



St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church

the MARTYR MONTHLY

Worship opportunities at SSM

Sunday ZOOM online service: 9:30 am

Open Sanctuary Hours: see page 4 for more information

Men's ZOOM online Bible Study: 3/3 & 17 @ 9:00 am

Women's ZOOM online Bible Study: 3/10 & 24 @ 10:15 am

Confirmation ZOOM online Class: 3/3 & 17 @ 7:00 pm

Thursday Nights: virtual Soup Supper @ 6:30 pm; Reflection and Study, *Living Well Through Lent* @ 7:00pm

MARCH 2021

Lent is the time for greater love,
listen to Jesus' thirst...

'Repent and believe'

What are we to repent?
Our indifference, our hardness of heart.

What are we to believe?
Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart
and in the poor - He knows your weakness.

He wants only your love,
wants only the chance to love you.



St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church ELCA

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

Welcoming all, Worshiping God, Serving others

Pastor's Ponderings...

Dear SSM Faith Family,

As I write, it is the middle of February and temperatures have hovered in the single digits or below for a while. This time of year can be especially difficult as we endure through freezing temperatures and flurries. I imagine that we all long for warmer days in the Spring.

The church season of Lent continues through the month of March. Lent sometimes feels like spring. Easter is on the horizon, yet we're still in the midst of our Lenten disciplines. We struggle to be more reflective, to value the good and let go of what is unhealthy. But will there ever be a payoff?

We struggle sometimes, and it may feel as if we can't catch a break. The "to do" list gets longer, the bills pile up, and we forget healthy habits and might opt for the path of least resistance. And as the season gets colder, we are still in midst of a pandemic, and family members or friends may be ill. It might feel as if we are trapped in a perpetual winter.

Yet, I know that hope is on the horizon. I know that shoots of green will soon appear from the ground. Slowly flowers will start to bloom, and there will be some yellow and white blooms near the church.

Yes, there is hope in this cold winter. Looking at the 10-day forecast there appears to be warmer temperatures on the way. And as we continue through Lent, perhaps we should start looking for those small signs of hope in our own lives. They are different for each of us, of course, but they all point to a future of warmth. For us Christians, we need only look to the cross for a sign of the coming resurrection of Easter. It will come, perhaps sooner than we think.

Peace,
Pastor Brian



COUNCIL UPDATE: During our Council Meeting on February 9, it was decided that all in-person worship services will remain cancelled through Easter. This was another difficult decision made, but we continue to believe that your safety and well-being are most important to our church family. Council will reevaluate the return to indoor activities each month, as we hope to begin reopening soon.

Jason Covert
Council President

Stewardship News - Walk with Jesus

I have always believed that good stewardship is defined as wise use of our time, talents and resources. As the chairperson of the Christian Education Committee, I am writing on behalf of the Stewardship Committee to discuss how the two are related.

Of course, we can use our time and talents to assist with our Christian Education offerings to our children. This fall we are going to need Sunday School teachers and co-teachers. By fall we expect to be meeting during our 9:30am worship hour again. If you have no experience or don't think you know enough, put your fears aside. We have a wonderful Sunday School staff who can help you settle in should you feel called to teach our young folks. We will also need quite a few volunteers to help with Vacation Bible School, which will probably be sometime in August (the exact dates are pending). Team leaders are always needed. This job entails guiding a group of several children through the evening to take part in activities and hear lessons presented by others. Other volunteers are needed for VBS as well.

This is probably the plea you expected because we usually think of stewardship in terms of how we use our time, talents and resources for others. Stewardship is also the wise use of the resources made available to us for our own enrichment. We not only share our food resources, but we also eat good food to maintain our own health and wellbeing, both are examples of good stewardship. So, we can make use of the many offerings of the Christian Education Committee, resources offered by SSM, to deepen our understanding of our Christian faith and our scriptures. Everyone can benefit from growing a closer, more personal relationship with our Lord and Savior. Exploring the scriptures, our beliefs and our practices as Lutherans is a wonderful way to do this. Sharing this experience with our fellow SSM members is both an opportunity for personal growth and a great way to strengthen our relationships with our faith family.

