

THE VOICE

of St. Stephen's

December Volume 140 Issue 12



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Services

- Sunday, December 1**
First Sunday of Advent
10:45 am
- Sunday, December 8**
Second Sunday of Advent
10:45 am
- Sunday, December 15**
Third Sunday of Advent
10:45 am
- Sunday, December 22**
Fourth Sunday of Advent
10:45 am
- Tuesday, December 24**
Christmas Eve Service
7pm
- Sunday, December 29**
First Sunday of Christmas
10:45 am
-

Reflections from Pastor Barry



Dear Friends at St Stephen's,

Peace On Earth. Peace. Peace and quiet. We all want it, don't we? Just a little peace in our lives.

As I write this, the war in the Ukraine intensifies. Russia is using troops from North Korea. Really? Gaza is all but completely destroyed and the world watches unable to assist in finding any resolution. Iran is increasingly taunted to respond. South Sudan, Yemen, the number of places in turmoil, continues to expand not shrink. Why is there war? No one ever wins where there is war. Resources are diminished. Loved ones die. Homes and homelands are destroyed. Why can't we just live in peace?

We are not so naïve to believe that peace is the absence of conflict. Nor do I think, we believe, if we only had a stronger military than peace could be enforced although that is a strong sentiment. Try and put down a people who are struggling with their day to day lives with force- such a policy may work in the short term, but folks will resist I assure you.

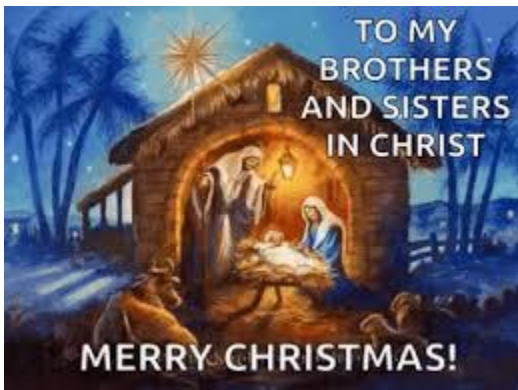
We celebrate the birth of Jesus this month of December. Jesus is born into a world where Rome has declared the Pax Romana. There may be peace for the folks in Rome although that is not even true but there certainly is no peace for Jesus and his family or the peasants of Galilee. The day to day necessities of life were always in question. Rome's peace came with an awful price- crucifixion was one of the many ways that "peace" was maintained. Political infighting was routine- the house of Herod was in a constant state of transition while members of the same family grabbed for power.

Mary's Magnificat words that are at the heart of Advent, remind us that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes into this world to turn it upside down, never mind the money changers tables that scene pales in comparison to Mary's predictions. The lowly are lifted up even enthroned. The rich are sent away empty. The proud are dashed, their schemes are exposed. The ruthless are cast aside, the hungry are

are filled with good things. This the peace we are promised.

The angels on that first Christmas Eve knew and understood something about the peace for which we all long. Peace on earth, good will to all they sang. Somehow they knew already that all means all, no exceptions. It was to the lowliest of all they brought their good news to those shepherds watching the flocks by night in the fields. These were the ones entrusted with the greatest news of all time to you this day is born, in the city of David, a child who is the Christ, our Lord.

A blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas to you all.
Pastor Barry



Voices of the Saints

Nicholas, Bishop of Myra is celebrated on December 6th this year on a Friday. Nicholas is the Saint upon which our St. Nick is based. Little is known about Nicholas, except that he has a bishop in present-day Turkey. According to legend, he spared three daughters from an unsavory life when their father was unable to provide dowries for each of them. Nicholas was famous for his giving to the poor, and so has become a symbol of anonymous gift-giving. Gifts to the poor are at the heart of the tradition we hold so dear. Many children will receive a gift for the first time in their lives when they open a shoebox packed with love here at St Stephen's. One of the traditions based on this day is that children would find candy and oranges in their shoes when they went to get dressed and start the day. Nicholas died around 343. A blessed St. Nicholas day to you all on December 6.



Prayers for Advent: The Advent Wreath

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath. If you have an Advent wreath in your home or if you simply light a candle when you sit down for dinner in your homes this Advent Season, here are four prayer, one for each of the four Sundays in Advent .





Prayer for Hope: Almighty God, grant us the grace to hope in you with you unwavering trust. As we begin this season of Advent, may our hearts be filled with the hope that comes from knowing your promises are true. Amen.



