

ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA

Epiphany of the Lord

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- Mt 2:10-11



THE MARTYR MONTHLY

JANUARY 2021

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AT SSM
Sunday ZOOM online service 9:30 am

***The Annual Congregational Meeting has been postponed to February 28, 2021**

Men's ZOOM online Bible Study: 1/6 & 20 @ 9:00 am
Women's ZOOM online Bible Study: 1/13 & 27 @ 10:15 am
ZOOM online Confirmation Class: 1/6 & 20 @ 7:00 pm
SSM Thursday check-in: 7:00 pm

6101 South 51st Street, Greendale, WI 53129; 414-421-3543 www.ssmelca.org

Welcoming all, Worshiping God, Serving others

PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear SSM Faith Family,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We are journeying through the twelve days of Christmas. After the twelve days of Christmas, we celebrate the “Epiphany of our Lord” on January 6.

Epiphany is sometimes thought of as an “aha” moment where we get clarity. In Epiphany we see Jesus being revealed to all nations. Tradition shares that three wise men or Maji discovered Jesus in Bethlehem and presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The magi followed the guiding star that led them to Jesus.



On December 21 I was looking forward to seeing our own “Christmas star” from my home. The planets Jupiter and Saturn were said to come in close proximity to one another that it would like one huge star in the sky. Unfortunately, my hopes of seeing the star were dashed as it was a cloudy and rainy evening. I did however see some beautiful photos online.

Living in the suburbs and the city with bright lights, we don’t always see many stars in the sky. Yet we still sing this line from "O Little Town of Bethlehem": *Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

For those having difficult times, for those who have recently lost a loved one, and for those whose hearts are weighed down by anxiety, these words hold hope for a better tomorrow. This has indeed been a challenging time as many were not able to gather with one another for holiday celebrations. Through these difficult times we hold onto hope. Hope for brighter days to come.

Wherever we are emotionally, physically, spiritually this Christmas season, may the light of Christ shine upon your path and bring peace to your heart, as we pray for peace in our world.

Peace,
Pastor Brian

P.S. Thank you for all your warm greetings, cards and gifts. My family appreciates it.

STEWARDSHIP - Walk with Jesus



Let your light shine so that others may see...

One of my favorite parts of Christmas Eve services is when the lights are turned off, candles lit and everyone sings Silent Night. One year at my sister's church, the lights were turned off, candles lit and the pastor said the final blessing and dismissal. People looked at each other until someone started singing "Silent Night, Holy Night" on their own. Everyone else joined in before leaving the church. I suspect many of us missed the fact we could not do this in the traditional way in 2020. Like so many other things we couldn't do.

January brings us to the church season of Epiphany, a time when we celebrate Jesus as the light of the world. After 2020, we need some light. And true light, not the light at the end of the tunnel that turns out to be an approaching train (old family joke). In the dark, gray winter, it sometimes can be hard to see the light. But we are called to be a people of hope, those who see the light while walking in the darkness.

But we are also called to be a light. In the baptismal service we are told to let our light shine so that others may see. Stewardship is a form of discipleship, reminding us that all that we do is in response to God's gracious love and message of hope. I have seen a lot of light this past year – people reaching out to shut in members, the extraordinary gift giving to food pantries, being remembered in prayers by our sister congregation in Tanzania.

But there is still darkness and will be even after the COVID-19 crisis passes. The poor, widow, orphan, outcast, imprisoned and others (and yes, even us) still need light. I invite you at the beginning of this year to reflect on how you can let your light shine this year so that others may see the God of hope and the tidings of good news.

Barbara Fritschel



2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES

As more people are moving to Simply Giving or Give+, some are asking if they can stop offering envelopes or if they can get ones for only the special offerings such as Lenten midweek services, Easter, Christmas, etc. A special services set may be available. This set cost is only slightly cheaper than the full set but it does save on paper. If you do not want offering envelopes for 2022 (for whatever reason) or want the special services set, please email either the church office or Barb Fritschel by January 12. We normally order the envelopes by the middle of January to get the best price. 2021 envelopes are available in the church narthex for pick up whenever in-person activities start up again. -Barbara Fritschel

MUSIC NOTES FROM TABITHA MOLDENHAUER



Thank you all who were able to submit music to our virtual Advent and Christmas services! The talent of our musicians at SSM continues to be a blessing to our worship, and the dedication and ability to adapt to making music remotely is incredible.

