

# St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church ELCA

*May God bless you with many things in life,  
May you stay blessed in every season,  
That is the only reason,  
This makes Christmas truly special,  
Merry Christmas to you!*



**WE HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US FOR OUR SPECIAL SERVICES  
AND EVENTS**

**Advent/Christmas Concert-----Saturday, December 8, 5:00 p.m.**

*Followed by a dessert reception*

**Holden Evening Prayer-----Wednesday, December 12, 6:30 p.m.**

**Children's Christmas Program----- Sunday, December 16, 9:30 a.m.**

**Christmas Eve service-----Monday, December 24, 4:00 p.m. and 10 p.m.**

**Christmas Day service-----Tuesday December 25, 9:30 a.m.**

**THE MARTYR MONTHLY**

**DECEMBER 2018**

## PASTOR'S PAGE...

Dear Family of Faith,

As we turn the calendar to December we begin a new church year and enter the church season of Advent. The term Advent literally means “coming” or “arrival.” In the weeks of Advent, we prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child into our lives, the one whom God sent as our Savior.



Advent is about preparing. Think about birthday parties or other parties you have thrown for others. You need to think and plan for many things - who to invite, the menu, what kind of cake the person likes best. A lot of preparation goes into throwing parties, and yet the efforts are rewarded as we see smiles on faces, friends and family enjoying each other's company.

Likewise, we have *four weeks* in Advent to prepare for the big party to come – Jesus' own birthday party.

And celebrating Jesus' birth is anything but an ordinary celebration. We are celebrating the fact that God has fulfilled God's promise to be a *living and redeeming God* by entering into our lives and becoming one of us in Jesus Christ.

Advent is more than a time for making our homes ready and for buying gifts, it is a time for making our hearts and minds ready for Jesus as well. We prepare ourselves not only for Christmas, but also in anticipation of the Lord's Second Coming.

Advent is also a time to examine and strengthen our connections to God and to God's hopes and dreams for the world in which we live. I invite you to reflect on the following:

1. How will you prepare your hearts this Advent season?
2. As we enjoy the company of family and friends during the holidays, Jesus also wants to keep company with us. How will you we make more time for him?

During Advent we will also sing together *Holden Evening Prayer* on Wednesday, December 12 at 6:30pm. It is a beautiful service of hope and expectation as we await and prepare.

Peace,

Pastor Brian

## STEWARDSHIP....

*BECAUSE OF  
GOD'S GREAT MERCY*



December, 2018

Though this article is for the December Martyr Monthly, I'm writing around Thanksgiving. This is such a "combination" time. Bonnie is busy planning all the cooking for Thanksgiving dinner which is at our house this year. She's been talking about putting up the Christmas decorations which we have traditionally done the day and weekend after Thanksgiving. At church we're thinking about getting ready for Advent, the blue season of expectation with the blue banners, the blue alter frontal, the blue candles, and during this season of transition into early darkness, perhaps a little blue mood. All this at the time when we're thinking about black Friday and the Christmas shopping. Yes! This time of year is the mixed up transition of all these things that swirl together in a seasonal soup of lights, feelings, preparations, and perhaps a little anxiety.

Well, let me offer a few croutons for the top of the soup, because try as we will these ingredients will continue to swirl. First, giving thanks. It's not something that comes naturally to me. I have to stop and think, "Be grateful kid. God has given you a lot that makes life wonderful." Number one is Bonnie. Right now she's out in the kitchen working the recipes for the pies. I'm told today is pie day. Thanksgiving and Christmas have always brought this sparkling enthusiast of good cheer to the surface. Our early tradition of decorating started 46 years ago on our first thanksgiving away from family when I was in school. Bringing in the lights and the tree brought joy and brightness in the dark. We just kept going. She is a true bright spot. Second are those grandkids, Andre and the whole lot of them, real gifts to the world. Make your list and remember them. They are lights when it gets dark early. Third is the season itself. For centuries even before Christ, this season was filled with celebrations of that edge between the growing darkness and the dawn of a new light. The winter solstice has marked for the world the dawn of a new day. It was no mistake that the Church chose a date right after the shift to growing light for its celebration of the coming of the Light of Christ, the Son (Sun) of Righteousness, the child who came to be known as the light of the world.

