



St. Stephen's Newsletter

December 2023-January 2024



Devotional Thought

**I want to get closer to God.
Can God help me know him better?**

Steve and Caroline attended the Christmas party for Steve's company. It was difficult, though. Even though the partygoers were enjoying each other's company, Steve and Caroline were pretty much ignored. In the middle of the holiday cheer, they didn't really fit in.

There's a reason for that. Steve recently joined the company and didn't know many people at work. He knew many of their names but didn't really know the people very well. And when you're the quiet type, it's hard to jump into Christmas party conversations.

If only someone could bridge the gap and help Steve and Caroline get to know those people better!

Do you ever feel distant from your Creator—you know there's a God, but you just don't feel close to him? It's a rotten feeling, but God bridged the gap to help us get to know him better.

The Bible tells us, "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1: 18). The "One and Only" is Jesus, who came to our world to help us know God better. The birth of Jesus is a big celebration because it is what God did for us to get closer to him. On the night of his birth an angel told shepherds, "*Today a Savior has been born to you*" (Luke 2:11).

You see, the selfish things we have done or said create distance between us and our Creator. God knew that and sent Jesus to bridge the gap. He came to us and took the punishment for our selfish words and actions so we could see and understand God's love. His birth was the start; his death was the clincher.

Do you know the feeling Steve and Caroline had? You won't have that with God because of Christmas. Jesus came so we would know God better.

Join us this Christmas to find out how Jesus made God's forgiveness known. That's how we get closer to God—through Jesus, whose birth we celebrate.

WELS Evangelism

Worship Opportunities

**Joint Advent Service with
Good Shepherd &
St. John's Juneau-Horicon-Lowell
Wednesday, December 6 @ 6:30pm
at St. John's, Juneau**

Our sixth annual joint Advent service with St. John's and Good Shepherd will take place at St. John's in Juneau. There will be devotions by the pastors, and special music by the choirs of all churches.

Please join us for this special service of preparation for Christ's coming.

**Advent Celebration Service
featuring Children's Choir,
Junior Choir, and Senior Choir
December 17 @ 10:00am**

Our Advent Celebration Service featuring all St. Stephen's Choirs, Children's, Junior, and Senior Choirs will be **Sunday, December 17 in the 10:00am service here at St. Stephen's.** A wonderful way to prepare our hearts for our coming Lord!

Christmas Worship

- Lutheran Elementary School Children's Service
December 24 at 6:00pm
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24 at 9:00pm
- Christmas Day Worship
December 25 at 10:00am

New Year's Eve Worship

New Year's Eve Worship with Communion
December 31 at 6:30pm

Christmas: STILL A Time to Reach Out!

Christmas makes an ideal time to invite someone to church. They can hear the good news that is meant for all people that a Savior has been born for them. All of our special worship opportunities for Christmas make an excellent time to reach out with God's gracious invitation to worship the newborn King. Here are some tips for inviting someone to church.

- Identify people in your circle of friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors who need the good news of Jesus. **Pray for them.**
- Pray that God would give you a chance to invite someone to church.
- Make use of the mass mailing that we will send out in early December. Talk with someone about how it would be nice to see them in one of those worship services. Even offer to sit with them, if they do come.

Christian Education Opportunities

For all adults...

Our Monday and Wednesday classes continue after Thanksgiving, continuing the study, "Letters to Scattered Saints" looking at the Letters of Peter.

For Children...

Our Sunday School continues to meet on Sunday mornings from 9:10 AM-9:45 AM. We use various classrooms in the lower level of the school. It is not too late to join us. If you have, or know of someone, age 3-8th grade, invite them to join us for this educational opportunity.

Fellowship Opportunities

Beaver Dam Area OWLS

OWLS (Organization of WELS

Lutheran Seniors) met during the Fall, monthly (2nd Tuesdays), alternating between St. Stephen's and Friedens in Randolph, enjoying delicious potluck lunches and interesting presentations. On December 12, we will meet at St. Stephen's to enjoy a potluck at noon and for a Christmas carol sing along. Due primarily to possible bad weather and difficult driving, we will take a break until March. During that break the leadership will meet to set up a program schedule for 2024. OWLS is open to all members of our WELS churches ages 50+. We'd love to have more for this spiritual growth and fellowship opportunity.



Lutheran Teens

Lutheran Teens have a couple outings planned over the course of the next few months. Please check out the bulletin regularly for more information.

Lutheran Teens are open for anyone from 7th-12th grade. Friends are always welcome.

Service Opportunities

Ladies' Aid

On the first Thursday of December, we host our Christmas gathering with dinner at noon and program by our Junior Choir at 1:00. We also include a few other folks who help us with our service activities.

Service activities include: serving for various "receptions" held at church such as funeral luncheons, family gatherings for baptisms, showers, etc., With donations for such services we maintain the church kitchen and its equipment, purchase kitchen supplies, mail cards with gifts to congregation young people away at school or in the military, provide a decorative cross and remembrance bookmark to young people confirmed each May, mail birthday cards to congregation members 85 years and older.

Our 2024 meeting schedule will change slightly. Taking a cue from the OWLS, we've decided to eliminate the January meeting. Regular meetings resume **Thursday, February 1 at 1:30 p.m.** in the church basement. We will add a June gathering which will be an indoor "picnic" to which we will invite congregation with the hope a few more people will join us in our service. For more information, please call the church office at 920-885-3309 to be put in touch with a Ladies Aid leader.