As we go forward with online worship through January and February, we will be making another virtual choir piece for the Epiphany season. If you would be interested in participating in that, or if you would like to submit solo or family group videos for worship, please let me know!

COUNCIL UPDATE

We continue to believe that your safety and well-being are most important to us. During our Council Meeting on December 8, it was decided that all in-person church activities will remain cancelled through the month of February. This was another difficult decision we made, and we understand many will be disappointed. Requests to use the church facility will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Council will reevaluate the return to indoor activities in February.

As mentioned last month, preparation for the annual meeting and 2021 budget is underway. It was agreed during the Council Meeting on December 8, the Annual Meeting will be postponed. At this time, we are planning to have the meeting on February 28, and it will be held virtually using Zoom. Similar to last year, a Budget Review meeting is planned to occur prior to the annual meeting. More details will be forthcoming next month. We will provide all reports and financial information by email, and also make copies available that can be picked up from the church entryway.

Jason Covert

Council President

HUMAN CONCERNS

Human Concerns continues to focus on food pantries during this difficult time in our country. We appreciate the continued support from the congregation at SSM. We have seen such generosity. So THANK YOU SO MUCH.

We also had great success with our Bay View Christmas giving and drive thru events. Any money left over from the Bay View Christmas giving was given to them to buy things like hats and gloves. Thank you for your much needed support.

BAYVIEW COAT DRIVE THE MONTH OF JANUARY.

Bay View will be collecting adult coats, children's coats and snow pants during the month of January. These can be dropped off during our DRIVE THRU EVENT or all month. Since Unity and Tippecanoe are not collecting these items, Bay View feels there is a great need.

PLEASE LIMIT TO COATS, HATS, GLOVES AND SNOWPANTS ONLY.

God's blessings for the coming New Year

Nancy Mineau and the Human Concerns Committee



MUSIC & WORSHIP

January 2021—a time on the calendar to which many have been looking forward. While many things will not immediately change on 1/1/21, we do have many hopes for the coming year. Let us look toward renewal—of relationships, of serving others, of worshipping together in the same physical space.

On January 6th, we celebrate Epiphany, a time to remember the Magi's journey to Bethlehem. We will celebrate Holy Communion on this day. If you did not pick up a communion kit at the drive-thru event on December 20th, please contact Denise Sanders at 414-423-0608 to get one.

We will continue our Sunday morning services online (via Zoom) for the next couple of months. Even if you do not have a computer or internet access, you can connect with a telephone landline. If you need help connecting to these services, please contact Denise or Pastor Brian.

CONSTITUTION UPDATE

During our Council Meeting on December 8, a motion was made and passed to adopt a resolution to add an emergency bylaw to the St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church constitution. We needed to consider whether our constitution allows for remote Council and Congregational Meetings. It currently does not allow this, which is why we addressed this during our meeting. Further, our constitution requires the Annual Meeting take place any Sunday in January, which is not feasible given the current pandemic situation.

The Greater Milwaukee Synod is working with all congregations and explaining that Wisconsin Statute 181.0207 Emergency bylaws provides the opportunity to adopt bylaws during the COVID-19 pandemic. It defines an “emergency” as a catastrophic event that presents a quorum of the corporation’s directors from being readily assembled. Further, the board of directors of a corporation may adopt bylaws that are effective only in an emergency.

The emergency bylaw added is as follows.

RESOLVED, that the constitution of the Church is amended by inserting the following at C10.08.:

Upon the occurrence, and for the duration, of any “emergency” as that term is defined in Wisconsin Statutes § 181.0207(1) this congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication. In addition, the annual meeting may be delayed. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

As explained in my Council Update for this month’s newsletter, Council intends to hold a remote Annual Meeting on February 28.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Jason Covert,
Council President

