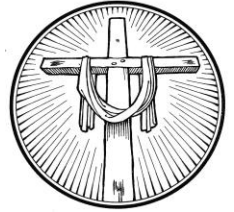




St. Stephen's Newsletter

April-May 2024



Devotional Thought

Canceled Debts

Jesus said, "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41,42)

One day Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of a religious leader named Simon. He was a member of the group called the Pharisees that believed their good works made them worthy before God; they didn't believe that they needed to be saved from their sins. There was an unexpected guest at the gathering—a sinful woman, a prostitute. She had come to honor Jesus by pouring expensive perfume and even her own tears on his feet. Simon was upset that Jesus was welcoming the praise of this sinful woman. He thought that if Jesus really knew who she was, he would not even let her touch him. The truth is Jesus knew that she had lived a sinful life. He also knew that her joyful tears were born of his forgiving love for her.

So Jesus told a story to teach Simon and us a lesson about forgiveness. There were two men who were in debt. One of them owed a moneylender about three years' worth of wages. The other owed the same moneylender about 50 days of wages. Neither was able to repay, so the moneylender graciously canceled both debts. Jesus posed a question: "Now which one of them will love him more?" Simon answered correctly that the one who had the larger debt canceled would have loved the moneylender more.

Jesus' short story speaks volumes for our lives. We all have a huge debt that we cannot pay. We cannot make up for all the sinful things we do, not by doing more good things or by doing less bad things. We can't cancel the debt of sin by anything we think, do, or say.

But God saw our desperate need and loves us so much that he canceled our debt of sin. He did that

by having his Son, Jesus, pay it completely for everyone. The price he paid was his death. As the sinless Son of God, he was able to take all of our sins on himself and suffer their punishment for us. By his death, he canceled the debt of our sin. Three days after he died, he rose from the dead to prove that his sacrifice counted for all of us.

It's springtime, and Christians are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What a great time of the year to be reminded that Jesus has canceled our debt of sin and given us new life with him!

WELS Evangelism

Restoration Update



By the time you receive this *Newsletter*, most of the painting of our church interior will be finished.

As the work has progressed, other opportunities for improvements have opened up:

Lighting will be improved with a new style of LED bulb--our lights will not need extensive rebuilding. Lighting controls will be assessed and improved at a later date.

We also have an opportunity to replace our worn carpet and refinish the hardwood. When the painting is completed, and the scaffolding is down, work on the flooring will begin.

We will resume worship back in the church as soon as the flooring is finished. We anticipate this will be in late April. Praise the Lord for all the wonderful gifts we have been given.



Worship Opportunities

Service Times

Sundays, 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Fridays, 1:30 p.m.

Note: During the restoration project, Sunday worship will be in the gymnasium, Thursday worship will be in the church basement, and Friday worship will be at Good Shepherd. *As soon as possible*, all services will resume in the church.

Confirmation

This year 18 young men and women will profess their faith in their confirmation vows.



- The **examination service** with pictures will take place on **Friday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m.**
- The **confirmation service** will be on **Sunday, May 5, at the 10:00 a.m. service.**
- **First Communion** will be **Sunday, May 12 at the 10:00 a.m. service.**

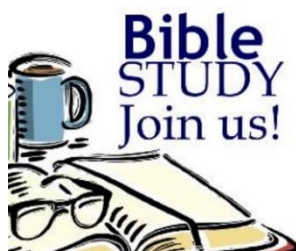
Ascension Day

Our **Ascension Day Worship** will be **Thursday, May 9 at 6:30 p.m.** This will be a special festival service to celebrate our "homecoming" as we return to the church for worship. There will be music by Children's Choir, Junior Choir, and Senior Choir.

Christian Education Opportunities

For all adults...

Mondays and Wednesdays, we are studying Luther's Small Catechism. Review and refresh your knowledge of the commandments and have a deeper look at what the small catechism teaches us.



Sunday Morning Educational Time

Our Sunday morning Bible Class is studying the same lessons as the Sunday School.

