



St. Stephen's Newsletter

June-July 2024

Devotional Thought



St. Stephen's 2024 Confirmands

Time To Grow

Jesus said, "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times" (Mark 4:3-8).

Songwriters have used it. Thinkers have used it. Investors have used it. You probably have used it yourself. Even Jesus Christ used it. Used what? They used the picture of planting seeds to make a point. Jesus told a story about planting seeds. Recorded for us in Mark 4:3-8, this simple story speaks volumes for our lives.

Jesus teaches us that seeds are being planted in hearts at worship services each Sunday. That's also what is happening in a children's Sunday school lesson—seeds are being planted in their hearts. That's what is happening when you learn

what the Bible teaches—seeds are being planted in your own heart. They are being planted by God through his Word.

Seeds need time to grow. In springtime, when gardens are first planted, there's not much to see. Yet, as every gardener knows, when it comes to seeds, it takes time. As sunlight warms the moist earth where seeds are embedded, seeds take time to sprout and grow.

Sometimes, a person checks out a church one Sunday and decides not to go back. But that's not much time to let the seeds sown that Sunday grow, is it? Sometimes, people are glad to attend a particular Bible class or workshop at a church. But when it is done, they lose interest. In a way, they are like a child who excitedly plants a seed in a foam cup and waters it regularly. But a couple of days later, the child forgets about it, and the seed dries up.

Sometimes a person goes to worship regularly so that the seeds of God's Word start to grow, but then he lets the cares of life grow up like thorns. They crowd out time for the Word, and so the planting of faith in his soul gets the life choked out of it. But sometimes, an amazing thing happens. The person keeps coming back to hear the Word. And the seeds grow and keep growing. The plant of faith is made strong by God's complete forgiveness won by Jesus. It flourishes under God's unconditional love given in Jesus and is made resilient by heaven's guarantee paid for by Jesus. Maybe that person is you.

From WELS Evangelism

Worship Opportunities

Summer Service Times

Just a reminder that our service times remain the same all through summer: Thursday evenings at 6:30 PM, Friday at 1:30 PM, and Sunday at 8:00 AM & 10:00 AM. We will also continue our Sunday morning Bible Class between the services.

Are you going on vacation this summer? Let's not forget about worship. Our services continue to be streamed via Facebook. They are posted on YouTube on Monday mornings.

You can also find area WELS/ELS churches in areas where you will visit. Go to: yearbook.wels.net to find a church where you may be.

St. Stephen's Radio Service

Since 1973 St. Stephen's has provided a half-hour radio worship service primarily for 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. It airs **every Sunday at 9:30am on WBEV (95.3 FM)**.

Each half-hour Sunday service on WBEV costs about \$75. You can listen to our radio services over the internet. Go to our [Radio Service Page and listen by streaming audio](#).



St. Stephen's Restoration Project Nears Completion

- Wall repair and painting were completed March 28th.
- Sanctuary lighting was updated with new LED lighting April 1st.
- A hearing loop was installed April 4th.
- Scaffolding was removed on April 8th.
- Hardwood areas under the pews were completely refinished May 15th.
- New chancel hardwood flooring and new chancel steps are in the works.
- Carpeting is expected to arrive after May 22nd.
- An audio/visual company is preparing a proposal to upgrade our sound system.



Our plan is to begin worshipping in the church as soon as we are able, and to have a special Grand Opening / Homecoming Service soon after.

Christian Education Opportunities For all...



Bible study will continue on Sunday mornings from 9:10am - 9:50am. Currently we are studying *19 Minutes with the Messiah*, with lessons based on Jesus' parables and "I am" statements.

Bible Information Class (BIC)

Another session of our Bible Information Class (BIC) will begin soon. The pastors lead these classes for those who have questions about the Bible, wish to become members, or would just like a review of what we believe. These classes are held **Mondays and Wednesdays at either 11:00 AM or 6:30 PM, starting Wednesday June 12**. If those times don't work, please speak with a pastor. We are flexible in finding a time that works for anybody. If you know of anyone that would be interested in this class, invite them. Better yet, come with them. If you do not feel comfortable inviting them, give their name and number to a pastor.

Vacation Bible School

Our School faculty and our Pastors have realized that our annual Vacation Bible School needs some "revamping". We've "done the same thing" for 25+ years; plus in recent years we've run into a conflict with Beaver Dam schools Summer School session. Due to the busyness of the end of the school year and our school's involvement in the accreditation process, VBS plans will not be finalized until early June. We anticipate a different week from the last week of July, and probably a different format. We'd like to try to involve our families in VBS as well. Watch the weekly worship folder announcements, the church website and FaceBook page for announcements about the when and where of VBS 2024.