Whether you join the Women's Study, the Men's Study, the Monthly Monday Study, the Thursday Night Check-in or have another idea (let me know if you do); whether you lead a group or participate in a group; whether you teach our children or lead your own children to Sunday School or VBS, you are practicing good Stewardship by making wise use of your time, talents and resources.

The more you know about the scriptures and the more you understand about your personal faith and our shared faith, the more prepared you are to share your time, talents and resources with others. Pray about it and see if God is leading you in this direction.

Yours in Christ,
Bonnie Zimmermann

Music Notes from Music Director Tabitha Moldenhauer



As we are continuing with virtual services with recorded music, just a reminder that all SSM musicians are invited and welcome to submit recordings (video preferred) for use in services.

Also, please see the Google Group email from Feb. 11 for information regarding a virtual choir piece being put together by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians.

Feel free to contact me with any tech, music, or copyright questions!



Music & Worship

Open Sanctuary Hours - Personal Prayer and Reflection

The sanctuary space at SSM will be open for personal prayer and reflection on
Mondays in March, 10:00-11:30 a.m. and 6:30-8:00 p.m.

If you would like to spend some time in the physical church space, just come any time during these open hours and enter the sanctuary. We ask that you follow current church protocols: wear a mask covering your mouth and nose and keep at least six feet of distance from anyone outside your household. To help us sanitize, please indicate where you sat by leaving behind a provided post-it not. Keep in mind that this is not a time of gathering or visitation, but instead a personal opportunity for prayer and reflection.

We will continue our Sunday morning services online (via Zoom) during the month of March and through Easter Sunday (April 4th). 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 Sanders or Pastor Brian.

Human Concerns

Thanks to all who contributed to our Drive Thru event on February 11th and 13th to help support Bay View Community Center's Food Pantry. Food is greatly needed in the Milwaukee area at this time. Also, Tippecanoe greatly appreciates all the items for the homeless. We will be having another food drive in the future.

PLEASE. NO MORE EGG CARTONS DONATIONS AT THIS TIME. We will make an announcement when they are needed again.

Thank you,
Nancy Mineau

News & Events

THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS: A Reminder

If you hold Thrivent products such as Life Insurance, Long-term Care Insurance, or Annuities, you have “earned” Thrivent Choice Dollars this past year. These dollars are not yours to spend on yourself, but are valuable to direct 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 throughout the year. If you have forgotten how to direct your choice dollars, be reminded you may do so in one of two ways.

By PC or other electronic device:

1. Visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice
2. Log in and enter your user ID and password, and answer the security question, if asked. (If you haven't yet registered on Thrivent.com, click “Register for account access” to do so.)
3. Click on Membership Overview
4. See the number of Choice Dollars available to direct. Click on direct choice dollars.
5. Follow the prompts...Finally click “Direct All” or enter a specific number and click “Direct now”. Finish by again following the prompts.

By phone:

1. Call 1-800-847-4836
2. From the Menu press 5 which should be the number for Member benefits and programs.
3. Listen for Thrivent Choice (you will need your phone no. and date of birth)
4. A representative will work with you to direct your Choice Dollars.

Thank you for doing this. Bob Rasmussen, Coordinator

Christian Education

As our COVID restrictions continue we are getting through winter by meeting on-line or by phoning in as best we can. You are invited to deepen your relationship with God and have an opportunity to interact with our SSM family and friends by joining us to study the scriptures.

Sunday School: Hopefully our families picked up their new lesson packets at our mid-February drive through event. If you did not pick up your packet, please contact the church office to find out about picking one up. Watch Pastor's weekly Friday email for a link to the video for each week.

The Thursday evening group will continue weekly check-in and during Lent will continue to look at parts of the booklet *Living Well Through Lent* for Lenten devotion. If you want to be included in this group, or to get a copy of the booklet if you do not have one, 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 continue to look 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, which is full of interesting stories, many of which you did not hear in Sunday School. 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 send 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. When this group can begin again meetings are the first Monday of each month at 1 pm. Watch for additional announcements regarding later dates.

At this time the plan is to have VBS sometime during the summer of 2021, probably in late summer. Exact dates have not been determined, but watch the newsletter for additional information. The theme will be *Rocky Railway: Jesus' Power Pulls Us Though*.