Join us on Sunday mornings

from 9:10 a.m.-9:45 a.m. in the church basement to learn more!

On the first Sundays of the month, we take off from Bible Class to enjoy a relaxed fellowship time with coffee, juice, and donuts.

Our youth are invited to Sunday School which meets from 9:10 a.m.-9:45 a.m., to learn more about their Savior. Each week they go through a Bible story.

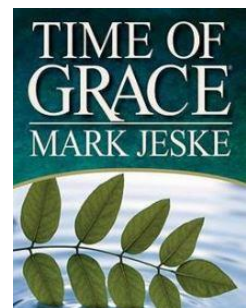
These two opportunities give families a wonderful way to grow in their faith. Please join us on Sunday mornings!

Fellowship Opportunities Beaver Dam Area WELS Seniors (OWLS)



Area seniors are invited to Friedens Lutheran Church in Randolph on Tuesday, April 9th. We open with a potluck meal at noon in the church basement. After the lunch we head upstairs for a devotion by an area pastor. Pastor Mark Jeske will then speak about a sad synod disagreement that began 100 years ago this month, called the "Protest'ant Controversy." Pastor Jeske was the speaker on "Time of Grace" for many years. Come enjoy the fellowship and learn. Friedens is on the south side of Randolph, and handicapped accessible. Everyone is welcome

Our group is for members of our area WELS churches age 50 and up. Friends are welcome, too. We've had some nice gatherings of 30-40 folks of late. Please join us for some Christian fellowship!!



Lutheran Teens



The Lutheran Teens are planning an event for the end of April. Keep your eyes out for announcements in the bulletin and on our Facebook page for more information.

Service Opportunities

St. Stephen's Ladies Aid Society

Our Mission – To assist the congregation in maintaining and furthering the program of the Kingdom of our Lord and to grow spiritually in our Christian faith and life.

We will once again host a Spring Luncheon and invite all those who volunteered to help at one or more funerals in the past year as our guest. It will start at noon with a meal in the church basement on Thursday, May 2nd. Our speaker will be Pastor Daniel Sims who has served as Pastor at Zion in Columbus and now is the Administrator of WELS Christian Aid & Relief, sharing the work of CA&R. Anyone interested in the presentation is welcome to attend. It will start at 1:00 p.m.



There is no meeting in June or July, however, we will be having a membership drive on Thursday, August 1st in the church basement. The Ladies' Aid will provide a noon lunch after which each officer and committee chair will explain what we do and how we serve our church, school, and other WELS groups with service work or donations. Attending this event is not a commitment to join but an awareness of what our meetings and projects are like. If any woman of our congregation would like to attend, please contact Shirley Kohls, program chair, at skohls48@gmail.com or 920-927-3870 by or before July 15.

St. Stephen's Radio Service

Since 1973 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).**

Recording may resume April 23 (or April 30 if the church isn't ready by the 23rd... watch the bulletin!). **Recording sessions will continue through May.**

Another way to support this ministry is with an offering. Each half-hour Sunday service on WBEV costs about \$70. You can listen to our radio services over the internet. Go to our [Radio Service Page and listen by streaming audio.](#)

PTS (Parent-Teacher-Society) is continually looking for ways to help build up the relationship between the parents and teachers of our school. This spring there will be a Movie Night on **Friday, April 12th** at 6:30pm and we also sponsor Teacher Appreciation Week that will be the week of May 1.

If you would like to volunteer to be on the board or help with any opportunities, please check out the information on the website, <https://ssbdwels.com/school/pts/>.

School News

As we near the end of another school year, it's a moment to reflect on the journey we've embarked upon in Christian education. Throughout this year, we've witnessed the growth and development of our students, not just academically, but spiritually as well. In the classroom, we've delved into the depths of scripture, exploring its teachings and understanding how they apply to our lives today. We've sought to instill in our students not just knowledge, but wisdom rooted in faith.