Prayer for Peace: Prince of Peace, in a world filled with turmoil, grant us the tranquility that only your peace can bring. Help us to be instruments of reconciliation and harmony in our relationships and communities. Amen.



Prayer for Joy: Heavenly Father, fill our hearts with the joy that comes from knowing your love. May we rejoice in the good news of salvation and share that joy with others during this season of Advent. Amen.



Prayer for Love: God of love, as we approach the celebration of the birth of your Son, help us to embody the love that He brought into the world. Teach us to love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

Church Finance Page

Operating Fund Report

Below is comparison of Operating Fund through the first ten months of 2023 and 2024:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Operating Income	\$ 136,100	\$ 141,428
Operating Expenses	-(\$ 178,347)	-(\$ 225,641)
Net Difference	-(\$ 42,247)	-(\$ 84,213)
Preschool Income	<u>+\$ 91,749</u>	<u>+ \$ 64,514</u>
Net Difference	<u>+\$ 49,502</u>	<u>-(\$ 19,699)</u>
Operating Fund Balance October 31	\$ 269,950	\$ 249,572
Property Maintenance Fund Balance	\$ 23,304	\$ 19,615

Roof Replacement

As our church building ages, the costs to maintain the building in good condition increases. Over the past 60 days, the congregation made the decision to replace the flat roofs at the front and rear of our building at a cost of \$80,000. The Property and Finance committees had begun planning for this, but the need to replace the roofs became urgent in late September.

St. Stephen's has been blessed in so many ways over the years. Once again, God was looking over us. Due to large surpluses turned over to the church from Pre-school over the past two years and reduction in expenses in recent years due to COVID and Pastor Koch's disability insurance policy, St. Stephen's does not have to borrow money or face a financial crisis over the roof replacement. The full amount of the roof costs will be paid from the church Operating account.

However, the Finance Committee and Church Council would like to replenish the Operating Fund for at least part of the roof costs. We don't expect to raise \$80,000 but would like to raise at least \$25,000-\$30,000 over the next year.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. Four months are being designated as "blitz" months. Announcements will be made in church and through the newsletter. Members will be encouraged to give what they can to cover the roof costs. Note, any roof contributions should be over and above your current church offering.
2. Special offering envelopes will appear in the quarterly mailers beginning in January.
3. Communication will be sent to ALL members, including those who do not regularly attend or contribute.
4. Fundraising opportunities are encouraged but none are planned by the Finance Committee at this time.

I (We) will contribute to the roof expense reimbursement per option checked below:

_____ I (We) will make a weekly contribution of \$ _____

_____ I (We) will make a monthly contribution of \$ _____

_____ I (We) will make a one-time contribution of \$ _____

Name _____ Envelope _____

Please return the bottom portion of this form to the church office or place in the offering plate when you attend worship.



Operation Christmas Child Work Party Nov 2



New Members Luncheon November 10





Operation Christmas Child Packing Party November 16



The Samaritan's Purse project Operation Christmas Child collects shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies and hygiene items-and delivers them to children in need around the world to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way. For many of these children, the gift-filled shoebox is the first gift they have ever received. We are happy to report that this year St. Stephen's filled 612 shoeboxes. This was made possible by year round collecting and sorting of items, a few work parties and a final packing party. The committee would like to thank everyone who donated items or money to purchase items that we need. Stay tuned for information on where our shoeboxes get distributed.

Poinsettia Order Form

Wednesday, December 11, 2024



6 1/2" Plants Red, Pink and White
\$8.00 each

Plant #1 _____ Red _____ White _____ Pink

Dedicated by _____

Check one _____ in HONOR of _____ in MEMORY of

Dedicated to _____

Plant #2 _____ Red _____ White _____ Pink

Dedicated by _____

Check one _____ in HONOR of _____ in MEMORY of

Dedicated to _____

Plant #3 _____ Red _____ White _____ Pink

Dedicated by _____

Check one _____ in HONOR of _____ in MEMORY of

Dedicated to _____

**Submit your order with your payment
(cash or Check)
for Poinsettia orders**

At Worship– place complete form (extra forms will be in the Narthex)in an envelope, place in Secretary's mailbox.