Here are a few more croutons for the soup: Give thanks for the Lord is good. Life is a holy expectation of the Advent of the kingdom of God. Bask in the light of the crystals of hope in the Christmas nights, and in the light that is Christ come into the world.

Happy Thanksgiving, Blessed Advent, and Blessed Christmas to you all!  
Rev. Dr. Kipp W. Zimmermann

## STEWARDSHIP CONT.

### COMMUNITY: YOUR RESPONSES

During our stewardship weeks we looked at Community, Compassion and Courage. We invited you to submit your answers to the questions about Community. Here are the responses we received.

1. What does it mean to enter the community as a child?

Be open to new worship practices. Be willing to try out new jobs or responsibilities for which we might be unfamiliar. Means to me as feeling of belonging outside of self. Examples include being a purposeful part of a loving family; a welcoming church.

2. What practices do we do, that like the disciples keep people from entering the community?

Ignoring or avoiding a visitor. Not inviting children in the community to Sunday School or VBS. When offering help and being turned away.

3. How can we be more welcoming to people of all ages, in all stages of life?

Welcome all, especially people who may be isolated in the community and people who may be quite different than us. What about baptizing all adults as Jesus was in the River Jordan. One way is to accept offers of help by finding ways to include rather than reject. Example: "We have enough kitchen help for the potluck. Still, we could use an extra hand in ..... . Find something to include them.





## **MUSIC & WORSHIP**

On Wednesday, December 12th at 6:30 p.m., we will worship using the Holden Evening Prayer written by Marty Haugen, a liturgical composer, performing and recording artist, and author from Minnesota. According to Haugen, “Holden Evening Prayer was written during the winter of 1985-86 when I was living with my family at Holden [Village, a year-round Lutheran Christian center in the North Cascade Mountains of Washington state]. As each part of the vesper service was written, it was prayed with the community as part of evening worship. The final version represents a very real collaboration with the winter community at Holden. I believe that's one of the reasons it continues to be used because it reflects the very real prayer of a particular community.” You might remember that Pastor Brian and his family traveled to Holden Village this past summer.

Please join us for this wonderful prayer service. We hope you can join us for all of our special services and events to celebrate the birth of our Lord (see front cover).

## **WOMEN OF THE ELCA**

Thank you for participating in the Bake & Craft Sale as well as the Basket Auction and Kid's Korner. It was a BIG success!!!

## YOUTH AND FAMILY

Cookie Baking and Care packages to college students and Military personnel away from home was our November/December event. If you have a student or military member who would like to receive a care package, please contact Patti Nelson.

January Event Ideas: Tubing at The Rock, Movie Night at SSM, Game Night, any other ideas???

## HUMAN CONCERNS

### ATTENTION CHRISTMAS CAROLERS!!!

Join us for the annual event of sharing the beautiful story of Jesus' birth to our homebound members, through song. We will be singing on Thursday December 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm. As usual we will have song books, and reconvene at church after singing to enjoy hot chocolate and cookies! All are welcome to join us, even if you feel like you can't sing. Smiles and Christmas cheer are just as precious to share with our homebound disciples! All children and their families are welcome and appreciated. Confirmation students, this is a fun and easy way to earn a few service hours! There will be a sign-up sheet posted in the narthex. Please contact Amy Billman at 414-736-2152 with questions. Thank you!



### TIPPECANOE

Our first Tippecanoe meal is Friday, December 7th. The next meal is Friday, January 4th. The sign-up sheet is outside the office.

The Sock, Hat, Undergarment Drive for Unity, Santa Fe and Tippecanoe starts in mid December. (Both adult and children's sizes).