Beyond academics, we've fostered a community where love, compassion, and service are the guiding principles. We've encouraged our students to emulate the example of Christ in their interactions with others, both within our school walls and out in the world. As we approach the end of this chapter, let us take a moment to give thanks for the blessings we've received and the growth we've experienced together. Let us also look ahead with anticipation and hope, knowing that the seeds we've planted this year will continue to bear fruit in the lives of our students for years to come.

In these final weeks, let us redouble our efforts to finish the year strong, supporting one another and leaning on our faith as we navigate the challenges that may arise. And as we prepare to bid farewell to another school year, let us do so with hearts full of gratitude and minds filled with excitement for the journey that lies ahead.

Kindergarten Round Up Follow-up:

Kindergarten Round-Up was held in Mid-February. We had a large number of families show up and express interest in our Kindergarten program and our school. Registration information was sent to families that have email addresses on file. **If you know of any families that are interested in Christian education, please refer them to Mr. Schulz.**

Updates:

As we move into April, the stark realization that we only have 8 weeks of school left starts to settle in. Please continue to keep your students focused and engaged in their learning as we wind down this year.

The 8th Grade student body will be traveling to Washington D.C. the week of April 15th. There is a full agenda of things they will see and do during that week. We pray that the Lord be with them as they travel. Thank you to all who supported the fundraising efforts held earlier in the year.

The registration window for the 2024-25 school year has opened. All families need to visit FastDirect and fill out information for your students. **Returning**

families need to log in with their current credentials and enter new students or mark returning students. **New families please visit** www.fastdir.com/saintstephens Click on the Registration tab on the left menu and follow the prompts given.

Upcoming Events:

- April 6-7 Lakeside Lutheran Fine Arts Festival
- May 3: Public Confirmation Examination
- May 5: Confirmation
- May 20: Awards Night
- May 23: Last day of school
Graduation service—6:30, with worship.

Congregation Finances - Where Do Our Gifts Go?

In years past this page has just given current financial information with a little scriptural encouragement to bring our thank offerings to our Savior God. But changing it up a little, we give some picture of where our gifts given out of love for our Savior Jesus go and what they do.

In Old Testament times, gifts such as grain and animals brought to the temple for sacrifice were divided up. Some gifts were given to the priests to take care of their bodily needs and temple activity, and some of it was BURNED in sacrifice. Today all of what we bring to Jesus gets “put to work” somehow in support of the work he gives his church to do. Here’s how.

Money given and designated for **General Fund** (Your offering envelope) supports the work St. Stephen’s congregation does locally. That means those gifts take care of:

- Pastors’ & Teachers’ salaries & benefits
- Church / School utilities
- Secretaries, Organists, Custodian wages
- Cleaning & Maintenance supplies
- Altar / Worship / Communion supplies
- Missions *
- Lakeside Lutheran High School **
- Maintenance on church/school/parsonages
- Sunday School / VBS materials
- Property & Liability Insurance
- Bible Class / Outreach materials
- Service folders & Office Supplies

*Money designated for **Missions** is sent to our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Through WELS those offerings financially support ...

- Ministerial Education Schools (our 4 schools that train future Pastors and Teachers)
- Home Mission Churches (new churches in the U.S.)
- World Mission Fields (sending Missionaries to foreign countries)
- Congregation Support (Worship, Youth, Evangelism, Stewardship resources for congregations)
- District and Synod Administration (Staff, Conventions, etc.)

In July 2023 we began operating financially on a June-July fiscal year which better coincides with the school year and WELS. Since July we have offered **\$47,695** for the Mission and Ministry of WELS. Our 2024 Commitment to WELS is the same as last year, \$114,470.00 (10% of our total budget).

For 2023-2024 we committed \$ **24,000 for LLHS support and as of end of February we have sent **\$12,500**.

Through 8 months of fiscal year 2023-24 our “General Fund” expenses were **\$718,544.00**. General Fund offerings & receipts were **\$808,051.00**. How blessed we are! One point to note: to this point we have “underspent” our budget (Ministry Spending Plan) by \$121,000, partly due to the fact that we are currently “short” and not paying two full-time called workers (1 Pastor and 1 Teacher).