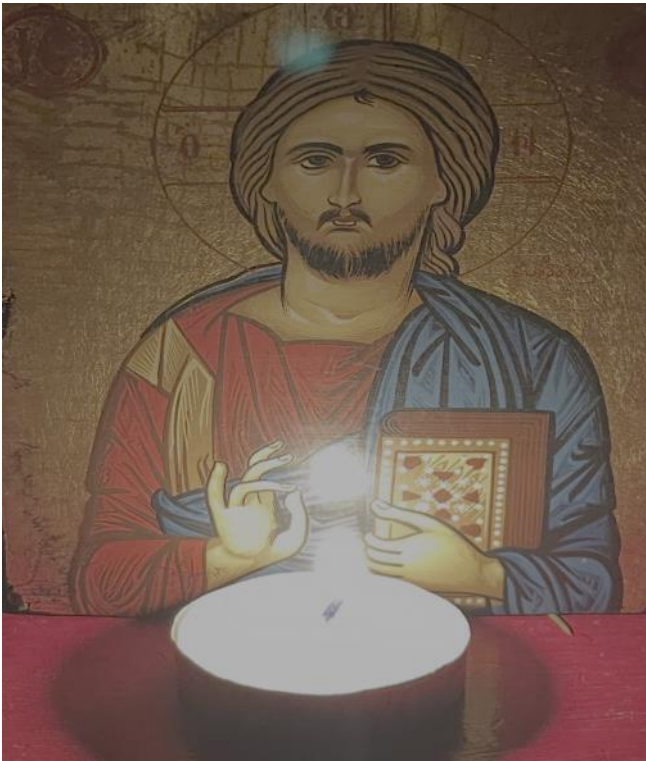


THE VOICE

of St. Stephen's

February 2025 Volume 142 Issue 2



Jesus and the candle

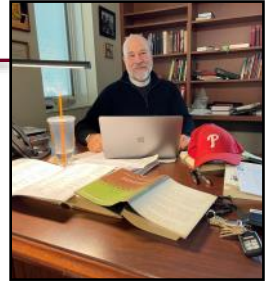
Inside this Issue

Reflections from Pastor Barry.....	2-3
Voice of Saints.....	4-5
Social Ministry Corner.....	6-10
Property Corner.....	11
Roof Replacement.....	12
2024 Financial Report.....	13
ELCA.....	14
Birthday/Anniversaries.....	15
Essentials Cafe.....	16
Pastor's Activities.....	17
Flowers.....	18
Worship Assistants.....	19
Church Council & Committee.....	20

Services

Sunday, February 2 Presentation of Our Lord 10:45 am
Sunday, February 9 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 10:45 am
Sunday, February 16 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany 10:45 am
Sunday, February 23 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany 10:45 am

Reflections from Pastor Barry



Dear Friends at St. Stephen's,

Epiphany is the season of revelation. It is the season of light. Indeed, the days are growing longer and temperatures are nudging up. The snows tell us it is winter, but the rains remind us that spring is around the corner. Well, maybe spring is around the block! The light we celebrate in Epiphany is not quite the same as the daylight that floods our skies. The light we celebrate in this season of Epiphany is more like the light of a candle. Imagine the power going out and your room goes pitch dark. You fumble for matches and with the stroke of a match stick there is enough light to find that candle. The candle is lit and your eyes adjust to this limited amount of light. You immediately notice how that single flame reveals far more of your room than you perhaps imagined. That single flame is the only source of light and it only by that light you can see. That single flame is everything and without it you would only be able to grope about in your space, relying on your memory to move about with any safety.

Christ be our light, shine in our hearts, shine through our darkness. These are words echoed in one of my favorite hymns of this season. If we allow the Christ to be our principal source of light, imagine how different our lives might be. I know you all are followers of Jesus, but there are many other lights that demand our attention and point us in a variety of directions. Christ is our light, the guiding light, the revealing light, the only light that matters. Our God is revealed to us in many ones, but God's main revelation is through God's Son.

This season of Epiphany we hear about God's revelation in Jesus. The One who stirs things up and turns things upside down. The One who lifts up the lowly and casts down the mighty. The One who shows grace upon grace in all that he does.

Sunday, February 2nd, we have the opportunity to celebrate Candlemas- a time when the candles for worship were blessed, candles

with their light that remind us of the light of Christ and the presence of God in our world and our lives. God is present. We are asked to seek out God's light and follow that path. It is that light that leads us to salvation, to wholeness, to well-being, to caring for our neighbor, to a life lived full of compassion and grace.

