

WELCOME TO *St. Stephen the Martyr, ELCA*

Service Times: Saturday - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:00 & 9:30 a.m.



the **MARTYR MONTHLY**
DECEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

St. Stephen the Martyr
Lutheran Church, ELCA

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OFFICE HOURS:
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SSM STAFF

Gail Brodersen-Heins, Pastor
pastorgail@ststephenthemartyr.com
Bill Bravener, Music Director
bbravener@ststephenthemartyr.com
Kevan Penvose, Discipleship Coach for
Family Ministries
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Lynda Shadd, Office Administrator
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Bob Brownell, Maintenance
Bob De Frank, Sunday School
Superintendent
Janet Snyder, Organist

2008 Holiday Schedule

Sat/Sunday, December 6 & 7 after services
Loose Ends Christmas Craft & Bake Sale

Saturday, December 13th - 5:00 PM

GALA CHRISTMAS CONCERT

with Senior & Children's Choir, Handbell Choir, & Soloists
Followed by refreshments & Hors D'oeuvres

Sunday, December 21th - 6:30 PM

Sunday School Children's Christmas Program

Wednesday, December 24th

5:00 PM—Christmas Eve Family Worship
Service of Carols, & Readings

10:30 PM—Christmas Eve Holy

Communion Worship
Service of Carols, Readings and Special Music

Thursday, December 25th - 9:30 AM

Worship with Holy Communion &
Special Music

Wednesday, December 31st - 5:00 PM



inside this issue:

- From Pastor's Desk
- Stewardship
- Women's Ministries
- Family Ministries
- Music & Worship
- Human Concerns
- Memorial Committee
- Other Notes
- Council minutes - highlights

PASTOR GAIL'S COMPUTER NOTES...

Advent and Christmas Musings....

In my living room, there is a lamp which is on a timer. Each night, the light comes on at a certain time and goes out at a certain time. I try very hard to be an energy saver, but this one light is important. When I come home from a meeting or other event, that light is shining. It's good to see, and it's good for safety and security.

God's redeeming light is even more important than my lamp. God's light has come into the world in Jesus. This is the theme of Advent and Christmas!

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

In this exciting month, we get to celebrate His coming into this world--and we await His second coming with hope. The One who was, and who is, and who is to come illumines the dark place in our lives and our world.

Sometimes we are confused, perplexed, and overwhelmed with life. Then 'a light goes on' and we can function again. The light of Christ is the light that leads us in all circumstances. Even in the pain of fear and loss, His light shines. Without my living room lamp, I may stumble around in my house until I find the light switch, but if I don't have Christ in my life, I will truly stumble around!

This season, I invite you to put aside some of the 'worldly craziness' of buying and worrying, and other busyness, and focus instead on the True Light who is coming into the world. Watch for Him; see where He is working on behalf the needy and forgotten ones, on behalf of justice and peace. Follow Him in his ways. Seek Christ's light as you invite others among your family and friends to join you in searching for Him. Do you see Christ at your work? At worship? At the mall? On the street? Look for Him and be dazzled by the light that the world cannot overcome.

See you at worship each week and at Christmas!

A blessed December to you all,

P.S. Read this newsletter for Advent activities and for the Christmas schedule. Help your own quest for light with these: Read Christian devotions. Join a Bible study group; read the Christmas story with new eyes. Sing carols with children; join the carolers going to visit shut-ins. Attend the Sunday School program and "The Promised Messiah"-Service of Lessons & Carols. Bring food for the hungry. Give to the ELCA Hunger Appeal. See all the opportunities on these pages to practice being a light to others!

Pastor Gail

Stewardship

***Next Stewardship Meeting is
December 2nd at 7:00 pm.***

***Using the gifts God
has given us to do
the work God
has called us to do.***

In our current stewardship drive, as of 11/16/08, we have received 113 pledge cards for a total of \$193,313 for the General Fund, and \$42,886 for the Building Fund.

Our goal is to have every household make a commitment to be a generous giver in 2009 by returning a pledge card.