Bring form & payment to the church office
Mon-Fri 8:30am- 12:30 am

Drop off form and payment in the mail slot 24/7

Mail form & payment to the church office

**Everyone is Welcome to Join us
for Food, Fun and Fellowship
Sunday, Dec 22nd follow the Worship Service**



Menu: Lasagna, Salad, Dinner Rolls, Assorted Desserts
There is no cost to attend but Reservation are required
Sign up in the Narthex or RSVP by calling or emailing the
church office by December 15
Phone: 610-865-0601
email: ststephenoffice@ptd.net

**Christmas Eve Service
7PM**





Kathy Bielinski
Francine Heft

Birthdays for December

1-Dwayne Gaumer
1-Linda Oplinger
2-Kerry Roberts
2-Todd Siegfried
5-Nancy Whitesell
6-David Carson
6-Danielle Keen
8-Barbara Seitzinger
12-Jamie Gaumer
14-Ryan Hoysan
14-Logan Malia
14-Shane Malia
18-Naomi Burgee
18-Frank Herb
18-Andrew Krauss
21-Gerald Seyfried
26-Dave Looker
27-Bill Ohmacht
28-Kristin Lambert
28-Mark Powell
28-Joseph Talaber
28-Timothy Zarzecki
29-Charles Miller



Anniversaries for December

6-George & Linda Oplinger
14-Ron & Pam Frantz







December 2024

St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church



Altar Care: Kim Bluder

Worship Service					
December 1 10:45am	Maddie Zuber	Ed Acevedo Kevin Blose Brody Zuber Bonnie Gerber	Cheryl Hosfeld	Pat Handlovic Sharon Wagner	Lopez
December 8 10:45 am	Elizabeth Lopez	Ron & Mary Jo Reed, Denise and William Lopez	Todd Siegfried	Ron & Mary Jo Reed	Todd and Jeanine Siegfried
December 15 10:45 am	Leah Jackson Raab	Ron & Mary Jo Reed, Brody Zuber, Scott Albanese	Mike Hosfeld	Ron & Mary Jo Reed	Rich and Emily Walker
December 22 10:45 am	Maddie Zuber	Ron & Mary Jo Reed, Ron Hari, Scott Albanese	Ed Acevedo	Pat Handlovic	Christmas Party
December 24 7:00 pm Christmas Eve	Brody Zuber	Ron & Mary Jo Reed, Mark McCormick, Tom Hartzell	Mark McCormick	Ron & Mary Jo Reed	
December 29 10:45 am	TBD	Todd, Jeanine Siegfried Brody Zuber Sharon Wagner	Evan Reese	TBD	Zuber Family

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Rev. Barry J. Harte
Secretary: Christine Baylor

Organist: John Phillips Jr
Sexton: Shawn Barger

CHURCH COUNCIL

Suzanne Bachman	610-974-9024	suzbach756@aol.com
Kim Bluder– VP	610-888-0365	kimberlybluder@gmail.com
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Frank Herb	484-747-5320	jlherb52@gmail.com
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Mary Jo Reed–Secretary	610-867-6276	reed2x@ptd.net
Linda Reese	610-861-5221	the-reeses@rcn.com
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Craig Spangenberg	484-767-3384	jlsparenberg@juno.com
Todd Siegfried	610-392-8940	jtisiegfried@msn.com

CHURCH COMMITTEES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Suzanne Bachman (Chair), Bonnie Gerber, Michelle Hoysan, Carla Perry, Bev Carson.

EVANGELISM

Suzanne Bachman, Bonnie Gerber, Pat Handlovic, Dennise Lopez (Chair), Joan Neff

FINANCE

Kim Bluder, Tom Hartzell (Chair, Treasurer), Mike Hosfeld, Michelle Hoysan, George Klose, Charles Miller, Ron Reed, Barbara Seifert-Sigmon, Mary Jo Reed

PROPERTY

Ed Acevedo, Dwayne Gaumer, Pam Hartzell (Chair), Linda Reese, Todd Siegfried, Craig Spangenberg, Joann Spangenberg, Herb Shellenberg

SHARED MINISTRY

Kathy Bielinski, Bonnie Gerber, Todd Siegfried, Lauren Morton
Mike Hosfeld (chair)

SOCIAL MINISTRY

Suzanne Bachman, Kathy Bielinski, Kim Bluder, Bonnie Gerber, Pat Handlovic, Jeanine Siegfried, Joan Neff, Susan Vitez, Linda Reese

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Sandra Beahm, Kathy Bielinski, Cheryl Hosfeld (Co-Chair), Mike Hosfeld, John Phillips Jr (Co-Chair), Evan Reese, Linda Reese, Mary Jo Reed, Jeanine Siegfried.

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