For those interested, Good Shepherd, our sister congregation, will be hosting Vacation Bible School August 5-9.



Fellowship Opportunities



Beaver Dam Area WELS Seniors

Our group began meeting again after the Winter months in April, with great potluck lunches and presentations in April by Pastor Mark Jeske on the Protest'ant Controversy in WELS in the 1920's and in May by retired Seminary Professor John Brenner on some of the history of our Pastor training school, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Our next get-togethers will be June 25th at Good Shepherd, with Ben & Stephanie Pagel telling about teaching in the Lutheran schools on the Apache reservation in Peridot, AZ. July 9 will be our picnic (weather permitting) at Waterworks Park (rain space in St. Stephen's basement). St. Stephen's member Veronica Schultz (also our Kindergarten Aide) will

share with us about growing up Muslim in Indonesia, and how she and her family were brought to know the true God and Jesus the Savior when she was a teenager. Her husband, Jacob, will also share a little bit about going to Indonesia after graduating from Martin Luther College, our WELS College of Ministry, as a Teacher to teach in a Christian School there, where he and Veronica met. Our potluck lunches begin at noon, followed by a devotion and the presentation for the month.

Our Seniors Group is here for all our members 55 and older (or close to it!). We'd love to have more of our "seniors" join us for our fellowship. Feel free to bring a friend!

Lutheran Teens

The major activity for Lutheran Teens this summer will be attending the WELS National Youth Rally at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO. Four of our teens will attend, with teen leader Jayme Roll. Hopefully, we can work in a teens activity during the summer, as well..

Matt O'Brion and Jayme Roll are heading up our Lutheran Teens group. Other parents of our youth in grades 7-12 are welcome to join in leading this group, with the goal of keeping them connected to Jesus and his people during the challenging middle school and high school years.



Service Opportunities

Ladies' Aid

St. Stephen's Ladies Aid continues to carry out its mission to grow in Christian faith as children of God and to serve him by serving our congregation. That service primarily takes the form of coordinating and serving meals for families, mostly for funerals, but also the occasional Baptism or Confirmation lunch, or bridal or baby showers held in the church basement. We are thankful to the several ladies (AND MEN) who are not Ladies' Aid members who gladly help with serving of funeral lunches. Our May luncheon is our activity during which we extend special thanks to them and to others in our congregation who assist us in one way or another. At our May Luncheon, we also try to include some kind of ministry presentation. This year Pastor Daniel Sims joined us to share the ministry of WELS Christian Aid & Relief.

If you are able and willing to help now and then at the serving of a "funeral lunch" we would love to have your help! Contact Carol Lathrop (920-887-

7250) or Pastor Heyer (920-885-3309) to add your name to the list of volunteers.

There will be no meeting in June or July. A membership drive will be held on Thursday, August 1st starting with a noon lunch in the basement provided by our current members. This is a great opportunity for any women of our congregation to enjoy some Christian fellowship. You will hear about the many ways in which St. Stephen's Ladies' Aid serves our local church and school as well as other WELS programs. There is no commitment to join by coming to this event. **If you would like to attend to learn more about us, please contact Shirley Kohls at (920)-927-3870 by July 15th.** or attend our next meeting which will be on Thursday, September 5, 2024.

School News

God Given Opportunities

As another school year draws to a close, it's natural to reflect on the journey we've all taken together.

This year has been filled with challenges and triumphs, growth and learning, laughter and tears.

Through it all, we've been supported by each other and guided by our faith.

We are reminded of the importance of community, of coming together as a family to support and uplift one another. As we close out this school year, let us take a moment to give thanks for the community we have built together.

Let us give thanks for the teachers who have dedicated themselves to nurturing the minds and souls of our students, for their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Let us give thanks for the parents who have entrusted us with the education and care of their children, for their partnership and support in the important work of raising the next generation.

Let us give thanks for the students who have filled our halls with laughter and curiosity, for their energy and enthusiasm, for the joy they bring to our lives each and every day.

And let us give thanks for God's grace, which has sustained us through the challenges and trials of this year, which has given us strength when we felt weak, and which has filled our hearts with hope for the future.