You can still make your pledge. Please review your giving for 2008 and help make up the deficit of approximately \$10,000 prior to the end of the year.

The ministry at St. Stephen the Martyr is a vibrant and growing ministry. Let's keep it that way.

When speaking of Stewardship it is very important to include your time and talents in your faith journey.

We affirm our faith by our actions. The use of our talents for God's work are acts of stewardship. The deeper and stronger our faith, the more we will perform acts of love that further the mission of St.

Stephen the Martyr.

Thank you!

~ Stewardship Committee

The Women's Bible Study will meet on December 10th at 10:15 AM
Join us as we study the scripture texts for the following weekend.

Annual Christmas Craft & Bake Sale

December 6th & 7th

Following ther Services

The Ladies of the Loose Ends have been busy preparing for the Christmas Craft and Bake Sale. Stop by the displays and choose some candy or baked goods. There will be a variety of crafts by the talented sewers and crafters we have here at SSM. We look forward to another successful event!

Don't forget to bid on our Silent Auction items! Bidding will close at 11:15 am on Sunday, December 7th. Proceeds from the sale will be used to fund various service projects of the ladies of Loose Ends, Women of the ELCA.

LOOSE ENDS BAKING AND PRICING DAY

Wednesday, December 3rd, 9 a.m.

We will be making candy and goodies to be sold at the annual Craft & Bake Sale. This is going to be a busy day and we will need YOUR help! We will also begin pricing items for sale and setting up tables, so there are jobs for all! Please save the date and join us in the Fellowship Hall.

LWR Annual Report on Quilts & Kits

Thanks to the Women of the ELCA who provided the largest portion of donations to Lutheran World Relief! Here are the totals:

452,870 Quilts 194,825 School Kits

114,300 Health Kits 48,300 Sewing Kits

104,800 Layettes 73,059 lbs. of Soap

What a marvelous thing you have done for God's people in need. Congratulations!

A Letter of Thanks....

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Thank you so much for your recent gift of \$1,003 contributed during the Thankoffering worship services held at St. Stephen the Martyr in September. Without your prayers and contributions, Women of the ELCA could not carry out its important ministries. Together we are a community of women committed to supporting the gifts and spiritual growth of one another.

Did you know that since 1988, the women's organization has awarded nearly \$3 million in grants here and abroad for efforts that advocate change in the lives of women and girls? In her recent letter of thanks for a 2007 grant, Beth Vavrina of the People's City Mission in Lincoln, NE wrote: "Support from our Women of the ELCA grant has contributed both directly and indirectly to restoring dignity to women who had come to a place of not loving themselves or thinking themselves worthy of a good life or honorable treatment. It is amazing what happens when care and support is extended in a consistent and meaningful way." This is just one example of ways in which our organization brings about healing and wholeness through the grants program.

We are grateful for your continued financial support to the Women of the ELCA.

Sincerely,

Linda Post Bushkofsky, Executive Director

Family Ministry News

Upcoming Events

Dec 7	10:40 am	Parent Planning Meeting 10:40 a.m. following worship
Dec 12-13		LOCK-IN @ Adoration Lutheran Church for students in grades 7-12
Dec 14	6:30 PM	SMASH @ St. Luke's for High School Students

Parents: We Need Your Help

What do you pray God has in store for the youth of St. Stephen the Martyr?
Where do you see Jesus leading us to help our young disciples grow in faith?

What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you to be a leader in our youth and family ministries?

Parents, you are the primary bishops and evangelists to your children, and we want to hear from you how St. Stephen the Martyr can best support you in this most important vocation. And two opportunities are coming up:

January 17th, 11:30 to 1 p.m. ~ All hands on deck!!! If you are a parent of a student in any grade, or if you're an adult who'd like to be a mentor to our youth PLEASE save this date and plan to attend a luncheon for visioning the future of youth and family ministries.

CAN'T WAIT 'TIL THEN?