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 1	Kessia Andersen Grant Gillespie Jenny Koeff Teri Peterson Kipp Zimmermann	January 20	Sara Jacobsen Travis Lisiecki
January 4	Jay Chadwick Mark Winter	January 21	Mason Zoske
January 5	Bob Rasmussen	January 22	Keira Revers Charlene Weller
January 6	Sally Chadwick	January 23	Kyle Julseth Karen Krosnicki
January 7	Mike Mayer Karen Rasmussen	January 24	Bill Andersen Joshua Stuedemann Mike Winter
January 10	Travis Nehring	January 25	Stephanie Falksen Debra Onsager
January 12	Caryl Chmielewski	January 26	Melissa Cooper Sandy Petricek Monica Sweet
January 13	Charles Billman Hannah Billman Sarah Billman Kyle Krauske	January 27	Leigha Andersen Amanda Chadwick
January 14	Faith Bulson Billy Burns	January 29	John Kalman Eric Sundquist

We do our best to make sure the information in this list is correct - if you see a discrepancy, please email the church office so we can make the necessary correction in the church records. Thank you.

NEWS & NOTES

ALUMINUM CAN SALE REPORT FOR 2020

With the final sale of salvaged cans in December, data for the year 2020 is now available.

The total income from the year long can sales was \$83 which was turned in to our Church Treasurer for distribution to the local food pantries.

The total represented 267 lbs. of cans sold at an average price of 32 cents per pound. It takes about 28 to 30 cans to make a pound.

Although the amount of cans collected was less this year, probably due to COVID-19, it can be noted that a valuable metal was kept out of landfills, while earning money for food for the needy.

Thank you to all who donated cans this past year. Please save your cans in the coming months, store at your home, and bring them to church after April 1, 2021.

Bob Rasmussen - Coordinator

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Happy New Year to all. Why not start your 2021 by becoming more familiar with God's word? We have many opportunities at SSM to do just that. At least until the end of February all of our offerings will be via Zoom. Don't forget that you can call into zoom as well, even if you do not have a cell phone. The number to call is 312-626-6733, then when prompted you enter the zoom meeting number. Contact the people listed below by each offering to get the correct meeting number. While you cannot see the rest of the participants over the phone you can hear and participate in the discussion.

Sunday School staff continues to prepare a new video for each week. Each week's lesson is related to the readings for the Sunday service for the same week. Every Friday when Pastor sends out the weekend worship information his email includes the link to a short message from a member of our Sunday School staff. If you are a Sunday School parent and do not have the materials that are being used you can contact the office and arrange a time to pick up a packet.

The Thursday evening group will continue weekly check-in. It has not been decided at the time of this writing what the discussions will entail. Often this is just an opportunity to connect with folks you don't get to see during this time of "stay at home". If you want to be included in this group call Pastor or Mimi. If you would like the link information sent to you just give the office a call or send an email to office@ssmelca.org.

The Men's Bible Study continues to meet via Zoom at 9:30 am on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. They are looking at the book of Genesis. If you would like the link information to this study, and are currently not getting it, give Kipp Zimmermann a call or text at 917-805-5998 or send him an email at kippzee@gmail.com. (If texting be sure to include your name.)

The Women's Bible Study meets via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 10:15 am. They are also studying Genesis. If you are not currently on the list to receive the link to this meeting call or text Bonnie Zimmermann at 917-805-5994 or sent an email to bonniezimmermann426@gmail.com. (If texting be sure to include your name.)

The Monthly Monday group is reading Making Sense of Martin Luther by David J. Lose. This is a cleverly written, easy to read book written in question and answer format which has led to some interesting discussion. As of this writing in-building group activities have suspended through the end of the year. Therefore, this group is on hold for now. Watch for additional announcements regarding later dates.

Bonnie Zimmermann for Christian Education



MBAASENY NEWS & UPDATES

Meet our Mbaaseny Educational Scholarship Recipients

Asante sana to all who have contributed to our scholarship fund and who pray for them. I asked our partner pastor if each of these students would share a bit about themselves for our newsletter. Pastor Mbise talked with each of our Scholarship recipients and shared their responses with me via WhatsApp. All 3 attend Diocese of Meru supported secondary schools (similar to our middle and high schools) where English is the main language used in teaching. Donations to this Scholarship Fund can be made at any time through St. Stephen the Martyr. Designate your donation to the Mbaaseny Scholarship Fund. Annually we seek to raise \$3,000 for these 3 students. If you would like more information, please contact Julie Starks, jastarks39@gmail.com (note new e-mail address), 414-254-2533. Asante sana!



