



St. Stephen's Newsletter

December 2024-January 2025



Devotional Thought

The Perfect Pearl

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45,46).

Have you found the perfect Christmas gift for that special someone yet? If so, what makes it perfect? Is it perfect because it's unique, like handcrafted pottery? Is it perfect because it fits the personality of the individual for who you bought it, like a plaid shirt for the lumberjack in your family?

What if you find the perfect gift only to discover that it's beyond your budget? Would you sell your car, your house, everything you own to obtain THE perfect gift?

Jesus once told a parable about a pearl-dealer whose goal was to find the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he owned so he could buy his treasured find.

The perfect pearl represents the message of salvation found in the Bible. This message is perfect because it tells us everything we need to know for this life and the next. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and deserve God's eternal punishment in hell. But the Bible also says that Jesus came to take that punishment—like your next-door neighbor paying for the fire damage that your hastily strung Christmas lights did to her house. Because of Jesus, our sins are paid for and forgiven!

This message is not only perfect; it's one of a kind. There are plenty of places you can look for the answers to life's questions, but the only place you'll find the perfect pearl is in the Bible. We would be glad to share with you the treasure that God has for us in his Word. The Bible appears to be like any other book, but within there is a precious message that exceeds everything we've known. It's like the person who pries open a dull clamshell and finds a glowing pearl nestled within that's worth more than any other.

A pearl in a clamshell! That's often how God works. He comes to us in unlikely places to give us his love. Could that be illustrated any more beautifully than it is at Christmas? At Christmas, the Son of God, our Savior, was born in a barn! And then this Jesus willingly gave up his life on the cross to pay for our sins and win us a place in heaven. This message is God's priceless, perfect gift for us!

WELS Evangelism

Worship Opportunities

Joint Advent Service with

Good Shepherd & St. John's Juneau-Horicon-Lowell

**Wednesday, December 4 @ 6:30pm
at St. Stephen's**

Our sixth annual joint Advent service with St. John's and Good Shepherd will take place at St. Stephen's. 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
Sunday, December 15 @ 10:00am**

Our Advent Celebration Service featuring all St. Stephen's Choirs, Children's, Junior, and Senior Choirs will be **Sunday, December 15 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
Sunday, December 22 at 4:00pm
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Tuesday, December 24 at 9:00pm
- Christmas Day Worship
Wednesday, December 25 at 10:00am

New Year's Eve Worship

- New Year's Eve Confessional Service with Communion
Tuesday, 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 special postcards that will be included with your bulletins in early December. Talk with someone about how it would be nice to see them in one of those worship services. Offer to sit with them when they attend.

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 10, we will meet at Friedens - Randolph 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 April. During that break the leadership will meet to set up a

program schedule for 2025 and to make arrangements for hosting the National OWLS Convention in October in Oshkosh. 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.

Service Opportunities

Ladies' Aid

On the first Thursday of December (5th), we host our Christmas gathering with a dinner at noon and program by our Junior Choir at 1:00pm. It is for our members and also a thank you to our pastors/wives and office staff.

The following info will give you an awareness of how we serve St. Stephen's congregation and school along with other varied ministry projects. Each month, a member of the Society volunteers to supervise special events held in the church basement. For funeral lunches, she works with a family member to plan the meal and makes calls for volunteers to set up, serve, and clean up the day of the event. Supervising the kitchen is also needed when used for bridal showers, wedding receptions, baby showers, baptism, etc.

With donations from services provided, we:

- Maintain & purchase church kitchen equipment.
- Provide funds to church groups upon request.
- Donate annually to WELS organizations.
- Collect monetary gifts for LWMS Spring and Fall projects for our Beaver Dam circuit.
- Send birthday greetings to our 85 and older congregation members.
- Visit elderly congregation members who are hospitalized or in rehab.
- Give special crosses and personalized bookmarks to our confirmands.
- Assist with items needed for our Busy Bags for children to use during worship.
- Prepare table decor for special events.
- Maintain and update basement display case.
- Host the Mission Festival potluck prior to the program.
- Host a Thank You Spring Banquet and Christmas gathering.

Our 2025 meeting schedule will remain as it was in 2024, eliminating the January meeting. Regular meetings resume **Thursday, February 6 at 1:30 p.m.** in the church basement.

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. Stephen's on **Wednesday, December 4 at 6:30pm** and at St. Stephen's on **Sunday, December 15 at 10:00am**) and the Christmas Day service here at St. Stephen's on Christmas morning, **December 25 at 10:00am**. 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!

A special Radio Service of Lessons and Carols will be aired on WBEV on December 22 at 1:00 p.m. and December 24 at 7:30 p.m. (It also may be aired sometime on December 25.)

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

School News

Advent is a profound season for contemplation. It marks the coming of Christ, not just as a child in Bethlehem, but as our Redeemer at the end of time. During this special period, we prepare our hearts and minds for His arrival. Like John the Baptist, who heralded Christ's coming, we are called to focus on repentance. Life is filled with temptations and sin, and we often stumble on our journey toward heaven. It's essential to recognize the sin in our lives while also

keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, our Savior. Advent invites us to adopt this mindset of preparation. The message is clear: Christ is coming, and He desires that all people be saved and come to know the truth. This Advent season, let us commit to preparing our hearts and minds, setting our focus on Christ and embracing the hope He brings.

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 9** in the church sanctuary.
- The annual winter band concert that showcases Mrs. Monson's students is tentatively scheduled for **December 16** in the gymnasium.
- We are looking forward to a full basketball season with numerous home games and tournaments.

Children's Christmas Service

The Children's Christmas service this year is called "Joy has Dawned." Joy Has Dawned is a children's service that traces the dawn of various eras in God's love for humanity: the dawn of time, the dawn of hope following the fall into sin, the dawn of joy at Jesus' coming that first Christmas, and the dawn of the New Testament church.



The service will begin at **4:00 on December 22**. We look forward to seeing all members of our congregation there.

Christmas Vacation

Christmas vacation begins after school on December 20. Vacation will run through January 5. School will start again on Monday January 6. 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 11 for our Veterans Day celebration. Again this year we held the event in the morning in conjunction with our weekly chapel service.



Accreditation News:

Over the course of the past year or so, many committees have been formed and met. The goal was to look at the school and its mission. With the Lord's blessing a site visit team will be at St. Stephen's in February to validate all of our findings. Please look for an update in future newsletters and congregational meetings.

From the Church Office

Save the Date!
150th Anniversary
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Pictorial Directory Dates
have been set!

Pictures will be taken

April 29, 2025 thru May 2, 2025

More information to follow in coming months

2025 Offering Envelopes

2025 offering envelopes are available. Please stop in the basement after church or the office during the week to pick up yours.

Stewardship and Finance Update

The following financial information is from the first third of our fiscal 2024-25 year, July through October.

General Fund Income:	\$ 333,368
General Fund Expenses:	\$ 398,089
(Balance / Deficit):	\$ - 64,721

As can be seen, our expenses are outpacing our offerings and other income. In November, some payments are being withheld to a later date in order to cover end of month payroll expenses.

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, 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.