December 7th, 10:40 a.m. ~ the congregation's Forward Planning Team is inviting feedback from youth and family ministries. We need 3 or 4 parents and adults to discuss the ministry plan and provide feedback. If you can meet for a brief half hour meeting after worship, please contact Kevan right away.

Youth

Two great events in one sweet weekend: December 12-14 — a Lock-In for 7-12 graders and SMASH for high school students. Be sure to make one of them, if not both. Save the dates, request off work, finish your homework early, and invite your friends.

Catch the Christmas Spirit

Catch the Christmas Spirit finds our characters taking time out in the middle of the "busy-ness" of Christmas to read the Christmas story. As they read, the real Christmas story comes to life around them. You will "clap" for joy, sing the "blues" with the shepherds, and "make room," once again, for the celebration of Jesus' birth.

Please join us Sunday December 21st at 6:30pm as the SSM Sunday School presents Catch the Christmas Spirit! A juice & cookie reception will be held in Fellowship hall following the program.

CONFIRMATION STUDENTS AND PARENTS!

Thursday evening classes meet through December 18th. We will reconvene on Thurs. January 8th.

Parents, please ask your student for their "Home Huddle" each week, and plan on spending a brief time together using the devotions and questions. Return to Pastor Gail or Kevan Penvose each Thursday. Thank you for your partnership in the faith life of your child.

SUNDAY SCHOOL FAMILIES

Christmas program rehearsals:

- Saturday, December 6th at 9am for all speaking and acting parts only
- Saturday, December 13th & 20th at 9am for all Sunday School Students. If a child is unable to attend any of the rehearsals please contact me as soon as possible.

Performances:

- Saturday, December 13th

The children & handchimes will be performing at the Senior Choir Concert on , please have children at church and ready to warm up by 4:20pm.

- Sunday, December 21st

Meet for warm-up in the Luther Room at 5:45pm, handchimes will meet at 5:15pm in the Sanctuary.

- What to Wear: A nice holiday outfit (no blue jeans!) Please keep in mind that most of the children will be

sitting on the floor during the program.

-Once again this year we ask that children bring winter hats, mittens, etc. (wrapped in tissue paper as A Gift for the Christ Child) and a dozen cookies—for refreshments after the program.

~Stephanie Mayer

Contact our Discipleship Coach, Kevan Penvose: 414-258-0858 stillerz7@yahoo.com

Music & Worship

Next Music & Worship Meeting Wednesday, December 3 @ 6 pm

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

The Music and Worship committee is looking for volunteers to be: ushers, lay readers, communion set up, communion servers, greeters for the new year. Please call Sue Jarchow (526-9785) or Cathy Peterson (325-6628).

We are also looking for members to join the Music and Worship committee in the new year. Help is always needed and welcomed.

The next Music and Worship committee meeting will be on December 3, 2008 at 5:45 pm. We welcome all members to this meeting.

PARAMENT COLOR CHANGES

As we begin the new church with Advent, the colors of the church change. Royal blue is the color of hope and anticipation. It marks the season of waiting and preparation for the arrival of Christ. The Advent Wreath is also present in the sanctuary which originated in Europe for home use after the Reformation in the 1500's. The Advent wreath marks the four weeks in Advent. The wreath contains four candles, the first one being lit on the first Sunday in Advent. An additional candle is then lit each week and on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, all four candles will be burning brightly. The parament color will change to white for Christmas, with white symbolizing the light and purity of Christ and joy at the birth.

GREETER VOLUNTEER ALERT!

Because I do not know what holiday service(s) you will be attending, I am asking for volunteers for the Christmas and New Year's Eve services. Even if you are not a regular greeter, you are welcome to be a part of our ministry and I would be happy to instruct you. Anyone who would like to greet for any Christmas service or for New Year's Eve, please contact me at church or at 546-1576. - John Rech, Coordinator

CAROLING, CAROLING, NOW WE GO!

Come young, come old and everyone in between!

December 15, 5:30 p.m.