Senior Choir

At this time, the choir is preparing music for Christmas. Senior Choir greatly enriches both Advent services (This year at St. John's on **Wednesday, December 6 at 6:30pm** and at St. Stephen's on **Sunday, December 17 at 10:00am**) and the Christmas Day service here at St. Stephen's on Christmas morning, **December 25 at 9:00am**. In January, the choir will begin preparations for Lent. We always welcome new voices. If you would like information about the Senior Choir, contact Mr. Josh Barnett (jbarnett@saintstephen.org).

St. Stephen's Radio Service

For 51 years St. Stephen's has provided a half-hour radio worship service primarily for our members who are homebound and in nursing homes, but also as a tool to share God's Word with many others. **It airs every Sunday at 9:30am on WBEV (95.3 FM).**



We record two half-hour services on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month (September – May). We start at **7:00pm and finish around 8:10pm.** It's a simple and pleasant way to serve Jesus and his people. We record in the church. The Maple Ave, church office, and ramp entrances will be open. Please join us!

You can listen to our radio services over the internet. Go to our [Radio Service Page and listen by streaming audio.](#)

School News

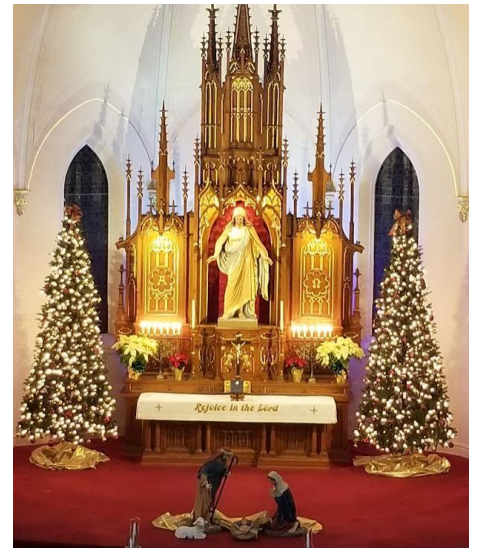
Advent---what a season to think about. The coming of Christ, not only as a child in Bethlehem, but also as our Redeemer at the end of time. During this time of year, we prepare our hearts and minds for Christ. As was with John, the predecessor of Christ, we focus on repentance. Our lives are filled with temptation and sin every step of the way here on earth until we reach our goal in heaven. We need to see the sin and ugliness of our lives, but we also need to see Jesus our Savior as we navigate this life. Advent puts us in this mindset for preparation. Christ is coming and the message is clear. Our Lord wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Prepare your hearts and minds this Advent season and set your attention on Christ.

There are multiple opportunities in December to see the gifts God has given to our students here at St. Stephen's, both musically and athletically:

- The annual piano recital that showcases Mrs. Estervig's students will take place on **December 11** in the church sanctuary.
- The annual Winter band concert that showcases Mrs. Monson's students will take place on **December 18** in the gymnasium.
- We are looking forward to a full basketball season with numerous home games and tournaments.

Christmas Eve Service

The Children's Christmas Eve service this year is called "What A Story!." The children's Christmas service explores the details of the story of salvation and reminds us that it is more than just a story – it is historic fact, the details of which are the basis of our sure and certain hope through faith in Christ. The service will begin at 6:00 on December 24. We look forward to seeing all members of our congregation there.



Christmas Vacation

- Christmas vacation begins after school on December 22. Vacation will run through January 2. School will start again on Wednesday, January 3. Let us always remember that this may be a vacation from our studies at school, but not a vacation from our Lord and His Word.

Veterans Day Thank you:

Thank you to all the veterans and families who attended on Monday, November 13 for our Veterans Day celebration. We held the event in the morning along with our chapel service. This was well received by many in attendance. We will plan for something similar in the future.



Accreditation News:

There are many committees that are meeting on a regular basis as we go through the process of accreditation. This process, though rigorous, allows us to evaluate our school and procedures that we use on a regular basis. Thank you to all who are serving on committees throughout this process.

From the Church Office

Stewardship and Finance Update

At our 2023 Annual Meeting, the Voters' Assembly decided to conduct financial business on a fiscal year basis, beginning in July. The following financial information is from the first quarter of our fiscal 2023-24 year, July through September.

General Fund Contributions:	\$ 248,402
General Fund Expenses:	\$ 261,238
(Balance):	\$ - 12,836

As can be seen, our expenses are outpacing our offerings and other income. In October our checkbook balance was not enough to meet end of month expenses, so we had to borrow \$8,000.

At this Thanksgiving time and soon, Advent and Christmas time of celebration, let's be moved by God's love for us in Jesus to bring generous gifts of thanks that support our ministry of sharing God's good news!

Another aspect of our stewardship is the use of our abilities and time. In the next month and a half, our Nominating Committee will be asking some of our men to consider serving Jesus and our congregation by serving on an elected board.

Gentlemen, if asked, please give the invitation serious and prayerful consideration. Many of our service groups also need people to help carry out their service tasks - Altar Guild, Ushers, Ladies Aid, Choirs, etc. Please do not wait to be asked. Talk to a Pastor or a leader of those groups about how to get involved.

2024 Offering Envelopes

2024 offering envelopes are available. Please stop in the basement after church or the office during the week to pick yours up.

Church Library

The church library has moved out of the church office! Christian books, movies, and CD's are much more accessible now due to the Ladies Aid creating a user-friendly and handy area in the church basement. Please stop by and check out a book or two. There are also handmade cards that have been made by our wonderfully gifted members and families.

