the people who have ministered here in the name of Jesus Christ continue to live on as they leave these walls and begin their church life in a new place. Amen.

The combined choir sings during Pilgrim’s final worship service in the building.



The Rev. Paulette Creswell delivers the sermon during the July 19th Service of Leave-Taking.



JULY 2026 MEMORIALS**In loving memory of Harold Peterson**

Current Expense Fund -- \$340

Family & Friends

Capital Campaign

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Shirley Kasten

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Judy Kort

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Sarah Lonsdorf

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Nadine Oelke

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Bruce & Jerelyn Weinke

In loving memory of Ali Will –
Jeff & Rhonda Will

Choir Fund

In loving memory of Harold Peterson –
Bill & Pat Lonsdorf

In memory of our beloved Sister-In-Law –
Kay Preller

Current Expense Fund

In memory of loved ones –
Joyce Fromfeld

Library Fund

In loving memory of Angie Ninneman –
Tim Gritzmacher

COUNCIL MINUTES ~ JULY 14, 2026

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Present: Dick Holster, Jim Von Rueden, Sarah Lonsdorf, Darrin Koehler, John Kronenwetter, Jeff Blomquist, Pastor Karoline, Frank Koerten, Sue Koerten, and Linda Konkel.

Absent: Sue Holster, Shauna Robinson, Jacque Schremp, and Betsy Utecht.

Council Minutes for June 9, 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 of the important dates that are coming up in the next several months. July and August: Pilgrim's Leave-Taking Service on July 19th. Pastor Karoline will be gone on vacation and working on some continuing education so Pat Lonsdorf will lead worship (no communion) on July 30th and August 2nd, Shirley Ecker will lead worship (no communion) on August 6th and the 9th, and Kay Palmer will lead worship on August 27th and August 30th (no communion). A book group is also starting up very soon.

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

Treasurer's Report: The total capital is \$23,123. A gift of \$2,000 was given to help pay for the fuel bill. Giving for the year is down by \$4,000.

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

Committee Reports:

Good Stewards: Pastor Karoline reported that God's Work, Our Hands Sunday is set for September 20th. October 25th will be our turn to host the Community Dinner.

Property: A written report was provided. The carpet in the chapel is being replaced. There was a problem with the cooling of the upstairs. It has been corrected.

Worship: No meetings will be held in July or August.

Trust Fund: A written report was provided. The committee will not meet in July.

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 not given as a report was not available.
 - **A motion was made and carried to approve the paid invoices.**
- Capital Campaign Update—The current loan balance is \$90,215. A \$1,000 donation was received for this campaign.
- Fred Patten has a new email. It is finance@sslcwausau.com.
- Communications Work Group Update – A written report was provided by the Communications Committee from its July 9th and 14th meetings. Pilgrim's website will be transitioning to legacy web content and domain and will operate alongside St. Stephen's, and the committee will be evaluating, if necessary, refreshing existing information on the St. Stephen website. Also, a privacy policy to protect members and visitors sensitive data along with QR Code Guidance for printed materials and physical spaces have been proposed. **A motion was made and carried to accept the Website Transition Plan, Proposed Privacy Policy subject to revision of Section 2, "Information We May Collect, and QR Code Guidance for Printed Material and Physical Spaces.**
- The Celebration Committee reported that they are all ready to go on Sunday. May need some assistance with parking signs for the parking at John Marshall School. Also, fans are needed to cool the Sanctuary as temperatures are expected to be in the high 80's.
- The appraisal on the Pilgrim building has been received. No information from the architect has been received yet.

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, September 8 at 5:30 pm. There will be no meeting in August.

A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Konkel, Substitute Council Secretary