SSM is extending a welcome to folks of all ages to come and go Christmas caroling to our shut-ins. We will gather at SSM at 5:30 for light snack and then at 6:00 pm car pool from SSM to the shut-ins and then return for a chili supper afterward. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex.

The Promised Messiah...

The choirs of St. Stephen the Martyr will present The Promised Messiah - A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Saturday, December 13 at 5:00 p.m. Participants in the concert will include Senior Choir, Handbell Choir, Chime Choir, Children's Choir, soloists and instrumentalists directed by Stephanie Mayer and Bill Bravener and accompanied by Jan Snyder

This festival is based on the traditional service held each Christmas Eve in the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, England which was first presented in 1918. The first broadcast from King's College took place in 1928. It has been broadcast every year except 1930.

Please join us for this special event.

Reception Following the Concert...

An hors d'oeuvres and dessert reception will be held following the December 13 Christmas Concert. A sign-up sheet will be posted outside the church office. Please let us know if you plan on attending, how

many will be attending and if you are able to provide either a hardy hors d'oeuvre or dessert to share.

Human concerns

Next meeting is December 4th at 6:30 p.m. Call Shirley Lieske, Committee Chair with any questions: 761-0734



Coffee News

Justice for the Meru Dioceses

Mt. Meru Coffee is not just good coffee; it is bringing justice to the Meru Diocese in Tanzania. Although a bag of Mt. Meru Coffee now costs \$9.00, which is more than some of the big name brands sold in grocery stores, each pound of Mt. Meru coffee directly pays the coffee grower \$2.20. This amount of money is making a huge difference to the family farmers and to the Meru Diocese, our sister synod. This is doing justice! You can help by buying Mt. Meru Coffee. Give Mt. Meru coffee as a hostess gift for Christmas parties. Give Mt. Meru Coffee as a thoughtful gift to friends and co-workers.

In addition to our usual bags of coffee, we will have a few Mt. Meru Christmas gift packages for sale in the narthex. Each gift includes a bag of coffee, a candy dish and candy and costs \$18.00.

Thank you all for your support of this worthy cause.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER APPEAL IN ADVENT

"Go and Do Likewise" Luke 10:37

SSM is highlighting the ELCA World Hunger Appeal once again during the Advent season. We will distribute the World Hunger boxes and envelopes for you to use to make a contribution. Any checks should be made out to "St. Stephen the Martyr" with ELCA World Hunger Appeal on the memo line.

The ELCA World Hunger Appeal responds to Christ's call to "Go and do likewise," serving with compassion people who are most vulnerable, paying attention to the full participation of women and the needs of children. Gifts to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal total over \$20 million each year. Out of each dollar contributed over 70 cents goes to international hunger relief and development work. Over 90 % of every gift provides direct support for our church's hunger ministry; less than a dime is used for churchwide administration, fundraising and communication.

Each gift is a prayer-full promise to remember to care and to answer Christ's call to "Go and do likewise." Thanks be to God.

- Carol Birk, Human Concerns

Knit Wits

The next Knit Wits meeting will be December 1st at 6:30 p.m. Please join us!

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR AMERICAN SOLDIERS

When you make out Christmas Cards this most blessed season, please prepare and send an extra card to:

A Recovering American Soldier

C/O Walter Reed Army Medical Center

6900 Georgia Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20307-5001

WHITNALL PARK BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Wednesday

December 17 at 7 p.m.

Whitnall Park Lutheran Church will be offering a Blue Christmas Service once again this year.

All are invited to attend this service that at the same time acknowledges the joy and wonder of the birth of Christ, and also acknowledges the reality that Christmas is often a difficult time for many people.

Hope to see you on the 17th!

~Pastor Michael Fazio,
Whitnall Park

Christmas Gifts for Bay View Community Center

Once again this year SSM will be collecting gifts for 15 needy children and elderly senior citizens. We are hoping to provide three presents for each person. There is a poster in the narthex with giving suggestions for each person.