Stay safe -
Bonnie Zimmermann for Christian Education

Easter Giving Parade

April 3, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

We are hosting an Easter drive-thru event at SSM. We hope you'll stop by to share some Easter Joy. The event will include:

Treat for the Kids

Each child will receive an Easter take-home activity and a special treat.

Food Drive

Bring non-perishable food items and/or monetary donations. These donations will be distributed to the Bay View Food Pantry, Unity, and Faith/Santa Fe.

Make a Gift

Consider donating to one of the following special funds:

- *Mission Endowment Fund*: SSM's endowment fund was established to enhance the mission outreach of SSM and to provide for long-term growth of the church.
- *Mbaaseny Education Fund*: The Mbaaseny Education Fund supports our Meru partner's students with their secondary school education (high school level) fees and tuition.
- *Organ Fund*: We have raised nearly half the cost of the new pipe organ. All donations to the fund will help us pay off the organ loan early.
- *South Milwaukee Human Concerns Food Pantry* or the *ELCA Lunchbox* program: Other food programs in need of support.
- *Human Concerns*: Gifts designated for this committee will be directed to urgent community needs.

Distribution of Holy Communion Kits

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the sacrament of Holy Communion during the online, Zoom worship service on Easter (April 4). He will consecrate the cups prior to distribution and a note will be included with a prayer and words for home distribution if you are not able to participate in the Zoom service.

How to Participate

Drive into the SSM parking lot any time between 10:00 a.m. and noon on Saturday, April 3rd. Signs and arrows will lead you to stations for giving and receiving. You will not need to get out of your car. Please wear your mask for interacting with the volunteers.

Thank you for your generous spirit.

Mbaaseny Education Scholarships



The Diocese of Meru supports a number of secondary schools where most students also board because of travel difficulties. Classes are conducted in English and students receive regular meals which is a big plus versus staying at home.

SSM currently provides tuition assistance for our parish partner Mbaaseny. Pastor Mbise and his partnership committee has selected 3 young people to receive this assistance. \$2,000 each school year

(January – October) is needed for these 3 students.

Funds are sent regularly to the Diocese of Meru and can be given through special gifts at SSM with the designation Mbaaseny Education Scholarships.

On Feb. 6, the Greater Milwaukee Synod joined with the Diocese of Meru for a prayer service using Zoom meeting technology. We sent 5 prayer petition topics for our partners to write prayers for us and they in turn sent us 6 topics. Below is the prayer shared from Meru to us on the topic of Education:

Heavenly Father, we Glorify your Holy name and we come before You for prayer.

We pray for our partners in Greater Milwaukee Synod who need you, Lord.

We pray for teachers in the USA who are working under difficult situation due to the pandemic response. We pray also for the students that are learning in a difficult environment as they cannot meet to discuss matters in classes normally.

Father, we pray for their overall health and ability to teach. Give them courage, give them faith, give them the strength to combat the situation.

We pray also for the community. Almighty God give them wisdom to support learning and studies, to teachers and students. We pray to overall education, teaching and learning system be guided by you O Lord. In Jesus Christ, we pray AMEN.

In turn, this is the prayer petition for Education that was said for the Diocese of Meru:

God of all understanding, knowledge and wisdom, we ask you to bless and sustain the educational institutions of the Diocese. You know the struggles they face due to changes in government policies. Help these educators rise to these challenges so they may continue to provide their students with the high level of education that led to the successful performance by form two and form four students on the national examinations for 2020. We celebrate the joyous news of their achievements and give thanks to you, oh God.

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Mbaaseny Education Scholarships, cont.

Lord, the teachers work tirelessly to educate their students. Provide them with all they need to continue this work and to provide for their own families. Watch over the students and continue to fuel their excitement for learning. Continue to bless them with education opportunities that will enable them to make a difference in the lives of their families and in the greater community.

We ask this in the name of your son, the Teacher, Jesus Christ.

Include our partner's education efforts in your prayers. If you are so moved and are able please consider a donation to our scholarship fund.

