



St. Stephen's Newsletter

February-March 2024

A Father's Love

Jesus said, "The son got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

He was homeless, smelly, and almost starving to death. But the worst thing was that he knew it was all his fault. He thought his father was cruel and overbearing; there were too many rules. He wanted freedom. He wanted to have fun, but his father was all about responsibility and hard work. So, he asked for his share of the inheritance. He didn't care about the farm; he just wanted the money. As soon as he got it, he left. He could finally do what he wanted to do. But it didn't take long, and all that money was gone—partying is expensive. Those he thought were his friends left as soon as he ran out of money. He was all alone and miserable. He had two choices, and neither seemed pleasant. He could continue as he was and hope he could scrape enough together each day so that he wouldn't starve to death, or he could go back home.

He headed for home. He was prepared to grovel, to ask to be just a hired hand on his father's farm. But he didn't get the opportunity to do much groveling. As soon as his father saw him coming, he ran out to meet him. He hugged and kissed him and gave orders for a huge celebration in his honor. The rebellious son had expected a cool reception. He had expected an "I told you so." Instead he got what he knew he didn't deserve: a joyous welcome home.

You and I are that young man who rebelled against his father. We have all rebelled against our heavenly Father. We have considered him to be cruel and overbearing and having too many rules—someone who doesn't want us to have any fun. We have all separated ourselves from him and broken his commandments. Our consciences tell us that he is angry, that we deserve whatever pain or suffering comes our way. Could our heavenly

Father still love us? Could he still welcome us to his eternal home in heaven?

Jesus' story about the disobedient son in Luke 15:11-24 is a short story that speaks volumes for our lives. It assures us of God's love and our heavenly home. Our heavenly Father loves us so much that he punished his obedient Son, Jesus, in our place so that he can welcome us as his dear children and heirs of eternal life. Instead of giving us what we deserve for our rebelliousness, he gives us what we don't deserve: complete forgiveness in Jesus.

We welcome you to gather with us for worship and learn more about our heavenly Father's love.

WELS Evangelism

Worship During Sanctuary Repair and Painting

Church wall repair and painting *has begun!* Since the repairs and painting involve scaffolding and other equipment in the church, we will need to use other locations for our worship.

- Sundays and Wednesdays in Lent we will worship in the School Gym.
- Thursdays before Lent we will worship in the basement.
- 1:30 Friday afternoon worship will be at Good Shepherd.

Repair and painting will last until after Easter, so Easter worship will also be in the gym. We will resume worship in the church as soon as the work is done.

Worship Opportunities

Lenten Midweek Services

"**God On Trial**" is the theme of our midweek worship for the 2024 Lenten Season. The series focuses on when God was literally put on trial in the person of Christ. In these inspired episodes for each Lenten and Holy Week service, believers find a model and motivation for how to live as God's people in Jesus. Our pastors will be preaching in rotation with the pastors of St. John's in Juneau, St. John's in Fox Lake and Good Shepherd in Beaver Dam.

Lent begins Ash Wednesday, February 14.
Worship services for Ash Wednesday will be at **3:45 and 6:30pm.** Holy Communion will be served at each Ash Wednesday service.

Weekly Wednesday Lenten services following will also be at **3:45 and 6:30pm.**

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday, March 24, 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

Holy Week Tuesday, March 26
Confessional service with Holy Communion, **3:45 p.m.**

Holy Thursday, March 28
Communion Service **3:45 p.m., 6:30 p.m.**

Good Friday, March 29
Good Friday Midday, **1:30 p.m.**
Good Friday Tenebrae, **7:00 p.m.**

Easter, March 31
Festival Services **6:30 and 10:00 a.m.**
Communion Service **8:00 a.m.**

Christian Education Opportunities

For all adults (confirmed)...



Sunday Bible Class

Our Sunday Morning Bible Class takes a look at lessons from the life of Christ.

Monday & Wednesday Bible Class

Mondays at 7:00pm & Wednesdays at 11:00am.

Monday and Wednesdays we are studying Luther's Small Catechism. Although we learned it as children, we will be taking a fresh look at the timeless truths of biblical doctrine.

Bible Information Class (BIC)

Do you know someone who has questions about the Bible and faith? Is your neighbor searching for a church home? Would you like a review of the basic teachings of the Bible? If you answered yes to these questions, we have an opportunity for you.

The pastors are starting another Bible Information Class. This class focuses on sharing the teachings of the Bible for those who have questions or want a review. It also serves as a means for a person to become a member of our congregation.

Invite a friend, neighbor, relative, or acquaintance

to this class or give their name and number to one of the pastors.

Fellowship Opportunities

Beaver Dam Area OWLS



Our area OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) has been "on hiatus" during the Winter months. We will begin meeting again in April (9th) at Friedens in Randolph. The Program Committee met earlier in January to line up our 2024 programs and is now in the process of securing program presenters.

The OWLS meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month, alternating between St. Stephen's and Friedens in Randolph (with one meeting at Good Shepherd this year - in June). "Meetings" start with a potluck lunch at Noon, followed by a brief devotion and our presentation. We welcome everyone 50 years and older (and your friends).

Lutheran Teens

On **February 24**, the Teens group will be having a tubing event with the possibility of getting together with other area groups. Look for more information and a sign-up coming soon. We hope to see many of our teens, as well as their friends, join us for this event.

Service Opportunities

St. Stephen's Radio Service



Since 1973 (50 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. This service provides the opportunity to hear God's precious word and to sing with fellow Christians the hymns of the faith. **It airs every Sunday at 9:30am on WBEV (95.3 FM).**

These services involve many people – our pastors, organists, and very importantly a volunteer congregation. **Radio recording will be on pause during the repair and painting project. We will resume recording sessions in late April and May when the project is finished.** You can support this ministry with an offering. Each half-hour Sunday service on WBEV costs about \$85.