May Christ indeed be our light,

Pastor Barry



Voices of the Saints

Elisabeth Fedde-was born in Feda in Vest-Agder, Norway on Christmas Day, December 25, 1850, Her father was a sea captain who retired when his wife became ill, and he became a farmer. She had six siblings. After her father died in 1873, Elisabeth trained as a deaconess at the Lovisenberg Deaconess House in Christiania .Fedde spent much of her early ministerial career Norway's newest and northernmost diocese. She and another young deaconess established a medical house in Tromsø, 1878, where they lived and worked under harsh and primitive conditions. On Christmas Day, 1882 Sister Elisabeth received a letter from her brother-in-law Gabriel Fedde, challenging her to set up a ministry in New York City for Norwegian seamen there. She sailed for the United States three months later and arrived on April 9, 1883.



Nine days later, Sister Elisabeth helped found the Norwegian Relief Society, thus establishing her American ministry. Sister Elisabeth established a boarding house at 109 Williams Street, near the Seaman's Church and rented out three small rooms at \$9 per month. Sister Elisabeth also often visited the sick and distressed poor; her diary about those experiences was later published.

In 1885, Fedde opened a deaconess house to train other women, as well as a nine-bed hospital that expanded to 30 beds and ultimately became Lutheran Medical Center of Brooklyn. After several years in New York Fedde accepted the invitation of midwestern Lutherans and moved to Minnesota. Shortly after she arrived in Minneapolis in 1888, Fedde established the Lutheran Deaconess Home. The next year she helped found the Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church. Fedde also helped Mortensen plan for a third hospital in Chicago , and another in Grand Forks, North Dakota.¹

Eventually, exhausted by her thirteen years working in America, Sister Elisabeth returned to Norway in November 1895. Shortly after her return, she married the patient Ole Slettebo, a suitor whom she had left to conduct her missionary work. Sister Elisabeth Fedde died on February 25, 1921, in Egersund, Rogaland, Norway. Her husband Ole died three years later.

Voices of the Saints

St. Valentine-officially known as Saint Valentine of Rome, is a third-century Roman saint widely celebrated on February 14 and commonly associated with "courtly love." Although not much of St. Valentine's life is reliably known, and whether or not the stories involve two different saints by the same name is also



not officially decided, it is highly agreed that St. Valentine was martyred and then buried on the Via Flaminia to the north of Rome. the February 14 spot of Roman Martyrology. One common story about St. Valentine is that in one point of his life, as the former Bishop of Terni, Narnia and Amelia, he was on house arrest with Judge Asterius. While discussing religion and faith with the Judge, Valentine pledged the validity of Jesus. The judge immediately put Valentine and his faith to the test. St. Valentine was presented with the judge's blind daughter and told to restore her sight. If he succeeded, the judge vowed to do anything for Valentine. Placing his hands onto her eyes, Valentine restored the child's vision. Asterius was humbled and obeyed Valentine's requests. Asterius broke all the idols around his house, fasted for three days and became baptized, along with his family and entire 44 member household. The now faithful judge then freed all of his Christian inmates.

St. Valentine refused to renounce his faith and Christianity and was executed outside the Flaminian Gate on February 14, 269. St. Valentine is the Patron Saint of affianced couples, bee keepers, engaged couples, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, happy marriages, love, lovers, plague, travelers, and young people. He is represented in pictures with birds and roses and his feast day is celebrated on February 14.

Social Ministry Corner

Past Events



Who We Are

Every night from November 1st to April 30th, shelter guests are provided a warm bed, home cooked meal, and showers if available. Our capacity is 70 beds per night.

We utilize volunteers to create meals, serve meals, clean, monitor showers, assist with up-keep, and work one-on-one with guests for linkage to needed services. The quantity and quality of our volunteers drives a successful shelter night.

On **January 25th** we volunteered at the shelter. We provided a hot meal of meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green beans. Volunteer opportunities include preparing and serving the meal, including dessert and beverages and cleaning up after the guests are done eating. We also monitored the showers, allowing our street neighbors the opportunity to enjoy a hot shower.

Mitten Tree- Your generous donations of hats, gloves, scarves, and socks were distributed to these 4 agencies- Bethlehem Emergency Shelter, Marvine Elementary School, New Bethany, and the Northeast Community Center. Thank You for helping fill this need in our community



In 2024 the Social Ministry Committee allocated \$500 from the endowment fund to support **World Central Kitchen**.

Founded in 2010 by Chef José Andrés, World Central Kitchen (WCK) is a nonprofit organization that is first to the frontlines providing fresh meals in response to crises. Applying a model of quick action, leveraging local resources, and adapting in real time, WCK has served more than 450 million nourishing meals around the world. They are currently in California providing support for those affected by the wildfires. When disaster strikes, WCK's Relief Team mobilizes with the urgency of now to start cooking and serving meals to people in need.

Social Ministry Corner

By partnering with organizations on the ground and activating a network of local restaurants, food trucks, and emergency kitchens, WCK serves comforting meals to survivors of disasters quickly and effectively. To support regional economies, WCK prioritizes purchasing local ingredients to cook with or distribute directly to families in need. We know that good food provides not only nourishment, but also comfort and hope, especially in times of crisis. Learn more about this agency at wck.org.