### UNITY DINNER DECEMBER 26TH

Help is always needed. (Preparing, serving & clean-up).

Unity is in great need of winter coats, warm winter clothing, gloves, hats and socks.

## HUMAN CONCERNS cont.

### HAVE A PEABERRY CHRISTMAS!

The holiday season is a great time to enjoy some Mt. Meru coffee—whether you are giving it as a gift or having a cup to help you get through the endless lists! Most importantly, buying this fair trade coffee is directly helping farmers in Tanzania support their families and communities.

Only 5% of all Tanzanian coffee beans picked are the Peaberry variety. This unique bean has a darker and richer roast with less acidity than the traditional bean. You can find this special limited edition of coffee on the table display in the Narthex for just \$15 per bag. Thank you for supporting this powerful partnership!

### BAY VIEW COMMUNITY CENTER CHRISTMAS GIFT DRIVE

It does not seem possible, but Advent and Christmas are just around the corner. St. Stephen the Martyr is again teaming with the Bay View Community Center to collect Christmas gifts for 15 children and 15 elderly adults. Our gift collection will begin on November 24<sup>th</sup> and November 25<sup>th</sup>. Look for the display in the narthex with gift suggestion cards for each person. We hope to have three gifts for each person. The cards will have suggestions for presents – there is no minimum or maximum you are asked to spend.

Securely attach the card to the gift (wrapped or unwrapped) and bring to church in the next three weeks. The exact date will be announced as soon as we receive the information from Bay View.

Each year we have had an impressive outpouring of gifts to help our friends at Bay View. It is wonderful to see so many gifts and they are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Birk or Shirley Lieske. Many thanks for your help with this project.

### BELL RINGING FOR THE SALVATION ARMY BEGINS DECEMBER 1ST

This year, we will again be ringing bells at Macy's Court & JC Penney-Southridge Mall (indoors). The dates for SSM's participation are Saturday, Dec. 1st (9AM - 8PM); Saturday, Dec. 8th (9AM - 8PM); Thursday thru Saturday, Dec. 13th & 15<sup>th</sup>, (9AM - 8PM). Your help is needed for one-hour time slots on those dates. Sign-up sheets are available in the Narthex. Contact Cathy Peterson for further information.



*Many thanks for your help,*

**2018 CONFIRMATION CLASS**



**Front row: Laura Nehring, Elyse Walker, Sam Ulch**

**Back row: Pastor Brian Hooper, Ander Ceku, Isaac Kling, Kyle Mayer  
Jaxson Easterlin (not pictured)**





## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Come, jump into one of our education opportunities, Men's Study 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 9 am, Women's Study 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 10:15 (except for 12/25) or the 1st Monday of each month at 1 pm.

We had planned to begin a study in November but were unable to get it together. Look for more to come with the new year.

Bonnie Zimmermann  
Christian Education



## MERU PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Scholarship Renewal – A year ago, individuals from SSM contributed to the secondary schooling for a student from our partner parish, Mbaaseny. Baraka Goodwin attends a Diocese of Meru sponsored boarding school in the Northern District. Tuition costs equal just over \$600 for a year which begins in January. Donations are welcome in any amount! **We have received and sent \$400 in the November wire transfer. Please consider contributing towards the remaining \$200 which can be sent in early January.** Include “Baraka Scholarship” in the memo line of checks made out to St. Stephen the Martyr.



Asante sana! (Thank-you very much!)

## NEWS & NOTES

### BUILDING AND PEOPLE SECURITY

Based upon the recommendation of our church's safety committee, the Ushers continue to lock the rear doors of your building at 9:45 AM, fifteen minutes after the start of the Sunday worship service. The purpose of this policy is to guard against building entrance by individuals bent on doing harm to our Sunday School children in the downstairs or the people upstairs.