Just take a card and purchase the item (or something close to the suggestion) and bring it to church by Sunday, December 14th. The gift does not need to be wrapped, but it is important to securely attach the card with the gift suggestion to the gift. This will assure that your gift reaches the correct child or elderly adult. We have helped Bay View with their program for a number of years and all the recipients are so happy and grateful to receive your gift. Help someone have a Merry Christmas this year and many thanks for your generosity.

-Human Concerns

CROP WALK 2008

Eighteen dedicated walkers from SSM were blessed with a beautiful sunny day this year for the Greater Milwaukee CROP Walk on October 12th. SSM walkers raised over \$1,500 this year! Thank you to everyone from SSM who participated by walking, sponsoring a walker or donating food to help those who have to walk everyday just to survive. And special thanks to Vickie Lawrence and United Cerebral Palsy for holding a food drive for CROP.

A big thank you to our 18 walkers for SSM this year: Pastor Gail, Tracy Covert, Tim Falksen, Calvin Fischer, Mitchell Fischer, Linda and Bailey Johnson, Terri Larsen, Vickie Lawrence, Dianne Niese, Sara and Borgne Raasch, Kelly Sachse, Amanda Salas, Nick Stawicki, Melissa Stevens, and Mike and Tracy Wholean. Come join us next year!

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Memorial Committee News

A meeting of the Memorial Committee, September 7th, yielded several new approved expenditures. Purchases have been made of two new candlelighters; one of which has a longer length handle and the other has a bell shaped cap for the wider candles. We have also purchased a stand for the lighters, which will be kept in the sanctuary to one side of the altar.

The committee, on advice from Bob Brownell, purchased four new banquet style tables that are light weight and easily movable. This will make arranging tables for the various activities less strenuous.

Acrylic display racks for the Care Notes series will be installed on the Fellowship Hall west wall. Please stop and check out the Care Note series; there is one to help with any event in your life.

If you have concerns or ideas to share please let us know. Your committee members are: Sandy Petricek-chair, Pastor Gail, Dick Kroll, Shirley Rau, Carol Birk, Marge Muroi, Karen Hoffman and me...

The next meeting of the committee will be December 6th, 2008.

~ Faith O'Connell

OTHER NOTES

FESTIVE FIRST FRIDAY POTLUCK

December 5th

All members and friends are invited to the First Friday Potluck at 6:00 p.m. on December 5th in the Fellowship Hall! You'll be glad you came! We'll have a special entree of Spiral Ham, and you are asked to bring a dish to pass: vegetable, salad, rolls or dessert.

We'll sing some carols, play a couple of simple Christmas games, and you are encouraged to bring a holiday story or jokes. Please also bring some non-perishable food items for those who are hungry. We'll bring the Food Pantry bin close by, and pray for the needs of others as we begin our meal.

A \$1.00 donation is asked for the ham (what a deal!) The sign-up is on the bulletin board next to the office.

All are welcome, especially those who live alone. Come join the fun!

HOME BOUND MINISTRY

Pastor Gail is still looking for people to call and visit several home bound members. There was a meeting in early fall at which two members were trained. Please call and we will set up another brief training session

and share procedures. Contact Pastor at the office: 421-3543 or home: 543-2060.

Fit & Faithful Online Bible Study

Interested in Bible Study but feel you don't have time? Not sure where to begin or what to say or that you don't know enough to be a part of a Bible Study?

Then check out Fit and Faithful, an online Bible Study that you can read and respond to at anytime. OR, you can just read and not respond at all! Our group enjoys sharing our thoughts and insights on scheduled readings (as well as how we attempt to stay healthy) that are sent to the group each week. Bible texts are included in the e-mail each week.

Use the Advent season to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth by joining Fit and Faithful. We will read some Old Testament texts that foreshadow the arrival of our Savior, then Luke 2 and begin a study of Matthew.

Contact Julie Starks via e-mail at jastarks@earthlink.net



COMING SOON!

SSM will offer several opportunities to study the "Bible-- Book of Faith" beginning in February. Watch for times and places where we will use these resources: "Opening the Book of Faith: Lutheran Insights for Bible Study"--which explores four methods of Bible study, then applies each method to four Scripture texts--and "Rediscovering the Book of Faith" Course. This study explores how the Bible came to be our Book of Faith.