As we look ahead to the summer months and the opportunities they bring for rest and renewal, let us go forth with grateful hearts, knowing that we are blessed to be part of this wonderful community.

May God's peace be with us all as we journey onward, and may His love continue to guide us in all that we do.

Faculty news:

Let us give thanks to the Lord. Our faculty for this past year:

Mr. Schulz-Grade 8 homeroom, Math, Principal
Mr. Zuberbier-Grade 7 homeroom, Language, P.E.
Mr. Barnett-Grade 5-6 homeroom, Social Studies, Music
Mrs. Emily Elmquist-Science, Gr. 8 English
Mrs. Cooper-Grade 3-4, Student Council
Ms. Helwig-Grade 2, Forensics
Mrs. Trimmer-Grade 1
Mrs. Barnett-Kindergarten

We say farewell to Ms. Helwig and Mrs. Elmquist after this year. They were both blessings to St. Stephen's while they were here. Lord's blessings to you in all your endeavors.

We will have some gaps to fill in our faculty as the summer wanes on. This will create some challenges for our faculty, but we accept those challenges and move on with the Lord's ministry to the children of St. Stephen's.

Other School Information:

This past year we graduated 14 students from 8th grade. May the Lord continue to bless them on their journey into life.

Congratulations and Lord's blessings to:

Quinn Apple, Liliana Balleza, Sydney Bradley, Kashton Craig, Sevanna Fairbank, Vivian Fister, Quinn Franke, Micah Larson, Vivian Lichty, Raegan Przybylski, Bayleigh Schaefer, Jordyn Schulz, Lillian Stephenson, Keagen Voigt

Give Thanks! Let us always give thanks to the Lord our God for the goodness he has shown us. He has given us so much in our lives, let us respond to that with offerings of thanksgiving. The ministry of St. Stephen's School is always grateful for the support it receives through its members.

We were able to share our goodness with four missions this year. We joined with other schools in the Central Wisconsin Lutheran Schools effort to collect funds for Lakeside OpGo, Vietnam Seminary, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Richland Center, and MLC. Each mission, we had a personal goal of \$600.00. We succeeded in the first three mission collections, the fourth was still being counted at the time of printing. What a wonderful gift from our students to the missions of our synod.

Please watch for news about the upcoming 2024-25 school year. School will resume on August 27.

From the Church Office

Summer office hours will start on May 24th. The office will be open Monday thru Thursday from 7:30am-noon, 12:30pm-4pm, and Friday from 7:30am-noon. Closed Friday afternoons.

Managing God's Gifts For Ministry
Our Finances (Fiscal Year June '23 - March '24)

<u>General Operating Fund</u>	
Expenses:	\$ 825,801
Income:	<u>\$ 902,929</u>
Balance:	\$ 77,128

We are blessed to have a "surplus" regarding our regular operating expenses as we are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through our fiscal year! Remember, however, that all year we have not been supporting a full-time Pastor, and we are supporting what amounts to about a $\frac{1}{3}$ time teacher to cover upper grades Science and 8th Grade English (Mrs. Dorn had been full-time Science, Homeroom 8, English 8, and Technology Support) May we all be aware that our God in his Word calls on us to give thank-offerings to him based on how he blesses each of us, not on what our church says it "needs". If we all brought offerings from that perspective, we'd always have all that is needed for the ministry He sets before us.

Some Dedicated Fund Balances (as of March 31)

Restoration: \$ 72,944 (all work to date paid for)
Special Improvement: \$ 46,320.99
School Playground Structure: \$ 11,049
(\$ 90,000 goal)

Automated & consistent giving throughout the whole year is easy and convenient. Visit "ONLINE GIVING" at www.ssbdwels.com or stop in the office to set up an opportunity to give electronically!

Voters Ministry Spending Plan (Budget) Meeting—Sunday, June 16 or 23, 11:10 A.M.

Having moved to a July to June Fiscal Year for our congregation/school finances, it is necessary to have a Voters' Assembly meeting sometime in June to adopt a Ministry Spending Plan (budget) that begins on July 1. The Finance Committee and Church Council have worked to prepare a Plan for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. The Plan will be adopted by the Council at its May meeting (after the writing of this newsletter), made available to all for a couple weeks before the Voter's meeting, and acted on at the Voters' meeting to be set by the Council at its May meeting. If the date set is June 16 - yes, it's Father's Day, but since it's a one topic meeting we would hope to accomplish our business within 30-40 minutes and be done by noon. St. Stephen's Church Council