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

School News

A Beginning thought

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to give you peace, not disaster, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

As we plan for the future, some may become disheartened. How will we ever be able to accomplish large plans when there is no support? How can we afford this? Is no one going to help this along? Is no one available? These and many more questions arise when we look at the work of the church/school. There are many physical attributes to work on when a congregation runs a building, but there are more important ideas to focus on. As we work through our school year, the teachers focus on these ideas. The faith life of the students runs in the forefront of our minds. As we prepare the youth of our congregation for their future, we remind them that we don't always know what is going to happen. We need to place all things into the hands of our Lord and let him bring to fruition all things for the benefit of his church.

Sports

We have successfully navigated through $\frac{2}{3}$ of our basketball season here at St. Stephen's. All teams are doing well. We look forward to the tournament season of February to see what our teams can accomplish.

Missions

Our school has joined with the other schools in the Lakeside Federation to support mission causes. In the 1st quarter, we supported LLHS OpGo trips. Our school support was \$619.00 of over 6500 that the schools sent in. 2nd quarter missions totaled \$751.35 in support of the Seminary in Vietnam. 3rd quarter missions will go to help the home mission church in Richland Center, WI. 4th quarter missions will help MLC and the training of future workers in the synod.

Kindergarten Round Up

St. Stephen's Lutheran School will be hosting Kindergarten Round-Up on February 19th from

6pm until 7pm. There will be a short meeting allowing parents the opportunity to get inside our classroom, meet the teacher, and get to know other possible parents and students. Mrs. Barnett has been doing a wonderful job getting things ready for this evening and looks forward to meeting all the new families.

If you have a child ready for Kindergarten this upcoming 2024-2025 school year, feel free to stop by and collect some information, meet some friendly folks and maybe enjoy a cookie or two.

If you know someone who has children in this age range, please encourage them to attend this evening. Congregation members and families are our best form of outreach. Let the Lord guide you to encourage the youth of our church and community to enroll in Christ-centered education.

If one cannot attend the meeting, please reach out to Mrs. Barnett for more information. She can be reached at kbarnett@saintstephen.org

Accreditation News

This year, St. Stephen's has started the accreditation process. This process allows us to examine our school, administration, relationships with the community and numerous other areas. Eight committees are working to see where we can make improvements in our education system at St. Stephen's. We look to a site visit by other school leaders to happen in late September of 2024. Thank you to everyone who is giving their time to help us through this process.

Upcoming events:

Feb 14-Potato Bar/Bake Sale 4 DC Trip 4:45-6
Feb 15-16 No School-WWDTC
Feb 19 Kindergarten Round up
Mar 8 End of Quarter 3
Mar 18-22 Spring Break
Mar 29 No School-Good Friday

Keep up with what's going on

Please keep up-to-date with school news on the school website at

www.ssbdwels.com/school

Click on school news when you get there to see everything that is being talked about on a weekly basis at school. St. Stephen's School is your outreach tool and there is plenty of news to read about on a weekly basis.

January 28, 2024 Annual Meeting Summary

The Annual Meeting of the Voters of our congregation was held Sunday, January 28.

1. **Treasurer David Stange** reported that finances of the congregation and school are in satisfactory order and reviewed our security procedures for making payments. Since we are on a fiscal year, a complete audit will be made after our fiscal year ends in June. Our finance committee is also working to consolidate our organizations' finances into dedicated funds.
2. **Elections for open positions on our Council and Boards were held.**

Elected to the Council were:

- Jesse Benike, Erv Loest, and Don Schultz.
- New officers will be elected to specific positions at the February Council meeting.
- Scott Wittnebel, Noah Trimmer and Jeff Schlegel have completed their terms of service. We thank them for their time and efforts serving on the Council.

2023 Council Members (+Departing officers):

Tim Welch – President

Jayne Roll – VP

+*Scott Wittnebel* – Secretary

David Schumann– District Elder Chairman

Gene Nimmer– Board of Property and Maintenance Chairman

+*Jeff Schlegel* – Board of Education Chairman

Duane Swenson – Financial Secretary

Steve Seim– Insurance Liaison

+*Noah Trimmer*–Council Member at large

- Board of Education: Jason Runke was reelected.

2024 Board of Education Members:

+*Jeff Schlegel* – Chairman

Mark Schuman

Jacob Schultz

Jason Runke

Andy Estervig

Duane Ohland – Good Shepherd Representative

- Board of Property and Maintenance: Don Cigelske was reelected.

2023 Board of Property and Maintenance

Members: Gene Nimmer – Chairman

Don Cigelske

Matt O’Brion

Jim Szopinski

3. Special written reports were reviewed:

- Membership actions of 2023 were approved.
- Other reports were also reviewed.

4. Old Business

- **Sanctuary Restoration.** In the advisory survey, the majority selected design two, which had blue highlights on the ceiling of the transepts, and that was approved by a unanimous vote. The work will begin on February 5.

5. New Business

- Three changes in the bylaws were approved:
 - Because we are now on a fiscal year, (July - June) Article I, Section 1, was changed so that meetings of the congregation are designated thus: January, Annual Meeting. Third quarterly meeting will be the Budget Meeting. Other meetings will simply be called “Quarterly Meetings.”
 - Article IV, a distinction is made between release, which is requested by a member, and removal, which is for “those with whom we have been unable to communicate, despite our diligent efforts to do so.”
 - Article VIII, Section 2, Audit committee shall consist of three people or an outside firm or individual may be asked to conduct or assist in an audit.