What is the Book of Faith Initiative?

The Book of Faith initiative invites the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word. This is an initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Bible is a book of faith

The Bible is the written Word of God that creates and nurtures faith through the work of the Holy Spirit and points us to Christ, the incarnate Word and center of our faith. The Bible invites us into a relationship with God, making demands on our lives and promising us life in Christ. The Bible tells the stories of people living their faith over the centuries and, through its demands and promises, forms us as a people of faith.

The language of Scripture is our first language of faith

The language of the Bible becomes our language. It shapes how we think and speak about God, about the world, and about ourselves. We become renewed, enlivened, and empowered as the language of Scripture forms our hearts, our minds, our community conversation, and our commitments.

We have a calling as the people of God

Part of our calling is to know, hear, share, and be rooted in Scripture. We are renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word. As we live into our calling as people who are formed by Scripture, we become renewed in our faith, enlivened through the Spirit, and empowered through the cross of Christ to serve God and neighbor.

CONDENSED COUNCIL MINUTES

November 11, 2008

President John Muroi called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Council members present were: J. Arneson, J. Bugajski, S. Jarchow, S. Lieske, S. Lubus, C. Malinowski, J. Miller, J. Muroi and E. Sanders. Pastor Gail Brodersen-Heins and Kevan Penvose were present. G. Raasch, was absent. S. Rosenstock and E. Arneson were excused. E. Sanders led the devotion.

Approvals: The Secretary's minutes from the October 11th meeting were reviewed and approved. The Financial Secretary's Report was reviewed. The Treasurer's Report was discussed. We are currently \$11,630.49 short in weekly offerings. The Treasurer's Report was approved.

Pastor's Time: Pastor thanked the Evangelism committee, L. Shadd, J. Muroi and others that helped prepare and welcome 23 new members to SSM. She also thanked C. Malinowski and the Stewardship Committee for the Walk with Jesus fall campaign. Pastor and B. Bravener will be meeting with Bishop P. Stumme-Diers to pre plan the installation service scheduled for 11/23 at 9:30 A.M. She presided at the baptism of A. Loper on 10/12/08 and the funeral service of S. Ehardt, father of member G. Ehardt. She asked the Council to seriously consider our benevolence commitments as we vote of the 2009 budget. Council approved the following members be removed from SSM's membership: J. Ducette, L. Saurmann (Mayer) and G. Labisch.

Old Action Items:

Background Checks - K. Penvose distributed an information sheet on who to contact for background checks on church volunteers. Council again discussed the need to do background checks on adults who supervise the youth at our various programs at SSM. It was suggested that the Executive Committee, a lawyer versed in background checks within a church setting and SSM's insurance agent meet formally to discuss this issue and present their ideas to the full Council at a future Council meeting.

Forward Planning Update - J. Muroi distributed the Forward Planning Report to the Council members. He asked that these ideas be discussed at the individual committee meetings. C. Malinowski thought it would be better if more than just committee members look at the summary. K. Penvose suggested that each of the Strategic Directions outlined in the Executive Summary be presented individually at church services within the next few weeks, leading up to the Annual meeting in January.

Safety Deposit Box - J. Muroi distributed the necessary paper work to have all members of the Executive Committee as well as J. Miller to have access to the church's Safety Deposit Box at Layton State bank.

New Action Items:

2009 Budget Review - The Council reviewed the preliminary proposed church budget for 2009. The Executive Committee will be meeting at a later date to finalize budget details.

Committee Reports:

Human Concerns - S. Lieske reported that her committee is currently working on the Christmas gift projects with the House of Correction and the Bay View Senior Center.

Christian Education - E. Sanders reported that S. Mayer is working with the SS children on the Christmas program.

Youth - K. Penvose stated that SSM participated in their first SMASH program with other churches in the area.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shellee Lubus,
Council Secretary

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