Asante sana,
Julie Starks
jastarks39@gmail.com

Lenten Stewardship 2021

A Time for Hope: Lenten Stewardship 2021

Thinking back to my childhood, the Lenten season meant giving up everything that tasted sweet or salty, spending long hours in church, and placing most of my weekly twenty-five cent allowance in a cream-colored envelope that I dutifully placed in the usher's wicker basket each Sunday. The Lenten season for my sister and me required that we give our all. Why? Because it was Lent. We were at war. The poor children were starving in Europe. Polio was beginning to strike my friends and me. And sharing money was considered the right thing to do to be a good steward and to fix everything bad. Besides, grandma and grandpa were watching!

Not until many, many years had passed did I realize the true intent and purpose of stewardship and the joy of sharing God's blessings of time, talent and money—especially during the reflective Lenten season. Our Savior Jesus gave his all; we give in gratitude. Stewardship is testimony of our faith. It reflects our hope in a better tomorrow. Even in difficult times—then and now. Lent is a time for renewing our hope and faith in our Risen Lord.

Indeed, the members of St. Stephen the Martyr continue to go above and beyond in their generosity of time, talent and money in serving others. Despite the on-going constraints of a continuing pandemic, political unrest, social injustices and economic turmoil, our members continue as role models of *an attitude of gratitude* through stewardship. Examples include our dedicated volunteers who set up weekly Zoom worship services and meetings; volunteers who plan, develop and implement music to enrich

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Lenten Stewardship 2021, cont.

worship; volunteers who order, package and distribute holy communion; volunteers who order, prepare and facilitate Sunday school educational materials; volunteers who coordinate and administer community, national and international outreach and so much more. Volunteering is part of our mission ... *to serve others*.

As hopeful people of faith let us continue to walk with Jesus in our Lenten stewardship journey knowing that Easter joy will soon be here! It is not what you give up that matters. It is what you give to, in gratitude, that does.

Thank you for your continuing support of St. Stephen the Martyr.

Marion Walton

March Birthdays

5 Carole Ropel
7 Shirley Lieske
13 Marc Manning
15 Jennifer Myszkowski
18 Amy Ziegert
19 Sally Kowalewski
19 El Schneider
21 Greg Guiliani
Joe Guiliani
Delaney Stuedemann



22 Nichol Manning
23 Tracy Wholean
26 Annika Tanke
27 Hanna Tanke
28 Betty Kroll
Pam Rothwell
29 Michael Wholean
30 Rae Bauman
Sherry Magner
Eleanor Salb

CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of February 09, 2021 Council Meeting

President Jason Covert called the meeting to order at 6:33 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.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Financial Secretary – January giving was down partially because

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CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING, cont.

the last week of January will be counted in February totals.

Treasurers Report – Building funds collected in 2020 were moved to the Building Capital Reserve account as is done at the end of each year. There is a large sum of money being held in reserves and there was some discussion regarding moving the funds to more specific line items that identify what the funds are being held for.

Treasurer's report was approved.

PASTOR'S TIME:

Ash Wednesday Zoom service will be held at 7:00pm on February 17. There will be weekly Lenten devotions held on Thursday nights at 7 with a virtual soup supper at 6:30. Our Synod is conducting 'Together in Mission' Zoom sessions the next three Saturdays. Contact Pastor Brian for more information.

CURRENT ACTION ITEMS

Opening the Church – Council decided that the church will continue to be closed until at least the week after Easter. There may be some availability to enter the church for 'Sanctuary Time' during March while staff is there. There may be a community Holy Week service at St Al's.

Annual Meeting – The annual meeting will be held via Zoom Sunday, February 28, 2021. The annual report and letter were sent out today via email. Print copies of the annual report will be available at the church and the letter will be mailed to all members. There will be a budget review on February 21 at 10:30 after the worship service.

The 2021 budget was reviewed.

The Synod Convention will be held April 30 and May 1. SSM can send two delegates.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP:

Our next drive through event will be held February 11 and 13th. Perhaps another drive through 'Easter Parade' will be scheduled.

PROPERTY:

The roof repair has been delayed due to the snow but is close to being completed.

HUMAN CONCERNS:

The Coat Drive is completed. Donations for Food Pantries will be dropped off soon.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:06.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie Daleness
Council Secretary