Baraka Godwin in his 4th year at Ngarenanyuki Secondary School
I am Baraka Godwin, am fine and am so much glad to hear all you are doing well. I am taking this opportunity to say thankyou for your helps. Still I do study hard for achieving better performance in order to fulfill my goals. My future is to be an engineer. I thank again all friends from SSM church for paying school fees. Everytime when I see Pastor Mbise coming to visit me tears of love are falling. Almighty God bless you all...all in I return my thanks to you knowing that I am orphan, for what you are doing for me. God will bless you so much. Amen.

Eliupendo Abel Pallangyo in her 1st year at Ailanga Lutheran Junior Seminary

I am Eliupendo Abel. I am in Form 1. I love my School because teachers are good and they teach well. Christian life is important at school. I like singing, I am a singer in school choir. I like science subjects because I want to be a doctor after my studies. I thank the friends of Mbaaseny Parish for paying my school fees. My father was Evangelist at Mbaaseny before he passed away last year. I hope God will help my dreams to come true. Thank you. Yours, Eliupendo



Victoria Ezekiel Kaaya in her 1st year at Leguruki Vocational and Technical School

I am Victoria Ezekiel Kaaya. I'm Form one student at Leguruki Secondary School and vocation center. I am very glad to hear that you are the one who supports me to go back to school soon after being home for two weeks. I have nothing to say but God will pay you. I am studying hard to achieve my goals. My future aim is to become a doctor. God bless you the friends of Mbaaseny.



MORE NEWS

THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS : A Reminder

If you hold Thrivent product such as Life Insurance, Long-term Care Insurance, or Annuities, you have “earned” Thrivent Choice Dollars in 2020. These dollars are not yours to spend but to send to a charity of your choice. St. Stephen the Martyr could be one of those recipients. Last year SSM received thousands of dollars in real money from choice dollars given to our church by our Thrivent members. The deadline to direct your 2020 dollars to SSM is March 31, 2021. Choice Dollars from 2021 can be donated as you earn them during the year.

You can direct your choice dollars on the internet at Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or by calling 1-800-847-4836. If you have more questions call Bob or Karen Rasmussen at 414-421-5170.

Thank you for doing this. Bob Rasmussen, Coordinator

CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 12/8/2020

President Jason Covert called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M.

Council members present were: J. Covert, B. Daleness, J. Dose, B. Fritschel, A. Matusiak, J. Miller, N. Mineau, J. Muroi, P. Nelson, D. Sanders, L. Sweet and B Zimmermann. Pastor Brian also attended.

Secretary minutes were reviewed and approved with corrections.

The Council discussed catch phrases that could be used for 2021 and after some discussion “Renewing and Strengthening Connections” was chosen.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Financial Secretary – Pledges continue to be on target. The PPP loan was forgiven.

Treasurers Report – Reviewed reports and disbursements.

Treasurer’s report was approved.

PASTOR’S TIME:

Now that the most recent book study has concluded Pastor will be doing check-ins with those interested on Thursdays at 7 pm. New book will be chosen in 2021. No check-

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CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING cont

ins on Christmas or New Years Eve. Char's ordination service went very well and was well attended. 27 Advent bags were provided to families of Sunday School children to continue to connect with young families. Christmas services will be recorded and there will be a live Zoom service at 7 pm on Christmas Eve. The AV team will get together to decide what equipment to purchase for ongoing virtual services. Tom Hoffman's funeral will be December 18 at the funeral home.

CURRENT ACTION ITEMS

Opening the Church – Council decided that based on continuing Covid concerns that the church will remain closed for in person worship and meetings through February 2021.

Annual Meeting – Jason and Denise attended a Webinar regarding how to conduct a virtual congregational meeting. We will need an emergency bylaw in order to conduct our annual meeting virtually and to delay the meeting past January. The emergency bylaw was approved by the council and the meeting date was set for Sunday, February 28, 2021. Committee reports are due to D. Sanders by January 15 and Annual Reports will be available electronically. Printed copies will also be available for picking up at the church.

2021 Budget – Pledges so far are lower than in 2020 and Pastor's insurance is going up in 2021. Committees will review their needs and a first pass at the budget will happen at the January Council Meeting.

STEWARDSHIP

A new chair will be needed for this committee as Barb will be retiring next fall and moving to Iowa.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP

A Christmas drive-thru event is planned for December 20 after church services. Additional information was included in the December newsletter.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:34.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie Daleness
Council Secretary