If for any reason, you arrive later than 9:45 AM, it is suggested you try to park in the upper level and use the upper main doors to enter our building. For Saturday services, the lower/rear doors are always kept locked, except for Christmas Eve services, the concert and funerals. Bob Rasmussen - Head Usher

### AMAZON SMILES

As you do your Christmas shopping remember to use Amazon Smiles. St. Stephen the Martyr has an Amazon Smiles Account. A percentage of your purchases can go to SSM. Go to [www.smile.amazon](http://www.smile.amazon) and look for "Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church."

### THRIVENT MEMEBERS - TAKE NOTICE

Thrivent Financial has announced that they will match up to \$250,000, nationwide, donations made to provide relief for California wildfire victims.

I'm a Thrivent Member: HOW CAN I DO THIS?

ANSWER: In one of **two** ways. **First** you many designate your unused Thrivent Choice Dollars to ELCA Lutheran Disaster Relief by going online to **Thrivent.com**.

The **Second** way would be to go online to **Thrivent.com** and make a personal donation to ELCA Lutheran Disaster Relief using your credit card or by electronic transfer.

Whichever way you give, it will help meet a great need. Your giving by credit card or electronic transfer the fees will be picked up by Thrivent. The company will then match your gift and other, until the quarter million dollar limit is reached.

Thank you for being generous and helping others. Bob Rasmussen -Thrivent Congregational Advocate for SSM.



## **CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 11/13/2018**

President Jason Covert called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Council members present were: J. Covert, B. Daleness, P. Nelson, J. Konop, J. Muroi, N. Mineau, J. Schultz, L. Sweet, A. Woerpel and B. Zimmermann. Pastor Brian was at a conference in Arizona.

October council minutes were approved.

### **FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S AND TREASURER'S REPORTS:**

Pledged amounts are meeting budgeted totals. Unpledged amounts are behind budgeted. Reviewed the Balance Sheet and Receipts and Disbursements reports. Received many memorial dollars in the last two months in remembrance of Bill Bravener and Ed Dowling. Treasurer's report was approved.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Council approved a \$500.00 gift to Faith Santa Fe to purchase turkeys for their food pantry. Budget for 2019 – Additions to the budget for 2019 include the income from our land lease and expense of a half time associate Pastor. Most of the committees have submitted their budgets and pledged amounts will be available by early December. Council will review the 2019 proposed budget again at the December meeting.

At the request of the Safe Worship committee we will begin using Trusted Employees for our background checks. They were recommended by our insurance company, Church Mutual.

The Annual Meeting will be held on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Committee reports are due January 7 and slide presentation on January 14.

Council discussed the possibility of providing some financial assistance to Pastor Brian for a trip to Tanzania in 2019.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Music Director Search – The search committee is at the point of presenting a job offer to a candidate.

Cell Tower – Triple A Asphalt Co blacktopped the road to the tower and also fixed several indentations in our parking lot caused by the heavy equipment. Power is installed and antennas will go up soon. They will also plant a few trees where we have requested them.

## CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING CONT.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

#### STEWARDSHIP:

Just a reminder that Commitment Weekend is this weekend.

#### HUMAN CONCERNS:

The committee is collecting warm coats, blankets and pies for Thanksgiving for Unity and Faith Santa Fe. Trying to alleviate some of the responsibilities that Bob and Shirley Lieske have handled for a number of years.

#### WORSHIP & MUSIC:

Busy planning for the Advent and Christmas seasons. All special services will be listed in the December newsletter, as well as weekly bulletins.

#### YOUTH & FAMILY:

Youth will bake cookies for college students and military. To be sent out the week of December 3. Gathering ideas for January activities.

#### BUILDING:

We have a new snow plowing firm this year. Outdoor Christmas decorations will be going up soon.

#### EVANGELISM:

Conducted a meeting regarding a new website format. Continuing to research.

Council decided to start their meetings at 6:30 starting next month.

Next MegaMeeting will be Tuesday, December 4, 2018

Next Council Meeting will be Tuesday, December 11, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Daleness,  
Council Secretary