Operation Christmas Child Update- In January we reported that some of our boxes went to South Africa. We now know that some of our boxes also went to Colombia. The following information about boxes sent to Columbia in previous years is taken from the OCC website.

Chanel Contreas, a widowed mom of three, is one of the families who crossed the border from Venezuela. She left in the fall of 2017 because there was no food, healthcare, or jobs left in her home country. Their money was worthless, and she was desperate for a better life. The four of them crossed the border with only one suitcase. It was all she could juggle as she carried her 6-month-old baby and walked with her two daughters who were then under the age of 5. They brought only essentials, unable to carry any toys or comfort items.



Chanel is thankful that her children each received an Operation Christmas child Shoebox Gift

Social Ministry Corner

My kids grew up used to it,” she said. “As a mother, I don’t want them to live in that situation. I want them to be happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally.”

When her children received the shoebox gifts, she was overwhelmed with gratitude. Her children were smiling and laughing as they discovered each treasure tucked away in the box. Full of joy and excitement, they started to look like kids again.

“I feel very happy to see them happy like this. This has no price. I have not seen them like this in a really long time, but I wanted to see them like this,” Chanel said. “I think God’s timing is perfect.”

The simple gift of a shoebox made a powerful impact. Chanel felt God’s blessing at the distribution and now wants to attend church there. She said that as she is learning to trust God with what little she has left, her faith is growing. God is providing for her family.

“Every box is an opportunity to reach a child with the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Franklin said. “It’s about telling children around the world and their families that God loves them. God hasn’t forgotten them.”

Social Ministry Corner

Currents Events



In 1990, Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group:

“Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat.”

Since then, close to \$200 million has been generated for local charities across the country through Souper Bowl of Caring. It has become a powerful movement that transforms the time around the Big Game into the nation’s largest celebration of giving and caring for those in need.

Through this mission, people learn they can make a positive difference in the world as they collect food, raise money and serve at hunger-relief charities and show caring and compassion in local communities across the country.

Share in God’s love for our neighbors in need and give generously on **Souper Bowl Sunday February 9th**.

The Social Ministry Committee will be serving a lunch of soup and bread during fellowship hour. We ask everyone able to please join us in tackling hunger by donating \$1 or 1 can of soup. All of the donations collected will go directly to our Tackle Hunger Charities of Choice: West End Food Bank and New Bethany Ministries.

Help us meet our goal of 100 cans of soup for the West End Food Bank and \$100.00 for New Bethany Ministries. Bring your soup cans in by Feb 9th. Donation bins for New Bethany will be in the Narthex on Feb 9th.



Social Ministry Corner

Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 16th– Social Ministry Meeting after the worship service

Saturday, March 22– Bethlehem Emergency Shelter

Ongoing needs Donations Bins in Narthex

Kenya Health Care Initiatives– Collecting school supplies like pens, pencils, crayons, scissors, colored pencils, sharpeners and all types of flash cards.

Operation Christmas Child– Collecting toys, clothing, school supplies, combs/brushes, toothbrushes and stuffed animals that are small enough to fit in a shoebox.

Food Cart to benefit West Bethlehem, Emergency Food Pantry- Nonperishable food items such as canned soups, fruit, vegetables, peanut butter, jelly rice, cereal, mac & cheese.

Property Corner

Projects Property Committee has worked on the past several months.:

Major Projects

1. Chimney repaired.
2. New laser beam smoke detector system installed in main church area.
3. Front & rear rubber roofs replaced.
4. (12) new spotlight bulbs replaced at front of church area.
5. Slate roof repairs.



Various Miscellaneous Projects

1. Plumbing repairs-including new toilet in downstairs ladies room.
2. Electrical repairs-including new light bulbs and fixture ballast replaced at interior and exterior of church.
3. Rear parking lot lines repainted & Handicap signs replaced.
4. Carpentry repair work.
5. HVAC repairs

Future Projects

Elevator, electrical & fire inspections required.

Thanks to all the property members & families for getting all these projects done.



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 Preschool 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.

2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

Total Income (Excluding Roof)	\$245,892
Total Expenses (Excluding Roof)	-\$245,367
Excess Income over Expenses	\$ 525
Roof Replacement Income	\$ 58,663
Roof Replacement Expenses	-\$ 80,000
Remaining Balance	\$ 21,337
Operating Fund Balance December 31, 2024	\$248,349
Property Maintenance Fund Balance December 31, 2024	\$ 20,352

Summary

The Finance Committee is pleased to report that the church broke even for the Operating Account in 2024 when we exclude roof replacement costs. Church operating income exceeded expenses by \$525 in 2024.

Through the end of 2024, St Stephens received \$58,663 in contributions towards the roof. The bulk of the funds were received in the form of an anonymous donation of \$50,000 from a charitable fund. But the congregation also contributed an additional \$8,663. A second blitz month will occur in February to generate additional contributions.

The church also has a balance of \$20,352 in the Property Maintenance Fund. That is a little misleading as there is approximately \$5,700 due on the new smoke detectors when we are invoiced. Those funds will be taken from the Property Maintenance Fund.

The only known significant project remaining would be repairs to the slate roof which has been completed in January. The anticipated cost is estimated at close to \$8,000.

The bottom line is that St. Stephen's financial picture remains stable after a strong 2024 thanks to the generosity of our members.

U.S. Wildfires

The Situation:

Multiple wildfires have broken out across Los Angeles County in California, with tens of thousands of people under evacuation orders. Sparked by dry conditions, strong winds and a limited water supply, these fires have destroyed homes and businesses and have led to injuries and loss of life. News is still unfolding about the full impact as firefighting efforts continue.

Our Response:

Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating with the Southwest California Synod, Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. We will work with them to provide for immediate needs and recovery amid the widespread destruction. Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying recovering communities for months and years to come.

What you can do:

Pray:

Please pray for communities in California impacted by the wildfires. May God's healing presence bring them peace and hope in their time of need and give strength to those working diligently to contain the fires and care for affected communities.

Give: Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response equip us to respond to communities affected by wildfires and related disasters. These gifts also empower us to respond to disasters whenever and wherever they strike. Gifts to "U.S. Wildfires" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by wildfires until the response is complete.

To give by phone, call **800-638-3522**. Checks or money orders can be mailed to:

Lutheran Disaster Response

P.O. Box 1809

Merrifield, Va 22116-8009



Kathy Bielinski
Francine Heft

Lisa Levick

Birthdays for February

9-Carol Haring
10-Marc Israel
10-Craig Spangenberg
11-John Phillips Jr
16-Joann Spangenberg
18-Daniel Macon
18-Linda Reese
21-Elizabeth Lopez
23-Maria Bevan
23-Brenden Henriques
26-Kevin Mitman
28-Jason Siegfried



Anniversaries for February

17-Richard & Sherry Israel
21-Dave & Beverly Looker



Come Join Us
at Essential Café
every 3rd Thursday of the month
9:30 am



Here is the list of days for the next coming months:

Thursday, February 20
Thursday, March 20
Thursday, April 24
Thursday, May 15
Thursday, June 19



If you get up on Sunday morning and your road is covered in snow or ice and you are wondering if we have Worship Service, please check WFMZ Channel 69 for update. You can also check our Facebook page or our web page for an update.



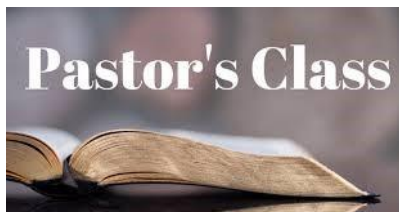
Collecting Palms

We are collecting palms. If you have palms, please bring them in and put them in the basket. We will be burning them for Ash Wednesday. We will be collecting them until February 23.



Bible Study with Pastor Barry

February 6 and February 13
9:30 am in Pastor's Office



Any teens who are already confirmed, Pastor Barry is holding a class for them on the first and third Sunday of the month at 9:30 am. The next classes would be February 2 and February 16



Altar Flowers dedications are a wonderful way to show gratitude for or honor loved ones. If you would like to sponsor Altar Flowers, please see the signup sheet in The Narthex



Donate Used Eyeglasses
There is a box in the Narthex for used
Eyeglasses
Your used eyeglasses can help
someone see better.








February 2025

St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church



Altar Care: Joann Spangenberg

Worship Service					
February 2 10:45am	Maddie Zuber	Ron & Mary Jo Reed Pam Hartzell Joan Neff	Ron Reed	Ron & Mary Jo Reed	Cheryl Mike Hosfeld
February 9 10:45 am	TBD	Ron & Mary Jo Reed Scott Albanese Jeanine Siegfried	Evan Reese		Souper Bowl
February 16 10:45 am	Brody Zuber	Ron & Mary Jo Reed,	Todd Siegfried	Ron & Mary Jo Reed	Kayla, Lisa Levick, Pat Handlovic
February 23 10:45 am	Lizzy Lopez	Denise Lopez William Lopez Scott Albanese			Hoysan 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
Pam Hartzell	610-865-2648	psh726@verizon.net
Frank Herb	484-747-5320	jlherb52@gmail.com
Denise Lopez– President	610-462-1278	dlopez76@ptd.net
Mary Jo Reed-Secretary	610-867-6276	reed2x@ptd.net
Linda Reese	610-704-9444	the-reeses@rcn.com
Herb Shellenberger	610-393-0441	hgshell@aol.com
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.